

**GEF-Land Degradation and Monitoring Project
Steering Committee Conference Call
September 19, 2016**

Present:

Dr. Sandy Andelman, Vital Signs

Dr. Annette Cowie, STAP

Mr. Stephen Muwaya, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, Uganda

Dr. Lennart Olsson, Lund University

Dr. Stefan Sommer, JRC

Dr. Compton Tucker, NASA

Dr. Ulrich Apel, GEF Secretariat

Mr. Tristan Schnader, Vital Signs

Introduction and Agenda Amendments

Dr. Andelman welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:12 p.m. EDT. She asked if anyone had amendments to the agenda. No additional items were offered.

Update on Dr. Marc Paganini for the Steering Committee

Dr. Sommer reported that he spoke to Dr. Marc Paganini, who mentioned that it would be easier to participate on the project's Science Advisory Committee (SAC), rather than on the Steering Committee, because joining the SAC would not require formal approval from the European Space Agency. Dr. Apel confirmed that the GEF does not require the project to have an ESA representative on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee agreed that Dr. Paganini joining the SAC would be an acceptable alternative.

Science Advisory Committee – membership updates

Dr. Sommer reported that Dr. Joachim Hill from the University of Trier will not be able to participate on the SAC.

Dr. Cowie reported that Dr. Graciela Metternicht and Dr. Stuart Marsh are willing and able to join the SAC.

Dr. Olsson reported that Dr. Rasmus Fensholt from the University of Copenhagen should be available to join the SAC as well.

Dr. Andelman agreed to send formal letters of invitation to all of the available aforementioned candidates, including Dr. Paganini.

Dr. Andelman noted that NASA will draft a report for Output 1.1.1, as outlined in paragraph 57 of the Project Proposal Document, by the end of November, giving the rest of the Project Technical Team until the end of FY17Q2 to review the draft. Dr. Andelman suggested that the SAC reviews the draft report and, in the invitation letter she will suggest this as their first activity. She would share the draft report with them at the end of November, giving them a month for their review, and schedule a call the first week of January 2017, to discuss their input, so the report can be finalized by the end of FY17Q3.

Updates from Andelman, Tucker, and Olsson on progress for FY17Q1

Dr. Tucker reported that NASA is on schedule with all of its activities for FY17Q1. His team is on track to process and verify the 2002-2015 MODIS Aqua and 2000-2015 MODIS 250 Terra NDVI and soil moisture data for all four pilot countries by the end of FY17Q1. The NDVI-soil moisture residual trend analyses and error determination is also on track for completion by the end of the quarter.

Dr. Olsson reported that Lund is mostly on schedule for its quarterly activities. Last quarter, there was a delay in completing Output 1.1.2 Activity 1, which asked for the stratification of Senegal into major vegetation types and identifying pilot sites for evaluation of land degradation analysis results. The delay occurred due to initial difficulty in tracking down the ShapeFiles required for stratification. Dr. Olsson mentioned that, even though Lund has the ShapeFiles now, his team is working on a more comprehensive stratification approach.

Dr. Olsson mentioned that his team, in coordination with Vital Signs, has experienced difficulty reaching focal points to help select potential participants for the training and capacity building workshop. Lund and Vital Signs should be able to manage the practicalities and logistics of the workshop. However, the right stakeholders from each country need to be involved in the training in order for the project to successfully build capacity. Input from the UNCCD Science and Technology Correspondents is important in this regard.

Dr. Apel offered to speak to the country delegations during the CRIC in Nairobi Oct 18-20, to help with national stakeholder reach out.

Dr. Andelman reported that Vital Signs is on track with its activities.

Discussion on information sharing with the UNCCD Secretariat and other parties

Technical difficulties prevented Mr. Muwaya from being able to discuss his proposed agenda item with the group, but Dr. Andelman agreed to follow up with him by Skype.

Dr. Andelman suggested that the project uses the NEPAD as an additional regional platform, in addition to SERVIR and WOCAT, for sharing products. NEPAD is developing an integrated platform with tools to enable holistic assessment of climate change and land degradation risks

in AU member states. Additionally, Dr. Andelman mentioned that she had met recently with representatives from the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which is engaging in a capacity building in Africa on data and statistics related to climate change, food security, and land degradation.

Dr. Cowie asked about the role of Ms. Sara Minelli, UNCCD Programme Officer for Monitoring and Assessment, within the scope of the project. Dr. Andelman suggested inviting Ms. Minelli onto the SAC. Dr. Cowie agreed to talk to Ms. Minelli about her availability and willingness to participate. Dr. Andelman also suggested having periodic calls with Ms. Minelli. The project could use suggestions on how to improve communications with the UNCCD focal points and Science and Technology Correspondents within each of the African pilot countries.

Dr. Andelman proposed inviting a representative of the ECA and NEPAD, which would allow these groups to help train additional people in their own outreach. Mr. Muwaya mentioned that the participation of UNCCD Committee of Science and Technology (CST) correspondents in the capacity building workshop would also be a good idea.

Dr. Andelman agreed to schedule a follow-up call with Mr. Muwaya to receive further input from him.

COP22 and potential side events

Dr. Andelman asked the Steering Committee if there might be potential partners that we should reach out to in case there are any opportunities for us to participate on any side events at the COP22.

Dr. Olsson commented that it might be too late to plan for COP22, especially since none of the project's products are ready. Dr. Olsson suggested that we look for opportunities at the UNCCD COP 13, which will have a focus on land degradation neutrality. There will also be a discussion on UNCCD implementation and reporting as the core process for SDG target 15.3 implementation.

Mr. Muwaya suggested that we consider talking to NEPAD about holding a side event or displaying an exhibit in the African Pavilion, which is organized by the African Union. Dr. Andelman suggested that the project have a poster and factsheets available, however we subsequently learned that the COP22 is a paperless convening, so a presentation would be more appropriate.

Any other business

Dr. Olsson proposed that certain members of the Project Technical Team meet on Wednesday, October 19th and Thursday, October 20th at Lund University to work on specific technicalities of analysis of the remote sensing data for the project.

Dr. Andelman reported that she had recently met with the African Development Bank (AfDB). During the first half of next year, there will be a midterm review of a major investment that has been focusing on improving productivity and livelihoods in African drylands. Under its new president, Akinwumi Adesina, the AfDB has committed to having all of their work be data driven. Dr. Andelman noted that the AfDB might want to involve this project team and use some of our products to evaluate whether their investments in Senegal are in the right places and whether their investments are having the intended impacts in Senegal. Dr. Andelman noted that she asked the AfDB to inform us of any opportunities for us to provide input.

The AfDB has a project in Senegal that is registering all small farmers and is digitizing and georeferencing the boundaries of their farm fields, as part of an effort to grant farmers tenure. This is envisioned to be completed within 12 months and could provide further data that could be used by this project to examine the relationship between land degradation and human well-being.

Dr. Olsson indicated skepticism about the quality and availability of the data from the project and therefore suggested caution.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the call adjourned at 6:00 p.m. EDT.