Monitoring land degradation has been identified globally as a key development challenge.

Land degradation affects the livelihoods of millions of people globally through its negative impacts on food and water security, forest cover, biodiversity, and societal resilience to climate variability and shocks. In 2011, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that 25% of global land is highly degraded, while only 10% is improving. This trend is driven, in most cases, by inappropriate policies and misplaced investments, which stem from a lack of reliable and standardized methods for identifying and monitoring land degradation.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) both strive to reduce land degradation, but they currently use different indicators for assessing trends over time, leading to inconsistent results.

Several barriers contribute to this, including:

1. A lack of standardized and harmonized datasets, methods, and tools for assessing land degradation
2. Absence of systematic and documented baselines at national scales
3. A lack of local technical capacity
Establishing Robust Methods

The project’s first component focuses on different global datasets and methods from satellite-derived indicators, e.g., NDVI, verified with field data from, e.g., Vital Signs. All products and reports will be peer reviewed. To ensure national relevance and buy-in, we are engaging stakeholders throughout the project.

Demonstrating Methods and Platforms

Component two focuses on demonstrating the robust methods and creating a platform to enable widespread adoption of the toolbox. An online toolbox, including source data and functions for calculating and mapping the indices, and resulting insights into different types of degradation and their drivers, will be available at www.vitalsigns.org/gef-ldmp and also will be disseminated through regional platforms. The toolbox will include manuals and other training materials.

Capacity Building

The project’s third component entails developing gender appropriate capacity to use the toolbox for assessing trends in land degradation. We will ensure that gender is considered throughout all project components, including the development of manuals and training materials. We will conduct at least one regional training workshop and will aim to have equal participation by women and men.

Learn more about the GEF-Land Degradation Monitoring Project at http://www.vitalsigns.org/gef-ldmp, or email us at GEF-LDMP@conservation.org.