Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Terminal evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management"

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Abstract

This report presents the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the terminal evaluation of the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management (GCP/GAM/031/GFF) project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government of the Gambia and its implementing partners. The project was implemented in the Gambia from October 2016 to December 2022. The evaluation used the pre-determined evaluation questions as indicated in the evaluation's terms of reference (TOR).[1]

Quantitative and qualitative methods included desk reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and site visits to conduct the evaluation and assess the extent to which the project had achieved its intended results. The evaluation used a stratified random sampling method that was guided by key criteria like community size and the intensity of key activities. Gender-disaggregated data was collected and analysed to assess the degree to which women were involved in and benefitted from the project.

Overall, the evaluation found that the project was satisfactorily implemented to achieve its objective: reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia by strengthening and expanding community forestry and implementing sustainable forest management (SFM) practices. Implementation, however, faced many challenges and constraints: the death of the first Project Coordinator; the advent of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); and procurement and administrative delays that led to a no-cost extension.

This report is intended for FAO, the GEF and the Government of the Gambia. The latter includes relevant technical departments and institutions, such as the Department of Forestry, so that it can advise similar project interventions in the future.

The project was satisfactorily implemented with positive outcomes among the target communities: improved forest management practices; enhanced entrepreneurship knowledge; and developed skills for better livelihoods. It was highly relevant to the Gambia, the GEF and FAO in terms of national and global natural resources management priorities. It also strengthened and contributed to the expansion of community forestry in the country. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), outreach and engagement from the related institutions were, however, less than optimal. Alternatively, the project was gender sensitive and promoted gender equality by strengthening women's roles in decision-making.

This report recommends that FAO in the Gambia initiate procurement processes from three to six months before the actual implementation of an activity. It should also ensure that letter of agreement (LOA) obligations and resource allocations are executed with minimal delays. FAO in the Gambia and the Government of the Gambia should develop and operationalize a communications strategy and plan upon project launch. They should also utilize leaflets and community radio in their outreach programmes. The project's M&E efforts need to be initiated early. Further, capacity and entrepreneurial skills development should be encouraged to sustain beneficiary interest. FAO in the Gambia and the Government of the Gambia should ensure that baseline gender-disaggregated data is available upon project launch to determine the degrees of gender equality and gender involvement in project implementation.

[1] FAO. 2022. *Terminal evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management" - Terms of reference.* Accra.

Last, the Government of the Gambia should continue to fund and rely on regional sustainable land management (SLM) forums for all of its natural resources initiatives. This aims to promote intersectoral collaboration and coordination. Further, the Department of Forestry should closely implement the project's exit plan.

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Figures and tables

Abbreviations

AAD	Action Against Desertification
ADWAC	Agency for the Development of Women and Children
AGFP	All Gambia Forestry Platform
ANR	Agriculture and Natural Resources
CFC	community forest committee
CFMA	community forest management agreement
CPF	Country Programming Framework
EDP	Enterprise Development Plans
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
JFPM	Joint Forest Park Management
LOA	letter of agreement
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MTR	mid-term review
NACO	Natural Resources Consulting
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NEMA	National Agricultural Land and Water Development Project
PCFMA	preliminary community forest management agreement
SFM	sustainable forest management
SLM	sustainable land management
TOR	terms of reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Executive summary

Introduction

1. A terminal evaluation of the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management (GCP/GAM/031/GFF) project was conducted from 21 November to 1 December 2022 in the Gambia. The project's objective aimed to reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia by strengthening and expanding community forestry and implementing sustainable forest management (SFM) practices. It was implemented in four regions of the country: North Bank; Central River (north); Upper River (north); and Lower River. The project had three related components: i) strengthen policy and institutional capacity for sustainable dryland forest management; ii) rehabilitate and manage community-based sustainable dryland forests; and iii) monitor, evaluate and disseminate information.

2. The evaluation focused on obtaining an independent assessment as to whether the project's planned inputs had contributed to the achievement of its planned results in terms of objective, outcomes, outputs and impact. It also sought to: examine and detail project achievements; identify barriers and challenges to implementation and determinants for success or failure; and identify any broader results and impact – positive or negative, intended or unintended – which that had occurred through the project in an effort to inform and improve similar initiatives in the future. The terminal evaluation was conducted by two Gambian consultants: one team leader and one team member.

3. The project was a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-5 project with a total budget of USD 15 784 447 – of which, the GEF funding totalled USD 3 066 347. Co-financing from the Government of the Gambia and its development partners, including projects and non-state actors, totalled USD 12 718 100.

4. The Department of Forestry was the project's main implementing partner. Other implementing partners were the following: Natural Resources Consulting (NACO); the Agency for the Development of Women and Children (ADWAC); and the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI). FAO provided overall oversight. The project had been planned to last five years, from June 2016 to September 2021. However, there was a no-cost extension until December 2022 because of implementation delays. These delays were due to the untimely death of the Project Coordinator and the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. The project was evaluated at its mid-term in January 2020. The mid-term review (MTR) focused on the inception and implementation periods from October 2016 to the end of December 2019. It also included a less intensive review of the project design phase from 2013 to 2015. The terminal evaluation focused on implementation, achievements, and challenges during the project's second half with reference to the MTR findings.

6. Based on pre-determined criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and cross-cutting issues, the terminal evaluation was guided by pre-determined evaluation questions. These were indicated in the evaluation's terms of reference (TOR) (see Executive Summary Table 1).[2]

[2] FAO. 2022. *Terminal evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management" - Terms of reference.* Accra.

Executive Summary Table 1. Evaluation questions

1) Relevance	Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, country priorities and the FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF)? i. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Were the project's strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved? ii. Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design/ since the MTR, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project's objectives and goals?
2) Effectiveness	To what extent has project objective been achieved? Were there any unintended results? What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved so far across its components? **Effectiveness by outcome** i. To what extent has the policy and institutional capacity for sustainable dryland forest management been strengthened through this project? Are institutions at the national and regional level able to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning, and practices? ii. To what extent has legal community forestry ownership been strengthened due to the project? To what extent has the project's community-based sustainable dryland forest management been effective? iii. To what extent has the application of project findings and lessons learned facilitated the project itself? **Effectiveness in terms of intended impact** iv. To what extent have community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices been strengthened and expanded?
3) Efficiency	To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost effectively? i. To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects and partnerships, as well as avoided the duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives? ii. To what extent has project management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
4) Sustainability	What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or remain even after the end of the project? i. What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project benefits in terms of economic, environmental, institutional and social sustainability? ii. To what extent is this project likely to build upon results achieved at the country level, particularly in light of the new GEF financing cycle (GEF-8) or through other potential donors?
5) Factors affecting performance	**Implementation** To what extent did FAO deliver on project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation, approval and start up, oversight and supervision? How well were risks identified and managed? **Execution** To what extent did the execution agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** (M&E design) Was the M&E plan practical and sufficient? (M&E implementation) Did the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Was information gathered in a systematic manner using appropriate methodologies? Was the information from the M&E system appropriately used to make timely decisions and foster learning during project implementation? **Financial management and co-financing** To what extent did the expected co-financing materialize? How did any shortfall in co-financing affect the project's results? **Project partnership and stakeholder engagement**

	Were other actors, such as civil society, Indigenous Peoples or the private sector involved in project design or implementation? What was the effect on the project results? **Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products** How is the project assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences? To what extent are the communications products and activities likely to support the sustainability and scaling up of project results?
6) Environmental and social safeguards	To what extent were environmental and social safeguards taken into account in designing and implementing the project?
7) Gender	To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing the project? Was the project implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?
8) Progress towards impact	To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project? i. Was there any evidence of environmental stress reduction and environmental status change, or any change in policy/legal/regulatory frameworks? ii. Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term impact?
9) Lessons learned	What knowledge has been generated from project results and experiences, which have a wider value and potential for broader application, replication and use?

Source: Elaborated by the Evaluation Team.

Terminal evaluation findings

Relevance

Finding 1. The project was relevant to the Gambian context, the GEF focal areas, FAO's strategic objectives, the FAO in the Gambia CPF, and national priorities.

7. The project was relevant to the Gambian context and highly congruent with the GEF focal area of land degradation control. This involved an operational SFM programme strategy to sustain the livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples. It was also relevant to FAO's Strategic Objective 2, which seeks to increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry, and fisheries in a sustainable manner. It further aligned with FAO in the Gambia's CPF, which emphasizes the improved sustainable management of forest resources and supports the implementation of global conventions. At the national level, the project was congruent with national priorities related to sustainable natural resources management and the implementation of international conventions and agreements on natural resources that the country is party to. These include but are not limited to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity.

Finding 2. The project design was based on community forest management interventions. Indeed, this was appropriate to meet the project objectives and beneficiary needs, as well as other stakeholders such as the Department of Forestry.

8. The project design prioritized the community ownership of forests, capacity development and better livelihoods. It did so through entrepreneurial skills development on beekeeping, improved cookstove construction and nurseries development, as well as cattle track and rangeland establishment. Its emphasis on the community ownership of forests encouraged community participation in sustainable dryland forest management within the project areas. However, one design shortcoming was the inadequate managerial-level involvement of some key technical departments and organizations, such as the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Community Development,

the Department of Agriculture and the National Livestock Owners Association in rolling out interventions.

Finding 3. The project remained relevant from design to implementation.

9. The project was particularly relevant in the context of the existing 2010–2019 forest policy[3] and the new 2022–2031 policy that has yet to be approved.[4] These policies aim to conserve, sustainably manage, and develop a forest area that covers at least 30 percent of the Gambia, and that contributes to national socioeconomic and environmental development and protection and to meeting the country's commitments under relevant international and regional conventions and agreements.[5] The project focused on SFM implementation.

10. Overall, the project's SFM relevance in the national and international context is highly satisfactory.

Effectiveness

Finding 4. The project aimed to reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia through the strengthening and expansion of community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices and livelihood improvements. This was achieved.

11. Community forest and Joint Forest Park Management (JFPM) practices implemented at local levels in the four project regions of North Bank, Lower River, Central River (north) and Upper River (north) sustainably managed 14 533 ha (about 98 percent of the targeted 15 000 ha) of dryland forest through the successful application of 18 JFPM committees plans and 73 community forest management plans (Outcome 2.2). It trained and helped to build the capacities of 21 participating community forest committees (CFCs) and 18 JFPM committees in dryland forest management. Similarly, capacity development training was delivered to identified government institutions and civil society organizations. This aimed to improve their capacity for integrating SFM into their respective policies. In addition, the project developed community entrepreneurial skills for beekeeping and value-added products. Similarly, the objective to establish a (sustainable land management) SLM forum and a community forestry management task force in all four project regions was successfully accomplished. The planned supply of 4 000 improved metal cookstoves for 2 000 households was achieved. Planned agroforestry interventions were successfully implemented, albeit seedling survival was less than desirable – about 36 percent survival as per NARI's estimation. A survival rate above 60 percent would have been better. All ten of the planned cattle tracks and rangelands (three cattle tracks and seven rangelands) were identified and ten management committees formed and trained. However, the establishment of boundary pillars has yet to be completed.

12. The project's unintended outcomes include the establishment of a fifth SLM forum in West Coast, which was not a project region. Further, a fire management guideline was

[3] Republic of the Gambia. 2009. *Forestry Sub-sector Policy, Republic of the Gambia (2010–2019)*. Banjul, Forestry Department. Cited 5 September 2023. https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/gam208066.pdf

[4] Republic of the Gambia. 2021. *Draft National Forest Policy 2022–2031*. Banjul, Forestry Department.

[5] Republic of the Gambia. 2009. *Forestry Sub-sector Policy, Republic of the Gambia (2010–2019)*. Banjul, Forestry Department. Cited 5 September 2023. https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/gam208066.pdf

developed, which the Department of Forestry uses as a training manual.[6] Memoranda of understanding were also signed between the Department of Forestry and key technical departments to fast track the approval of the preliminary community forest management agreements (PCFMAs) and the community forest management agreements (CFMAs) that guarantee legal community forest ownership. A charcoal value chain assessment was conducted for the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources.

Effectiveness by outcome

Finding 5. Through the trainings provided, the relevance of sustainable dryland forest management to social, environmental, and economic development were better understood and appreciated by the government and non-governmental organizations that had participated. Consequently, they are able to incorporate dryland forest management practices into their policies as and when relevant.

13. The project trained 90 governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on effective sustainable dryland forest management as per design (Output 1.1.1). It also developed a national forest management and rehabilitation strategy and updated the National Forest Action Plan (Output 1.1.2). Further, the project established all five of the planned multistakeholder regional dryland forest management forums (Output 1.1.3). However, the sustainability of these regional-level institutions and their operations remain uncertain due to the absence of predictable funding for future operations.

14. Trainings covered the following: agroforestry principles and practice; silvicultural practices and techniques; bushfire management; water conservation techniques; value chain improvement; community-based forest management and tenure transfer; forest monitoring; recordkeeping; data collection tools; and mapping.

15. The project contributed to building the policy and management capacity of the Department of Forestry by supporting the development of a new dryland forest management strategy and the review and update of its forestry action plan (Output 1.1.2). These capacity development achievements are important for the long-term success of sustainable dryland forest management in the country and in contributing to the future effective implementation of interventions under Component 2: community-based sustainable dryland forest management; and rehabilitation. An exit strategy was developed to facilitate the post-project implementation of outcomes.[7]

16. An MTR recommendation highlighted vagueness and a possible inability to meet the following indicator under Output 2.2.2: forest cover increased by 5 percent through small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration. This indicator was amended as follows: community forest cover increased by 5 percent in the project intervention regions. Although the activities undertaken to achieve this were satisfactorily implemented, there is no indication that the community forest area increased by 5 percent since no quantitative benchmarks had been reported before or after implementation.

[6] Republic of the Gambia. 2018a. *National Forest Action Plan (NFAP) 2019–2028*. Banjul, Department of Forestry. Cited 5 September 2023. https://chm.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/72F99C09-A17F-497F-7B00-EE38CDE69E5D/attachments/207709/NFAP%20(2019%20-%202028).pdf

[7] FAO Representation in the Gambia. 2022a. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project: Sustainable Approach and Exit Strategy*. Banjul.

Finding 6. The project strengthened legal community forestry ownership by facilitating the development, conclusion and signing of both the PCFMAs and the CFMAs, as well as the JFPM agreements between the government and the communities. Further, the project strengthened the conviction of participating communities in their ability to manage their forests based on knowledge gained from trainings provided by the project.

17. The project enabled the signing of nine JFPM agreements between the government and the participating communities. It also initiated the development of all 73 CFMAs. This facilitated the implementation of sustainable management principles by their committees. The project also started management plans for nine out of the remaining 18 JFPM agreements. In fact, these agreements have been developed and await either approval or signing by the Department of Forestry. Community-based forest enterprises on beekeeping were established through the community forest and JFPM efforts. In addition, 20 community forests management agreements were signed and await gazetting.

18. Six hundred stakeholders were trained on sustainable dryland forest management principles and practices (Output 2.2.1). There is a need for continuous follow up with these trainees to ensure sustained implementation.

19. The project prepared 14 new five-year management plans covering an area of 1 438.12 ha of community forest under the CFMA (Output 2.1.3). It also developed 18 JFPM plans and signed 18 JFPM agreements covering an area of 7 698.9 ha (Output 2.1.4). Further, 47 community forests were moved to the PCFMA (75 percent of target hectarage of 3 251 ha) while 44 community forests under the PCFMA were recommended for the CFMA (102 percent of target hectarage) (Output 2.1.2).

Finding 7. Beekeeping boosts income generation prospects within community forestry. The inclusion of this aspect into the project, as well as the successful introduction and distribution of improved cookstoves with a fire award scheme, were motivational. Indeed, these elements facilitated project implementation (Outcome 2.2; Outputs 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4).

20. Interest in community-based forest management and protection has increased. The project experienced delays in the implementation of some interventions, such as nursery construction, the supply of beehives, the distribution of improved cookstoves and rangeland establishment. These were related to administrative and procurement bottlenecks within FAO in the Gambia. However, the National Beekeepers Association of the Gambia trained community members to produce hives. As a result, the supply-related delays for beehives were overcome through capacity building: communities constructed their own hives. All 625 Kenyan top bar hives that had been distributed to the 18 beekeeping enterprise groups across the project regions were produced locally. Although the nursery infrastructure construction was complete, these were not operational upon project closure.

21. The NARI implemented farm-level agroforestry planting on an aggregate area of 496.29 ha as part of the SFM interventions (Output 2.2.2). According to the December 2022 project progress report, this was out of a planned 500 ha. Awareness was raised among communities, especially farmers, on agroforestry practices and their potential benefits for soil fertility improvement and increased crop production.

22. The NACO successfully implemented the project's enterprise development component (Output 2.2.4). Besides building capacity on simple recordkeeping among 40 enterprise development participants (16 females and 24 males), 100 interest group members (49 females and 51 males) and 30 representatives (five females and 25 males) from support and service institutions participated in two trade fairs. These fairs were organized to cultivate contacts among the entrepreneurs. Further, NACO implementation reports highlight that 21 Enterprise Development Plans (EDPs) were developed and 18 beekeeping enterprise groups were mentored on how to harvest honey and process raw honey and bees wax (NACO implementation reports). This aspect has proven to be highly popular among the community forest and JFPM committees as it is a major source of income. A lot of enthusiasm and desire has been generated at the community forest and JFPM level to expand beekeeping activities within their intervention areas.

Effectiveness in terms of intended impact

Finding 8. Community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices were strengthened and expanded throughout all project implementation areas.

23. All related key project results (Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2; Outputs 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) were achieved and, to a large degree, their intended impacts. Capacity for sustainable dryland forest management at the level of community forest and JFPM committees were strengthened through the training of 600 community forest and JFPM committee members (Output 2.2.1 linked to Outcome 2.1), making it possible for local communities to independently undertake forest management practices such as: fire management; assisted natural regeneration; tree growing; community forestry procedures and processes; nursery management; seed collection; seedling planting and maintenance; and fire management techniques.

24. The project had notable success in establishing a regional sustainable dryland management forum (Output 1.1.3 linked to Outcome 2.1) and a community forest management task force (Output 2.1.1) in each of the implementation regions. This marks significant progress towards strengthening the institutionalization of community forestry and the expansion and implementation of SFM in the country.

25. The project was satisfactorily and effectively implemented in terms of outcome and intended impact. This aspect considers the project's objective to reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia by strengthening and expanding community forestry and implementing SFM practices. The previously cited gains add to this.

Efficiency

Finding 9. The project was implemented rather efficiently. It collaborated with a limited number of existing projects: the European Union's Action Against Desertification (AAD);[8] FAO-GEF's

[8] FAO. 2018. Action Against Desertification. The Gambia. In: *fao.org*. Rome. Cited 5 September 2023. www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/countries/africa/gambia/en

Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project;[9] and the Green Climate Fund's Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project.[10] This collaboration aimed to implement common activities and reduce costs.

26. This project and the AAD project had a joint project steering committee for shared trainings on identifying an improved cookstove prototype for the communities. The project also used the horticulture sites of the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project to establish private nurseries. It also partnered with the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project to demarcate three cattle tracks and to train the management committees that were part of both projects. It partnered with the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project for the rehabilitation of some divisional nurseries. However, there was limited collaboration with the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project in implementing similar silvicultural, forest protection and beekeeping interventions in the project area. Both this project and the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project implemented farmer trainings on these activities at different times. However, they could have been planned and implemented together to save on training costs and to benefit from expertise in the two projects. Although the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project had adopted the project's skills transfer experience to beekeeping households during beehive construction, there was no joint training conducted to enable both to save on costs.

27. FAO's slow procurement process has been a source of complaint among the implementation partners and some communities. This process has been blamed for a number of delays: the purchase and delivery of seedlings; nursery construction; the purchase of improved metal cookstoves; and the acquisition of beehives. FAO in the Gambia linked these delays to FAO procurement guidelines and requirements which do not always align with responsiveness and capacities of local service providers. Components executed by the implementing partners would have received better support from the respective line department had there been an operational link between the project and these head offices from the start. For example, the ADWAC was not adequately linked to the head offices of the Department of Livestock Services and the Department of Community Development, which are government-mandated institutions on livestock and community development matters – including improved cookstoves.

Finding 10. Project formulation considered the provisions of international agreements: the Convention on Biological Diversity; the UNCCD; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was also designed to respond to the GEF focal area on land degradation and its operational strategy on SFM, as well as to the Government of the Gambia's natural resources policies, programmes, and action plans.

[9] GEF. 2016. *Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia*. The GEF ID: 5782. Washington, DC. Cited 5 September 2023. www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5782

[10] GCF. 2017. *FP 011: Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia river basin: Developing a climate resilient, natural resource based economy*. Gambia | United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) | Decision B.13/23, 8 June 2016. Incheon, Republic of Korea. Cited 5 September 2023. www.greenclimate.fund/document/large-scale-ecosystem-based-adaptation-gambia-river-basin-developing-climate-resilient

28. The project implemented activities that were similar to other projects, such as the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project, the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project and the AAD. All of these are involved in either community forestry, dryland forest management, cattle track and rangeland establishment, or beekeeping.

Finding 11. Project management adapted to two significant changes: the untimely death of the first Project Coordinator in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Both conditions limited supervisory missions from the project office and delayed implementation.

29. The project managed to hire another Project Coordinator in 2019. During this period, the project's regional focal points continued to implement extension work activities. The project did not need to adapt to any policy changes since no significant policy changes had occurred during implementation.

30. Despite limited coordination and collaboration with other projects and some government departments, the project was implemented satisfactorily and efficiently. It achieved all of its planned outputs.

Sustainability

Finding 12. Project design and implementation had a number of features to ensure that the results continue to be useful and sustainable in the future. The project addressed important sustainability successes, concerns and challenges in a way that impressed the non-project communities and encouraged them to express a desire for similar projects and their communities.

31. There were gains in strengthening community knowledge on: sustainable dryland forest management; strengthened entrepreneurial skills of community members; improved farmer knowledge on agroforestry practices and benefits; strengthened production capacity of the regional central nurseries; and strengthened regional SLM forums and regional task forces for the enhanced consideration of dryland forest management in project design, implementation and monitoring into the future. Memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were signed with key government institutions involved in PCFMA and CFMA certification to hasten the process and avoid future land use conflicts. The project also developed an exit strategy that includes relevant departments and agencies for the continued implementation of project activities.[11] Further, the project bolstered the involvement of women in decision-making. Indeed, it recognized the fact that women are important "push factors" in many communities on forest management. Women also had leadership roles in entrepreneurial activities linked to community forestry management and JFPM. These features and achievements will likely enhance the application of the country's community-based sustainable dryland forest management in the future.

Finding 13. The project created some sustainability features. However, there are still significant sustainability risks at the institutional, social, and economic level within the communities.

[11] FAO Representation in the Gambia. 2022a. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project: Sustainable Approach and Exit Strategy*. Banjul.

32. These risks include: limited budgetary and technical support capacity from the Department of Forestry; slow processing and the issuing of CFMA and PCFMA documents and certificates; insufficient follow-up support (extension and financial); uncertain political support for community forest expansion; greater demand for land for real estate development, which will become a serious risk in the project's rural areas; constant threat of fires, overgrazing and potential conflict between communities regarding ownership and benefit sharing arrangements; potential between the village development committees and the CFCs on the use of community forest sites; uncertain or inadequate financing for future community forest management and expansion; and overgrazing.

Finding 14. The project achieved important and positive results: community-level entrepreneurial and skills development; and the expansion of community forestry and policy strengthening through the national sustainable dryland forest management strategy and the updated National Forest Action Plan. This provides an encouraging environment for more investment in the further development and expansion of community forestry outside the current project area.

33. Despite challenges and given the project results achieved, the government can harness opportunities offered by the GEF replenishment cycle (from July 2022 to 2026) and other potential donors. This way, it can build on these gains and advance any unfinished activities within the context of the project's exit plan. The project results can be scaled up in the country with proper coordination among other environmental projects.

34. Overall, the project has created satisfactory sustainability potential for maintenance and the expansion of community-based sustainable dryland forest management in the country. Given the implemented risk mitigation measures, the risk rating is moderately likely.

Factors affecting performance

Implementation

Finding 15. FAO made a satisfactory delivery on project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation, approval and start up. Oversight and supervision were, however, less than satisfactory as there had been no supervisory visits by a Lead Technical Officer to the project sites. This could be related to changes in the Lead Technical Officer at the level of the FAO Regional Office for Africa in Accra and the FAO Subregional Office for West Africa in Dakar.

35. The Project Management Unit had interrupted supervisory and monitoring visits between the death of the first Project Coordinator and the hiring of the new one. Project monitoring was also hampered by the late establishment of an M&E system and the late recruitment of an M&E Officer. These issues were addressed after the MTR in 2020. The project also undertook satisfactory risk management activities. These included capacity development for forest management, nursery production support and entrepreneurial skills development. The development of memoranda of understanding with relevant departments was an important risk management measure that had been undertaken. Political-institutional risk relating to difficulties in securing co-financing was successfully addressed through co-financing secured from the implementing partners. The risk related to a possible lack of interest or sense of ownership on behalf of local communities was managed. This was done through extensive awareness creation on the benefits of community forestry and the creation of the regional community forest task forces that constantly engaged with the communities on conflict resolution and encouraged the non-participating communities to join the community forest and JFPM ventures. Potential

conflict-related risks in terms of community forest tenure were addressed through the neighbouring villages agreement process through which neighbouring village heads (*alkalo*) and district chiefs sign, agreeing to the ownership claim of the applicant village. Conflict-related socioeconomic risks concerning access to benefits were addressed by the Forest Act and through clearly defined JFPM agreements and community forest management plans, as well as the CFMAs. The Forest Act provides for the allocation of 15 percent of the community forest revenue to the Department of Forestry's national forestry fund and the remaining 85 percent to the community. There were no political problems during project implementation. There were no extreme climatic events that impeded project implementation. The establishment of a mechanism to monitor and forecast possible extreme events as per the project document,[12] which would have defined early response mechanisms to extreme climatic events, did not happen.

36. Despite initial challenges, especially administrative, the project was satisfactorily implemented.

Execution

Finding 16. FAO, as the executing agency, implemented its role despite shortcomings. There were significant delays in project implementation due to delayed procurement and administrative processes, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

37. FAO procurement and administrative processes were considered very slow and complicated by the implementation partners. This was not particular to the project. In fact, it reflects the structural or corporate efforts to ensure transparency in procurement. There were delays in implementation due to the procurement of late seedlings and concluding letters of agreement (LOAs) obligations with the implementing partners. FAO headquarters and the FAO Subregional Office for West Africa had limited involvement in providing technical backstopping for project implementation. Further, there were delays in establishing an M&E system and outreach protocols. This was compounded by the untimely death of the first Project Coordinator and the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless, the project was finally satisfactorily implemented.

38. FAO had mixed success regarding its role and responsibility in project implementation, which was executed in a moderately satisfactory way.

Monitoring and evaluation

Finding 17. The project had no M&E Officer upon launch. Instead, FAO in the Gambia used an existing M&E team that it temporarily strengthened through the employment of a United Nations Volunteer. The M&E plan that the team developed was sufficient for the project's purpose as it considered the outcomes and outputs. However, its late development and implementation incurred lost opportunities for the early detection of implementation shortcomings and early corrective measures.

39. There was a lack of monitoring for activities during the first half of project implementation, except for field missions conducted by the Project Coordinator or related staff. Relevant monitoring tools were developed only in 2021.

[12] FAO & GEF. 2016. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project Document*. Banjul, FAO. Cited 5 September 2023. www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5406

40. The 2020 MTR exposed challenges and shortcomings in project implementation: administration; procurement; M&E; and communications. The MTR made several recommendations to address these issues in its report. These recommendations received administrative responses as required.

Finding 18. There was a delay in the development and implementation of an M&E system. This negatively impacted the availability of information – independent of the project management report – to guide and reorient, as necessary, the first half of implementation. However, following the development of an M&E system halfway through implementation, the M&E efforts were conducted according to plan through methodologies defined in its strategy.

41. Based on the M&E plan, several M&E missions were conducted from 2020 to 2022: two in 2020; three in 2021; and four in 2022. The missions covered all project interventions in a systematic manner across a representative number of implementation sites. Discussions were held with: regional forestry officers; regional governors; entrepreneur groups; female beneficiaries of improved cookstoves; and community forest and JFPM committees. Recommendations for follow-up actions and adjustments were made as appropriate.

Finding 19. Recommendations made by the evaluation missions were implemented to the extent possible (see Annex 2). However, certain recommendations related to procurement and contractual issues have yet to be completely implemented.

42. Despite efforts to address the recommendations of the project's monitoring missions, activities such as the establishment of central nurseries, the production and distribution of improved metal cookstoves, and the conclusion of stock routes and rangeland establishment and management arrangements remained incomplete at the time of the terminal evaluation. The monitoring of reports allowed for attention to be placed on implementation bottlenecks and to follow up on corrective measures as much as possible. The M&E missions covered the following: implementing partner activities; LOA signing; the demarcation of community forests and agroforestry sites and office supplies; institutional collaboration; forest management and capacity development; and the implementation of enterprise development.

43. Considering both the Project Coordinator's independent supervisory missions and the absence of a dedicated M&E programme during the first half of project implementation, the project's M&E was moderately satisfactory.

Financial management and co-financing

Finding 20. Key financial management issues involved delays in the disbursement of funds to implementing partners and in the procurement of goods and services for project implementation. Despite these challenges, FAO and the GEF financial and co-financing delivery were 89.90 percent and 94.68 percent, respectively. This is satisfactory.

44. Although FAO and the GEF financial delivery was not 100 percent achieved as of 31 December 2022, significant achievements were made across the three project components. There was an 85.21 percent delivery for Outcome 1 on institutional capacity development, 79.85 percent on Outcome 2 for community-based sustainable dryland management and rehabilitation, and an 80.19 percent on results-based implementation (M&E). Despite administrative and implementation delays, FAO in the Gambia exercised good financial management. This led to the successful implementation of project

activities. Project co-financers did extremely well in meeting 100 percent of their co-financing agreement, with the exception of the AAD project (80 percent) and NEMA (National Agricultural Land and Water Development Project) (10 percent). The AAD project ended halfway through the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project, while NEMA phased out with no other confirmed source of paying the co-financing fund balance.

45. Financial management and co-financing were satisfactory.

Project partnership and stakeholder engagement

Finding 21. The project design did not involve as many civil society and private sector actors as desired. It did, however, engage with a limited number such as NACO and the ADWAC as implementing partners. These partners operated through LOA obligations signed with FAO as the executing agency. The implementing partners executed their interventions with diligence, despite administrative and procurement challenges.

46. The NACO contributed to the strengthening of community forestry and enterprise development. The ADWAC contributed to the wide acceptance and use of improved cookstoves and the establishment of cattle tracks and rangeland. The NARI came on board in May 2021, which was later. It did so through an LOA signed with FAO in the Gambia. This contributed to the dissemination of knowledge on and the implementation of agroforestry intervention in the project areas. Although NARI was involved in project formulation, the implementation plan did not contend with its involvement. The one-year LOA ended in May 2022 and was extended for two months until July or early August 2022. This was insufficient for a meaningful engagement in an intervention that requires several years for impact.

47. The project's partnership and stakeholder engagement was moderately satisfactory.

Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products

Finding 22. The project experienced delays in developing and implementing a communications strategy. This was due to the fact that a communications expert was never available, even at the MTR. Nonetheless, the project took important steps to communicate its activities and outcomes through media outlets such as newsletters, newspapers, the Gambia Radio and Television Services, the FAO website and Facebook.

48. While these efforts contributed to raising the project's visibility both nationally and internationally, local impact may have been diminished due to limited distribution and accessibility. Perhaps greater use of community radio would have given the project a wider audience at the local level and generated more awareness on its purpose, activities and achievements for more impact.

49. Project achievements on communications, knowledge management and knowledge products was moderately satisfactory.

Environmental and social safeguards

Finding 23. The project extensively incorporated environmental and social safeguards in its design and implementation. The development and signing of community forest and JFPM agreements was an action towards ensuring environmental and social safeguards during project implementation. Enterprise development initiatives such as beekeeping helped to generate

income for the communities. This contributed to improved livelihoods and the reduction of extraction pressure on the forests. Similarly, the supply of improved cookstoves was an important initiative in contributing to women's health and reducing pressure on forests.

50. Management agreements signed between the project and the participating communities ensure that the forest areas where the project had intervened are protected from unsustainable use. This allows for their growth and development to sustainably provide environmental and ecosystem services. The project provided secure community ownership and capacity building for beneficiaries to ensure sustainable management and utilization for long-term environmental benefits. The introduction of enterprise schemes such as beekeeping was also an environmental and social safeguard. These provide alternative income sources that steer away from the excessive exploitation of forests. Similarly, the introduction of energy-efficient metal cookstoves and capacity development among communities to build their own clay stoves were important safeguards that not only reduce pressure on forests but also save time and cut costs among households. Further, this will hopefully prevent soil loss through erosion control when the agroforestry intervention takes hold and finds wider application. It may also increase soil fertility and soil moisture over time. Rangeland establishment and management is another environmental and social safeguard that will secure access to a reliable source of livestock grazing and help to reduce farmer-herder conflict, contributing to social cohesiveness and peace.

51. The PCFMAs and the CFMAs developed and signed with the communities, the corresponding capacity development and the distribution of 4 000 fuel-efficient cookstoves to 2 000 households were important environmental and social safeguard achievements.

52. Satisfactory environmental and social safeguards were incorporated into project design and implementation.

Gender

Finding 24. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming were key project design features. Indeed, the project was implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. It ensured that women were represented in decision-making bodies, such as the community forest and JFPM committees, and that they received training in and benefitted from enterprise skills development.

53. The project enhanced the participation of women in management, planning and decision-making through their active involvement in the work of the SLM forums and regional community forest task forces. It helped improve their productivity, income and living conditions by engaging with and training them in entrepreneurship skills development. Women were the main beneficiaries of entrepreneurial development interventions like beekeeping and nursery production. Most CFCs had 30 percent or more female membership as per the project design. Similarly, the regional community-based forest management task forces had an average of about 30 percent female membership, even though the regional SLM forums had far less women. Therefore, the project was gender sensitive. Its achievements can provide good lessons for the expansion or implementation of similar projects in the future.

54. The project satisfactorily considered gender issues in its design and made satisfactory progress in promoting gender equity in decision-making during implementation. It also made satisfactory gains in terms of empowerment related to income generation among

women. This was done through EDPs, especially for beekeeping and value-added beekeeping products.

Progress towards impact

Finding 25. Project interventions, such as community forestry, the JFPM, improved cookstoves, stock route and rangeland establishment, nurseries, beekeeping and beeswax processes had been ongoing in the country prior to the project. Notwithstanding, the project contributed to extending these interventions and their benefits to communities that had not been covered by earlier projects or government agencies. This made an important contribution to the long-term environmental, social and economic impacts of these interventions at the national level.

55. The project's establishment of a 30 percent benchmark for women's participation in the decision-making bodies of the community forest and JFPM committees paves the way for wider and more gender-sensitive participation in community-level SFM implementation. By linking entrepreneurial development like beekeeping to dryland forest management, the project contributes to the popularity and sustainability of community forestry in the country. This is due to the promise of more income for participating communities. Skills training such as beehive manufacturing and beeswax processing will increase the sustainability of forest management. The creation of alternative job opportunities for beneficiaries steer from the exploitation of forest resources for income.

Finding 26. Environmental stress reduction and environmental status change could not be evidenced as a result of project implementation. There were no parameters or baselines established by the project at its formulation to allow for measuring these changes. However, the national dryland forest management strategy and action plan that the project had helped to develop and update could potentially lead to policy and regulation changes when successfully implemented.

56. Despite the lack of documentary evidence on environmental stress reduction, interviews with the communities indicate satisfaction with the project's outcome regarding positive forest growth and, in some cases, greater biodiversity – particularly of monkey and baboon. This was reported for the joint management of the Jeloki Forest Park in Central River (north) and the Jalabiro Forest Park in North Bank.

57. The project developed two national policy instruments: a dryland forest management strategy; and an updated forestry action plan. Outside of this, project implementation did not result in any changes in policy, legal or regulatory frameworks.

Finding 27. Despite mitigation measures adopted during project implementation, the risks identified in the project document[13] remain relevant to future progress towards long-term impact. The social, economic and environmental risks have a broad national relevance that the project could only partially address in the implementation areas.

[13] FAO & GEF. 2016. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project Document*. Banjul, FAO. Cited 5 September 2023. www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5406

58. Forest fires remain the biggest risk to progress towards long-term impact of dryland forest management in the country. These fires are often set outside of the management jurisdiction of CFCs. Not only that, the committees and their communities are rather ill-equipped to fight them, which exposes forests to damaging impacts. There may be political support for dryland forest management, as indicated by the approval of relevant policies and laws. However, socioeconomic and political realities may favour the development of competing land use sectors, such as farming and real estate development for settlements. This is to the detriment of forest land.

59. Overall, the project made satisfactory progress towards achieving the desired impact of strengthening community-based sustainable dryland forest management for environmental protection and improved livelihoods in the project areas. In general, the project also supported this progress in the country.

Lessons learned

Lesson 1. The introduction of income generating entrepreneurial activities as part of community forest and JFPM interventions was a significant motivational factor for the wider involvement and commitment of community members in community-based forest management.

Lesson 2. Capacity building for greater knowledge and skills among communities in forest management and entrepreneurship was essential in boosting confidence among members to independently undertake forest management with minimal external assistance.

Lesson 3. Securing neighbouring village agreements to the customary claim of ownership of forest land by a community seeking to implement community forestry was an important conflict prevention measure. It also promotes sustainability and the wider implementation of community forestry.

Lesson 4. Multiagency oversight organs, such as the regional SLM forum and the regional community forest task force, have the potential to enhance regional interagency coordination and collaboration in project implementation.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Despite delays, the project was satisfactorily implemented with positive outcomes: improved forest management; and developed entrepreneurial knowledge and skills among the participating communities. This advanced community-based sustainable dryland forest management.

60. Farmer knowledge on agroforestry practices and benefits was strengthened in the project areas. Production capacity at the regional, central nurseries was also strengthened. Regional oversight structures such as SLM forums and community forest task forces were successfully established in all administrative regions. The project also facilitated the development of an exit strategy for the sustainability of related project activities.[14] There was the gender-sensitive involvement of women throughout project implementation. In particular, this was done through community forest and JFPM committees, and in enterprise development and the use and construction of energy-efficient cookstoves. The planned rangeland and cattle tracks have been identified and established, even though boundary pillars for some of them have yet to be installed.

[14] FAO Representation in the Gambia. 2022a. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project: Sustainable Approach and Exit Strategy*. Banjul.

Conclusion 2. The project was relevant to the country, and this is highly satisfactory. It addressed the GEF focal area and operational programme strategies, as well as FAO's priorities for the country in natural resources management and conservation. Further, the project design had significant socioeconomic relevance in terms of capacity development and the improvement of rural livelihoods.[15] In general, it was relevant to international contexts that relate to improving the management and conservation of dryland forest ecosystems for environmental, social and economic benefits.

61. The project resulted in an increased area (15 000 ha) of dryland under sustainable management, improved rural livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. In fact, this contributed to the Gambia's implementation of its obligations under global environmental and natural resources conventions and agreements. It also developed the survival skills of rural populations through the various trainings.

Conclusion 3. The project interventions of a community-based approach to sustainable dryland forest management and enterprise development were efficiently implemented. They were also satisfactorily sufficient to bring about the desired impact of sustainably managed dryland forests and improved livelihoods in the participating rural areas.

62. Efficiency, however, was affected by delays in procurement and the finalization of the LOA obligations with the implementing partners. Further, project implementation could have taken better advantage of the network of civil society and non-governmental organizations on the ground in its outreach and communications programmes.

63. FAO's oversight function for the procurement of services and material inputs was moderately satisfactory. This was due to administrative and procurement bottlenecks. These delays negatively impacted the rate at which implementing partners conducted their activities. There were also delays on behalf of the implementing partners in terms of the LOA obligations. This may have been due to capacity limitations on their side, or failure on the side of FAO to closely follow up with them.

Conclusion 4. The project was satisfactorily effective in strengthening and expanding community forestry. In so doing, it increased livelihood options for the participating communities.

64. The project created new community forests. It also built capacity for dryland forest management by training community forest and JFPM committee members and relevant technical departments as per Outcome 1. Significant gains were made towards securing the legal ownership of community forests by concluding 28 CFMAs (to be gazetted and issued) and the conclusion and signing of all planned 18 JFPM agreements. Complementary entrepreneurial interventions like honey production, beeswax value chain processing, skills development in beehive production and agroforestry practices were successfully introduced. These will most likely remain important motivational and contributing factors to the expansion and continuation of dryland forest management and increased crop production in the country.

[15] Ceci, P. *et al.* 2015. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project: Gambia Socio-economic Baseline Study Report*. Banjul, FAO.

65. The planned production and distribution of 4 000 improved cookstoves for 2 000 households was achieved by December 2022. Communities also gained skills in constructing fixed clay stoves. These interventions can reduce fuelwood use and mitigate negative environmental and social impacts to forest degradation. The established community grazing areas of cattle tracks and rangeland and the signed agreements will likely reduce grazing pressure on dryland forests and conflict within and between communities.

Conclusion 5. Overall, the project's sustainability, which was sought through the strengthening and expansion of community forestry, raised awareness among farmers of agroforestry. This established formal, long-term agreements (land tenure, grazing areas, cattle track, rangeland) and the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills development. It also facilitated the implementation of risk mitigation measures, which appears solid despite some risks.

66. Risks to sustainability will, however, remain and need to be considered in future implementations. These include: budget deficits at the Department of Forestry level; slow processing of agreements; fire; and possible community forest to alternative land use.

Conclusion 6. The absence of an M&E Officer in the first half of project implementation had an impact on the effectiveness of the M&E efforts. This situation only improved during the second half of project implementation through the recruitment of a United Nations Volunteer. In fact, this strengthened the exiting M&E team and the development of an M&E plan. The project's physical financial management was efficient. This is because it was implemented within an institutionalized and operating financial management system. However, project design and implementation fell short of involving as many civil society and private sector actors as desired. Project visibility was not as high as it could have been due to delays in developing and implementing a communications strategy and plan.

67. The late M&E start in 2020 resulted in initial, insufficient project monitoring – except for the field missions conducted by the Project Coordinators or related staff. As a result, some of the implementation bottlenecks like late LOA obligations and delayed execution by the implementing partners could not be flagged early enough for remedial measures.

68. By project closure in December 2022, the GEF financing had completed 89.9 percent of its planned disbursement, compared to 48 percent at mid-term in December 2019. Project co-financers did extremely well in meeting 100 percent of their co-financing agreement, with the exception of the AAD project (80 percent) and NEMA (10 percent). The latter phased out early, while the AAD project ended half way through implementation.

69. The project failed to capitalize on opportunities from the executive offices of some important non-governmental stakeholders like the National Livestock Owners Association, the All Gambia Forestry Platform (AGFP) and the National Farmers Platform. In fact, these all have a strong presence on the ground among farmers and local communities. Institutional support from these civil society organizations was not fully realized. The inadequate involvement of government institutions like the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Community Development and the Department of Agriculture – which had high stakes in the project and its expected outcome – risk their involvement in the follow up of post-project activities.

70. The project advanced outreach for its activities through electronic means, mainly various FAO websites. Unreliable internet services in the country, particularly rural areas, and the

fact that many stakeholders do not regularly visit FAO websites for information, limited the dissemination of project information in the country. Extensive dissemination of project factsheets and a more intensive use of community radio may have provided better visibility of the project to a wider local audience.

Conclusion 7. The safeguards that the project implemented to counter environmental and social risks were satisfactory. This aspect allowed for successful project implementation and the replication of similar activities.

71. Five multistakeholder SLM forums promoted cooperation and helped to reduce institutional risk related to a lack of cooperation. Indeed, their joint missions and project steering committee meetings fostered institutional coordination. Political-institutional risks related to financing were mitigated through the government acquisition of co-financing. Social risks were mitigated by better livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurial skills development. Conflict risks related to were addressed through the signing of neighbouring village agreements and community participation in PCFMA and CFMA development.

72. Women participated in planning, decision-making and capacity development trainings on community forest, JFPM and forest enterprise group committees where they had about 30 percent membership. They were also the main beneficiaries in the enterprise development components. Here, they learned how to generate income through beeswax processing for body cream.

Conclusion 8. Gender equality and mainstreaming was a strong feature of the project both during design and implementation. Gender-responsive measures enhanced strong women's participation throughout implementation, promoting equality and women's empowerment for successful community-based dryland forest management in the project regions and beyond.

Conclusion 9. The project made significant progress towards the achievement of sustainably managed dryland forests and improved community livelihoods in the country, especially its northern part. Beyond this, it created unintended possibilities for enhanced intersectoral collaboration throughout the country. In fact, it created an SLM forum in the non-project area of the West Coast and unprecedented memoranda of understanding with key government institutions. This will potentially fast track the development and conclusion of the PCFMAs and the CFMAs for wider community forestry implementation. Further, the project provided information to increase knowledge on the charcoal value chain in order to advise future policy development and implementation.

73. The project strengthened community capacity to undertake SFM on its own. It also strengthened the capacities of related technical departments to incorporate sustainable dryland forest management in policies and activities. Entrepreneurial interventions improved the skills of participating communities, enhancing income generation for improved livelihoods. Further, policy documents that were developed, such as the dryland forest management strategy, the updated forest management plan[16] and the fire management guidelines,[17] can bolster the implementation of SFM and biodiversity conservation. Similarly, the established stock routes and rangeland and the promotion of

[16] Republic of the Gambia. 2021. *Draft National Forest Policy 2022–2031*. Banjul, Forestry Department.

[17] Republic of the Gambia. 2018a. *National Forest Action Plan (NFAP) 2019–2028*. Banjul, Department of Forestry. Cited 5 September 2023. https://chm.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/72F99C09-A17F-497F-7B00-EE38CDE69E5D/attachments/207709/NFAP%20(2019%20-%202028).pdf

cookstoves will reduce grazing and firewood collection pressure on the managed forests. This enables forest protection and development in the long term. Mitigating measures were taught and implemented against social, environmental and political risks. The project empowered women to participate in decision-making processes on forest management and improved their skills to generate income for livelihood support. The project also successfully demonstrated that the introduction of income generating activities like beekeeping raises the motivation and commitment of beneficiaries to adopt and implement community-based sustainable dryland forest management.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Given the negative impact that FAO's cumbersome administrative and procurement process had on the timely implementation of project activities, FAO in the Gambia should look closely into the feasibility of initiating procurements from three to six months before the actual implementation of an activity. FAO should also use government procurement systems where feasible through beneficiary stakeholder government institutions and employ multiple suppliers where a large number of inputs are concerned. This can involve the procurement of improved metal cookstoves to reduce time and ensure that quality control, especially for locally acquired inputs like seedlings, is ensured.

Recommendation 2. FAO should ensure that future LOA obligations with implementing partners, as well as the allocation of resources, are processed and executed with minimal delay. This is to avoid delays on behalf of the implementing partners. In the same context, closer follow up with the implementing partners should be ensured for early detection and the mitigation of potential implementation bottlenecks.

Recommendation 3. Capacity and entrepreneurial skills development should be part of every FAO in the Gambia and the GEF community-based sustainable forest or natural resources management project to encourage and maintain beneficiary and stakeholder interest in and commitment to implementation. This is to strengthen the sustainability of project activities and outcomes. Projects should assist enterprise development for beneficiaries to secure markets for their products. The project itself can also buy from them when possible. One example is seedlings for project use.

Recommendation 4. The Government of the Gambia should continue to fund and use the regional SLM forums in all of its region-based natural resources projects. This ensures proper coordination and effective monitoring so that past and future projects are aligned with government priorities. This is for the sustainability of natural resources management in the country.

Recommendation 5. The Department of Forestry should ensure a mechanism of regular follow up with all departments and agencies that were assigned a responsibility in the exit plan. This involves memoranda of understanding signed with other departments for PCFMA and CFMA processing. In fact, this should be closely implemented to reduce administrative delays in approval and gazetting. This would also facilitate the sustainable continuation of project interventions and activities.

Recommendation 6. FAO in the Gambia and the GEF should ensure that future natural resources projects identify and involve all relevant technical departments and civil society and non-governmental organizations in both project design and implementation. This will provide for better coordination and a greater ownership of outcomes.

Recommendation 7. FAO in the Gambia and the FAO Regional Office for Africa should establish an early M&E system and regular supervisory visits by the Lead Technical Officer. This is to avoid or minimize operational bottlenecks and administrative delays by following up with the FAO Regional Office for Africa, FAO headquarters or government staff. Further, project formulation should ensure that all procurements that are likely to take time and delay implementation are identified in the project document.[18] Project Coordinator's guidance and timely action should be included in implementation scheduling.

Recommendation 8. FAO in the Gambia and the Government of the Gambia should ensure that a communications strategy and plan are among the first implementation documents of natural resources projects. Limited and unreliable internet access in rural Gambia means that the communications strategy should rely on leaflets and community radio to reach the widest possible audience.

Recommendation 9. FAO in the Gambia and the Government of the Gambia should ensure that future natural resources project design and formulation include the availability of gender-disaggregated information. This is to determine the degrees of gender equality, gender involvement and gender mainstreaming in project implementation.

[18] FAO & GEF. 2016. *Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project Document*. Banjul, FAO. Cited 5 September 2023. www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5406

1. Introduction

1. This report presents the terminal evaluation of the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management (GCP/GAM/031/GFF) project implemented in the Gambia from 2016 to 2022. The evaluation was largely based on pre-determined evaluation questions that had been presented in the evaluation terms of reference (TOR) (FAO, 2022). Various stakeholders were interviewed to highlight the project's implementation process, challenges and achievements. These include relevant government institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations, implementing partners, beneficiary communities and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the Gambia project staff, as well as members of the project steering committee. This report presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations developed by the Evaluation Team based on the analysis of data collected through different methods and tools.

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

2. In contrast to the objective, the evaluation had a dual purpose: accountability and learning for both improvement and enlightenment. On learning, it seeks to respond to the information needs and interests of policymakers and other actors with a decision-making role. Programming improvements and organizational development provide valuable information for managers or others responsible for programme operations, while an in-depth understanding of the programme and its practices cater to the information needs and interests of programme staff and sometimes participants.

3. Further, the terminal evaluation sought to determine whether key measures recommended by the mid-term review (MTR) had been considered and implemented and how they contributed to project delivery.

1.2 Intended users

4. As indicated in the TOR, the primary intended users of the evaluation include the following: the Budget Holder; the Project Task Force; the Chief Technical Adviser; FAO technical, programme and operations staff; the donor; and other external stakeholders such as government institutions related to the project that can use the evaluation's findings to affect change. These users and the purpose for which they will use the evaluation report are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Main purposes and intended users of the evaluation

Purpose		Intended user
Accountability. Respond to the information needs and interests of policymakers and other actors with a decision-making role.	Inform decision-making Provide accountability	FAO management Government of the Gambia
Improvement. Programming improvements and organizational development provide valuable information for managers or others responsible for programme operations.	Improve programming	Operational partners Project Task Force, Project Management Unit, FAO Country Office(s) The Global Environment Facility (GEF) project formulators
Enlightenment. In-depth understanding of the programme and its practices normally cater to the information needs and interests of programme staff and sometimes participants.	Contribute to knowledge	FAO personnel and future formulators and implementers

Source: FAO. 2022. *Terminal evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management" - Terms of reference*. Accra.

5. In addition to the primary intended users, the secondary intended users include implementing partners such as the Agency for the Development of Women and Children (ADWAC) and the Natural Resources Consultancy (NACO). The implementing partners can benefit from this evaluation report by learning from the assessment of their performance. This can allow for improving their future performance based on the conclusions and recommendations. Other government institutions such as the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and the Department of Agriculture can also use the report to improve collaborative approaches to programming and project implementation.

1.3 Scope and objective of the evaluation

6. The terminal evaluation covered activities carried out from the beginning of the project to the end of the evaluation field mission. It covered all three project components, including those executed by the implementing partners. The evaluation focused on the implementation period that took place after the MTR in February 2020 since it had covered the first half. Nonetheless, the terminal evaluation was comprehensive of the entire project implementation.

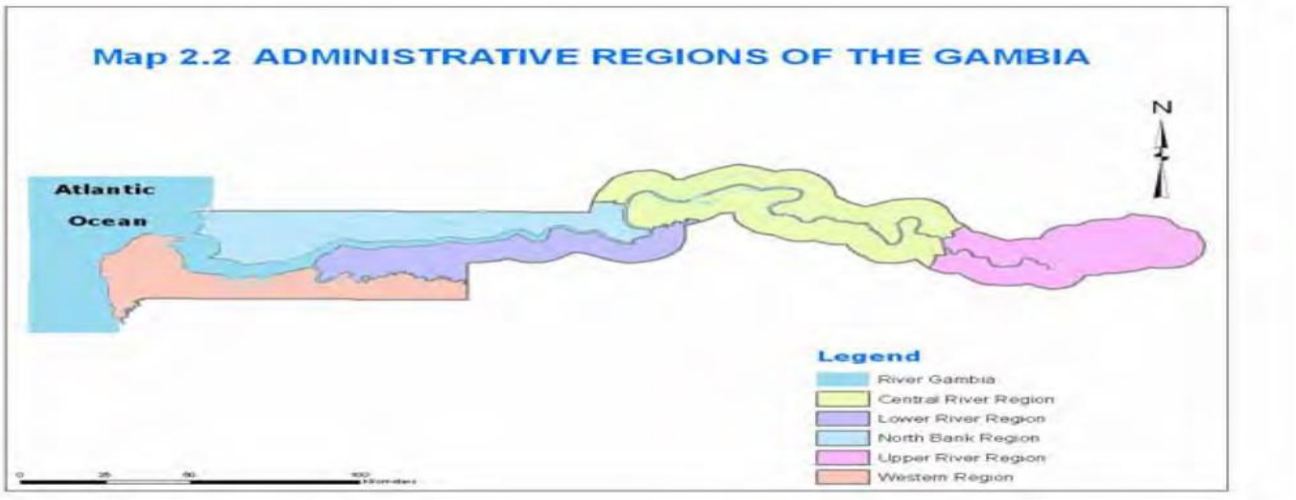
1.3.1 Objective

7. The objective of the terminal evaluation, as per the TOR, was to assess the extent to which the project achieved its intended results. The evaluation sought to determine whether the project's model and its specificities tied to Gambian law warrant scaling up. For this purpose, the evaluation sought to determine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project interventions. It also sought to identify factors affecting project performance and whether environmental and social safeguards were taken into account in designing and implementing the project. Further, the evaluation sought to determine the extent to which gender considerations were considered in project design and its contribution to progress towards the long-term impact of sustainable forest management (SFM). This involved useful knowledge, information and

experiences generated by the project that can be of valuable for broader application, replication and use.

8. This terminal evaluation covered all activities in the four project implementation regions: Bank Region (north); Central River (north); Upper River (north); and Lower River.

Figure 1. Administrative regions of the Gambia



Source: Government of the Gambia and FAO. 2010. *The Gambia National Forest Assessment 2008–2010*. Banjul. Map conforms with UN Geospatial. 2018. *Map of the Gambia*. New York, United States of America. https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/gambia.

9. The report considered activities that had been undertaken from the beginning of the project to the end of the evaluation field mission. It reviewed the findings from the MTR and covered all project components, specifically: all components from the GEF and the Government of the Gambia; elements from implementing partners, such as the ADWAC, NARI and NACO; and co-financed components like in-kind contributions from the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources. It focused on the implementation that took place after the MTR but was comprehensive of the entire project. Therefore, the evaluation considered the conclusions and recommendations of the MTR and actions taken to deliver what was relevant in the second half of project implementation.

1.3.2 Evaluation questions

10. The report is based on pre-determined evaluation questions from the TOR. These questions refer to all project implementation aspects: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; cross-cutting issues like gender; monitoring and evaluation (M&E); outreach and communications; and lessons learned. It also presents the evaluation findings in the form of conclusions and recommendations on behalf of the evaluators. These questions were reviewed by the Evaluation Team during the evaluation's inception (see Table 2).

Table 2. Evaluation questions

1) Relevance	Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, country priorities and the FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF)? i. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Were the project's strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved? ii. Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design/ since the MTR, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project's objectives and goals?
2) Effectiveness	To what extent have project objectives been achieved? Were there any unintended results? What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved so far across its components? **Effectiveness by outcome** i. To what extent has the policy and institutional capacity for sustainable dryland forest management been strengthened through this project? Are institutions at the national and regional level able to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices? ii. To what extent has legal community forestry ownership been strengthened due to the project? To what extent has the project's community-based sustainable dryland forest management been effective? iii. To what extent has the application of project findings and lessons learned facilitated the project itself? **Effectiveness in terms of intended impact** iv. To what extent have community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices been strengthened and expanded?
3) Efficiency	To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost effectively? i. To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects and partnerships, as well as avoided the duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives? ii. To what extent has project management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
4) Sustainability	What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or remain even after the end of the project? i. What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project benefits in terms of economic, environmental, institutional and social sustainability? ii. To what extent is this project likely to build upon results achieved at the country level, particularly in light of the new GEF financing cycle (GEF-8) or through other potential donors?
5) Factors affecting performance	**Implementation** To what extent did FAO deliver on project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation, approval and start up, oversight and supervision? How well were risks identified and managed? **Execution** To what extent did the execution agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? **M&E** (M&E design) Was the M&E plan practical and sufficient? (M&E implementation) Did the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Was information gathered in a systematic manner using appropriate methodologies? Was the information from the M&E system appropriately used to make timely decisions and foster learning during project implementation? **Financial management and co-financing** To what extent did the expected co-

	financing materialize? How did any shortfall in co-financing affect the project's results? **Project partnership and stakeholder engagement** Were other actors, such as civil society, Indigenous Peoples or the private sector involved in project design or implementation? What was the effect on the project results? **Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products** How is the project assessing, documenting and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences? To what extent are the communications products and activities likely to support the sustainability and scaling up of project results?
6) Environmental and social safeguards	To what extent were environmental and social safeguards taken into account in designing and implementing the project?
7) Gender	To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing the project? Was the project implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?
8) Progress towards impact	To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project? i. Was there any evidence of environmental stress reduction and environmental status change, or any change in policy/legal/regulatory frameworks? ii. Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term impact?
9) Lessons learned	What knowledge has been generated from project results and experiences, which have a wider value and potential for broader application, replication and use?

Source: FAO. 2022. *Terminal evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management" - Terms of reference*. Accra.

1.4 Methodology

11. The evaluation used quantitative and qualitative methods. These included desk reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and site visits. This ensured that the evaluation's objective, as defined in the TOR, was adequately and comprehensively addressed. A stratified random sampling method was used to select interviewees and communities in each project region. This was guided by key criteria, including the size of the community and the intensity of key interventions. Quantitatively, gender-disaggregated data was collected and analysed to assess the degree to which women had benefitted from the project. Due consideration was made to select communities since the project was evaluated in conjunction with the project. This aimed to maximize resources and save time among both projects in the field. Every effort was made to ensure a representative sampling of the project under each method. The Evaluation Team went on a fact-finding field mission from 21 November to 3 December 2022 (see Appendix 2).

1.5 Limitations

12. Terrain: the field mission faced time constraints. In fact, the evaluation was conducted during a busy time in the agricultural calendar (harvest, processing and marketing). Oftentimes, the Evaluation Team had to wait for community members to return from their farms. This had an unintended negative impact on the total time available for interviews. Further, security concerns over the use of FAO official vehicles after 18.00 also created time constraints. The main trunk road in the northern part of the country was recently improved. However, feeder roads to the more remote villages were rough. This impacted timely access and, consequently, the time available for meetings with communities.

Regardless, the Evaluation Team made adjustments in their timing and routes and managed to carry out all planned meetings.

13. Availability: youth migration to the urban areas in West Coast and the regional capitals also meant that youth presence at the meetings was rather limited. As a result, there was a lack of youth views on project implementation and planned benefits for them and their communities. The evaluation mission was scheduled from 21 to 31 December 2022 and all target stakeholders were informed accordingly. Unfortunately, a couple of days before the mission set out, the Office of the President announced the "President's annual meet-the-people". It was not possible to reschedule the mission due to the time constraints of coinciding agendas. Planned routes had to be adjusted. The timely availability of some government officials or the staff of implementing partners and stakeholders for the scheduled interviews could not be attained. Subsequent remote interviews, when possible, were arranged. The Governor of Upper River and the ADWAC manager were not interviewed as they had an official engagement outside of the region.

14. Documentation: despite promises, the Evaluation Team did not receive many site visit reports that could have provided useful information. Instead, other documentation was used. Relevant discussions were held with various regional SLM forums. These elements largely informed this report, mitigating the loss.

1.6 Structure of the report

15. The report was structured in accordance with the TOR provisions. It starts with an introduction describing the purpose and intended users of the evaluation. The introductory section also presents the scope, objectives and methodology of the evaluation, outlining the questions and associated data collection instruments. The introductory section is followed by the project's background and context with a detailed description of its components and their respective outcomes. This is followed by its theory of change. This illustrates the pathway of change in which the project was meant to contribute (see Section 2.3).

16. In section 3, the evaluation findings focus on the following criteria: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impacts; sustainability; and other parameters with their respective ratings, as defined in the evaluation design matrix. Based on these findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented, followed by a bibliography and a list of annexes.

2. Background and context of the project

2.1 Background

17. Most of the Gambia belongs to the Sudano-Sahelian climatic zone. This is characterized by a long dry season of about seven to eight months and a rainy season of four to five months. According to the 2010 Gambia National Forest Assessment (Government of the Gambia and FAO, 2010), more than 90 percent of the Gambia's 423 000 ha of forest and woodland is degraded. The National Forest Assessment classified the land use types as: 26.6 percent forest; 10.9 percent other woodland; 52.1 percent other land; and 10.9 percent inland water. Of the forest types, only 4.5 percent is regarded as "evergreen", while the rest is deciduous (degraded) forest.

18. The forest sector's contribution to the national gross domestic product has not been reliably established. It is, however, estimated at only 1.2 percent and does not take into account the non-timber and non-wood forest products, such as wild food and feed, fibre and fuelwood. The latter is estimated to account for more than 90 percent of domestic energy for cooking. The Gambia's forest provides protection, production and conservation functions from socioeconomic and environmental perspectives with great significance for rural livelihoods. These functions include but are not limited to: soil formation and conservation; water and climate regulation; food; fibre; fuelwood; fodder; and a source of traditional medicine. In the northern part of the Gambia, desertification and land degradation – which are combined effects of climate variability, climate change and population pressure – have had significant impacts on forest resources and, consequently, local livelihoods.

19. The 2010–2019 Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2009) emphasized community-based forest management, which had been introduced in 1991. Similarly, the new draft Forest Policy (2022–2031) (Republic of the Gambia, 2021), which has yet to be approved by the National Assembly, also emphasizes community forestry and intersectoral collaboration in forest management. Both policies were formulated in line with the environmental and socioeconomic policy objectives of the government to alleviate to poverty. The two policies acknowledge the fact that SFM will remain an illusion in the country unless all parties become stakeholders and play an active role in forest management decision-making and the implementation of management objectives.

20. As demonstrated in the project's MTR, community forestry approaches significantly improved dryland forest ecosystem functioning. However, several critical barriers remain. In fact, these obstruct the expansion of community-based sustainable dryland forest management in the Gambia. They include the following factors:

    i. inadequate framework and guidance for effective dryland forest management;

    ii. limited institutional capacities and inadequate technical assistance for local communities; and

    iii. limited market-oriented development of small-scale forest enterprises (Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project mid-term review).

21. See Annex 2 for a full recap of the MTR findings, conclusions and recommendations.

22. Participatory forest management, however, suffered some setbacks from 2005 to 2015 due to: limited political commitment and interference; human and financial resources limitations from the Department of Forestry; frequent changes in the leadership of the Department of Forestry and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources; land conflict; land use changes (real estate development); increased population pressure; mandate conflict (forestry, land, wildlife); isolated approaches to SFM; and the absence of natural resources management capacities among the local authorities (Bojang, 2021). Despite these challenges, about 33 342 93 ha of forest were placed under community control at the end of the 2010–2019 policy period, representing 16.67 percent of the policy target of sustainably managing 200 000 ha. The Forest Policy provision on community forestry was recognized as one of the world's most inspiring and innovative forest policies by the World Future Council from which it received the 2011 Silver Future Policy Award.

23. The Gambia's forestry sector faces many social, environmental and administrative problems. This has involved a significant population increase over the past two decades. According to the 2019–2021 United Nations Development Programme Country Report (UNDP, 2022), the Gambia's current population density is 125 per km – one of the top five in Africa. The Gambia relies primarily on tourism, rain-dependent agriculture and remittances, making it vulnerable to external shocks. The country's economic growth over time has been lower than the targeted 7 percent growth for least developed countries. Its economy grew by 6.0 percent in 2019 compared to 6.5 percent in 2018. Economic growth averaged 5.6 percent between 2016 and 2019 but contracted to around -0.2 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on tourism and its related sectors. It rebounded to 5.6 percent in 2021, mainly due to a partial recovery of the tourism sector and robust private construction. Inflation increased to 7.6 percent in December 2021 and accelerated to 8.3 percent. For agriculture and food security, most of the rural population depends on crops and livestock for their livelihood. The sector witnessed a slight revival in 2018 and grew by 0.9 percent. This differs from a sharp contraction of -4.4 percent in 2017. However, due to erratic rainfall in the 2018/19 cropping season, agricultural production declined by about 23 percent. The country is therefore not on track to achieve food and nutritional security, which is a situation that has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism sector contributes between 14 and 20 percent of gross domestic product to the economy. It is the country's main foreign exchange driver and a significant source of employment. Regarding human development indicators, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) reported the following: a human development index of 0.466 for 2019; a total population of 2.3 million in 2021; a poverty ratio of 48.6 in 2016; a Gini index of 35.9 in 2018; an unemployment rate of 32.5 percent in 2018; a literacy rate of 42 percent; and live expectancy at birth of 62.1 in 2019.

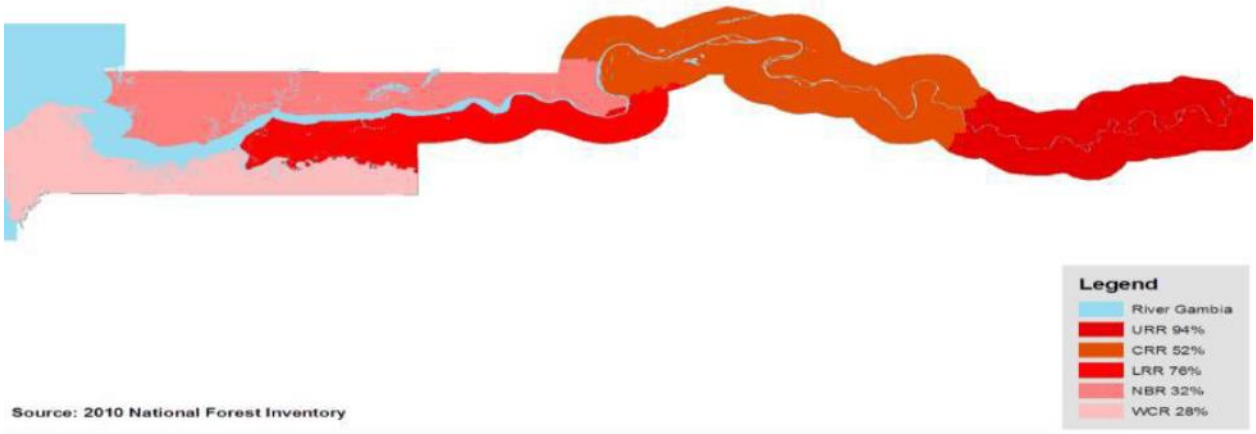
24. The Gambia's population rise has placed unprecedented pressure on the already degraded forest resources for the supply of fuelwood and charcoal. The same remains true for the demand of construction timber. These phenomena have challenged the department's control capacity. There has also been a recent spike in the demand for land for settlements, especially from the real estate sector in West Coast.

25. The Department of Forestry is challenged by human and financial resources limitations. Its staff numbers have remained low, with a virtual absence of a sufficient cadre of professional forestry staff. Annual development budget allocation to the Department of

Forestry was traditionally low (between GMD 5 and 6 million per year on average) during the preceding policy period (from 2010 to 2019).

26. Forest fires pose the biggest threat to SFM and forest development in the country. Although there was not regular fire monitoring, the 2010 National Forest Assessment reported that about 50 percent of the country's forest area had burnt that year. There has not been any new forest assessment or inventory since 2010. Despite this, discussions held with the Department of Forestry indicate that the situation regarding fires being a major cause of forest degradation has not changed. Forest fires have increased in intensity, killing mature and young trees alike and contributing significantly to forest degradation. Public support for fire prevention and control is limited due to general apathy towards fires and the perception that fire prevention and management is the responsibility of the Department of Forestry. Compounded with this are forest fire impacts like uncontrolled grazing and overgrazing, which pose serious challenges for forest regeneration. Apart from community-managed forests and jointly managed forest parks, the rest of the Gambia's forests remain open to unrestricted use as the public does not feel responsible for their management. The extent of the country's bushfire problem is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Bushfire occurrence in the Gambia



Note: The legend shows the percentage of total land burnt by bushfire in different administrative regions of the Gambia (adapted from the MTR).

Source: FAO. 2020. *Mid-term evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management"*. The Gambia. Map conforms with UN Geospatial. 2018. *Map of the Gambia*. New York, United States of America. https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/gambia.

27. Tree planting and management remains a challenge. Apart from a lack of interest among the local population in planting timber trees, the Department of Forestry's other challenge has been its inability to sustain plantation establishment. Changing public attitudes for reforestation will require intensive awareness and education measures, as well as the collaboration of related natural resources sectors.

28. Another major challenge that the department faced during the Second Republic (from 1994 to 2017) was securing political support for the expansion of community forestry. Political support was oriented towards real estate development. Attempts at expanding community forestry were met by a lack of political will to process tenure documents, such

as the community forest management agreement (CFMA) that would grant ownership of forest resources to the communities. The back-to-the-land policy of the Second Republic had encouraged and caused rampant and uncontrolled encroachment into and the destruction of natural forest stands.

> "Sustainable forestry management is not done in a vacuum. It is based on reliable data and information. Unfortunately, data and information on the forestry sector is at best scanty and its availability periodic since it relies on project opportunities as opposed to planned and regularly executed surveys and assessments funded by the government. Information such as the forest area and density, species composition, removals, regeneration rates, fires coverage and damage, and deforestation and forest degradation rates are not readily available in the country. The last forest assessment was done in 2010 with the assistance of FAO and there has not been any other since then. This situation makes forest management planning a difficult task" (Bojang, 2021).

2.2 Description of the project

Table 3. Project summary information

Project title	**Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management**
FAO project symbol	GCP/GAM/031/GFF
FAO project ID	620178
The GEF project ID	5406
Recipient country	Gambia
Executing partner	Department of Forestry
Implementing partners	NACO ADWAC NARI
The GEF focal area	Land Degradation
The GEF strategic objectives	Land Degradation-2 Outcome 2.2: improved dryland forest management
Environmental Impact Assessment Category	C
The GEF CEO endorsement	May 2016
Project start date (project document, expected)	June 2016
Project start date (entrance on duty [EOD] actual) and expected end	From October 2016 to September 2021 (with a no-cost extension until December 2022)
Project inception/launch	March 2017
Project mid-term	April 2019
Expected end (project document)	September 2021
Expected end (latest project implementation report after no-cost extension granted in 2021)	September 2022
Expected end (actual after no-cost extension granted in 2022)	December 2022
Total budget	USD 15 784 447
The GEF/Least Developed Countries Fund	USD 3 066 347
Co-financing	USD 12 718 100
The GEF funds spent to date (31 December 2022)	USD 2 903 260
The GEF remaining funds (31 December 2022)	USD 163 086
Terminal evaluation	January 2023 data collection; publication summer of 2023

Source: Elaborated by the Evaluation Team.

29. The five-year Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2022b), executed by FAO, was supported by the GEF in the context of its mandated Land Degradation focal area. The project was to be implemented for five years from October 2016 to September 2021. However, the unexpected demise of

the first Project Coordinator and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted implementation. Both factors led to a no-cost extension until December 2022. The principal implementing partners of the project were: the Department of Forestry; NACO; the ADWAC; and NARI. In addition, the project was executed in close partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, and the National Environmental Agency.

30. The project's objective was to reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia by strengthening and expanding community forestry and implementing SFM practices. To do so, the project identified three barriers to overcome:

i. inadequate framework and guidance for effective dryland forest management;

ii. limited institutional capacities and inadequate technical assistance for local communities; and

iii. limited market-oriented development of small-scale forest enterprises.

31. Given these barriers, the project identified four major outcomes and 12 outputs. Through these, the project aimed to attain its objective. Consequently, the project was to be implemented through three interlinked components. These are outlined in the following points.

2.2.1 Component 1. Strengthening policy and institutional capacity for sustainable dryland forest management

32. In order to ensure adequate skills and knowledge for community-based sustainable dryland forest management, the project aimed to strengthen national, regional and community capacities for an efficient and effective implementation of project activities. The development of a dryland forest management and rehabilitation strategy and the revision of the National Forest Action Plan were envisaged to be accomplished during project implementation. At the regional level, the project aimed to establish multistakeholder sustainable dryland management forums under the agriculture and natural resources (ANR) platform for proper policy coordination. It also aimed to create community forest management task forces for community-level sensitization and the facilitation of community engagement in dryland forest management. Therefore, Component 1 was designed to achieve the following outputs under Outcome 1.1.

Outcome 1.1 Institutions at the national and regional level have the capacity to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices:

i. Output 1.1.1: Key sectors and institutional stakeholders trained on effective dryland forest management (90);

ii. Output 1.1.2: National dryland forest management and rehabilitation strategy developed as a supplement to the 2010–2019 Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2009); and

iii. Output 1.1.3: Multistakeholder regional dryland forest management forums created (five).

2.2.2 Component 2. Community-based sustainable dryland forest management and rehabilitation

33. This component was meant to strengthen community forestry in the project regions and areas through technical assistance and support mechanisms to facilitate forest tenure transfer to local communities. Component 2 was also designed to ensure that dryland forests are effectively managed by local communities through community-level capacity building, the development of new forest management plans, the implementation of SFM practices and the reduction of pressure on dryland forests targeted by the project. Planned field-level technical interventions include: tree planting and assisted natural regeneration; agroforestry; bushfire management; the provision of fuel-efficient cookstoves; community grazing agreements; and community-based forest enterprise development in areas such as beekeeping and tourism. Therefore, the following outputs were planned under Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2.

Outcome 2.1: Legal community forestry ownership strengthened:

i. Output 2.1.1: Regional community forest task forces created and strengthened (five);

ii. Output 2.1.2: Advanced 3 251.4 ha of forest from start up to the PCFMA phase and 4 578.42 ha of forest at the PCFMA phase advanced to the CFMA phase;

iii. Output 2.1.3: Management of 1 438.12 ha of forest under the CFMA strengthened; and

iv. Output 2.1.4: A forest area of 5 749.9 ha brought under Joint Forest Park Management (JFPM).

Outcome 2.2: About 15 000 ha of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities:

i. Output 2.2.1: Community forest and JFPM committee members trained in improved dryland forest management and community forest procedures and processes (600 members);

ii. Output 2.2.2: SFM practices implemented (5 percent increase in forest cover through small-scale tree planting and assisted implementation across 500 ha; improved bushfire management techniques);

iii. Output 2.2.3: Controlled grazing implemented through community grazing agreements (ten) in the community forests and efficiency of fuelwood use improved by introduced cookstoves (2 000 households); and

iv. Output 2.2.4: Community-based forest enterprises strengthened (21 enterprises).

2.2.3 Component 3. Project monitoring and evaluation and information management

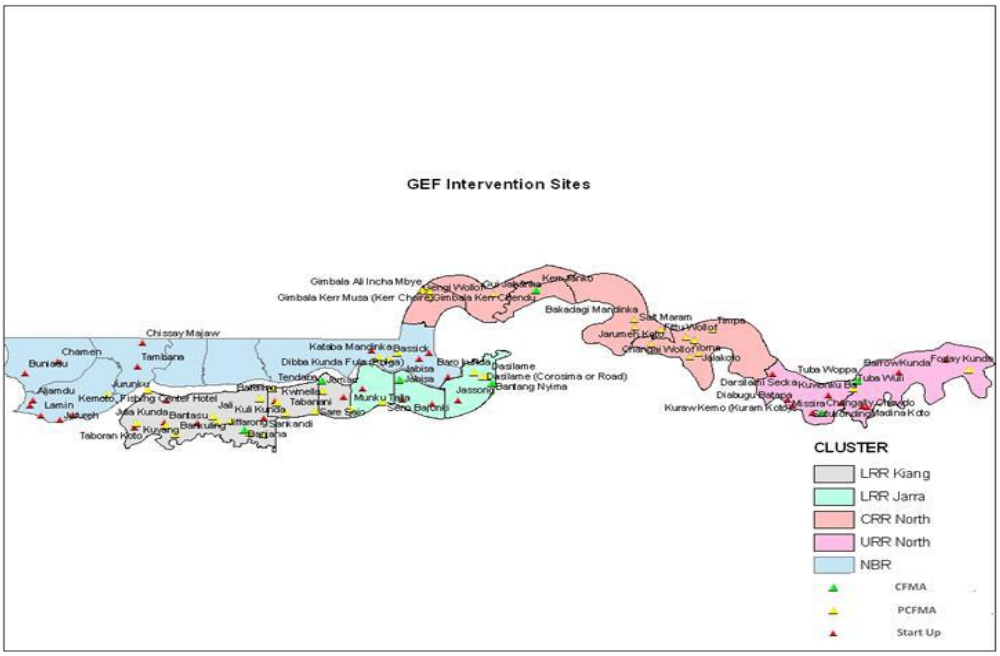
34. Component 3 focused on project implementation, effectiveness and efficiency. It assumed a results-based management principle. Component 3 sought to determine whether project objectives had been achieved. It also aimed to capture lessons learned and disseminate these for the benefit of the Government of the Gambia, FAO and the general public. Activities undertaken under Components 1 and 2 were analysed to draw experience and lessons learned for informed decision-making at the national level. This

process also aimed to guide institutional issues and actions for either scaling up or correcting. Component 3 involved the following outputs under Outcome 3.1.

Outcome 3.1: Project implementation based on results-based management and the application of project findings and lessons learned in future operations facilitated:

i. Output 3.1.1: Project monitoring system providing systematic information on progress in meeting project outcomes and output targets.

Figure 3. Geographic areas of project intervention



Source: FAO. 2022. *Terminal evaluation of the project "Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management" - Terms of reference*. Accra. Map conforms with UN Geospatial. 2018. *Map of the Gambia*. New York, United States of America. https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/gambia.

2.3 Theory of change

35. The project did not have a theory of change at its design stage, but the MTR reconstructed one as the basis of its analysis. The theory of change defines the logical linkages between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact required to bring about the long-term goal, as defined in the project's logical framework. The set of connected blocks illustrated in Figure 4 shows the pathway of change. Each outcome in the pathway links to an intervention, demonstrating the relational connectivity of activities required to bring about change.

36. The project's ultimate impact WAs to reduce forest degradation and to increase the provision of forest ecosystem services for local communities in the northern part of the Gambia. This was facilitated by: improved policies; capacities and structures; the strengthening and expansion of community forestry; and the use of SFM practices. As such, its design approach presented a logical pathway for causal change. This model aimed at achieving the desired impact with interlinked components and corresponding outcomes.

37. Strengthening institutions at the national and regional level to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices (Outcome 1.1 and Outputs

1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3) directly impacted the management and control of forest resources. Similarly, strengthening legal community forestry ownership supported by management plans and strengthening community entrepreneurial capacity (Outcome 2.1 and Outputs 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4; Outcome 2.2 and Outputs 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4) reduced the risk of forest degradation and contributed significantly to rural livelihoods. In turn, this bolstered resilience. Indeed, interventions on controlled grazing through community grazing agreements in the community forests and the efficiency of fuelwood use through the introduction and distribution of improved cookstoves significantly contributed to the attainment of project results.

38. The MTR recommendations helped to build the project. This was also bolstered by the need to support more diversified community resilience. In fact, efforts were made for the creation of forest Enterprise Development Plans (EDPs) for forest groups. These focused on beekeeping for honey production. Improved metallic cookstoves were distributed to women in 2 000 households. Capacity building, mostly for women, was conducted on the construction of clay ovens. This was to reduce pressure on firewood collection, as well as overall drudgery. All of this contributed to achieving the project results.

39. The effective management of forest resources requires regional community forest task forces. These were created and strengthened through the required tools and equipment. Community forest and JFPM committee members need to be trained in improved dryland forest management and community forest procedures and processes to ensure sustainability.

40. These interventions also respond to the Government of the Gambia's international commitments – especially those ratified within the frameworks of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity.

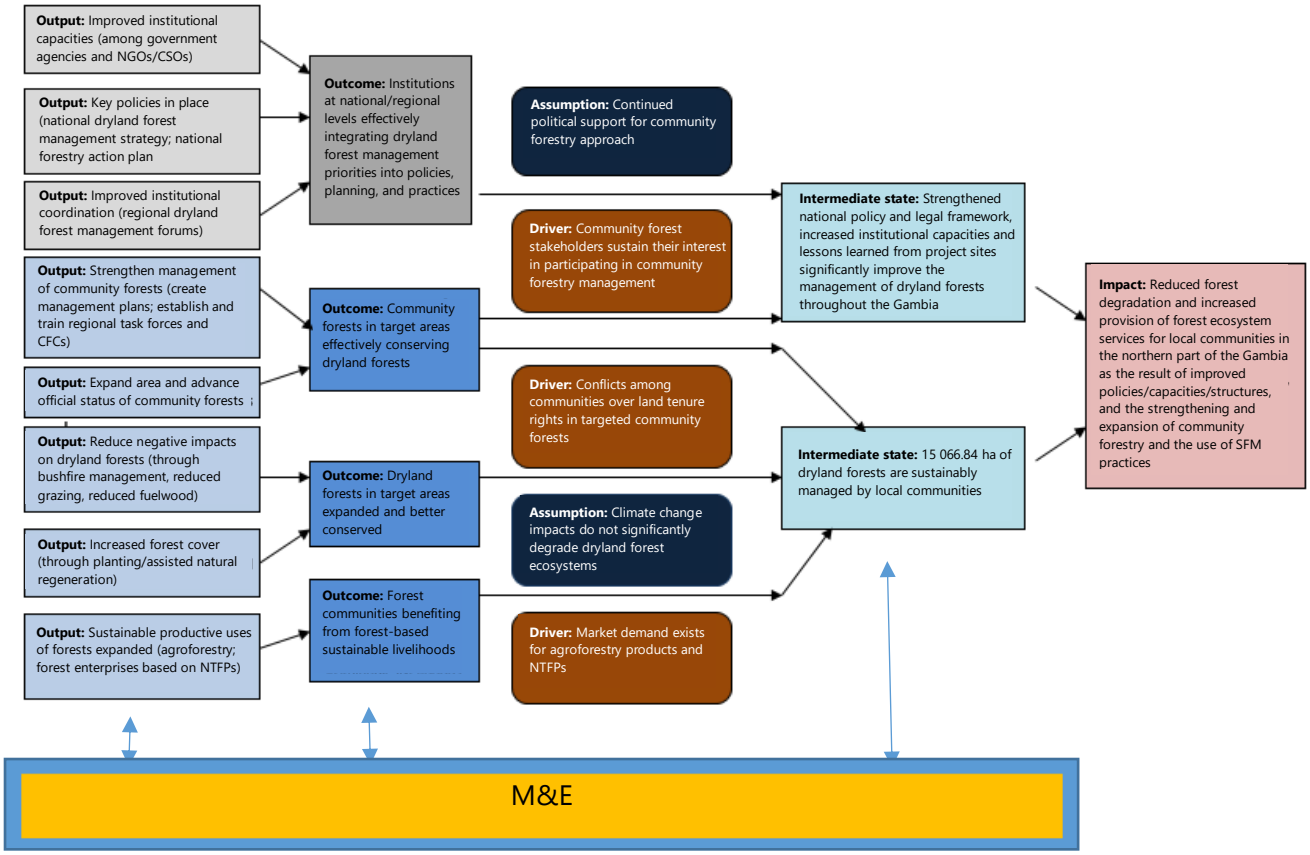
41. The project results logically interconnect. Of note are the following two observations:

    i. The MTR's theory of change had two basic assumptions: there will be continued political support for community forestry; and climate change impact does not significantly degrade dryland forest ecosystems. In no way did these assumptions factor in the emergence of natural disasters and, as revealed, the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a major hindrance to timely project implementation.

    ii. Output 2.2.2 targeted the planting of 100 ha of trees across the project's intervention area. In fact, there is little or no capacity to monitor the survival rate of these trees and, by extension, their contribution to forestry regeneration.

42. The project's theory of change, as designed or reconstructed by the MTR, is still valid and can contribute to the desired results if the provisions of the exit strategy are implemented and managed well. Figure 4 details the theory of change that had been developed during the MTR and used in this terminal evaluation.

Figure 4. Theory of change (reconstructed)



Notes: NGOs: non-governmental organizations; CSOs: civil society organizations; NTFPs: non-timber forest products

Source: Elaborated by the Evaluation Team.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

EQ 1: Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, country priorities and the FAO CPF?

Finding 1. The project was relevant to the Gambian context, the GEF focal areas, FAO's strategic objectives, the FAO in the Gambia CPF and national priorities.

43. The project was relevant to the Gambian context. It was also highly congruent with the GEF focal area of land degradation. This involved an operational SFM programme strategy in order to sustain the livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples in the dryland at a global level. The project was also congruent with FAO's Strategic Objective 2, which seeks to "increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner." To this end, it contributed to the following organizational outcomes: producers and natural resources managers adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner; and stakeholders in member countries strengthen governance – laws, policies and institutions needed to support in transitioning to sustainable agricultural systems. This is done through the capacities developed at the community level to manage dryland forests and to implement livelihood improvement skills such as beekeeping and related value-added products. Further, the outcomes are congruent with the priority sustainable natural resources and climate change adaptation objectives of FAO in the Gambia's CPF. These emphasize the improved sustainable management of forest resources and support the implementation of global conventions.

44. The project outcomes were also congruent with the country's national priorities. These include the national programme to combat desertification and the need for a forestry strategy and a forestry action plan. Given its community focus, the project was in line with the national Poverty Reduction Strategy that recognizes the importance of sustainable natural resources management. Other national programmes that the project was relevant for are the National Adaptation Programme of Action on Climate Change and the Programme on Biodiversity Conservation. Further, the project responded to the Gambia Environmental Action Plan and to the international and environmental commitments of the government, such as the nationally determined contribution to fight climate change. The focus on dryland forest, which is the dominant forest type in the country, is highly relevant. In fact, it holds importance for national efforts to combat desertification and preserve biodiversity and other ecosystem services, and improve livelihoods. This involves the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (FAO, 2018), the 2010–2019 National Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2009) and the 2022–2031 Draft National Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2021). Most of the community forests and jointly managed forest parks were protected from forest fire and excessive grazing due to the project interventions. This led to improvements in forest stocking and density and, by extension, carbon capture.

EQ 2: Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Were the project's strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved?

Finding 2. The project design was based on community forest management interventions. Indeed, this was appropriate to meet the project objectives and beneficiary needs, as well as other stakeholders such as the Department of Forestry.

45. The Department of Forestry is hindered in terms of its capacity to meet forest management needs in the country. Project-supported community forestry interventions therefore presented it with the opportunity to extend forest management to areas that it otherwise would not be able to manage. Alternatively, community forestry presented communities with opportunities to own and manage their own forests. This is something that communities want. Indeed, it contributes to livelihood improvements through the harvesting of forest products for income generation. The project design included the supply of improved cookstoves at the community level. This was appropriate for reducing pressure on the dryland forest for fuelwood collection and in contributing to better livelihoods. The creation of regional SLM forums was also appropriate in terms of regional coordination and knowledge sharing among stakeholders for the wider application of dryland forest management through forum membership. However, one design shortcoming was the inadequate involvement of relevant technical departments such as the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Community Development and the Department of Agriculture in rolling out project interventions.

EQ 3: Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design/since the MTR, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project's objectives and goals?

Finding 3. The project remained relevant from design to implementation.

46. Although the Department of Forestry drafted and validated a new policy in 2021 – the 2022–2031 Draft National Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2021) that has yet to be adopted – the project objective and outcomes remain relevant to the new policy context. This draft policy, like the 2010–2019 Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2009), aims to conserve and sustainably manage and develop a forest area that covers at least 30 percent of the Gambia. This can contribute to national socioeconomic and environmental development and protection and to meeting the country's commitments under relevant international and regional conventions and agreements. It emphasizes the implementation of SFM through community forestry and JFPM, capacity development, and the development of forest-based industry, agroforestry, and forestry research. Similarly, it remains relevant to the context of national commitments and plans to implement international conventions, such as the UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. It is also relevant to a number of regional conventions like the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the Abidjan Convention.

47. The COVID-19 pandemic did not have a negative impact on the project's relevance for dryland forest management in the country. It did, however, affect the pace of implementation due to government-imposed lockdowns that had affected the field missions and monitoring.

48. Overall, the project's relevance to the national and international context regarding SFM can be rated as highly satisfactory.

3.2 Effectiveness

EQ 4: To what extent have project objectives been achieved? Were there any unintended results? What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved so far across its components?

Finding 4. The project aimed to reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia through the strengthening and expansion of community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices and livelihood improvements. This was achieved.

49. The project focused on implementing community forest and JFPM interventions at the local levels in the four project regions of North Bank, Lower River, Central River (north) and Upper River (north). It trained and helped to build the capacities of 21 participating community forest committees (CFCs) and 18 JFPM committees in dryland forest management. Similarly, capacity development training was delivered to identified government institutions and civil society organizations for improving their capacity to integrate SFM into their respective policies.

50. This capacity development process enabled the beneficiary CFCs to plan and implement forest management activities, especially fire prevention and enrichment planting. Added to this, the project's beekeeping interventions developed skills at the community level by training community members to maintain and build beehives. Although the rate of hive colonization was, to the disappointment of some communities, slow, beekeeping generated income for the participating members. This element was not a failure in project design. Rather, it was the result of reduced bee population in the country. This was due to many factors such as forest fires, forest cover loss and inappropriate honey harvesting methods. Similarly, the objective to establish an SLM forum and a community forestry management task force in all the four project regions was accomplished.

51. Agroforestry interventions were successfully implemented. These interventions met the target of 120 farmers and farms, even though tree seedling survival was less than desirable (about 36 percent survival as per NARI's estimation). A survival rate above 60 percent would have been better. At the time of evaluation, nine out of the ten planned stock routes and rangeland had been established. Upon writing this report, the Project Coordinator stated that all of the planned cattle tracks and rangeland (three cattle tracks and seven rangelands) had been identified and ten management committees had been formed and trained.

52. A first unintended result of project intervention was the creation of a fifth SLM forum in West Coast, which was not part of the project regions. This is because successful functioning of the forums in the four project regions had improved intersectoral collaboration and efficiency. At the same time, the project and its related activities could be monitored. There was also appropriate guidance for the regional technical advisory committees on the design of future projects.

53. A second unintended result was the use of fire management guidelines as a training manual by the Department of Forestry. It was felt that the draft guideline would better serve as a training manual.

54. A third unintended result was the development of memoranda of understanding between the Department of Forestry and key technical departments to fast track the approval process of the PCFMAs and the CFMAs. These departments were: the Department of Lands and Surveys – for the validation and approval of community forest maps; the Department of Printing – for the processing of the CFMA document for gazetting purposes; and the Department of Physical Planning – to avoid any future land use disputes concerning the community forests. As a result, copies of the CFMA certificates and Geographic Information System details on community forests are now kept by the Ministry of Justice, the National Archives, the Department of Lands and Survey, and the Department of Physical Planning for future reference.

55. The fourth unintended result of project implementation was the charcoal value chain assessment requested by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources for its information and use, which the project undertook under Output 2.2.3 on energy-efficient cooking.

3.2.1 Effectiveness by outcome

EQ 5: To what extent has the policy and institutional capacity for sustainable dryland forest management been strengthened through this project? Are institutions at the national and regional level able to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices?

Outcome 1.1. Institutions at the national and regional level have the capacity to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices (90).

Output 1.1.1. Key sectors and institutional stakeholders trained on effective dryland forest management.

Output 1.1.2. National dryland forest management and rehabilitation strategy developed as a supplement to the 2010–2019 Forest Policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2009).

Output 1.1.3. Multistakeholder regional dryland forest management forums created (five).

Finding 5. Through the trainings provided, the relevance of sustainable dryland forest management to social, environmental and economic development were better understood and appreciated by the government and non-governmental organizations that had participated. Consequently, they are in a position to incorporate dryland forest management practices into their policies as and when relevant.

56. The training of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders increased capacity in integrating dryland forest management. This was manifested by the establishment and operationalization of the regional SLM forums, which coordinate and monitor ANR projects and programmes in the regions. The SLM regular monitoring visits led to increased dryland forest interventions and natural resources development initiatives across the regions. Governmental institutions and non-governmental and community-based organizations were trained on effective sustainable dryland forest management. The beneficiary governmental institutions included the Department of Forestry and the departments of the regional SLM forums, which also coordinate and monitor ANR projects and programmes in the regions. The capacities of local institutions such as the community forest and JFPM committees were strengthened, as well as those of targeted non-governmental and civil society organizations, namely the All Gambia Forestry Platform (AGFP), the National Beekeepers Association of the Gambia and the ADWAC. The trainings on sustainable dryland forest management include: agroforestry principles and practice; silvicultural practices and techniques; bushfire management; water

conservation techniques; value chain improvement; community-based forest management and tenure transfer; forest monitoring; recordkeeping; data collection tools; and mapping.

57. The project contributed to building the policy and management capacity of the Department of Forestry by supporting the development of a new dryland forest management strategy and the review and update of its forestry action plan (Output 1.1.2). Both were validated (from 16 to 18 August 2018) and accepted by the Government of the Gambia. To strengthen the Department of Forestry's implementation capacity, the project supported the elaboration of guidelines for fire management and agroforestry practices among its staff and participating communities. These capacity development achievements are important for the long-term success of sustainable dryland forest management in the country and in contributing to the effective implementation of interventions under Component 2 on community-based sustainable dryland forest management and rehabilitation.

58. The development of a national forestry strategy and a review of the national forestry action plan contributed to forest protection and conservation and the implementation of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification at the regional and local level. The project not only contributed to the management of dryland forest ecosystems by building the capacity of communities and members of the regional SLM forums but also improved livelihoods among some communities. The latter was done through the production and sale of honey and skills development to process and transform beeswax into value-added products like body cream for income generation. These latter activities helped to reduce pressure on local forests from commercial fuelwood collection and timber harvesting.

59. At the regional level, the project succeeded in transforming the ANR working groups of the regional technical advisory committees into an SLM forum (Output 1.1.3). Its expanded membership included non-governmental and civil society organizations. These forums have oversight responsibility for monitoring all region-level ANR management projects to ascertain their relevance and sustainability and to report to the technical advisory committee on the possible readdressing of challenges and scaling up of success stories. To do this, the forum members received trainings to enhance their appreciation and understanding of the strategies and rationale for forest management interventions at various forest-ownership levels: community forestry; the JFPM; community-controlled state forest management; and private forest management. The project also successfully created regional community forest management task forces to support the popularization, conflict resolution and expansion of community forestry to further strengthen SFM at regional levels and throughout the country.

60. The sustainability of these regional institutions and their operations remain uncertain due to the absence of a predictable funding mechanism. The project's exit strategy in itself (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2022a) does not guarantee the continued functioning of the regional forums and task forces. The local government authorities do not have any standing provisions for the operation of the various subcommittees of the regional technical advisory committees, including the forums and task forces.

EQ 6: To what extent has legal community forestry ownership been strengthened due to the project? To what extent has the project's community-based sustainable dryland forest management been effective?

Outcome 2.1. Legal community forestry ownership strengthened.

Output 2.1.1. Regional community forest task forces created and strengthened (five).

Output 2.1.2. Advanced 3 251.4 ha of forest from start up to the PCFMA phase and 4 578.42 ha of forest at the PCFMA phase advanced to the CFMA phase.

Output 2.1.3. Management of 1 438.12 ha of forest under CFMA strengthened.

Output 2.1.4. A forest area of 5 749.9 ha brought under JFPM.

Outcome 2.2. About 15 000 ha of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities.

Output 2.2.1. Community forest and JFPM committee members trained in improved dryland forest management and community forest procedures and processes (600 members).

Output 2.2.2. SFM practices implemented (5 percent increase in forest cover through small-scale tree planting and assisted implementation across 500 ha; improved bushfire management techniques).

Output 2.2.3. Controlled grazing implemented through community grazing agreements (ten) in the community forests and efficiency of fuelwood use improved by introduced cookstoves (2 000 households).

Output 2.2.4. Community-based forest enterprises strengthened (21 enterprises).

Finding 6. The project strengthened legal community forestry ownership by facilitating the development, conclusion and signing of both the PCFMAs and the CFMAs, as well as the JFPM agreements between the government and the communities. Further, the project strengthened the conviction of participating communities in their ability to manage their forests based on knowledge gained from trainings provided by the project.

61. By the time of the evaluation mission, the project had enabled the signing of nine JFPM agreements between the government and the participating communities and the development of all of the anticipated 73 community forest management plans. As a result of these plans, the concerned community forests were managed under sustainable management principles by their committees. The project also began management plans for the remaining nine out of the planned 18 JFPM initiatives. These were developed and awaited either approval or signing by the Department of Forestry. All nine JFPM committees with signed agreements established community-based forest enterprises on beekeeping and honey production. These activities strengthen the commitment to community forestry practices. In addition, 20 community forestry management agreements were signed and await gazetting and a final handing over to the relevant communities. The remaining eight out of the planned 28 were at various stages of readiness to be issued the CFMAs (Outcome 2.1). Upon writing this report, the Project Coordinator informed the Evaluation Team that all 18 JFPM agreements had been signed, all 18 management committees had been formed and all 18 management plans had been developed.

62. The slow administrative process for gazetting the agreements affected the approval and clearance of the documents, which were delayed at the Department of Lands and Surveys. This was a source of frustration for some communities who had been waiting for

the confirmation of their ownership status since their engagement in community forestry – some since the beginning of the project, others even before the project.

63. Sustainable dryland forest management practices introduced by the project were effective in the sense that beneficiary communities are proud of the knowledge and techniques learned and are confident in applying the principles and practices. This can be attributed to the successful training of 600 stakeholders (Output 2.2.1). However, the Evaluation Team is concerned that without continuous follow up from the Department of Forestry and its collaborating (implementing) partners, community enthusiasm may wane with negative consequences for sustainability. This concern arises from the fact that communities seemed to rely on the continuous supply of equipment and tools from the Department of Forestry for their forest management activities. Many of the CFC members complained about the limited number of firefighting tools such as cutlasses, fire beaters and rakes, which evaluators opine could be availed by the committees themselves.

64. According to the project progress report from July to December 2022, the project had prepared 14 new five-year management plans covering an area of 1 438.12 ha of community forest under the CFMA (Output 2.1.3). It had also developed 18 JFPM plans and signed 18 JFPM agreements covering an area of 7 698.9 ha (Output 2.1.4). Further, 47 community forests covering an area of 2 433 ha under start up were supported and moved to the PCFMA (75 percent of target hectarage of 3 251 ha) while 44 community forests under the PCFMA covering an area of 4 693.9 ha were evaluated and recommended for the PCFMA (102 percent of target hectarage) (Output 2.1.2). The shortfall in start-up cases was attributed to the large number of small community forests (some 1 ha or less) that the project had addressed.

65. An MTR recommendation highlighted vagueness and a possible inability to meet the following indicator under Output 2.2.2: forest cover increased by 5 percent through small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration. This indicator was amended as follows: community forest cover increased by 5 percent in the project intervention regions. Although the activities undertaken to achieve this were satisfactorily implemented, there is no indication that the community forest area had increased by 5 percent since no quantitative benchmarks were reported before or after implementation.

EQ 7: To what extent has the application of project findings and lessons learned facilitated the project itself?

Finding 7. Beekeeping boosts income generation prospects within community forestry. The inclusion of this aspect into the project, as well as the successful introduction and distribution of improved cookstoves with a fire award scheme, were motivational. Indeed, these elements facilitated project implementation (Outcome 2.2; Outputs 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4).

66. Communities have shown greater interest in protecting their forest. This is to encourage vegetation growth in the hope that it will increase the chance of bees colonizing the hives. Other villages have shown interest in community forestry due to successful beekeeping activities in nearby participating communities. This, as reported by the project's regional focal points, led to greater requests from villages to implement community forestry. Participating villages reported more collaboration and cooperation within communities. This is due to the introduction and implementation of community forestry, which encouraged further village commitment to the project and facilitated its execution.

67. The project experienced delays in some interventions, such as the construction of nurseries and the supply of beehives. The imported beehives did not encourage bee colonization. The project therefore supported the National Beekeepers Association of the Gambia in training community members to produce hives that are commonly used in the country. This change in strategy helped to bolster skills in hive production and facilitated the colonization of hives. Now, beekeeping has become a source of motivation for communities to engage in project activities. Upon evaluation, all of the 625 Kenyan top bar hives that had been distributed to the 18 honey enterprise groups across the project regions were produced locally.

68. The redundancy of establishing another nursery when there had been a regional central nursery was understood. Following the MTR, the project decided to rehabilitate the regional central nurseries to facilitate the coordinated production of seedlings by the regional offices (Output 2.2.2). However, due to procurement and contractual delays in nursery installation, additional infrastructure such as borehole and nursery beds were not fully operational. This should encourage a rethinking in future project designs regarding procurement and contract planning for effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

69. The introduction and distribution of improved cookstoves by the implementing partner, the ADWAC, had significant success in terms of its popularity and high acceptance among the participating communities (Output 2.2.3). Beneficiary communities testified to stove efficiency through savings in fuelwood use. As a result, less time and costs are spent collecting fuelwood. Beneficiary households also reported that they used to collect and use four or more donkey carts of fuelwood per month prior to receiving the cookstoves. Now, they collect and use only two to three carts for the same period. Households that had purchased fuelwood from the market reported a reduction in the amount of money spent on wood for energy. This is due to cookstove utilization.

70. Of the 4 000 cookstoves planned for production and distribution to 2 000 households, 3 050 were distributed to 1 450 households at the time of evaluation (from 21 December 2022 to 1 January 2023)[1] (the ADWAC office in Kerewan). Some households reportedly shared cookstoves as they awaited their own. This was confirmed at a meeting with the cookstove beneficiaries in Wassu village in the Niani district of Central River (north). Although there had been a slight delay in production, the Project Coordinator informed the Evaluation Team after its mission ended that the ADWAC began distributing the remaining 950 cookstoves in mid-December 2022.

71. In addition to the improved metal cookstoves, the project trained 25 community members – five from each of the five operational areas (Lower River, Kiang; Lower River, Jarra; Central River, north; Upper River, north; North Bank) to build fixed mud stoves and to train others in the community to do same. In Wassu, this training by community trainers was confirmed. The community found the training to be a very useful, cost-efficient transfer of skills to bring cookstoves and ensure savings for every household.

72. The introduction of a fire award scheme (Output 2.2.2) awarded a total of 200 rakes, 200 cutlasses, eight milling machines (four for rice and four for millet) and 100 bicycles (from 2020 to 2022) to performing community forest beneficiaries. This, along with the trainings on bushfire management, motivated communities to engage. In fact, they did so

[1] From 21 September 2022 to 1 December 2023 when the evaluation's data collection period took place.

according to specific guidelines in forest management and protection to qualify for the awards. This may be an unsustainable practice, but it allows the forests to be protected from fires during the project period. As a result, tree stocking per hectare rises alongside greater resilience to future fires.

73. The implementing partner, the ADWAC, informed the evaluation mission through its February to March 2022 interim report that nine out of the ten planned silvopastoral structures (three cattle tracks and seven rangeland) had been established (Output 2.2.3). The tenth was being negotiated as it was to be moved from its earlier planned location at Njaba Kunda village to Dobo village. For the management of these, ten 11-member management committees were formed with members from communities near the cattle tracks and rangeland. The implementing partner also trained five out of ten committees on group governance and financial management to enhance their management capacity as per its interim report. The ADWAC claimed that it had insufficient funds to train all committee members due to the late disbursement of funds.

74. The identification and establishment of the rangeland was, however, done with little involvement of the Department of Forestry. As further revealed during the evaluation mission discussion with the ADWAC, the regional staff of the Department of Livestock Services had been involved in the identification and implementation of three rangelands. The Department of Forestry was also an implementing partner under another FAO-GEF project – GAM 033. However, there was limited involvement of the Department of Forestry's head office in the establishment of the other seven rangelands by the ADWAC. Similarly, the ADWAC involved the regional representatives of the National Livestock Owners Association but not the national executive office. The inadequate involvement of these two national offices is likely to make any post-project follow up by the Department of Livestock Services rather difficult. According to the ADWAC, it and the Department of Livestock Services recently attempted to establish a joint implementation of rangeland at Dobo in North Bank, rather than the previously planned Njaba Kunda. This would take advantage of the presence of the Department of Forestry and the GAM 033 project watering points.

75. Discussions at a meeting with the rangeland committee at Dongoroba village in Lower River indicated that cattle track and rangeland establishment found high acceptance among communities – not only for grazing land but also conflict avoidance among cattle herders and crop farmers. Although it was challenging to identify agreed upon boundaries by all of the neighbouring villages, the project still managed to achieve consensus on rangeland routes and limits. This does not totally eliminate conflict, but it significantly reduces the potentiality since local authorities from the governor's office, district chiefs and village heads were involved.

76. The ADWAC claimed that the lack of FAO support for the cost of running the ADWAC vehicles, per project design, posed constraints for swift rangeland establishment. The ADWAC, however, could have taken advantage of possible support from the Department of Forestry, the Department of Livestock Services and the National Livestock Owners Association. This also could have ensured that these institutions are aware of stock route boundaries in order to mitigate future conflict.

77. According to the December 2022 project progress report, NARI implemented farm-level agroforestry planting on an aggregate area of 496.29 ha out of a planned 500 ha as part

of the SFM interventions (Output 2.2.2). Awareness was raised among communities, particularly participating farmers, on agroforestry practices and their potential benefits for soil fertility improvement and increased crop production. The NARI's implementation reports and discussions held with NARI staff involved in the project indicate that beneficiaries were trained on agroforestry techniques like alley cropping, trees and forage, and spacing arrangements on the farm. This was corroborated during interviews with three participating farmers at Amdalai village in North Bank, at Panchang in Central River and Drammani village in Upper River. There were successful tree plantings in alley cropping systems by some participating farmers in North Bank, Lower River and Central River. However, many complained of the late supply of seedling at the start of the programme. In some cases, the seedlings were too small. In other cases, the viability of the seedlings was reduced by long transport distances during which the seedling suffered some degree of desiccation. Apart from delays in the procurement process, seedlings were mainly secured from West Coast. This required a lengthy transfer to the planting locations. The participating farmers expressed satisfaction with the agroforestry programme. However, they also conveyed that the seedlings could have been made available earlier in the planting season for better survival. Plantings in 2021/22 had better survival – approximately 50 percent according to farmers interviewed. This is because they had been supplied in time and were in better condition. Overall survival rates were low – around 30 percent according to the farmers. Agroforestry farms and farmers visited by the Evaluation Team at Drammani, Panchang and Amdali indicate low survival rates, even though strong surviving individual trees could be seen.

78. The project's enterprise development component (Output 2.2.4), which was implemented by NACO, brought significant success. Capacity building for the enterprise development participants was successfully undertaken. This involved 40 participants (16 females and 24 males) trained on simple recordkeeping. It also included the participation of 100 interest group members (49 females and 51 males) and 30 representatives (five females and 25 males) from support and service institutions that had participated in two trade fairs. These were organized to facilitate contacts for collaboration among the entrepreneurs.

79. Further, NACO implementation reports cite that 21 EDPs were developed and 18 beekeeping enterprise groups were mentored on raw honey and beeswax harvesting and processing. This aspect proved to be most popular among the community forest and JFPM committees as it was a major source of income. A lot of enthusiasm and desire was generated at the community forest and JFPM levels to expand beekeeping activities within their intervention areas. The prospect of early and annual revenue generation through beekeeping was encouraging for communities' continuous involvement in community forest and JFPM implementation. It is therefore a promising aspect for community forest sustainability. In addition, two tree nursery enterprise groups were mentored on tree seedling propagation. Although these groups had successfully established nurseries, they were not equally successful in selling their products. In fact, they lacked a market in their immediate vicinity and the means of transport to the regional urban markets. Here, prospects for selling their product would have likely been higher due to greater demand for amenity planting seedlings along the streets and on fence lines in the city. Further, neither FAO nor others provide procurement schemes for these seedlings. The failure of the project to establish a link between the seedling producers and its procurement process and full value chain lowered the success of this intervention. The private nursery entrepreneurs are likely to give up unless the project or the Department of Forestry establishes this link.

3.2.2 Effectiveness in terms of intended impact

EQ 8: To what extent have community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices been strengthened and expanded?

Finding 8. Community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices were strengthened and expanded throughout the project implementation areas.

80. All related key project outputs (Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2; Outputs 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) were achieved and, to a large extent, their intended impacts. Capacity for sustainable dryland forest management at the level of community forest and JFPM committees was strengthened by training 600 of their members (Output 2.2.1 linked to Outcome 2.1). This made it possible for local communities to independently undertake forest management practices: fire management; assisted natural regeneration; tree growth; community forestry procedures and processes, including the process of community forest acquisition and management; nursery management; seed collection and seedling planting and maintenance; and fire management techniques. Similarly, the capacities of national and local institutions, including civil society and non-governmental organizations, were strengthened (Output 1.1.1 linked to Outcome 2.1) to advance SFM implementation. The dryland forest management strategy and the updated forestry action plan, which were adopted by the Government of the Gambia, will further strengthen community forest management in the country (Output 1.1.2 linked to Outcome 2.1).

81. Through the project, local communities sustainably managed 14 533 ha (about 98 percent of the 15 000 ha target) of dryland forest. This information was established in the project progress reports, which were corroborated in discussions with the CFCs. The annual management interventions were confirmed. As a result, the forests were protected from fire and illegal exploitation. This was achieved through the successful application of 18 JFPM plans and 73 community forest management plans (Outcome 2.2). It included 20 new five-year management plans (more than the planned 14) for the CFMAs, covering an area of 3 451 ha (Output 2.1.2). In addition, 2 433.21 ha of forest out of the planned 3 251 ha, that is, 75 percent, in the startup phase were moved to the PCFMA. Twenty community forests in the PCFMA phase were recommended for the CFMA, covering 5 289 ha (Output 2.1.3). Although this fell short of 818 ha for community forests under start up to be moved to the PCFMA, a gain of about 711 ha of the PCFMA was prepared for moving to the CFMA. Despite the fact that these CFMAs still needed to be gazetted at the time of evaluation, these developments represent a significant move towards SFM strengthening and expansion. Similarly, the development of 18 JFPM plans (Output 2.1.4) – nine of which were signed by the Department of Forestry at the time of the evaluation mission and, according to the Project Coordinator, the other nine were signed upon writing this report for a total area of 6 098 ha – is an equally significant move towards SFM.

82. The project's success in establishing a regional sustainable dryland management forum (Output 1.1.3 linked to Outcome 2.1) and a community forest management task force (Output 2.1.1) in each implementation region is underscored. Indeed, this marked significant progress towards strengthening the institutionalization of community forestry and the expansion and implementation of SFM in the country. The forums and task forces ensure a wider dissemination of community forestry and SFM knowledge and practices in

the regions through the interaction of their respective members with politicians and populations.

83. The conclusion of community grazing agreements and the establishment of three cattle tracks and six rangelands (the seventh, which has been pending at the time of evaluation mission, was concluded by the end of December 2022) (Output 2.2.3) were important to both reduce grazing pressure on dryland forests and address tension and conflict among communities. This is important for maintaining peace in the project areas, improving the health of animals through a secured grazing area and ameliorating the livelihood of the cattle owners to potentially contribute to SFM in the country.

84. The project aimed to reduce forest degradation in the northern part of the Gambia through the strengthening and expansion of community forestry and the implementation of SFM practices. These reported gains show that the project was effectively implemented in terms of both outcome and intended impact.

3.3 Efficiency

EQ 9: To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost effectively?

Finding 9. The project was implemented rather efficiently. It collaborated with a limited number of existing projects: the European Union's Action Against Desertification (AAD) (FAO, 2018); FAO-GEF's Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project (GEF, 2016); and the Green Climate Fund's Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project (GCF, 2017). This collaboration aimed to implement common activities and reduce costs.

85. This project and the AAD project had a joint project steering committee for shared trainings to identify an improved cookstove prototype for the communities. The project also used the horticulture sites of the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project to establish the private nurseries under its enterprise development component. This avoided the need for a separate nursery and reduced costs. It also partnered with the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project to demarcate three cattle tracks where the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project had provided cattle watering points and to train the management committees that were part of both projects. It partnered with the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project on the rehabilitation of divisional nurseries. All of these were cost-efficient measures.

86. Coordination through the Department of Forestry avoided duplicate activities in select villages. Beyond this, there was inadequate collaboration with the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project that was implementing similar interventions. These were sometimes done within the same cluster of villages and involved the following interventions: beekeeping; natural forest management; farmer-assisted natural regeneration; fire management and protection; and tree planting. Both this project and the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project implemented farmer trainings on these activities at different times. However, these could have been planned and executed together to save on training costs and

benefit from expertise through both projects.[2] Further, while the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project had adopted this project's skills transfer experience for beekeeping households in beehive construction, there was no joint training conducted on reducing costs or promoting efficiency.

87. There were complaints from the implementing partners and some communities regarding FAO's slow procurement process. In fact, this led to a number of delays like seedling purchases and delivery, nursery construction, improved metal cookstove purchases and beehive acquisition. During an interview, a FAO in the Gambia staff member linked these delays to "the need to fully follow FAO procurement guidelines and rules and the challenges to the responsiveness of the local service providers." Components executed by the implementing partners would have received better support from the respective line department had there been an operational link between the project and the head offices of these from the start. For example, the ADWAC was not adequately linked to the head offices of the Department of Livestock Services and the Department of Community Development, which are government-mandated institutions on livestock and community development matters, including improved cookstoves. The absence of this close link meant that the ADWAC did not enjoy as much support from these departments as desired for swifter implementation. In fact, it was unable to use their extension staff's strengths. Further, the engagement of these government departments at the head office level supports the ownership of project outcomes and follow up after project closure.

EQ 10: To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects and partnerships, as well as avoided the duplication of similar activities by other groups and initiatives?

Finding 10. Project formulation considered the provisions of international agreements: the Convention on Biological Diversity; the UNCCD; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Sustainable Development Goals. It was also designed to respond to the GEF focal area on land degradation and its operational strategy on SFM, as well as to the Government of the Gambia's natural resources policies, programmes and action plans.

88. Project implementation, however, did not seem to closely consider and link to other existing projects, such as the AAD, which was a co-financing partner that ended halfway through the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project. The project collaborated with the GAM 033 project in implementing some rangeland components, such as in Dobo and on the women's vegetable gardens. The project implemented similar activities as other projects such as the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project, the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project and the AAD, which were all involved in community forestry, dryland forest management, cattle track and rangeland establishment or beekeeping. However, field-level coordination and collaborative implementation between them and the project was limited. This would have been a design failure to ensure synergy and complementarity among them – but this was not the case. The project document (FAO and GEF, 2016) had identified all of these projects and their activities and indicated the need to leverage on them. It actually looks more like the individual Project

[2] The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources organized a Project Managers' forum to build synergy among the various-yet-related projects. Their lack of coordination is the failure of all involved projects.

Coordinator's had adopted a "silo approach" to their work, which compromised efficiency (resource use) and effectiveness.

EQ 11: To what extent has project management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?

Finding 11. Project management adapted to two significant changes: the untimely death of the first Project Coordinator in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Both conditions limited supervisory missions from the project office and delayed implementation.

89. Unfortunately, the first Project Coordinator passed away in late 2018. This left a management gap until a replacement Project Coordinator was recruited in 2019. During this period, the project relied on regional forestry officers and their designated focal points to implement activities. Needless to say, the supervision of these activities from project headquarters was minimal. The implementation of further activities had to wait for the new Project Coordinator.

90. The COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed lockdowns meant that supervisory missions from project headquarters were restricted. However, as with the death of the first Project Coordinator, the regional forestry officers continued to implement and provide reports to the project office on progress and challenges.

91. Despite limited coordination and collaboration with other projects and some government departments, the project was, overall, satisfactorily and efficiently implemented. It also achieved all of its planned outputs.

3.4 Sustainability

EQ 12: What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or remain even after the end of the project?

Finding 12. Project design and implementation had a number of features to ensure that the results continue to be useful and sustainable in the future.

92. Cooperation and collaboration at village and community levels, as revealed during discussions with many CFCs, was instrumental to start up the community forests through the neighbouring village agreement process. At the village level, the promise of ownership of the identified forest area encouraged the community members to come together and implement community forestry. The evaluation found several examples that were significant for the sustainability of many project results: strengthened community forest and JFPM committees' knowledge on the environmental, social and economic values of forests; forest management; tree production; fire protection; basic management planning; and bookkeeping. This reduces the need for extension services for communities that can rely on the following elements.

    i. Strengthened entrepreneurial skills of community forest and JFPM committee members and villagers in complementary income generation beekeeping, hive production and value-added products in the community and JFPM context – this may extend similar activities and values to other communities through village-to-village interactions.

    ii. Developed skills for mud stove construction and farmer-to-farmer trainings to make more cookstoves – this can enhance the diffusion of energy-efficient

cookstoves at the community level and further reduce fuelwood collection pressure on the dryland forests for the latter's protection and development.

iii. Strengthened farmer knowledge on agroforestry practices and benefits of increased tree cover – this can lead to income generation and better livelihoods.

iv. Increased commitment for the implementation of community forestry and beekeeping among participating communities – this can increase income and reduce fuelwood collection and timber exploitation pressures on the forests.

v. Strengthened production capacity of the regional central nurseries for the increased and sustainable production of seedlings for reforestation activities in community forests and jointly managed forest parks – this involves other locations such as farmland and gardens towards greater forest cover.

vi. Strengthened SLM forums in the structures of the regional technical advisory committees – these ensure the future and continued consideration of dryland forest management in project designs, implementation and monitoring at regional levels.

vii. Strengthened community forest task forces for conflict resolution and the promotion of community forest interventions within the districts and at regional levels – this would contribute to the expansion of community forestry practices in the regions.

viii. Signed memoranda of understanding with key government institutions involved in the PCFMA/CFMA certification process to hasten the process and avoid future land use conflict – these institutions are: a) the Department of Printing for gazetting; b) the Department of Lands and Surveys for mapping; c) the Gambia Radio and Television Services for information dissemination; and d) the Department of Physical Planning to avoid the allocation of community forest sites for other land use. Besides speeding up the certification process, this will also help to strengthen legal community forest ownership and enhance their sustainable management.

ix. Development of an exit strategy, including a participatory approach with other sectoral partners, to encourage the inclusion of dryland forest management in the annual budgets of these partners – this would foster a continued implementation of SFM beyond project closure (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2022a).

x. Increased involvement of women who have played an important leadership and motivational role in community forest management as a sustainability factor. Women were a "push factor" in many communities for community forest management and played leadership roles in entrepreneurial activities linked to the community and the JFPM. They processed beeswax into body cream and expressed a desire to be trained in wax-based soap production for greater income generation. This potential for women can encourage and sustain interest in the implementation of community-based SFM.

xi. Continued awareness of the benefit of protected (from encroachment) and dedicated grazing area in the rangeland component – this will not only continue to provide feed for livestock but will also reduce herder-crop farmer

conflict in the communities, reduce pressure on the community-managed forest and therefore contribute to forest growth.

93. All of these areas of sustainability for action are enhanced by a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Indeed, project implementation successfully engendered this aspect at the village and community level.

EQ 13: What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project benefits in terms of economic, environmental, institutional and social sustainability?

Finding 13. The project created some sustainability features. However, there are still significant sustainability risks at the institutional, social and economic level within the communities.

94. The Gambia's forestry sector faced numerous challenges that pose a risk for the successful implementation of SFM practices. These challenges cut across social, economic and environmental sectors. Some of these are not in the hands of the government nor the local authorities. Important risk factors are detailed in the following points.

i. The Department of Forestry is mandated under forest policies and laws to implement and expand community forestry. It is the project's main implementing agent. The Department of Forestry's limited budgetary and technical support capacity will likely limit its ability to consolidate and build upon the project gains. In fact, this may reduce the frequency of the extension staff's visits to follow up with the project beneficiaries and to extend the project's positive results to other communities outside of the project areas.

ii. The slow rate of processing and issuing of the PCFMA and CFMA documents and certificates (mapping, map endorsement, community forest and JFPM certification) defined community forest certification. Despite the memoranda of understanding signed with relevant institutions, this will remain a risk factor for the sustainable implementation and expansion of community forestry unless concrete measures are taken at both the technical and policy level. The memoranda of understanding are one step in that direction. Communities are likely to lose interest in community forest management due to such delays.

iii. The extension and financial follow-up support for beekeeping enterprises was insufficient. There was a lack of collaboration when it comes to strengthening skills and developing marketing aspects. This threatens the continued and successful expansion of beekeeping in future community forest and JFPM activities, as well as its positive impact on sustainable community-based dryland forest management.

iv. Uncertain political support for community forestry expansion poses a risk to its sustainability. This is because its viability hinges on sustained political support for the type of land use and required tenure arrangement. Conflicting mandates by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Local Governments and Lands over the use of forest lands – especially in light of the recent rise in land for real estate development – may affect the expansion of community forestry.

v. Accelerated real estate development has yet to become a serious risk in the project's rural areas. It does, however, threaten the future of community forests near the regional capitals. Real estate development has begun to create

controversy and conflict in terms of tenure for some of the community forests in West Coast.[3]

vi. The constant threat of fires, overgrazing and conflict among communities on ownership and community forestry benefit sharing undermine the future commitment to community forest and JFPM arrangements.

vii. Occasionally, the village development committees and the CFCs experience conflict on the use of community forest sites. Village development committees were established under the Local Government Act. They advise, initiate and guide development at the village level. The loss in institutional memory due to the departure of some members or corruption may led to conflict between the village development committee and the CFCs as far as its plan for land is concerned. This can result in a prolonged legal case, which is potentially inimical to the long-term sustainability of community forestry.

viii. Inadequate financing for community forest management may jeopardize the project's overall sustainability. The CFCs need financing for activities such as the acquisition of firefighting and nursery equipment or seedlings. While some communities engaged in beekeeping may generate revenue (provided beehives are sufficiently colonized) to meet these costs, others without them may resort to unsustainable harvesting of the forest.

ix. Where large cattle herds are present with little grazing space, the community forest presents the main source of grazing. This poses the risks of overgrazing and the eventual "death" of the forest due to a loss of interest among the community members in protecting it.

EQ 14: To what extent is this project likely to build upon results achieved at the country level, particularly in light of the new GEF financing cycle (GEF-8) or through other potential donors?

Finding 14. The project achieved important and positive results: community-level entrepreneurial and skills development; and the expansion of community forestry and policy strengthening through the national sustainable dryland forest management strategy and the updated National Forest Action Plan. This provides an encouraging environment for more investment in the further development and expansion of community forestry outside the current project area.

95. Despite challenges like procurement delays that lead to the incomplete implementation of project components, the government can take advantage of the opportunities offered by the GEF replenishment cycle from July 2022 to 2026. This is to build on its gains and to advance any unfinished activities within the context of the project's exit plan. There is still room to strengthen the entrepreneurs' development component in activities such as beekeeping and value chain development, private nurseries development, and rural and local tourism development. In fact, the project's results can be scaled up in the country with proper coordination on ongoing environmental projects like the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project and the realignment of their activities during their implementation review. Further, given the exit plan and the responsibilities assigned to relevant and collaborating departments, institutions and non-governmental organizations, project success stories can be used and built upon by these institutions and organizations. This would, however, require that these departments

[3] For example, according to the Department of Forestry Records, the Kotobali and Wendu Nette community forestry of Manduarr and Cassa Kunda villages in West Coast are in court to counter ownership claims by certain individuals in the community, even though they received the CFMA certificates.

integrate similar activities in their annual workplans and implies that the government allocates them additional budget resources.

96. The project created sufficient conditions for the expansion and sustainability of community forestry and sustainable dryland forest management in the country. These include but are not limited to the following: inclusion of enterprise development components in community forest implementation for greater socioeconomic benefits; memoranda of understanding between the Department of Forestry and relevant government institutions to fast track the community forest certification process; capacity and knowledge development among communities, relevant civil society and non-governmental organizations and technical departments for forest management; and policy strengthening through the development of policy tools like the SFM strategy and the updated National Forest Action Plan. Given these successes, the project outcome was satisfactory as far as sustainability is concerned. This aspect is moderately likely.

3.5 Factors affecting performance

3.5.1 Implementation

EQ 15: To what extent did FAO deliver on project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation, approval and start up, oversight and supervision? How well were risks identified and managed?

Finding 15. FAO made a satisfactory delivery on project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation, approval and start up. Oversight and supervision were, however, less than satisfactory as there had been no supervisory visits by a Lead Technical Officer to the project sites. This could be related to changes in the Lead Technical Officer at the level of the FAO Regional Office for Africa in Accra, Ghana and the FAO Subregional Office for West Africa in Dakar, Senegal.

97. The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequential travel restrictions also contributed to shortcomings in oversight and supervision. The supervisory visits by the Project Management Unit in the country were interrupted by the untimely demise of the first Project Coordinator. Project supervision was also hampered by the late establishment of an M&E system and the late recruitment of an M&E Officer. These issues were addressed after the MTR in 2020, meaning that project implementation did not benefit from any meaningful M&E during the first two years of implementation. The project therefore missed opportunities to take early and necessary corrective measures on implementation, such as procurement and extension work.

98. The project document (FAO and GEF, 2016) identified most of the important risk factors, including social, economic, environmental and community factors. Some satisfactory risk management was undertaken. However, the identified institutional risk related to the compartmentalized implementation of project activities, which was to be addressed through a subcoalition[4] of the ANR platform, was unable to avoid compartmentalization despite several field monitoring visits by the regional SLM forums. For example, the headquarters of the Department of Livestock Services had little involvement in establishing the rangeland, which was done by the ADWAC, the implementing partner. The ADWAC activities in the area of stove distribution and construction of fixed mud

[4] See Table 2 of the MTR on institutional risks.

stoves did not sufficiently involve the Department of Community Development. The involvement of these departments would have facilitated the necessary extension work and post-project follow up and sustainability. However, the establishment of the regional sustainable dryland forest management forums was positive in that it allowed for a multisectoral review of project implementation alongside other environment and natural resources projects. This was highlighted among forum members and the regional technical advisory committees so that they could coordinate project implementation. It also helped to raise awareness for better cooperation and coordination at the regional level.

99. The political-institutional risk of difficulties in securing co-financing was successfully addressed. This was done through co-financing that had been secured from the implementing partners, including the Department of Forestry, NACO, the ADWAC and a host of other government projects that had provided financial and in-kind resources. These also allowed for project implementation to proceed during the no-cost extension phases.

100. The identified social risk involving a lack of interest or sense of ownership on behalf of local communities was managed by raising awareness on the benefits of community forestry. Regional community forest task forces were also created. These constantly engaged communities on conflict resolution and encouraged them to join the community forest and JFPM ventures. The benefits of community forest and JFPM initiatives were adequately explained to the participating and prospective communities. In addition, the introduction of beekeeping for honey production and sale, which had promised income generation for the communities, helped to generate and sustain interest in the project. Although the project had, at the time of evaluation, not handed any of the PCFMA or CFMA matters to participating communities, the Evaluation Team found that the communities had participated in the preparation of documents for the conclusion of these agreements. This involved site maps, management plans and relevant neighbouring village agreements. Communities expressed their trust in the process and information about the other CFCs, for example, Jamagen village in Central River, north and Kolibantang village in Upper River, north. The Department of Forestry engaged with the communities and explained the time-consuming processes. Despite this, the Department of Forestry needs to double its efforts to ensure that the agreements are delivered to the qualified communities by project closure or shortly after.

101. Potential community forest-related tenure conflict risks were addressed through the neighbouring villages agreement process. This process gets heads (*alkalo*) of the neighbouring villages to sign, agreeing that they have no customary claim to the forest land targeted by the participating village. The agreement is also signed by the district chief, who further authenticates the ownership of the participating village. Where a conflict cannot be resolved through the neighbouring village agreement process, the communities in conflict are encouraged to jointly manage the targeted forest. This arrangement was successfully applied and effectively averted tenure risks. For example, the Jambarr community forest is jointly managed by four villages: Kwonkunding; Jaa Kunda; Sankabarr; and Touba Bureng in Upper River (north). The community forest task forces established by the project were also recognized by communities and successfully resolved intervillage conflict.

102. Socioeconomic risks of conflict related to accessing benefits were addressed by the Forest Act, through clearly defined JFPM agreements and community forest management plans, and in the CFMA. The latter allocates 15 percent of the revenue to the Department of Forestry's national forestry fund and the remaining 85 percent to the community. Of the allocation to the community, 40 percent (or 34 percent of the total revenue) is to be reinvested in forestry development while the remaining 60 percent (or 51 percent of the total revenue) should be used for community development. These benefit sharing arrangements have been successfully applied since the introduction of community forestry in 1991. The use of 60 percent allocation for community use is supposed to be guided by bi-laws that are directly developed by the community. These are based on traditional and institutional practices and consider modern-day situations. Upon community request, the Department of Forestry helps develop these bi-laws. Currently, the Forest Act does not insist on the development of bi-laws governing the use and the community share of benefits. It would, however, be prudent for the act to insist on the development of such bi-laws to be reflected in the CFMA so that community-level benefit sharing is set. This would avoid future conflict that ultimately affects the sustainability of community forestry.

103. There were no political problems during project implementation. The project steering committee did not have any missions in 2022. However, it undertook three missions – one each in 2017, 2018 and 2021 – and held meetings in Mansakonko (Lower River), Basse (Upper River) and Janjanbureh (Central River). It visited project sites to review progress and constraints and to make recommendations. The establishment and operation of the regional SLM forum with its membership from many ministerial technical departments was a stabilizing factor as far as political interference is concerned. There have not been any political objections regarding the PCFMAs and the CFMAs, but these have yet to be handed to the respective communities.

104. Despite some dry spells during the planting seasons of the initial years of project implementation that had either delayed planting or prevented it, no significant extreme climatic event impeded activities. Normal climatic conditions, in both the dry and rainy seasons, prevailed in the country and project activities were undertaken in these contexts. Fire prevention and tree planting with indigenous and drought-tolerant species occurred. Late planting stemmed from the late procurement of seedlings. Weak seedlings, however, negatively impacted the survival of the plantings. The establishment of a mechanism to monitor and forecast extreme events, per the project document, did not happen. In fact, this would have defined early response mechanisms to extreme climatic events. However, the country's meteorological services provided information on climatic developments for the general public that the project accessed to guide its activities.

105. Despite initial challenges, particularly administrative, the project was satisfactorily implemented.

3.5.2 Execution

EQ 16: To what extent did the execution agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project?

Finding 16. FAO, as the executing agency, implemented its role despite shortcomings. There were significant delays in project implementation due to delayed procurement and administrative processes, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

106. The project's implementing partners considered FAO procurement and administrative processes both very slow and complicated,[5] which is not particular to this project. Complication reflects structural or corporate efforts to ensure transparency in procurement. The resulting inability to implement a swift procurement is widely held responsible for delays in meeting the project implementation timeline. There were, as a result, delays in implementing some project activities: tree planting for community forests; agroforestry interventions; nurseries development; and implementation of the EDPs. Delays in finalizing LOA obligations with implementing partners also contributed to implementation delays. For example, NACO drafted and submitted an LOA on 25 September 2017. The LOA was reviewed on 26 October 2017 and the final version was signed on 11 December 2017 – almost four months since its drafting. Implementing partners complained about delays in funding disbursement, which prevented speedy partner activities. The involvement of FAO headquarters and the FAO Subregional Office for West Africa was minimal at best in providing technical backstopping for project implementation. It took about three years, from 2018 to 2021, before an M&E plan and framework was established and an M&E Officer was assigned to the project. Communications and outreach activities were also delayed due to the late establishment of these protocols. The COVID-19 pandemic and changes in the designation of senior government officials posed additional challenges that contributed to implementation delays.

107. FAO had mixed success regarding its role and responsibilities in project execution, which can be regarded as moderately satisfactory.

3.5.3 Monitoring and evaluation

EQ 17: M&E design: Was the M&E plan practical and sufficient?

Finding 17. The project had no M&E Officer upon launch. Instead, FAO in the Gambia used an existing M&E team that it temporarily strengthened through the employment of a United Nations Volunteer. The M&E plan that the team developed was sufficient for the project's purpose as it considered the outcomes and outputs. However, its late development and implementation incurred lost opportunities for the early detection of implementation shortcomings and early corrective measures.

108. This M&E team had a regular M&E staff member in 2019 and a United Nations Volunteer to undertake the M&E of two projects from the GEF: Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management and GAM 033. This means that there was insufficient monitoring during the first half of project implementation, except for the field missions conducted by the Project Coordinator or related staff. A project baseline assessment was conducted using the Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of Farmers and Pastoralists tool in 2018 for the two GEF-funded projects (Kaba, 2018). An indicator tracking tool and an M&E framework, including a monitoring plan, were also developed in 2019 and 2021, respectively, to assess the level of implementation of the project intervention activities. M&E missions were undertaken after the recruitment of the M&E Officer based on the developed M&E framework and plan after 2021.

109. An MTR was conducted in 2020, covering the first two years of project implementation (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2020). The evaluation exposed challenges and shortcomings in project implementation at its mid-term. These were mainly linked to

[5] See the MTR and implementing partner reports.

administrative issues related to procurement, M&E and communications. It also found and reported on implementation issues. The MTR made several recommendations to address these issues. Annex 3b of the MTR presents the questions and how they were answered by project management, as reported in the latter's 2021 Programme Implementation Report (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2021)

EQ 18: M&E implementation: Did the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Was information gathered in a systematic manner using appropriate methodologies?

Finding 18. There was a delay in the development and implementation of an M&E system. This negatively impacted the availability of information – independent of the project management report – to guide and reorient, as necessary, the first half of implementation. However, following the development of an M&E system halfway through implementation, the M&E efforts were conducted according to plan through methodologies defined in its strategy.

110. Based on the M&E plan, several M&E missions were conducted from 2020 to 2022. According to the report from the project's M&E focal person, two missions were conducted in 2020, three in 2021 and four in 2022. The missions addressed all project interventions in a systematic manner, covering a representative number of implementation sites. The missions included the following: visits to and discussions with regional forestry officers; regional governors; entrepreneur groups; women beneficiaries of improved cookstoves; community forest and JFPM committees; central and community nurseries; and other stakeholders such as the regional SLM forums and community forest management task forces. The missions made recommendations for follow-up actions and adjustments, as appropriate, to improve project implementation.

EQ 19: M&E implementation: Was the information from the M&E system appropriately used to make timely decisions and foster learning during project implementation?

Finding 19. Recommendations made by the evaluation's mission were implemented to the extent possible (see Annex 2). However, certain recommendations related to procurement and contractual issues have yet to be completely implemented.

111. The establishment of central nurseries, the production and distribution of improved metal cookstoves, and the arrangements for stock routes and rangeland establishment and management remained incomplete at the time of this evaluation. Monitoring reports highlighted implementation bottlenecks and follow-up corrective measures. The M&E missions covered the following issues: implementing partner activities; late LOA signing, which led to delays in implementing partner activities; Global Positioning Systems for surveying and demarcating community forests and agroforestry sites; the need for laptops and data cards for the project cluster monitors; transhumance, deforestation and degradation of forest cover; sourcing seedlings; strategic restoration activities; sensitization on bushfire management and strategies; installation of borehole overhead tanks for nurseries; institutional collaboration; capacity development; operationalization of enterprise development initiatives, project steering committee issues and regional oversight activities of the Department of Forestry; SLM; task forces; and many other project implementation activities. The M&E reports and recommendations helped to guide the project activities towards achieving the desired results.

112. In March 2022, an M&E mission was conducted to assess the implementation of the EDPs of the forest enterprise groups and assess the status of the enterprises. This included beekeeping materials supplied by the project. Some challenges discovered by the

mission, as per the M&E report, were as follows: i) low rate of colonization of the beehives; ii) desertion or absconding of beehives after colonization, particularly after bees transfer from catcher boxes to the main beehives; iii) intrusion of lizards and insects into beehives; iv) consumption of honey by the bees themselves when harvesting is late; v) threat of bushfire; vi) water challenges for seedlings at tree nurseries; and vii) seedling marketing. The mission made several recommendations for follow up: regular inspection and constant cleaning of the beehives; harvesting of colonized beehives every three to four months to make the bees more active in honey production; formation of a WhatsApp group for sharing information and best practices; advise communities to plant flowering trees near the apiaries to attract bees; constant monitoring of the enterprise groups by regional forestry officers and their staff; and more technical support on nursery management. All recommendations were implemented, except for the WhatsApp group and the flowering plants around the apiaries. The former was due to a lack of time on the side of the focal point and the latter to the inadequate supply of seedlings.

113. Considering the lack of a dedicated M&E programme during the first half of project implementation, the independent project supervisory missions undertaken by the Project Coordinator made the M&E moderately satisfactory.

3.5.4 Financial management and co-financing

EQ 20: To what extent did the expected co-financing materialize? How did any shortfall in co-financing affect the project's results?

Findings 20. Key financial management issues involved delays in the disbursement of funds to implementing partners and in the procurement of goods and services for project implementation. Despite these challenges, FAO and the GEF financial and co-financing delivery were 89.90 percent and 94.68 percent, respectively. This is satisfactory.

114. FAO and the GEF financial delivery was not 100 percent. However, significant implementation achievements were made as of 31 December 2022 across the three project components. There was an 85.21 percent delivery for Outcome 1 on institutional capacity development, 79.85 percent on legal community forestry ownership strengthening, 98.22 percent on the community sustainable management of 15 017 ha of dryland forest and 80.19 percent on results-based implementation. FAO in the Gambia exercised good financial management (89.9 percent delivery).

115. FAO in the Gambia exercised good financial management (89.9 percent), despite the untimely death of the first Project Coordinator and the COVID-19 pandemic, which had resulted in implementation delays and challenges. This good financial management led to the successful implementation of project activities. Further, project co-financers did extremely well in meeting 100 percent of their co-financing agreement, except for the AAD project (80 percent) and NEMA (10 percent). While the AAD project ended halfway through the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project, NEMA phased out with no other confirmed source of paying the balance of the co-financing fund. Table 4 shows the delivery levels for the various components of the GEF contribution to the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project.

Table 4. The GEF expenditure results budget by outcome

Outcome	Description	The GEF grant (USD)	Expenditure as of 31/12/2022 (USD)	Delivery
Outcome 1.1	Institutions at the national and regional level have the capacity to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices	254 603	218 476	85.21%
Outcome 2.1	Legal community forestry ownership strengthened	293 131	232 425	79.85%
Outcome 2.2	A total of 15 017.84 ha of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities	2 245 662	2 205 193	98.22%
Outcome 3.1	Project implementation based on results-based management and the application of project findings and lessons learned in future operations facilitated	192 933	156 266	80.19%
Project management		80 017	90 900	113.48%
GEF total		**3 066 346**	**2 746 994**	**89.90%**

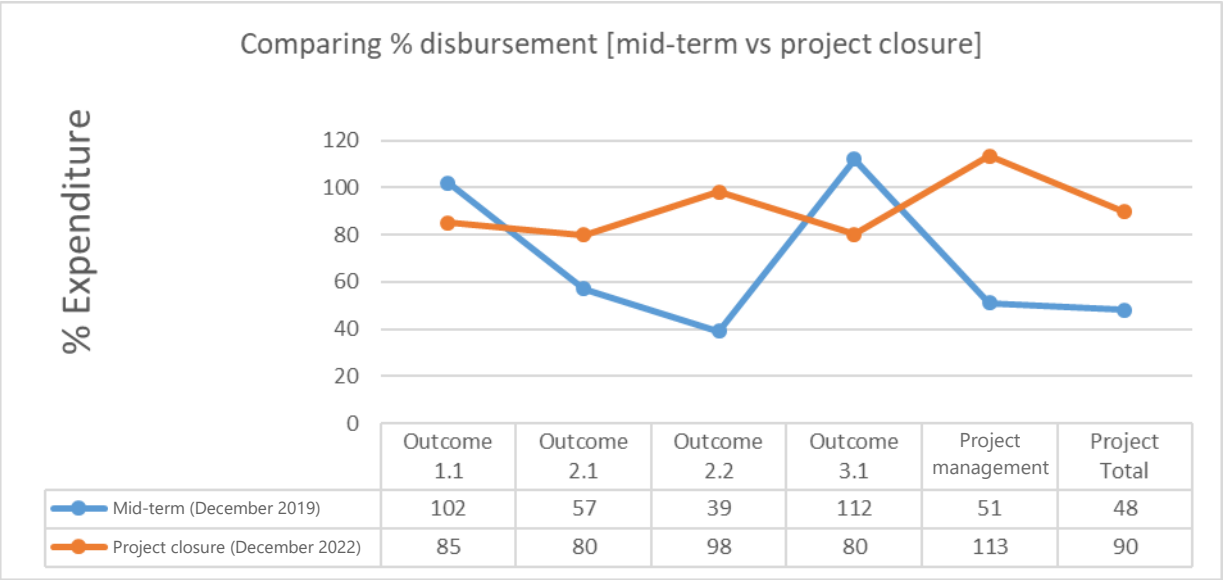
Source: FAO in the Gambia Finance Department report.

116. The full details of the GEF financing and co-financing expenditures are provided in Appendices 8 and 9, respectively.

117. Other financial management issues that may have impacted delivery include combined procurement planning for the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management and GAM 033 projects. While this may be regarded as an efficiency move, the Department of Forestry attributed some of the delays in procurement to this combination. These administrative issues translated into delays in implementation of some LOA obligations by all implementing partners. This included: a delay in the completion of nursery beds and accompanying multipurpose centres of the five central nurseries; a delay in the completion of the water reticulation for the nurseries; delays in the procurement of seedlings for agroforestry planting; delays in the fabrication of the metallic improved cookstoves by the contractor; and delays in procuring boundary marking pillars for stock routes and rangeland.

118. Figure 5 illustrates the project disbursement rate that increased from 48 percent in December 2019 (mid-term) to 90 percent in December 2022 (project closure), justifying the satisfactory rating. Figure 5 also shows disbursement evolution during the period and per project outcome.

Figure 5. Comparing percent disbursement (mid-term vs project closure)



	Outcome 1.1	Outcome 2.1	Outcome 2.2	Outcome 3.1	Project management	Project Total
Mid-term (December 2019)	102	57	39	112	51	48
Project closure (December 2022)	85	80	98	80	113	90

Source: FAO in the Gambia finance data.

119. Financial management and co-financing were satisfactory.

3.5.5 Project partnership and stakeholder engagement

EQ 21: Were other actors, such as civil society, Indigenous Peoples or the private sector involved in project design or implementation? What was the effect on the project results?

Finding 21. The project design did not involve as many civil society and private sector actors as desired. It did, however, engage with a limited number such as NACO and the ADWAC as implementing partners. These partners operated through LOA obligations signed with FAO as the executing agency. The implementing partners executed their interventions with diligence, despite administrative and procurement challenges.

120. Engagement in the implementation of activities was limited to a few civil society and private sector actors, mainly the ADWAC, NACO and the National Beekeepers Association of the Gambia. Others were involved as members of the project steering committee. These include the AGFP, the National Farmers Platform and the National Livestock Owners Association. Being a community-based project, it involved a large section of communities in project implementation through their community forest and JFPM committees, as well as women's groups. The extensive involvement of community members and the capacity development support they received from the project enabled the effective and efficient implementation of community forest and JFPM interventions. These were success factors in community-based endeavours. It must, however, be noted that closer involvement of the AGFP, the National Beekeepers Association of the Gambia and the National Livestock Owners Association from design to implementation in all the interventions as relevant could perhaps have avoided some of the implementation setbacks. For example, the National Beekeepers Association of the Gambia could have provided guidance on a better choice of beehives as opposed to those imported from China since the very beginning. Similarly, the AGFP had extensive membership through its regional chapters in the country and experience in tree planting and community mobilization from which the project could have benefitted. Nevertheless, there was indeed commendable representation of civil society organizations on the project steering

committee (NACO, the National Farmers Platform, the AGFP, the National Coordinating Organization for Farmers Association in the Gambia). Their experience and advice filtered to the project through project steering committee meetings and field mission recommendations, even if more direct collaboration could have been beneficial.

121. The NACO provided co-financing through in-kind contributions (staff time). It supported the Department of Forestry in community forest and JFPM implementation by facilitating local meetings, assisting in the development of community forest management plans and processing of the PCFMA and CFMA documents. It trained community forest and JFPM committees on community forest designation processes and supported the implementation of the community forest management plans. The NACO focused more on enterprise development. To this end, with co-financing from FAO's Forest Farm Facility, NACO successfully: i) reviewed and updated 20 EDPs (18 beekeeping enterprises and two tree nursery management enterprises) in the four regions, plus the training of 80 participants; ii) validated 20 EDPs in the four regions among 120 interest group members; and iii) mentored 20 forest enterprises on harvesting and processing raw honey and beeswax, as well as the propagation of tree seedlings. It also provided training on simple recordkeeping for the 20 forest resources and services enterprise groups. The NACO's enterprise development activities ensured a gender balance with an almost equal representation of men and women. The NACO facilitated the creation and operationalization of five regional SLM forums, including one in West Coast. The West Coast SLM forum was an unintended output of the project. It was informed by the success of the SLM forums in the four project regions. Despite challenges, NACO satisfactorily delivered its LOA obligations.

122. The ADWAC implemented two different interventions: i) the distribution of 4 000 improved cookstoves to 2 000 households in the project areas of the four regions; and ii) the identification and demarcation of seven rangelands and three cattle tracks or stock routes in North Bank, Central River (north), Lower River and Upper River (north).

123. By the time of evaluation, the ADWAC had already distributed 3 050 improved metal cookstoves to 1 450 households. The balance of 950 continued to be distributed through the month of December 2022 and may last into 2023. Upon writing this report, the Project Coordinator informed the consultants that the balance of cookstoves had already been delivered to the beneficiaries by the end of December 2022.

124. The project, the ADWAC and other stakeholders widely cited production delays on behalf of the FAO contractor. In fact, these were cited as the cause for delays in the distribution of the cookstoves. Other delays stemmed from administrative bottlenecks related to the processing and signature of LOA obligations and, sometimes, late disbursements of LOA payments. Apart from the distribution of improved metal cookstoves, the ADWAC also trained women to build fixed clay stoves. For this, it relied on trainers that had been trained by the Department of Forestry. This a positive sign of collaboration and an efficient and effective use of resources.

125. For the establishment (identification, demarcation, mapping) of the stock routes and rangeland, the ADWAC had, by the time of evaluation, implemented the establishment of nine out of the ten planned stock routes and rangeland. By project design, the stock routes and rangeland did not include the provision of cattle watering points. This risks its success and sustainability. The ADWAC collaborated with the regional officer from the

Department of Livestock Services in North Bank to establish the Dobo rangeland. This is where the Department would provide cattle watering facilities through the GAM 033 project. The ADWAC collaborated with the GAM 033 project in establishing three common rangelands. Rangeland management committees were formed and committee members trained on stock route and rangeland management and group and financial management to enhance their capacities and follow up on such activities after project closure. However, without the watering facilities and given the use of non-concrete boundary pillars at many of the sites, the durability of the rangelands remains uncertain. The ADWAC claimed that it had faced administrative challenges like inadequate fuel support from FAO,[6] the non-provision of maintenance and running costs by FAO for the ADWAC vehicles, and only a small allowance for the Project Coordinator. These challenges contributed to implementation delays and reduced the frequency of site visits. The ADWAC did not make a strong link with the headquarters of the Department of Livestock Services during the implementation of its activities, nor did it connect with the executive office of the National Livestock Owners Association. Both of these institutions have a national, operational mandate and coverage with a significant number of on-the-ground extension staff who can potentially support the management of interventions upon project closure. This shortcoming could put the sustainability of the project-implemented stock routes and rangeland at risk.

126. The NARI came on board late in the implementation of the project in May 2021. This was done through an LOA signed with FAO in the Gambia to implement the project's agroforestry intervention. Although NARI was involved in project formulation, the implementation plan did not involve it during the initial phases. The one-year LOA ended in May 2022 and was extended for two months until July and early August 2022. This was not enough time for a meaningful engagement in an intervention that requires several years for its impact to be seen. The period did not allow for NARI to monitor the interventions and draw conclusions and recommendations. The NARI undertook the sensitization of community leaders and farmers in the project regions on the benefits of adopting agroforestry practices in their farming systems. For this, it used mass media, mainly radio and television, as well as a documentary film. Important agroforestry tree species identified and used for the project were: *Leucaena lecocephala*, *Senna siamea*, *Faidherbia albida*, *Gliricidia sepium* and *Moringa oleifera*. The NARI employed alley cropping and farm boundary planting approaches on the farmland of 120 farmers, of which 112 were men and eight were women. Farmers received training on agroforestry practices, benefits, tree planting and farmer-managed natural regeneration. They also received agroforestry seedlings for planting. Of 120 ha targeted for transplanting, 103 ha were successfully transplanted. The assessment missions showed a survival rate of about 36 percent of planted seedlings. A 60 percent or above rate of survival would be more desirable, based on NARI and Evaluation Team views.

127. The NARI faced significant challenges during its short engagement. These included: the late procurement of seedlings by FAO and the supply of very weak seedlings due to long transport distances and the immaturity of the seedling; the supply of just a few of the species required, which severely delayed progress; getting the famers to work together in the fields; a late start to transplanting activities at the end of August; and livestock grazing. These are sustainability challenges that would need to be looked at for future

[6] Given the LOA, it is still underscored that the ADWAC was directly responsible for the administration of activities – including responsibility for the availability of vehicles.

agroforestry interventions. The NARI activities were also negatively impacted by the late disbursement of funds from FAO.

128. The project's partnership and stakeholder engagement was moderately satisfactory. The inadequate engagement of key technical departments and organizations at their decision-making levels, such as the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Community Development and the National Livestock Owners Association, may affect the possibility of these departments following up on the implemented activities – all of which are within their mandate.

3.5.6 Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products

EQ 22: How is the project assessing, documenting and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences? To what extent are the communications products and activities likely to support the sustainability and scaling up of project results?

Finding 22. The project experienced delays in developing and implementing a communications strategy. This was due to the fact that a communications expert was never available, even at the MTR. Nonetheless, the project took important steps to communicate its activities and outcomes through media outlets such as newsletters, newspapers, the Gambia Radio and Television Services, the FAO website and Facebook.

129. A short-term Communications Officer was hired in October 2021 (60 months after project launch) to document the project's best practices and lessons learned. Important steps to assess, document and share activities and results to increase visibility where taken thereafter. These include: the development of a communications plan; the development of a factsheet to share with stakeholders; the development and dissemination of a newsletter among stakeholders; and of a press release posted on the FAO website. These efforts definitely contributed to raising the project's visibility both nationally and internationally. However, their local impact may be hindered by limited distribution. This is evidenced by the fact that not many people, except those directly involved in the project, knew about the project's purpose and activities. Some technical staff at the regional level, however, had heard about it. Most Gambians do not routinely check the FAO website for information. News on various FAO sites, including FAO in the Gambia's Facebook and Twitter, significantly contributed to creating awareness among people. However, a one-page pamphlet or brochure widely distributed at government, project, civil society and non-governmental organization offices would have generated greater awareness – particularly on lessons learned and best practices. Also, the use of community radio could have reached a wider audience for more impact. Community radio is popular in rural areas and focuses on local issues and events that are of interest to the communities. They also rely on individuals who are known by and live among the communities. The discussion timings on community radio can be negotiated to occur when most farmers are not engaged in fieldwork for greater reach.

130. Project achievements on communications, knowledge management and knowledge products was moderately satisfactory.

3.6 Environmental and social safeguards

EQ 23: To what extent were environmental and social safeguards taken into account in designing and implementing the project?

Finding 23. The project extensively incorporated environmental and social safeguards in its design and implementation. The development and signing of community forest and JFPM agreements was an action towards ensuring environmental and social safeguards during project implementation. Enterprise development initiatives such as beekeeping helped to generate income for the communities. This contributed to improved livelihoods and the reduction of extraction pressure on the forests. Similarly, the supply of improved cookstoves was an important initiative in contributing to women's health and reducing pressure on forests.

131. The management agreements between the project and the participating communities ensure that the forest areas where the project intervened are protected from unsustainable use. This allows for growth and development so that environmental and ecosystem services can be provided in a sustainable way. Project design also provided for secure ownership tenure and capacity building for beneficiaries on forest management, conservation and sustainable utilization. These elements sought to create a long-term conducive environment for forest protection, extending the environmental benefits of the forests. A related environmental safeguard design, which had a major social safeguard feature, was the introduction of beekeeping. This provided an alternative source of income by steering away from the excessive exploitation of forests by the beneficiaries. Indeed, it reduced exploitation pressure and allowed the forest to grow and sustain environmental services while generating much needed income for the participating communities to meet their social needs. A similar environmental and social safeguard was the introduction of energy-efficient metal cookstoves and capacity building among participating communities to build their own clay stoves. This not only reduced pressure on forests by lessening the reliance on household fuelwood but also saved time and costs for the households. It even contributed positively to women's health. Further, agroforestry, which was part of project design, will prevent soil loss through erosion control and increase soil fertility and soil moisture over time. This will hopefully translate into more income from increased crop production and sales, depending on environmental developments and climate change. The introduction of stock routes and rangeland was another social safeguard. This is because it reduced grazing pressures on community forests while allowing access to larger grazing sources for livestock. Communities depend on this aspect for part of their income and nutrition. This also eases farmer-herder conflict, contributing to social cohesiveness and peace.

132. The project was implemented with these environmental and social aspects in mind. Although there was a delay in the implementation of some project components – due to delayed procurements and the slow development and implementation of LOA obligations, the untimely death of the first Project Coordinator and the COVID-19 pandemic – there were significant achievements in all areas. This is reflected in the Programme Implementation Reports for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 and summarized in the results matrix (see Appendix 8) (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2018; 2019; 2020a; 2020b; 2021; 2022b). Important environmental and social safeguard achievements include the following: the development and adoption of a new forest strategy (Republic of the Gambia, 2018c; 2021) and upgrade of the forest action plan (Republic of the Gambia, 2018a); progress in upgrading the legal status of various community forests through the development of the PCFMAs and the CFMAs; the establishment of grazing areas and their communal management; the capacity development of technical staff of the Department of Forestry and other technical departments; the development and implementation of community forest enterprise plans, such as beekeeping and private community nurseries; the distribution of about

4 000 fuel-efficient cookstoves to 2 000 households (achieved by the end of December 2022 according to the final list of beneficiaries provided by the Project Coordinator); and the engagement of a large number of farmers in agroforestry.

133. Satisfactory environmental and social safeguards were incorporated into project design and implementation.

3.7 Gender

EQ 24: To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing the project? Was the project implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?

Finding 24. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming were key project design features. Indeed, the project was implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. It ensured that women were represented in decision-making bodies, such as the community forest and JFPM committees, and that they received training in and benefitted from enterprise skills development.

134. The project planned to: promote the participation of women and strengthen their role in planning and decision-making; improve women's productivity, income and living conditions; involve women in the SLM forum activities and regional community forest task force to reach at least 30 percent of female members; facilitate women's access to training and technical assistance; and ensure that 30 percent of training programme beneficiaries are women. At least 30 percent of the community forestry and JFPM committee members were women.

135. Culturally, women are not involved in forest work as this is regarded as a male domain. It would therefore follow that women are traditionally unlikely to be represented through group and committee work on forestry. However, given the nature of community forestry and the project's desire to promote gender equity, the CFC reported that all decisions on forest management and benefit sharing were made with the full participation of female members. Further, all interviewed committee members reported that women had benefitted to the same degree as men. This involved all trainings for the committee and direct participation in all forest management activities and decision-making processes. Women were the main beneficiaries of entrepreneurial development interventions like beekeeping and nursery production. The establishment of a 30 percent minimum benchmark for women's representation in management committees and decision-making bodies was a good indication of the project's gender sensitivity. In fact, this can provide good lessons learned for expanding projects in the future. To a large extent, the project met its membership benchmark of 30 percent women on most CFCs. The following are examples: in Kwinella, Lower River, five of the 12 CFC members (42 percent) were women; in Badumeh, Lower River, the CFC reported a membership of 50 percent women; in Seno Bajonki, Lower River, ten of the 18 members (55 percent) were women; in Sankwia, Lower River, six of the 12 members (50 percent) were women; in Mandori, North Bank, five of the 20 members (25 percent) were women; in Jamagen, North Bank, five of the 15 members (30 percent) were women; in Sukuta Niani, Central River, four of the ten members (40 percent) were women; in Yona Musa, Central River, five of the ten community forest members (50 percent) were women; in Jamagen, Central River, five of the 15 members (30 percent) were women; in Changally Chewdu, Upper River, six of the 12 members (50 percent) were women; for Joloki Forest Park, Upper River, the committee reported a 50/50 representation; and in Kolibantang, Upper River, five of the 13 CFC members (38 percent) were female.

136. The project actively involved women in the community-based forest enterprises development (Output 2.2.4) intervention. This focused on non-timber forest products like honey and tree seedlings. Women received trainings on honey production, value-added honey products and business planning. In some of the participating communities, women started to receive income from the sale of beeswax body cream and look forward to more trainings on soap production. The project might not be able to deliver on the latter, but the exit strategy should ensure that the Department of Forestry delivers this much needed livelihood enhancement training. Women were also involved in enhancing their access to and control over natural resources.

137. Membership of most of the community forest and JFPM committees was about 50 percent women. This achievement goes beyond the design target of 30 percent and came about as a result of the communities' desire to ensure equitable gender representation on the community forest and JFPM committees. It also follows the efforts of the implementation partner, NACO, to ensure this equitable representation. Similarly, the regional community-based forest management task forces had an average membership of about 30 percent women: the Upper River task force had 21 members, out of which four are women (19 percent); and the North Bank task force had ten female members out of 25 (40 percent). However, the regional SLM forums had far less women (about 5 percent on average). For example, the Upper River forum had only one woman out of a membership of 25 (4 percent) while North Bank had one female in its 15-member forum (6.7 percent). This is a direct function of male dominance at the level of technical regional departments. The production and distribution of improved cookstoves to households benefitted women in particular as it reduced the work burden that had traditionally been assigned to women, as well as cooking time.

138. The project satisfactorily considered gender issues in its design and made satisfactory progress in promoting gender equity in decision-making during project implementation. It also made satisfactory gains in the economic empowerment of women through the EDPs, especially beekeeping and value-added products.

3.8 Progress towards impact

EQ 25: To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project?

Finding 25. Project interventions, such as community forestry, the JFPM, improved cookstoves, stock route and rangeland establishment, nurseries, beekeeping and beeswax processes had been ongoing in the country prior to the project. Notwithstanding, the project contributed to extending these interventions and their benefits to communities that had not been covered by earlier projects or government agencies. This made an important contribution to the long-term environmental, social and economic impacts of these interventions at the national level.

139. The project's establishment of a 30 percent benchmark for female participation through the decision-making bodies of the community forest and JFPM committees paves the way for wider and more gender-sensitive participation in the implementation of SFM at community levels. Also, by linking entrepreneurial development like beekeeping to dryland forest management – with its promise of greater income for the participating communities – the project contributes to the popularity and sustainability of community forestry in the country. Further skills training, such as beehive manufacturing and beeswax processing, will help to increase the sustainability of forest management by

creating alternative job opportunities for the beneficiaries. This ultimately steers away from the exploitation of forest resources for income.

EQ 26: Was there any evidence of environmental stress reduction and environmental status change, or any change in policy/legal/regulatory frameworks?

Finding 26. Environmental stress reduction and environmental status change could not be evidenced as a result of project implementation. There were no parameters or baselines established by the project at its formulation to allow for measuring these changes. However, the national dryland forest management strategy and action plan that the project had helped to develop and update could potentially lead to policy and regulation changes when successfully implemented.

140. Despite the lack of evidence on environmental stress reduction, interviews with communities indicate community satisfaction with the project outcome on positive forest growth and, in some cases, greater biodiversity – especially monkey and baboon. This was reported for the joint management of the Jeloki Forest Park in Central River (north) and the Jalabiro Forest Park in North Bank.

141. The project developed two 48ational policy instruments, namely a forest management strategy and an updated forestry action plan. Outside of this, project implementation did not result in any changes to the policy, legal or regulatory frameworks. Nonetheless, it contributed to the country-wide implementation of SFM and rural livelihood improvements through the implementation of community forest and JFPM programmes and enhanced enterprise development for non-wood forest products and their value chain development. These interventions and activities are provided for in the 2010–2019 policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2009) and the new 2022–2031 draft policy (Republic of the Gambia, 2021), which has yet to be adopted by the government.

EQ 27: Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term impact?

Finding 27. Despite mitigation measures adopted during project implementation, the risks identified in the project document (FAO and GEF, 2016) remain relevant to future progress towards long-term impact. The social, economic and environmental risks have a broad national relevance that the project could only partially address in the implementation areas.

142. Forest fires are the biggest threat to progress towards long-term impact of dryland forest management in the country. These fires are often set outside the management jurisdiction of the CFCs, and the committees and their communities are usually rather ill-equipped to fight them. There may be apparent political support for dryland forest management, as indicated by the approval of relevant policies and laws, but the socioeconomic and political realities may favour the development of competing land use sectors like farming and real estate development. Climate change and its negative impacts of droughts and floods may force populations to unsustainably exploit the dryland forest. This may negate the potential long-term, positive impact of dryland forest management. The Gambia's steady population increase has come with greater demand for limited forest resources, especially fuelwood and charcoal. This phenomenon threatens SFM unless alternatives for wood-based domestic energy are found.

143. The project made satisfactory progress towards achieving the desired impact of strengthening community-based sustainable dryland forest management. It also made

satisfactory progress on environmental protection and improved livelihoods in both the specific project areas and in the country overall.

3.9 Lessons learned

EQ 28: What knowledge has been generated from project results and experiences, which have a wider value and potential for broader application, replication and use?

Lesson 1. The introduction of income generating entrepreneurial activities as part of community forest and JFPM interventions, such as beekeeping and related value chain activities, was a significant motivational factor for the wider involvement and commitment of community members in community-based forest management. This intervention has high potential to enable the wider and sustainable application of sustainable dryland forest management in the country. The combination of entrepreneurial interventions and the implementation of SFM practices within the same implementation area promises to enhance the popularity of community forestry. This can then support wider adoption, application and sustainability in the country.

Lesson 2. Capacity building for greater knowledge and skills among communities in forest management and entrepreneurship boosted confidence among members to independently undertake forest management with minimal external assistance. This experience has value for broader application and the replication of community forestry. Indeed, it allows for farmer-to-farmer education, experience sharing and the encouragement for community forestry undertakings elsewhere.

Lesson 3. Although the process of securing neighbouring village agreements to tenure claims of communities applying for community forest had been used well before the project, securing this agreement was an important element in the wider application of community forestry. This is because it addressed and reduced the risk of conflict over forest ownership. In fact, this can enable the wider application of community forestry and related interventions.

Lesson 4. The creation of multiagency oversight organs, such as the regional SLM forum and the regional community forest task force, were instrumental in enhancing interagency coordination and collaboration in project implementation at the regional level. The SLM forum could potentially advise on the relevance of projects for national development and provide information for future project designs.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Despite delays, the project was satisfactorily implemented with positive outcomes: improved forest management; and developed entrepreneurial knowledge and skills among the participating communities. This advanced community-based sustainable dryland forest management.

144. Indeed, there were delays related to the early death of the first Project Coordinator and administrative and procurement bottlenecks. The former created a gap in supervision and the implementation of certain administrative work until the recruitment of a new Project Coordinator. Procurement delays resulted in the late implementation of some activities related to nursery establishment and the delivery of cookstoves. Despite these delays, community forest and JFPM committees were strengthened both in terms of knowledge and skills, while complementary income generating activities were developed. Farmer knowledge on agroforestry practices and their benefits were bolstered. The production capacities of the regional central nurseries were strengthened, and the SLM forums and community forest task forces were established in all administrative regions. An exit strategy that involves other relevant sectors in its implementation was developed for the further implementation of outcomes beyond the project (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2022a). The project also ensured an extensive involvement of women on community forest and JFPM committees and the establishment of grazing areas.

Conclusion 2. The project was relevant to the country, and this is highly satisfactory. It addressed the GEF focal area and operational programme strategies, as well as FAO's priorities for the country in natural resources management and conservation. Further, the project design had significant socioeconomic relevance in terms of capacity development and the improvement of rural livelihoods (Ceci *et al.*, 2015). In general, it was relevant to international contexts that relate to improving the management and conservation of dryland forest ecosystems for environmental, social and economic benefits.

145. The project resulted in an increased area (15 000 ha) of dryland under sustainable management, improved rural livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. In fact, this contributed to the Gambia's implementation of its obligations under global environmental and natural resources conventions and agreements. It also developed the survival skills of rural populations through various trainings.

Conclusion 3. The project interventions of a community-based approach to sustainable dryland forest management and enterprise development were efficiently implemented. They were also satisfactorily sufficient to bring about the desired impact of sustainably managed dryland forests and improved livelihoods in the participating rural areas.

146. Implementation efficiency was constrained by delayed procurement processes and the conclusion of LOA obligations with the implementing partners. Despite these shortcomings, the project was satisfactorily efficient in implementing its activities at the regional levels. Indeed, the project took advantage of some existing and relevant projects such as the AAD and FAO's Forest and Farm Facility (during the first half of implementation) to implement community forest and JFPM interventions. Further, collaboration with the Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia project helped to facilitate and deliver on stock routes and rangeland establishment. However,

efficiency would have been better if the project had better collaboration with the Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin project in implementing its forest restoration and beekeeping activities. Also, the project could have better utilized civil society and non-governmental organizations on the ground in its outreach and communications efforts.

147. FAO's oversight function related to the procurement of services and material inputs was less than satisfactory. All of the implementing partners complained about delays in material and equipment and the processing and signing of LOA paperwork. These delays negatively impacted the work of the implementing partners. There were also delays by implementing partners in enforcing the LOA obligations. This could have been due to either capacity limitations on their side or failure on the side of FAO to closely follow up on implementation. Overall, the project implementation delays cannot be attributed to the death of the first Project Coordinator and the COVID-19 pandemic alone. FAO oversight failures also played a significant role in these delays.

Conclusion 4. The project was satisfactorily effective in strengthening and expanding community forestry. In so doing, it increased livelihood options for the participating communities.

148. The project created new community forests and increased capacity for dryland forest management by training community forest and JFPM committee members and relevant technical departments as per Outcome 1. This contributed to dryland forest management. The significant gains in concluding secure tenure for the project's community forests through the conclusion of 28 CFMAs (to be gazetted and issued) and the conclusion and signing of all planned 18 JFPM agreements will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening legal community forest ownership. As a result, this can expand community forestry and SFM. The complementary entrepreneurial interventions of honey production and beeswax value chain processing, as well as the related skills development, have high income generation potential. They will most likely remain major contributing factors to the expansion and continuation of dryland forest management in the country. The project generated great interest in agroforestry within the implementation areas, potentially contributing to increased crop production and income for the farmers.

149. Despite production delays, all 4 000 improved cookstoves were distributed among the target of 2 000 households by the end of December 2022. Community grazing areas (cattle tracks and rangeland) and the related agreements will reduce grazing pressure on dryland forests and tension and conflict among communities. This has the potential to maintain peace in the project areas and improve both cattle health and the livelihoods of their owners while contributing to SFM.

Conclusion 5. Overall, the project's sustainability, which was sought through the strengthening and expansion of community forestry, raised awareness among farmers of agroforestry. This established formal, long-term agreements (land tenure, grazing areas, cattle track, rangeland) and the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills development. It also facilitated the implementation of risk mitigation measures, which appears solid despite some risks.

150. Risks to sustainability remain and need to be kept at the forefront of future implementations. These include a budget deficit at the Department of Forestry, the slow processing of agreements, fires and the possible allocation of forest land for alternative land use.

Conclusion 6. The absence of an M&E Officer in the first half of project implementation had an impact on the effectiveness of the M&E efforts. This situation only improved during the second half of project implementation through the recruitment of a United Nations Volunteer. In fact, this strengthened the exiting M&E team and the development of an M&E plan. The project's physical financial management was efficient. This is because it was implemented within an institutionalized and operating financial management system. However, project design and implementation fell short of involving as many civil society and private sector actors as desired. Project visibility was not as high as it could have been due to delays in developing and implementing a communications strategy and plan.

151. The late M&E start in 2020 resulted in initial, insufficient project monitoring – except for the field missions conducted by the Project Coordinators or related staff. As a result, some of the implementation bottlenecks like late LOA obligations and delayed execution by the implementing partners could not be flagged early enough for remedial measures.

152. Financial reports are system-based and easily generated as and when needed. On financial disbursements, a rate of 89.9 percent was registered for the GEF financing as of December 2022, compared to 48 percent at mid-term in December 2019. With this level of funding use, the likelihood of exhausting project finances was high given the remaining number of project closure activities. Project co-financers did extremely well in meeting 100 percent of their co-financing agreement, with the exception of the AAD project (80 percent) and NEMA (10 percent). The latter phased out with no other confirmed source for paying the co-financing balance while the AAD project ended half way through implementation.

153. There was an inadequate use of the opportunities offered by existing civil society actors during project implementation, such as their experience in institution building and their extension staff strength. The non-involvement of important non-governmental stakeholders like the National Livestock Owners Association, the AGFP and the National Farmers Platform (which have a strong presence on the ground among farmer and local communities) during implementation, incurred lost opportunities for more local-level institutional support. This reduced, to some degree, effectiveness and efficiency. Given the close association that these civil society organizations have had with community institution and capacity building, the project would have made better progress in the timely implementation of its activities had it partnered with them on implementation. For the government institutions, stakeholders such as the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Community Development and the Department of Agriculture, their inadequate engagement – especially at the head office level during project design and, in some cases, implementation – risks involvement in the follow up of post-project activities. This might, to some degree, affect the sustainability of some particular activities such as skills development in improved cookstove manufacturing. This would be due to a lack of ownership on the side of the institutions for these activities.

154. The project advanced outreach for its activities through electronic means, mainly various FAO websites. Unreliable internet services in the country, particularly the rural areas, and the fact that many stakeholders do not regularly visit FAO websites for information, limited the dissemination of project information in the country. Extensive dissemination of project factsheets and a more intensive use of community radio may have provided better visibility of the project to a wider local audience.

Conclusion 7. The safeguards that the project implemented to counter environmental and social risks were satisfactory. This aspect allowed for successful project implementation and the replication of similar activities.

155. Five multistakeholder SLM forums were created and effectively trained. This reduced institutional risk related to cooperation. Indeed, their joint missions and project steering committee meetings fostered institutional coordination. Co-financing secured by the government mitigated the political-institutional risk related to financing. In addition, better livelihood opportunities that had been created through the enterprise development initiative of beekeeping helped to enhance a sense of project ownership at the beneficiary community level. This lowered social risks. Risks related to tenure conflict were effectively reduced through the signing of neighbouring village agreements and community participation in PCFMA and CFMA development, as well as the agreement processes on cattle tracks and rangeland. Well-targeted enrichment plantings and the implementation of agroforestry built capacity among communities. In fact, they undertook tree planting to mitigate climate-related risks. Despite administrative bottlenecks, the project was successful in procuring necessary inputs and concluding LOA obligations with the implementing partners. By following COVID-19 protocol and through careful planning and coordination between lockdowns, the project organized field activities to ensure that project implementation had not been seriously impacted.

Conclusion 8. Gender equality and mainstreaming was a strong feature of the project both during design and implementation. Gender-responsive measures enhanced strong women's participation throughout implementation, promoting equality and women's empowerment for successful community-based dryland forest management in the project regions and beyond.

156. Women's membership and participation in planning and decision-making on community forest and JFPM committees and forest enterprise group committees was about 30 percent. Women were the main beneficiaries in the enterprise development component where they learned to generate income through beeswax processing for body cream. Women also benefitted from the distribution of improved cookstoves and skills trainings for clay stove construction. Further, women's capacities were developed through access to technical assistance. This improved their knowledge in forest management and tree nursery production, as well as their skills in value-added agriculture.

Conclusion 9. The project made significant progress towards the achievement of sustainably managed dryland forests and improved community livelihoods in the country, especially its northern part. Beyond this, it created unintended possibilities for enhanced intersectoral collaboration throughout the country. In fact, it created an SLM forum in the non-project area of the West Coast and unprecedented memoranda of understanding with key government institutions. This will potentially fast track the development and conclusion of the PCFMAs and the CFMAs for wider community forestry implementation. Further, the project provided information to increase knowledge on the charcoal value chain in order to advise future policy development and implementation.

157. The project strengthened community capacity to undertake sustainable community-based forest management on their own. It also strengthened the capacities of related technical departments to enable them to incorporate sustainable dryland forest management in their policies and activities. The implemented entrepreneurial interventions improved the skills of participating communities. This enhanced their income generation prospects for improved livelihoods. Further, developed policy

documents such as the dryland forest management strategy, the updated forest management plan (Republic of the Gambia, 2021) and the fire management guidelines (Republic of the Gambia, 2018a) have the potential to enhance the implementation of SFM and biodiversity conservation. Similarly, the establishment of stock routes and rangeland, as well as community exposure to the benefits of using improved cookstoves, reduces grazing and firewood collection pressure on the managed forests. This will enable their protection and development in the long term, despite the social, environmental and political risks for which mitigating measures were implemented and taught to the beneficiary communities.

158. Women have an important role in the country's social development. The project empowered women to participate in decision-making processes on forest management. It also improved their skills to generate income for livelihood support. The project successfully demonstrated that the introduction of income generating activities like beekeeping motivates beneficiaries and bolsters their commitment to adopt and implement community-based sustainable dryland forest management. Overall, it can be concluded that the project made satisfactory progress towards achieving its intended impact. It strengthened the knowledge of beneficiaries on sustainable dryland forest management and enhanced the prospect of income generation through the development of entrepreneurial skills. Both of these elements will likely support social and environmental benefits in the future. Indeed, so far, the project has created the conditions of wider intersectoral collaboration for improved delivery in community forestry and JFPM.

4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Given the negative impact that FAO's cumbersome administrative and procurement process had on the timely implementation of project activities, FAO in the Gambia should look closely into the feasibility of initiating procurements from three to six months before the actual implementation of an activity. FAO should also use government procurement systems where feasible through beneficiary stakeholder government institutions and employ multiple suppliers where a large number of inputs are concerned. This can involve the procurement of improved metal cookstoves to reduce time and ensure that quality control, especially for locally acquired inputs like seedlings, is ensured.

Recommendation 2. FAO should ensure that future LOA obligations with implementing partners, as well as the allocation of resources, are processed and executed with minimal delay. This is to avoid delays on behalf of the implementing partners. In the same context, closer follow up with the implementing partners should be ensured for early detection and the mitigation of potential implementation bottlenecks.

Recommendation 3. Capacity and entrepreneurial skills development should be part of every FAO in the Gambia and the GEF community-based sustainable forest or natural resources management project to encourage and maintain beneficiary and stakeholder interest in and commitment to implementation. This is to strengthen the sustainability of project activities and outcomes. Projects should assist enterprise development for beneficiaries to secure markets for their products. The project itself can also buy from them when possible. One example is seedlings for project use.

Recommendation 4. The Government of the Gambia should continue to fund and use the regional SLM forums in all of its region-based natural resources projects. This ensures proper

coordination and effective monitoring so that past and future projects are aligned with government priorities. This is for the sustainability of natural resources management in the country.

Recommendation 5. The Department of Forestry should ensure a mechanism of regular follow up with all departments and agencies that were assigned a responsibility in the exit plan. This involves memoranda of understanding signed with other departments for PCFMA and CFMA processing. In fact, this should be closely implemented to reduce administrative delays in approval and gazetting. This would also facilitate the sustainable continuation of project interventions and activities.

Recommendation 6. FAO in the Gambia and the GEF should ensure that future natural resources projects identify and involve all relevant technical departments and civil society and non-governmental organizations in both project design and implementation. This will provide for better coordination and a greater ownership of outcomes.

Recommendation 7. FAO in the Gambia and the FAO Regional Office for Africa should establish an early M&E system and regular supervisory visits by the Lead Technical Officer. This is to avoid or minimize operational bottlenecks and administrative delays by following up with the FAO Regional Office for Africa, FAO headquarters or government staff. Further, project formulation should ensure that all procurements that are likely to take time and delay implementation are identified in the project document. Implementation scheduling should be established for the Project Coordinator's guidance and timely action.

Recommendation 8. FAO in the Gambia and the Government of the Gambia should ensure that a communications strategy and plan are among the first implementation documents of natural resources projects. Limited and unreliable internet access in rural Gambia means that the communications strategy should rely on leaflets and community radio to reach the widest possible audience.

Recommendation 9. FAO in the Gambia and the Government of the Gambia should ensure that future natural resources project design and formulation include the availability of gender-disaggregated information. This is to determine the degrees of gender equality, gender involvement and gender mainstreaming in project implementation.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Department of Forestry headquarters			
Jaiteh	Mohammed	Director	Department of Forestry, Banjul
Gaye	Cherno	Head, participatory forest management	Department of Forestry, Banjul
National Livestock Owners Association			
Jallow	Ebrima	President	National Livestock Owners Association, Brikama
Sowe	Momodou	Secretary	National Livestock Owners Association
Jatta	Lamin	Vice President	National Livestock Owners Association
Korta	Buba	Executive member	National Livestock Owners Association
Bah	Gibby	Executive member	National Livestock Owners Association
Saidy	Momodou	Executive member	National Livestock Owners Association
FAO in the Gambia			
Ceesay	Moustapha	Assistant FAO Representative	FAO in the Gambia
Nget	Sambou	Project Manager/Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project	FAO Country Office, Fajara
NACO/implementing partner			
Camara	Kanimang	Executive Director	Abuko
Jarjussey	Alkali	Staff	NACO
National Beekeepers Association/Gambia			
Manga	Siaka	President	Brikama
National Farmers Platform/Gambia			
Bojang	Sherrifo	President	Brikama
Beyai	Ebrima	Treasurer	Brikama
AGFP			
Camara	Ebrima		Brikama
NARI			
Jallow	Demba	Director General	NARI
Dibba	Lamin	Director of research	NARI
Jawneh	Kadijatou	Principal research officer, cropping	NARI
Manjang	Dembo	Research assistant	NARI

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Nyassi	Amadou	Research officer	NARI
National Environment Agency			
Touray	Njagga	Director, intersectoral services	National Environment Agency
Ceesay	Ousman	Senior programme officer, ANR	National Environment Agency
Jaiteh	Lamin	Registrar of pesticides	National Environment Agency
Betay	Bai	Programme officer, hazardous chemicals and pesticides programme	National Environment Agency
Bojang	Mbassy	Programme officer, ANR	National Environment Agency
Department of Agriculture			
Sankareh	Aba	Director, agribusiness services	Department of Agriculture
Lower River			
Mpetcheki CFC Bajana, Kiang West (beekeeping)			
Saro	Fabakary	Committee member	Bajana
Bajo	Lamin F	Committee member	Bajana
Touray	Fatou	Committee member	Bajana
Njie	Mariama	Committee member	Bajana
Touray	Baba	Committee member	Bajana
Bajo	Natoma	Committee member	Bajana
Njie	Mama	Committee member	Bajana
Kwinella Nyakunda CFC, Kiang West			
Camara	Lamin L.	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Ceesay	Abdou Karim	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Dibba	Kabiro	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Dibba	Yahya	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Manjang	Ousman	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Manjang	Kaddy	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Saidy	Kebba	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Sanneh	Omar	Committee member	Kwinella Nyakunda
Rangeland management committee, Dongoroba village			
Bak	Omar	Committee member	Jabatou

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Dem	Musa	Committee member	Dongoroba
Dem	Omar	Committee member	Bodoyel
Jallow	Hamad	Committee member	Dongoroba
Jallow	Hadja	Committee member	Digirai
Kanyi	Konyagie	Committee member	Jassong
Sorok CFC, Badumeh Koto Village, Jarra Central			
Ceesay	Fatou	Committee member	Badume Koto
Jassey	Ansumana	Committee member	Badume Koto
Kantel	Lisa	Committee member	Badume Koto
Kassama	Maimuna	Committee member	Badume Koto
Kanteh	Momodou	Committee member	Badume Koto
Kebbeh	Musa	Committee member	Badume Koto
Manneh	Fatou	Committee member	Badume Koto
Manneh Saikou	Fatou	Committee member	Badume Koto
Njie	Yaya	Committee member	Badume Koto
Sonko	Naaba	Committee member	Badume Koto
Sonko Jola	Fatou	Committee member	Badume Koto
Sonko	Solo	Committee member	Badume Koto
Sonko	Yaya	Committee member	Badume Koto
Sankuwia CFC, Jarra West			
Ceesay	Ceesayba	Committee member	Sankuwia
Fofana	Alhaji	Committee member	Sankuwia
Fofana	Amadou	Committee member	Sankuwia
Sanneh	Lamin	Committee member	Sankuwia
Seno Bajonki Village CFC, Jarra West			
Bah	Amad	Committee member	Seno Bah
Bah	Jawando	Committee member	Seno Bah

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Dem	Khadijatou	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Bokarr K.	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Bubacarr Jela	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Momodou I.	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Saidy Hawa	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Njagga	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Bubacarr	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Ibrahima	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Malick	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Alhaji Malick	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Larry	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Momodou Jeba	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Isatou	Committee member	Seno Bah
Jallow	Daddy	Committee member	Seno Bah
Regional Forestry Office, Soma, Jarra West			
Bah	Bubacarr	Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project focal point	Soma Town
Sanyang	Alhaji	Regional forestry officer	Soma Town
Dryland forest management forum			
Bojang	Sulayman	Department of Water Resources	Soma Town
Camara	Momodou	Regional livestock director	Soma Town
Ceesay	Momodou B.K.	National disaster management agency	Soma Town
Giteh	Alhajie	Department of Fisheries	Soma Town
Jammeh	Baba	Department of Community Development	Soma Town
Khan	Alpha	President, dryland forum	Soma Town
Buwa	Kinteh	Soma area council	Soma Town
Sanyang	Alhajie	Regional forestry officer	Soma Town

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
North Bank			
Mandori village JFPM committee, Central Baddibu			
Jah	Abou	Committee member	Mandori
Jaiteh	Yaya		
Jaiteh	Njambanding	Committee member	Mandori
Jammeh	Njambou	Committee member	Mandori
Kanni	Abdou	Committee member	Mandori
Manneh	Kebba	Committee member	Mandori
Marong	Alhajie Binta	Committee member	Mandori
Saho	Sarjo	Committee member	Mandori
Jamagen village CFC			
Camara	Modibo	Committee member	Jamagen
Camara	Sally	Committee member	Jamagen
Camara	Kebba	Committee member	Jamagen
Camara	Oumie	Committee member	Jamagen
Ceesay	Jabel	Committee member	Jamagen
Jallow	Samba	Committee member	Jamagen
Jassey	Njaymeh	Committee member	Jamagen
Jobe	Alieu	Committee member	Jamagen
Keita	Mohammed	Committee member	Jamagen
Leigh	Mayoro	Committee member	Jamagen
Njie	Musa	Committee member	Jamagen
Nyang	Maram	Committee member	Jamagen
Sarr	Ousman	Committee member	Jamagen
Touray	Mbye	Committee member	Jamagen
Touray	Jarra	Committee member	Jamagen
Aljamdou village CFC, Niumi			

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Gomez	Edward	Committee member	Aljamdou
Mendy	Umpa	Committee member	Aljamdou
Mendy	John	Committee member	Aljamdou
Mendy	Landing	Committee member	Aljamdou
Mendy	Ousman	Committee member	Aljamdou
Mendy	Binta	Committee member	Aljamdou
Mendy	Faye	Committee member	Aljamdou
Njie	Ebrima	Committee member	Aljamdou
Amdallahi Village, Niumi, Agroforestry Farm			
Sarr	Musa	Farmer	Amdallahi
Regional SLM forum, Kerewan			
Bah	Abdoulie	Forum member	International Committee if the Red Cross
Camara	Sarjo	Forum member, regional director	Department of Livestock Services
Chako	Musa	Forum member	4-H project
Daffeh	Lamin	Forum member	FAO
Jarju	Bakarry	Forum member	Regional forestry office
Jallow	Assiatou	Forum member	Youth office
Jawara	Alhajie	Forum member	Department of Community Development
Kintek	Fabala	Forum member	Department of Parks and Wildlife Management
Kuyateh	Haruna	Forum member	Gambia Radio and Television Service
Manneh	Mama	Forum member	Njawara Agricultural Training Centre
Saho	Alagie K.	Forum member, councilor	
Saidy	Lamin	Forum member	National Disaster Management Agency
Saidykhan	Lamin	Forum member, governor	
Sanyang	Ismaila	Forum member	Department of Water Resources

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Community forest management task force, Kerewan			
Gaye	Aron	Committee member	Kerewan
Gassama	Nyimansata	Committee member	Kerewan
Jobe	Mbye	Committee member	Kerewan
Marr	Momodou	Committee member	Kerewan
Sanneh	Buba	Committee member	Kerewan
Sonko	Fatou	Committee member	Kerewan
Suwareh	Yaya	Committee member	Kerewan
ADWAC head office, Kerewan			
Bah	Alassan	Project officer	Kerewan
Jassey	Ebrima	Regional cordinator	Kerewan
Regional forestry office, Kerewan			
Jarju	Bakary	Regional forestry officer	Kerewan
Colley	Pierre	Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project focal point	Kerewan
Central River, north			
Genjie Wollof village CFC, Lower Saloum			
Ceesay	Abdou	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Ceesay	Awa	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Ceesay	Fatou	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Ceesay	Ali Boye	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Ceesay	Incha	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Gai	Sohna	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Gaye	Mariama	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Jobe	Charrey	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Jobe	Ndey	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Jobe	Sohna	Committee member	Genji Wollof

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Jallow	Samba	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Kujabi	Lamin	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Lobo	Kumba	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Mbaye	Aji Amie	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Mbaye	Awa	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Nget	Mam	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Njie	Jai	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Njie	Ngahana	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Secka	Kumba	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Secka	Kumba	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Sowe	Masow	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Sowe	Gai	Committee member	Genji Wollof
Touray	Aji	Committee member	Genji Wollof
SLM forum, Janjanbureh			
Bah	Ousman	Governor, Central River	Janjanbureh
Keita	Lamin	Traditional communicator	Janjanbure
Mbaye	Sainey	Deputy Governor	Janjanbureh
Njie	Momodou	Assistant commissioner, development officer	Janjanbure
Saidyba	Lamin	Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project focal point, Central River	Jarumeh Koto
Samura	Musa	Kuntaur area council	Kuntaur
Panchang village CFC, agroforestry			
Ceesay	Hasoum	Committee member	Panchang
Ceesay	Mohamed	Committee member	Panchang
Ceesay	Mamat	Committee member	Panchang
Gaye	Njahan	Committee member	Panchang
Jobe	Kebba	Committee member	Panchang

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Mbaye	Madi	Committee member	Panchang
Improved cookstove beneficiaries, Wassu village community forest, Niani			
Bayo	Lamin	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Camara	Adama	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Camara	Sarjo	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Ceesay	Adama	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Ceesay	Fatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Darboe	Binta	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Drammeh	Isatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Fofana	Isatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Fatty	Aja	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Kambani	Njie	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jabbi	Mariama	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jabbi	Mama	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jallow	Khadijatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jallow	Kumba	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jammeh	Fatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jarra	Fatoumata	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Keita	Alhajie Balamin	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Keita	Isatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Njie	Yaye	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Kora	Mariama	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Manneh	Aja	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Manneh	Fatoumata	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Saidy	Amie	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Sambou	Isatou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Sawo	Mama	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Sonko	Momodou	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Susso	Anna	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Tambedou	Kaddy	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Touray	Kumba	Cookstove beneficiary	Wassu
Jeloki JFPM committee and beekeping, Sukuta, Niani			
Ceesay	Mamadi	Committee member	Sukuta
Ceesay	Mariama	Committee member	Sukuta
Ceesay	Sheriff	Committee member	Sukuta
Nursery, regional forestry office, Jarume Koto			
Sanneh	Ebrima	Regional forestry office	Jarume Koto
Saidyba	Lamin	Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project focal point	Jarume Koto
Bafara CFC, Changai/Jarume Koto			
Ceesay	Sulayman	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Jabbi	Sariba	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Jaiteh	Mustapha	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Joberteh	Sandi	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Komma	Nyima	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Sassawo	Alkali	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Suwareh	Fanta	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Kabongbong CFC, Yona Musa, Sami			
Baldeh	Hawa	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Camara	Moro	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Camara	Makutu	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Camara	Sheriffo	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Dibbasey	Kemo	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Jabbi	Bassu	Committee member	Jarume Koto

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Jaiteh	Fatoumata	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Konta	Kebba	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Konta	Kalilou	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Sillah	Fatoumata	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Sillah	Ebrima	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Sillah	Balamin	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Touray	Momodou Lamin	Committee member	Jarume Koto
Jamagen CFC, Sami			
Bah	Saidou	Villager	Jamagen
Bah	Giddeh	Villager	Jamagen
Bah	Abdourahman	Villager	Jamagen
Bah	Gayor	Villager	Jamagen
Bah	Omar	Villager	Jamagen
Camara	Fatou	Villager	Jamagen
Camara	Fatou (2)	Villager	Jamagen
Jallow	Sinchu	Villager	Jamagen
Jeng	Sainey	Villager	Jamagen
Jeng	Kinneh	Villager	Jamagen
Jobe	Yassin	Villager	Jamagen
Jobe	Sohna	Villager	Jamagen
Jobe	Fatou	Villager	Jamagen
Jobe	Absa	Villager	Jamagen
Jobe	Kumba	Villager	Jamagen
Gaye	Abdoulie	Villager	Jamagen
Kah	Mbasin	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Ali Masam	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Amat Sainey	Villager	Jamagen

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Khan	Mamudou	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Ali	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Malick	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Amadou	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Kebba	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Kahcru	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Binta	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Mohammed	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Marri	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Emi	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Momodou Hoja	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Binta	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Yassin	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Horja	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Ndey	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Lolly	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Ebrima	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Adama	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Alhajie	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Mamat	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Demba	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Abdoulie	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Babacarr	Villager	Jamagen
Khan	Gibbi	Villager	Jamagen
Leigh	Amadou	Villager	Jamagen
Leigh	Sarjo	Villager	Jamagen
Leigh	Modou	Villager	Jamagen

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Leigh	Isatou	Villager	Jamagen
Leigh	Yassin	Villager	Jamagen
Leigh	Adama	Villager	Jamagen
Leigh	Menkeh	Villager	Jamagen
Ndimballan	Fatou	Villager	Jamagen
Nyang	Sainabou	Villager	Jamagen
Sanga	Khasi	Villager	Jamagen
Secka	Alhajie	Villager	Jamagen
Taal	Fatou	Villager	Jamagen
Upper River, north			
Sare Samba Baide and Sare Samba Kekuta, CFC			
Bah	Fatoumata	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Bah	Mariama	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Bah	Salimatou	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Bah	Pateh	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Bah	Woppa	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Dem	Momodou	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Dem	Malang	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Jawo	Salla	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Jallow	Hassan	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Jallow	Ayuba	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Jallow	Saidou	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Jallow	Ali	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Jallow	Dawda	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Sowe	Mbembe	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Sowe	Binta	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Sowe	Chome	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Sumareh	Fatoumata	Villager	Sare Samba/Kekuta
Changally Chewdo CFC, Sandu			
Bah	Daddo	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Camara	Kamisa	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Camara	Hawa	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Dem	Jaranka	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Dem	Alhajie	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Fatty	Bully	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Jawo	Wurry	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Mballow	Jainaba	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Mballow	Jarai	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Sabally	Jainaba	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Yaffa	Fanta	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Touba Wuli CFC, Touba Wuli			
Camara	Faye	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Conteh	Sarjo	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Danjo	Mbye	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Demba	Isatou	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Drammeh	Teneng	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Fatty	Tida	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Fatty	Fatoumata	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Fatty	Bintou	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Jallow	Juma	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Jallow	Sana	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Kora	Binta	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Manneh	Musa	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Nyang	Nyaling	Committee member	Changally Chewdo

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
Sanneh	Omar	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Sanno	Karamo	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Sanno	Lamin	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Sanno	Foday	Committee member	Changally Chewdo
Jeloki JFPM committee			
Bunda Bah	Bakary	Committee member	Jeloki JFPM
Dembelleh	Wuyeh	Committee member	Jeloki JFPM
Drammeh	Bakary	Committee member	Jeloki JFPM
Drammeh	Degummeh	Committee member	Jeloki JFPM
Drammeh	Essa	Committee member	Jeloki JFPM
Fatty	Burang	Committee member	Jeloki JFPM
Jambarr CFC, Kwonkunding			
Bunda Bah	Bakary	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Barrow	Saikou	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Danjo	Manku	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Fatty	Burang	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Touray	Almami	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Touray	Alfusainey	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Touray	Jewuru	Committee member	Kwonkunding
Jumburu CFC, Kolibantang			
Dem	Mamudou	Committee member	Kolibantang
Jallow	Juma	Committee member	Kolibantang
Jallow	Jainaba	Committee member	Kolibantang
Jallow	Yaya	Committee member	Kolibantang
Marena	Ebrima	Committee member	Kolibantang
Sabally	Woppa	Committee member	Kolibantang
York	Kawsu	Committee member	Kolibantang

Last name	First name	Position	Organization/location
York	Yusupha	Committee member	Kolibantang
Yaffa	Kaffa	Committee member	Kolibantang
SLM forum, Basse			
Barjo	Yankuba	Forum member	Basse
Ceesay	Yaya	Forum member	Basse
Jallow	Muhammed	Forum member	Basse
Jarju	Omar	Forum member	Basse
John	Samba	Forum member	Basse
Mbakeh	Amadou	Forum member	Basse
Regional community forest task force, Basse			
Baldeh	Peter	Task force member	Basse
Regional forestry office, Basse			
Barjo	Yankuba	Regional forestry officer	Basse
Tamba	Lamin	Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project focal point	Basse

Appendix 2. Evaluation method

Desk review

Project documents were reviewed during the evaluation process. Particular attention was placed on the TOR, however, the Evaluation Team also conducted a desk review of the following information: an appraisal document; baseline reports; the MTR; progress reports from implementing partners; synthesized project implementation reports; field mission reports; policy documents; and other relevant sources.

Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted. These targeted steering committee and technical team members, including: the project-established regional dryland forest management forums; the community forest management task forces; the Department of Forestry; FAO's Project Management Unit; project steering committee members at the national and regional level; implementing partners such as the ADWAC, NACO and NARI; representatives of community forest and JFPM committees; and beneficiaries of the entrepreneurial interventions like beekeeping and improved cookstoves.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were used to obtain information from beneficiaries in a consistent and structured manner. Targeted beneficiaries include community forest and JFPM committees. This involved women as a group, whether members of the same community or beneficiaries of the same activity. A pre-defined checklist was used as a tool to obtain relevant information in a consistent and structured manner. There were also focus group discussions with dryland forest management forums, community forest management task forces and the beneficiaries of improved cookstoves.

Site visits

Site visits were conducted from 21 to 30 November 2022 in all project implementation regions: North Bank; Central River, north; Upper River, north; and Lower River. This was conducted to closely assess selected sites and to gather the beneficiary views on implementation, intended and unintended results, and expectations. These site visits allowed the Evaluation Team to appreciate the project's physical achievements and overall implementation. This process also provided additional information on challenges and a way forward. The site visits were randomly selected from an exhaustive list of beneficiaries and intervention types that had been provided by the Project Management Unit. These included: community forest and JFPM committees; improved cookstove beneficiaries; agroforestry participants; and rangeland management sites. In addition, the regional-level project implementation oversight committees, such as the technical advisory committees and their respective dryland forest management forums and community forest task forces were visited and interviewed as appropriate.

Success stories

The Evaluation Team identified, assessed and presented case studies on success stories that warranted replication and expansion, as well as the not-so-successful stories that would need re-evaluation for the future. These case studies were identified during the key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Free, prior and informed consent was sought for the interviews,

photographs, videos or recordings made during the case study collection and site visits. The selection process assured representational voices of the most vulnerable populations, especially women.

Data analysis and interpretation

Quantitative data gathered during national and field-level visits were analysed. Qualitative data was compiled through desk reviews and community and key informant interviews to draw inferences for conclusions and recommendations. This terminal evaluation considered all information that had been gathered from various data collection instruments.

Site mapping and sampling

A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representativeness throughout the selection process. In each project intervention region, a representative sample of districts was randomly selected. For each district, a sample of communities and intervention types, as relevant, was drawn using the same process of random selection. The selection process was guided by key criteria, including but not limited to: districts and communities with large coverage (size); the intensity of key project intervention activities (implementation status) that were representative of the different project components (variety of interventions, all covered); the geographical spread of the districts within a given region; and the distribution of communities within a specific district, given accessibility, time and resource constraints. Since the project was evaluated in conjunction with the GAM 033 project, due consideration was given to communities where both projects had intervened for efficiency and to maximize resources and time during fieldwork.

Appendix Table 1. Site visit summary and a gender-disaggregated number of respondents

Region	District	Institution/community forest Village/community	Number of respondents		Total
Greater Banjul			***Male***	***Female***	
		Department of Forestry	2	0	**2**
		National Livestock Owners Association (Executive)	6	0	**6**
		FAO in the Gambia	6	0	**6**
		NACO	2	0	**2**
		National Beekeepers Association	1	0	**1**
		National Farmers Platform	2	0	**2**
		AGFP	1	0	**1**
		NARI	4	1	**5**
		National Environment Agency	4	1	**5**
		Department of Agriculture	1	0	**1**
Lower River		Dryland forest management forum	8	0	**8**
		Regional forestry office	2	0	**2**
	Kiang West	Bajana (community forestry)	3	4	**7**
	Kiang West	Kwinella Nyakunda (community forestry)	7	1	**8**

Region	District	Institution/community forest Village/community	Number of respondents		Total
		Dongoro Bah (rangeland)	4	1	**5**
	Jarra Central	Badumeh Koto (community forestry)	6	7	**13**
	Jarra West	Sankuwia (community forestry)	3	1	**4**
	Jarra West	Seno Bajonki (community forestry)	11	2	**13**
North Bank		Regional SLM forum	13	1	**14**
		Regional forestry office	2	0	**2**
		Community forestry management task force	5	2	**7**
		ADWAC	2	0	**2**
	Central Baddibu	Mandori (JFPM)	4	3	**7**
		Jamagen (community forestry)	10	5	**15**
	Niumi	Aljamdou	6	2	**8**
	Niumi	Amdallahi (agroforestry)	1	0	**1**
Central River, north		SLM forum	6	0	**6**
		Regional forestry office	2	0	**2**
	Lower Saloum	Genjie Wollof (community forestry)	16	7	**23**
		Panchang (community forestry/agroforestry)	6	0	**6**
	Niani	Wassu (improved cooktoves)	3	26	**29**
	Niani	Sukuta (JFPM/beekeeping)	2	1	**3**
		Changai (community forestry)	3	4	**7**
	Sami	Yona Musa (community forestry)	8	5	**13**
	Sami	Jamagen (community forestry)	28	27	**55**
Upper River, north		SLM forum	6	0	**6**
		Regional community forest task force	1	1	**1**
		Regional forestry office	2	2	**2**
		Sare Samba Baide (community forestry)	11	6	**17**
	Sandu	Changally Chewdo (community forestry)	4	7	**11**
	Wuli	Touba Wuli (community forestry)	8	9	**17**
		Dramani (Jeloki JFPM)	6	0	**6**
		Kwonkunding (community forestry)	6	0	**6**
		Kolibantang	7	2	**9**

Gender

Gender dimensions were also considered, especially in determining the category of people to be involved in the evaluation at the community level. The sample was drawn from the main list of communities. This covered related project activities that had been implemented and groups of people or individuals that had been involved in each district. In some instances, deliberate selections were made as an affirmative action towards ensuring the involvement of the most vulnerable populations: women; youth; and people with disabilities. It also involved key influential people within the project's context.

Appendix 3. Success stories

A beekeeping success story: the Bajana community forest (Npetcheki)

The introduction of enterprise development initiatives – such as beekeeping within the implementation framework of community forestry – was successful in terms of its contribution to the improvement of forest health, income for communities and commitment to community forestry. It not only increased skills and knowledge on beekeeping and related activities like hive construction and value-added products but also provided an alternative source of income for the CFCs and their members. It also helped to reduce extraction pressure on the dryland community forests so that these forests could rehabilitate in terms of tree stocking and biodiversity.

The Npetcheki CFC in the village of Bajana, Kiang West District of Lower River has successful enterprise development success stories. The CFC shared that it harvested its beehives many times over three months. It generated GMB 15 000 from one harvest alone. They refused to provide an exact figure, which is probably higher. Further, female entrepreneurs learned how to make body cream by processing beeswax from honey harvests. This generated significant income, helping them educate their children. In fact, they were so impressed with the entrepreneurial development results that they requested additional training to produce soap from beeswax. The women entrepreneurs could sell all of their processed beeswax cream locally at the village level. They look forward to selling more if the new beehives are colonized and productive.

A similar story was heard from the Jeloki JFPM committee in the Mandori village of North Bank.

The distribution of improved metal cookstoves and training on the construction of fixed clay stoves

The introduction of improved metal cookstoves was a successful project intervention. All beneficiaries, mainly women, expressed satisfaction with the initiative and desire for more cookstoves. This stems from the clear, perceived benefits of using the cookstoves.

In the village of Wassu, Niani District of Central River (north), female beneficiaries reported that one cart-load of fuelwood now lasts them more than a month. Before the introduction of improved cookstoves, fuelwood had lasted only two to three weeks. Consequently, they used to collect two cartloads for a given period but now collect just one. They also shared that this reduces the drudgery of cooking and stated that it will contribute to improved health due to less smoke. Further, the women perceived that less quantity and frequency of fuelwood collection from the community forest and the surrounding woodlands means that the initiative will protect and develop forests. They were also trained in the construction of fixed mud stoves, which are equally energy efficient, and this made them feel empowered. In fact, they feel confident to train each other and other villagers on more sustainable energy use.

Not-so-successful stories: private tree nurseries

The project can highlight many success stories, but it also has some less than successful experiences. These are limited but equally important for learning purposes. The introduction of private tree nurseries among participating CFCs is of particular interest.

In the village of Genji Wollof, Lower Saloum District of Central River (north), private tree nurseries were introduced as part of the project's entrepreneurial development initiative. Female entrepreneurs were trained in nursery establishment and management for seedling production. The women learned to produce seedlings but were unable to sell these seedlings due to the lack of a market at the village or community level. The project failed to assist them in accessing markets outside of the community. Further, it failed to link female producers and their products to the project's seedling procurement process (providing an outlet for them). In addition, the choice of seedlings to produce was not adequately linked to the project's needs. Although not necessarily a requirement, this would have provided a good outlet and source of income and incentive for private producers during the first two years of production as they searched for other post-project period market opportunities.

Appendix 4. Itinerary for key informant interviews

Ministries/agencies/depts./bilateral/multi-lateral organizations	Proposed time & location	Key contact	Mode of engagement/data collection
Project Oversight			
FAO/GAM- BH	Fajara		
Project Coordinator	Fajara	Sambou Nget	
Project Task Force - FAO.GAM - FLO - PC - LTO/SFW - HQTO	Fajara	Mustapha Ceesay	
	FAO HQ	Mohamed Bergigui	
	Fajara	Sambou Nget	
	Dakar	Patrice Savadogo	
	FAO HQ	Magnus Grylle	
Project Steering Committee (PSC) – NEA; MECCNAR; Department of Forestry; NACO; ADWAC; All Reg. Governors; National Farmers Platform; NACOFAC; AGFP; MoJ; DWR; DPWM…..	Banjul	Chairperson –PS, Alieu Njie	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
M&E – FAO/GAM	Fajara	Esi Christon Quao	
Communication/FAO.GAM	Fajara	Kopi Chandra Kharel	
MECCNAR	Kanifing	DPS Bubacar Zaidi Jallow	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Department of Forestry	Banjul	Director – Mohamed Jaiteh	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Department of Livestock Services	Abuko	Principal Animal Production Officer – Ebou Jobe	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
NEA	Kanifing	Director Inter-sectoral Network – Njagga Touray	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
NARI	Brikama	Director of Research -Dr. Lamin Dibba	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
NACO		Executive Director – Kanimang Camara	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
ADWAC	Kerewan/NBR	Director – Mam Samba Joof	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) Working Group	MECCNAR Kairaba Avenue/ Kanifing	PS – Mr. Alieu Njie	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs/FGD
National Livestock Owners Association (NLOA)	Brikama	President – Ebrima O. Jallow	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
National Bee Keepers Association (NBAG)	Brikama	President – Siaka Manga	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
National Farmers Platform, Gambia (NFPG)	Brikama	President – Hon. Sheriffo Bojang	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
All Gambia Forestry Platform (AGFP)	Brikama	President – Seeku Janko	
North Bank Region			
NBR Regional Directorate Oversight Local Government Authority Multi-stakeholder regional dryland forest management forum Regional community forestry	Kerewan Kerewan Kerewan Kerewan	Bakary Jarju – RFO Pierre Colley Reg. Focal Point Governor/NBR – Lamin Saidikhan Governor/NBR Governor/NBR	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs FGD FGD

Ministries/agencies/depts./bilateral/multi-lateral organizations	Proposed time & location	Key contact	Mode of engagement/data collection
task force			
Rehabilitation of Forest Nursery	Kerewan	Pierre Colley Reg. Focal Point	
Jalabiro Forest Park – JFPM Committee	Mandori/Central Baddibu	Nfamara Mambureh Lead Entrepreneur	FGD
Improved Cook Stove	Busura	Musukebba Marong	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Bassick Community Forestry Committee	Bassick/Sabach Sanjally	Momodou Bah (Lead Entrepreneur)	FGD
CFC at start up to PCFMA	Jamagen/NBR	CFC President – Musa Njie	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
PCFMA to CFMA	Aljamdu/NBR	CFC President – Ebrima Njie	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC with developed Preliminary Management Plan	Jamagen/NBR	CFC President – Musa Njie	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC with developed 5 year management plan	Aljamdu/NBR	CFC President – Ebrima Njie	
Ngunta Cattle track Management Committee	Ngunta/NBR	Hulay Dem	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Agroforestry	Amdallai/Lower Numi/NBR	Musa Sarr	
Central River Region – North			
CRR North – Regional Directorate Oversight Local Government Authority Multi-stakeholder regional dryland forest management forum Regional community forestry task force	Jarummeh-Koto Janjangbureh Janjangbureh/CRR Janjangbureh/CRR	Ebrima Sanneh Lamin Saidyba Reg. Focal Point Governor/CRR – Ousman Bah Governor/CRR Governor/CRR	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs FGD FGD
Rehabilitation of Forest Nursery	Jarummeh Koto	Lamin Saidyba Reg. Focal Point	
Sibikuroto Forest Park, JFPM Committee	Sukuta/Niani/CRR	Bahammadi Ceesay (Lead Entrepreneur)	FGD
Improved cook stove	Wassu/Niani/CRR	Mariama Keita	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Community Forestry Committee	Genji Wollof/Lower Saloum/CRR	Ndey Jobe – Lead entrepreneur	FGD
Gassang Forest Park, JFPM Committee	Madina Lamin Kanteh/Niani/ CRR	Saidou Trawally – Lead Entrepreneur	FGD
CFC at start up to PCFMA	Jamagen/CRR	Ali Maram Khan – CFC President	
CFC at PCFMA to CFMA	Jarumeh Koto	Alkali Sisawo CFC President	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC with developed Preliminary Management Plan	Jamagen/CRR	Ali Maram Khan – CFC President	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Banta Suu Cattle track management Committee	Banta Suu	Fatou Touray	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Agroforestry	Panchang/CRR	Muhammed Ceesay	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Upper River Region – North			
URR North Regional Forestry Directorate – Oversight Local Government Authority Multi-stakeholder regional	Basse Basse Basse Basse	Yankuba Bajo – RFO Lamin S Tamba – Regional Focal Point (RFP) Governor/URR –Samba Bah	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs

Ministries/agencies/depts./bilateral/multi-lateral organizations	Proposed time & location	Key contact	Mode of engagement/data collection
dryland forest management forum Regional community forestry task force		Governor/URR Governor/URR	FGD FGD
Agroforestry site	Drammani	Samba Drammeh – Farmer	
Rehabilitation of forest nursery	Jeloki Forest Station	Lamin S Tamba – Regional Focal Point (RFP)	
Jeloki Forest Park, JFPM Committee	Drammani/Wuli/URR	Bakary Drammeh (Lead Entrepreneur)	FGD
Mbemgbong Samba Community Forestry Committee	Changally Chewdu/Sandu/URR	Jaranka Dem (Lead Entrepeneur)	FGD
Forest Fire Management award scheme – milling machine	Changally Chewdu/Sandu/URR	Dado Bah (Lead)	FGD
CFC Start up to PCFMA	Kolibantang/URR	Yusupha York – CF President	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC from PCFMA to CFMA	Kwonkunding and villages/URR	Manku Danjo – CF President	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC With developed PCFMA	Sare Samba Baide and Sare Samba Kekuta	Hassana Jallow – CF President	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC with developed 5-year management plan	Touba Wuli/URR	Tida Fatty – CF President	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Yorobawol rangeland management Committee	Touba Wuli	Nyaling Nyang	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Limbambulu rangeland management Committee	Drammani/Wuli/URR	Degumeh Drammeh	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Lower River Region			
LRR Regional Forestry Directorate Oversight Local Government Authority Multi-stakeholder regional dryland forest management forum Regional community forestry task force	Soma Soma Soma Soma	Alhaji Sanyang – RFO Bubacarr Bah – Reg. Focal Point Governor/LRR – Seedy Lamin Bah Governor/LRR Governor/LRR	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs FGD FGD
Sorok Community Forest, JFPM Committee	Badumeh Koto/Jarra Central/LRR	Ansumana Jassey Lead entrepreneur	FGD
Mpecheck Community Forest Committee	Bajana/Kian West/LRR	Fabakary Sora – Lead Entrepreneur	FGD
CFC Start up to PCFMA	Sankuwia/Jarra West/LRR	CFC Chair – Saikou kanyi	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC PCFMA to CFMA	Kanuma/LRR	CFC Chair – Seedy Sonko	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
CFC with developed preliminary Management Plans	Sankuwia/Jarra West/LRR	CFC Chair – Saikou kanyi	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Improved Cook Stove	Sare Samba/LRR	Fatou Ceesay	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs
Range Land and Cattle track Management Committee	Sare Samba/LRR	Omar Bah	FGD
Agroforestry Farmers	Kwinella Nyakunda/LRR	Lamin L. (Fakebba) Camara	Face-to-face using KIIs or SSIs

Ministries/agencies/depts./bilateral/multi-lateral organizations	Proposed time & location	Key contact	Mode of engagement/data collection
Wensenkelleh Community Forest Committee	Seno Bajonki/Jarra West/LRR	Bubacarr Jaila Jallow – Lead entrepreneur	FGD

Appendix 5. The GEF evaluation criteria rating table

This table presents the project ratings as part of the terminal evaluation process.

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	The project was relevant and well aligned to the strategic objectives and priorities of the GEF, FAO, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Gambia's National Development Plan (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, 2017).
A1.1. Alignment with the GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The project perfectly aligned with both the GEF land degradation focal area and FAO's strategic framework and objectives on natural resources.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	It addressed the agriculture and natural resources policies and action plans (forest policy, national climate change policy and action plan, climate change, biodiversity, desertification control action plans). It also addressed global priorities on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and land degradation.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	S	Although there was complementarity between the project and the AAD and Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Gambia River Basin projects, it had limited collaboration with these during implementation. However, it collaborated with the FAO-GEF GAM 033 project with which it had complementary areas of stock routes/rangeland establishment. Here, they could have collaborated more on beekeeping interventions. The project also corresponded with FAO's Forest Farm Facility interventions that provided co-financing through NACO for the community forest and enterprise development components. The project's collaboration with other initiatives was either very limited or non-existent, especially when it came to other government projects.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	S	The project was remarkable in meeting expectations, despite many challenges: the death of the first Project Coordinator; the COVID-19 pandemic; and cumbersome procurement processes. It improved the lives and livelihoods of beneficiaries through income generation and better management capacities of beneficiaries on sustainable dryland management. It also improved entrepreneurial skills (honey production, value-added products, beehive construction, improved clay stoves, seedling production). It

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		enhanced the empowerment of women in management and decision-making as members of the community forest and JFPM committees and the regional community forest management task forces. The establishment of SLM forums in the regions improved the coordination and monitoring of all natural resources-related projects. The need to maintain such structures is quite critical for the sustainability of project initiatives.
B1.1. Delivery of project outputs	S	On activity implementation, the project satisfactorily met its output targets. All 28 CFMAs were completed and signed and await gazetting. Also, all 18 JFPM agreements were completed and signed, along with their respective management plans. They also await delivery to their respective management committees. The forest strategy was developed and the management plan was updated. Additionally, regional community forest task forces, together with the SLM forums, were established and operational. EDPs were established and accompanying training programmes were conducted. Of the planned 2 000 households targeted for the supply and use of improved metal cookstoves, 1 450 were reached through the production and distribution of 3 050 cookstoves with some households sharing them. Distribution of the balance of cookstoves (950) is in progress. Women also had about 30–50% representation on the community forest and JFPM committees and the regional task forces. They benefited from capacity development activities and were the main beneficiaries in the construction of fixed clay stove trainings (of trainers), allowing the project to reach more people. On stock routes, nine out of the ten planned were implemented. The project developed and implemented a communications strategy and an M&E plan.
B1.2. Progress towards outcomes[iii] and project objectives	S	All project components were satisfactorily implemented.
Outcome 1.1 Institutions at the national and regional level have the capacity to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices	S	The project achieved satisfactory results under this outcome by developing policy and strategy documents. It also conducted trainings of other relevant institutions to improve their capacity to integrate dryland forest management. However, these have yet to lead to policy changes or the deliberate integration of dryland forest management into other relevant sectoral policies.
Outcome 2.1 Legal community forestry ownership strengthened	S	Significant achievements were registered under this component. Twenty-eight CFMAs were signed and are in the process of being gazetted to conclude their respective legal

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		community ownership status. Additionally, 18 JFPM agreements were signed and are ready to be implemented.
Outcome 2.2 A total of 15 066.84 ha of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities	S	Project achievements in implementing the sustainable community-led management of dryland forest ecosystems was quite significant. Local communities sustainably managed 15 000 ha of dryland forest through the successful application of 18 JFPM plans and 73 community forest management plans. In addition, the capacity of local communities in forest management and protection was developed. Similarly, the improved fuel-efficient cookstoves were used by most communities to reduce household fuelwood consumption. The initiated forest enterprises were well established and communities started to reap gains and reduce pressure on dryland forests. However, the established forest nursery enterprises were challenged by the availability of marketing outlets.
Outcome 3.1 Project implementation based on results-based management and the application of project findings and lessons learned in future operations facilitated	S	The absence of a dedicated M&E Officer in the project's initial stage negatively affected having a robust results-based M&E system in place. However, there was marked improvement at the later stage after recruiting an M&E Officer to oversee the system. An M&E system was then put into place to monitor, track and provide management recommendations for timely decision-making.
Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/outcomes	S	Despite challenges, the project made satisfactory progress towards achieving project outcomes as indicated in the results matrix. On project outcomes, significant progress was made. All capacity development activities at the institutional and community levels were accomplished, potentially contributing to sustainable dryland forest management. Further, the PCFMAs and the CFMAs were processed to near conclusion, ultimately strengthening legal ownership for communities. Significant achievements were made in enterprise development with improvements in income generation potential for beneficiaries, including women. Gender mainstreaming was very effective. Equally on rangeland, nine out of the planned ten were accomplished with the potential to reduce grazing pressure on forest land, strengthening their sustainable management.
B1.3. Likelihood of impact	S	The forest enterprises started to realize gains, particularly from beekeeping production. This contributed to reducing pressure on forests. Equally, conflict reduction mechanisms were put in place, for example, the signed neighbouring village agreements for

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		community forests, local rangeland conventions, and the establishment of regional forest task forces for the promotion of community forest, conflict prevention and management – all of which contribute to an increased commitment to community-based natural resources management. The adoption of improved cookstoves also reduced the level of fuelwood consumption in the beneficiary households. This contributed to savings and, as a result, better livelihoods. However, despite these gains, the right sustainability conditions can still be created. There can be less funding for task force meetings. There can also be less extension support for beekeeping interventions due to the Department of Forestry's limited capacity to follow up upon project closure.
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency[iv]	S	Despite challenges, the project's achievements were remarkable with over 80 percent disbursement/delivery. Financial resources were efficiently managed and the project collaborated with a FAO-GEF agriculture project to establish rangeland for increased efficiency. The project also created and efficiently used the SLM forums and community forest task forces to disseminate the project idea and to act as local monitors for implementation. However, delays in the procurement processes negatively impacted the timely implementation of some key activities, such as seedling acquisition and planting, nursery construction and the timely procurement and delivery of cookstoves. This sometimes led to budget shortfalls as a result of frequent price fluctuations. Equally, delays in LOA signing resulted in the late disbursement of funds for the implementation partners. Further the engagement of civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations was limited. Regardless, the project was satisfactorily efficient.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	The overall risk to sustainability remains since there are limited controls over natural risk factors. However, within the project context, the implemented mitigation measures reduced the impact of the risk to long-term sustainability of the project. As an additional mitigation measure, an exit strategy was developed with the participation of the government, implementing partners, other similar projects and beneficiaries to help create

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		the sustainable continuity of project results (FAO Representation in the Gambia, 2022a). This participation encouraged acceptance and ownership of the strategy by stakeholders.
D1.1. Financial risks	MU	The Department of Forestry will mainstream support for the continuity of the project results in its annual budgets. In addition, other projects under the Ministry of Environment and Climate and Natural Resources that have similar objectives will help to sustain project outcomes by financing related project activities. In addition, revenue from CFMA implementation will partially go back into forest management. This will then reduce the financial risk. However, all of these aspects do not make the project outcome risk proof. The department's human and financial resources are low and their levels are unreliable. Projects have a lifetime, while revenue from the CFMA implementation are low and only intermittent.
D1.2. Sociopolitical risks	L	These risks are low given the adopted conflict mitigation measures like the neighbouring village agreements and the conclusion of the PCFMAs and the CFMAs that grant tenure to the communities over the community forests. The inclusion of income generating activities such as beekeeping will help to maintain interest in the community forest at the local level.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	L	The implementation of sustainable dryland forest management is a mandate of the Department of Forestry. In addition, the established forest laws and regulations call for SFM. Similarly, the Forest Act and regulations provide for the implementation of community forestry. At the decentralized levels, the SLM created will continue working with the communities to sustain project gains. Further, the creation of community forest and JFPM committees will ensure local institutional support for the project outcome.
D1.4. Environmental risks	ML	Stakeholders were trained on adopting measures to manage environmental exposures like fire prevention and control. The established rangeland will reduce pressure on the community forests and jointly managed forest parks. However, climate change and variation, especially drought – which is beyond the control of the government and the communities – remain a significant risk to the sustainability of project gains. Droughts will increase the fire risks and negatively affect tree planting and farmer-assisted natural regeneration. Fire management and protection, which the communities were trained in, will be a mitigating factor.

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		Overgrazing will be minimized due to the establishment of stock routes and rangeland away from the community forests.
D2. Catalysis and replication	S	With the achievements made so far, such as improved income potential from project-related entrepreneurial skills development, the project has been a catalyst for scaling up and replicating dryland forest management. Neighbouring non-participating communities started to show interest in the project. In fact, they requested similar interventions from the Department of Forestry for both community forestry and JFPM.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness[v]	S	The Department of Forestry has many years of experience in implementing community forestry, JFPM and beekeeping. This enabled a good project launch. In addition, project design included many complementary actions and actors to promote sustainable dryland forest management and entrepreneurship development. It also ensured regional oversight through the SLM and the community forest task forces. Further, the involvement of experienced implementation partners, such as NACO, the ADWAC and NARI, helped to facilitate the effective implementation of activities through the capacity development of beneficiaries and enterprise development. In fact, this proved to be a successful, motivating factor for community engagement.
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	At the country level, the project team worked closely to ensure the delivery of project milestones. Routine joint field monitoring visits were held during and after. Emerging implementation issues were discussed and addressed during these, as well as in steering committee meetings. In addition, the implementing partners followed the provisions of their respective LOA obligations – despite numerous procurement and disbursement delays and implementation delays on behalf of the partners. Community empowerment through the capacity development of CFC members, women's groups and stakeholder institutions, as well as the successful introduction EDPs, all contributed to improved implementation quality.
E2.1. Quality of project implementation by FAO (Budget Holder, Lead Technical Officer, Project Task Force, etc.)	MS	FAO implemented its executing functions moderately satisfactorily. It provided support for the project steering committee to hold periodic meetings. It also provided guidance and direction for the implementing partners where necessary. FAO also enabled the M&E, despite the late development of an M&E

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		strategy and plan. It also followed up with the implementing partners for the development and submission of implementation reports. There were, however, important shortcomings in FAO execution. There was no trace of backstopping field missions by FAO headquarters and the Lead Technical Officer. There were significant delays in: procurement; the processing of LOA obligations; disbursement of funds to implementing partners (Ips); the recruitment of key staff such as the communications and procurement officers; and setting up a dedicated M&E team and system. These implementation shortcomings disrupted the quality of project implementation.
E2.2. Project oversight (project steering committee, project working group, etc.)	S	The project steering committee, the SLM forums and the CFC and community forest task forces actively participated in their respective engagements. This provided oversight and guidance for project implementation, which contributed significantly to the achievements. Steering committee meetings were regularly held during the second half of the project in fulfilment of the recommended twice a year. However, it did not meet in 2022. Further, the SLM forums and the community forest task forces proved to be effective regional multisectoral oversight establishments for project implementation and provided effective oversight functions during implementation.
E3. Quality of project execution	MS	From the start, the Project Management Unit had been established and functional. Later, however, it was disrupted due to the demise of the first Project Coordinator and unfilled vacancies of key staff positions, including M&E, communications and procurement officers. These aspects negatively impacted project execution during its first half. However, with the91ecuritment of a new coordinator and the filling of the vacancies, there was marked improvements on administrative and operational functions. The project was delivered on LOA obligations and supported by annual workplans and budgets. The identified focal points as an interface between FAO and the Department of Forestry also immensely contributed to the improved quality of execution as they were closer to project beneficiaries.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	S	The project had an operating financial management system that made financial reporting efficient. On financial disbursements, a rate of 90 percent was noted as of December 2022 compared to 48 percent at mid-term (December 2019). Further, 94 percent of

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		approved co-financing fund was committed with the government and other implementing partners, including the ADWAC and NACO, having fulfilled 100 percent of their co-financing pledges. The AAD project (80 percent) and NEMA missed their co-financing targets by 20 percent and 10 percent, respectively. The latter, however, phased out with no other confirmed source of paying the co-financing balance. These factors had no significant impact on project execution.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	MS	While the project engaged extensively with stakeholders, especially at community levels, there were lapses in horizontal linkages with other development partner interventions on the ground. Although similar activities were implemented, there was very little collaboration with these activities during project implementation. Community-level engagement via community forest and JFPM committees and SLM forums was, however, commendable. The interest in adoption and scaling up of project innovations was high and indicative of sustainability trends. The exit strategy, if effectively implemented, would be a pathway to enhance partnership and stakeholder engagement in the future.
E6. Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products	MS	There was limited communications, knowledge sharing and management during the first half of project implementation. However, during the last two to three years of the project's lifetime, the project made important achievements in communicating its work by producing newsletters and factsheets and in using FAO in the Gambia sites to highlight progress, success stories and lessons learned. This contributed to only a moderate increase in visibility and awareness on project activities at the national level due to their limited distribution and the fact that not many people in the country regularly visit FAO in the Gambia websites for information. Better dissemination of project information would have been achieved had the project produced leaflets or brochures for wider distribution at the national, local and community level.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MS	There had not been a focused M&E system for the project from the start. Much of the project's M&E activities began during the second half of the project with the development of a necessary M&E plan and tools. With this, there were periodic monitoring missions to track the implementation status and provide recommendations to guide project implementation. Indicator tracking tools, for example, the GEF and the Adaptation

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
		Monitoring and Assessment Tool were updated periodically. Regular implementation reports from implementing partners and back-to-office reports from project staff were also generated, highlighting actions to be taken by management.
E7.1. M&E design	MS	The M&E design met the project's needs. However, since the M&E design goes beyond the results matrix, the incorporation of an evaluation design matrix would have been ideal.
E7.2. Implementation plan (including financial and human resources)	MS	The project design included a global workplan. The Project Management Unit used this workplan to develop annual workplans for implementation. Periodic M&E missions were conducted in accordance with approved project workplans and budgets. The Project Management Unit also embarked on periodic monitoring missions and regular management meetings. There was an initial delay in recruiting key project staff, which was a noticeable human resources issue. This was, however, addressed at project mid-term. There were also financial issues regarding the timely disbursement of funds linked to LOA approval. These issues persisted until project closure, leading to delays in the timely delivery of implementing partner activities that had been detailed in each LOA.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MS	Despite numerous implementation challenges, including late financial disbursement, the death of the first Project Coordinator, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and procurement bottlenecks, the project succeeded with a 91% financial disbursement rate as of December 2022 and the achievement of most outcomes. Initially, however, these factors had negatively affected the rate of implementation as per project design, warranting a one-year no-cost extension.
F. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S	The project was ideal in addressing gender issues. Women made up over 70% of the project beneficiaries and were heavily dependent on dryland forest for fuelwood and income. With the operationalization of the forest enterprise schemes and the distribution of improved cookstoves, their resilience and dependence on forest resources was positively impacted. Further, the project strengthened women's role in decision-making at the community level since they had become members of the various community forest and JFPM committees and regional oversight task forces.

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating[i]	Summary comments[ii]
F2. Human rights issues/Indigenous Peoples	S	The project had no human rights or Indigenous Peoples issues.
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	S	The GEF forestry project was classified as a low-risk project. Therefore, no environmental and social safeguard documents were developed. The project was approved and operated on the premise of this and several other pre-approval phases.
Overall project rating	S	

Notes: [i] See the rating scheme in Appendix 6.

[ii] Include reference to the relevant sections in the report.

[iii] Assessment and ratings by individual outcomes may be undertaken if there is added value.

[iv] This includes cost efficiency and timeliness.

[v] This refers to factors affecting the project's ability to start as expected, such as the presence of sufficient capacity among the executing partners upon project launch.

Appendix 6. Rating scheme

See instructions provided in Annex 2. Rating scales in the "Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects", April 2017.

PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes.

Rating	***Description***
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	*Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceed expectations and/or there were no shortcomings.*
Satisfactory (S)	*Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings.*
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	*Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings.*
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	*Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.*
Unsatisfactory (U)	*Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings.*
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	*Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings.*
Unable to Assess (UA)	*The available information does not allow for an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.*

During project implementation, the results framework of some projects may have been modified. In cases where modifications in the project impact, outcomes and outputs have not scaled down their overall scope, the evaluator should assess outcome achievements based on the revised results framework. In instances where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has been scaled down, the magnitude of and necessity for downscaling is taken into account. Despite the achievement of results as per the revised results framework, a lower outcome effectiveness rating may be given where appropriate.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

Quality of implementation and of execution will be rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF agencies that have direct access to the GEF resources. Quality of execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received the GEF funds from the GEF agencies and executed the funded activities on the ground. The performance will be rated on a six-point scale:

Rating	***Description***
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	*There were no shortcomings and the quality of **implementation** or **execution** exceeded expectations.*
Satisfactory (S)	*There were no or minor shortcomings and the quality of **implementation** or **execution** meets expectations.*
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	*There were some shortcomings and the quality of **implementation** or **execution** more or less meets expectations.*
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	*There were significant shortcomings and the quality of **implementation** or **execution** was somewhat lower than expected.*
Unsatisfactory (U)	*There were major shortcomings and the quality of **implementation** or **execution** was substantially lower than expected.*
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	*There were severe shortcomings in the quality of **implementation** or **execution**.*
Unable to Assess (UA)	*The available information does not allow for an assessment of the quality of **implementation** or **execution**.*

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Quality of project M&E will be assessed in terms of:

i. design

ii. implementation

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability will be assessed by taking into account the risks related to the financial, sociopolitical, institutional and environmental sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability will be assessed using a four-point scale:

Rating	***Description***
Likely (L)	*There is little or no risk to sustainability.*
Moderately Likely (ML)	*There are moderate risks to sustainability.*
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	*There are significant risks to sustainability.*
Unlikely (U)	*There are severe risks to sustainability.*
Unable to Assess (UA)	*Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.*

Appendix 7. The GEF co-financing table

Sources of co-financing	Name of co-financer	Type of co-financing	Amount confirmed at CEO endorsement/approval	Actual amount materialized as of 31 December 2022	Actual amount materialized upon project closure	Expected total disbursement by project closure
Government	Department of Forestry	Grant	370 000	370 000	370 000	370 000
		In-kind	1 830 000	1 830 000	1 830 000	1 830 000
Government	NEMA	Grant	5 000 000	4 500 000	4 500 000	5 000 000
Government	Food and agriculture sector development project	Grant	2 800 000	2 800 000	2 800 000	2 800 000
Non-governmental organization	ADWAC	Grant	450 000	450 000	450 000	450 000
Private	NACO	In-kind	100 000	100 000	100 000	100 000
European Union	FAO AAD project	Grant	1 368 100	1 093 000	1 093 000	1 368 100
International organization	FAO Forest and Farm Facility	Grant	700 000	700 000	700 000	700 000
	FAO Country Office	In-kind	100 000	100 000	100 000	100 000
		TOTAL	**12 718 100**	**11 943 000**	**11 943 000**	**12 718 100**

Source: FAO in the Gambia Finance Department. Sources of co-financing may include: bilateral aid agencies; foundations; the GEF; the local government; the national government; civil society organizations; other multilateral agencies; the private sector; and beneficiaries

Appendix 8. Results matrix

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
Component 1							
Outcome 1.1 Institutions at the national and regional level have the capacity to integrate dryland forest management into policies, sectoral planning and practices	Land Degradation-2 tracking tool forestry policy score (Land Degradation Focal Area Portfolio Monitoring and Assessment Tool).	Four	Five	Forestry policy score moved to five.	S	S	The project achieved satisfactory results under this outcome by developing policy and strategy documents. It also conducted trainings to support dryland forest management.
Output 1.1.1 Key sectors and institutional stakeholders trained on effective dryland forest management	Number of government and non-government staff trained on dryland forest management	Lack of capacity in and understanding of dryland forest management issues within key institutions; no training programmes	Ninety government and non-governmental institutional stakeholders trained	Ninety staff from government, non-governmental and community-based organizations trained on sustainable dryland forest management.	S	S	The project achieved its set targets as stakeholder capacity was built.
Output 1.1.2 National	Supplementary	No policy-	Supplement	National forest	HS	HS	The development of the strategy and

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
dryland forest management and rehabilitation strategy developed as a supplement to the 2010–2019 Forest Policy.	forest strategy. National forestry action plan.	level guidance for dryland forest management. National forestry action plan outdated	strategy in place. National forestry action plan.	strategy developed and validated. National forestry action plan reviewed, updated and validated.			action plan will likely contribute immensely to dryland forest management in the country.
Output 1.1.3 Multistakeholder regional dryland forest management forums created.	Number of forums created	No specific multisectoral coordination mechanism exists for dryland forest management	Five	Five regional SLM forums created and several field monitoring visits to project implementation sites and other ANR project sites conducted by the forums.	S	S	The establishment of regional SLM forums enhanced the implementation of project deliverables through regular visits and the provision of advice and recommendations for follow up. Further, the forum enhanced intersectoral collaboration and improved efficiency by allowing for the combination of monitoring missions from several natural resources projects. The success of the SLM experience in the four project regions resulted in an unintended result: the creation of a fifth forum in West Coast, which was not part of the project.
Component 2							
Outcome 2.1 Legal community forestry ownership strengthened (management plans developed under Outcome 2.1 will be implemented	Institutional bottlenecks removed resulting in improved JFPM (18 agreements)	Community forest designation process and progress in the JFPM	Eighteen JFPM agreements and 28 gazetted community forests	Eighteen JFPM agreements signed. All 18 JFPM committees established	S	S	While the 28 CFMAs and 18 JFMAs had yet to be handed over to communities as at the time of the evaluation, great achievements were noted under this component since all of the necessary documentation was done. In addition,

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
through Outcome 2.2)	and efficient and effective transfer of forest ownership to communities (at least 28 gazettes)	stalled due to institutional limitations and bottlenecks	Eighteen JFPM plans and 73 management plans	community-based forest enterprises on beekeeping and honey production. Twenty-eight community forests in the process of being gazetted (final maps produced and endorsed and await the issuing of notices and orders) – these forests will finally be handed over to the local communities after the gazette. Seventy-three community forest management plans developed, making it possible for the communities to apply the SFM practices to the community forest and the JFPM intervention areas.			community forestry sensitization and conflict prevention and resolution was significantly enhanced by the creation of the community forest task forces. These undertook many sensitization and conflict mitigation missions in their respective project regions.
Output 2.1.1 Regional community forest task	Number of task forces and their	At regional levels, there	Five regional community	Five regional community forest	S	S	The project achieved the establishment of five regional community forest task forces

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
forces created and strengthened	capacities	are no specific institutional mechanisms for addressing the practical constraints and bottlenecks in community forestry designation procedures	forest task forces created and strengthened	task forces created and trained on forest ownership transfer, forest governance, forest policy and legislation. Six community forest conflict resolution and management processes facilitated.			and strengthened capacities for effective community forest management. The community forest task forces effectively engaged in community forest sensitization and conflict mitigation and resolution.
Output 2.1.2 Advanced 3 251.4 ha of forest from start up to the PCFMA phase and 4 578.42 ha of forest at the PCFMA phase advanced to the CFMA phase	Number of ha	Since 2006, 0 ha have been transferred/ advanced from one stage to the next until recently when 965.2 ha in the project sites were moved from the PCFMA to the CFMA	Advanced 3 251.4 ha to the PCFMA (37 management plans); 4 578.42 ha advanced to the CFMA (28 gazettes)	Moved 2 433.21 ha of forest under start up to the PCFMA and 20 community forests under the PCFMA recommended for the CFMA, covering 5 289 ha.	S	S	The project exceeded the targets set for the hectarage of the PCFMA to be moved to the CFMA. However, for the hectarage of start-up community forests to move to the PCFMA, there seemed to be a lack of about 818 ha. This, according to the Project Coordinator, could be attributed to the fact that most communities had joined the community forest programme during implementation with only a few hectares of forest.

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
Output 2.1.3 Fourteen new management plans (1 438.12 ha) developed for community forests under the CFMA	Number of new management plans	Community forestry under the CFMA have outdated, expired or ineffective management plans	Fourteen new five-year management plans covering an area of 1 438.12 ha of community forest under the CFMA	Twenty new five-year management plans developed for 20 community forests recommended for the CFMA, covering an area of 3 451.1ha.	HS	HS	More than the expected number of five-year community forest management plans were developed, making the outcome highly satisfactory. This shows the popularity of community forestry among the local communities.
Output 2.1.4 A forest area of 5 749.9 ha brought under the JFPM	Number of JFPM agreements and management plans	No JFPM agreements	Eighteen JFPM agreements and plans	Eighteen JFPM plans covering an area of about 6 098.2 ha developed. Eighteen JFPM committees formed. Eighteen JFPM agreements signed.	S	S	The developed JFPM agreements and plans were in line with the project targets and enhanced forest resources management.
Outcome 2.2 A total of 15 066.84 ha of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities	Successful application of 18 JFPM plans and 73 community forest management plans	Existing community forests and communities involved in the JFPM have very limited capacities and lack adequate	15 000 ha of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities	14 553.27 ha of dryland forest brought under community management through the successful application of 18 JFPM plans and 73	S	S	Twenty-eight community forests and 18 JFPM initiatives were placed under sustainable management through appropriate management plans and the training of CFC members in basic forest management practices. Project achievements in implementing the sustainable community-led management of dryland forest ecosystems were

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
		technical assistance for implementing SFM		community forest management plans.			therefore great.
Output 2.2.1 Community forest and JFPM committee members trained in improved dryland forest management and community forest procedures and processes (600 members) (trainings linked to Outputs 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 and the committees under them)	Number of members trained	Zero	Six hundred community forest and JFPM committee members trained	Six hundred stakeholders (376 males and 224 females) trained on improved dryland forest management and community forest procedures and processes.	S	S	This was an important element for community forest sustainability upon project closure. Community members now feel confident that they can manage their forest with the new knowledge they have acquired. They also feel confident that they can train other villages/communities on community forest procedures and processes. This is a significant, potential multiplying factor for the Department of Forestry's sensitization drive on community forestry.
Output 2.2.2 SFM practices implemented - 5% increase in forest cover through small-scale tree planting and assisted natural regeneration Based on the MTR recommendation, the indicator (5% increase in forest cover through small-scale tree planting and	Number of hectares covered by tree planting Number of hectares regenerated and protected (including forest fire prevention and management), and managed	Limited natural regeneration Tree planting exercises conducted for over 70.2 ha in the project area	Tree planting across 100 ha Agroforestry techniques implemented across 500 ha Regional tree nurseries established	Enrichment planting conducted on more than 200 ha of degraded forests (community forest and JFPM areas). Agroforestry introduced on about 476 ha of farmland, and more than 500 farmers trained on	MS	MS	Although enrichment planting and agroforestry were satisfactorily implemented, the rehabilitation of the five central nurseries was not satisfactorily completed. Nursery beds were constructed but not operationalized due to incomplete water reticulation systems. In addition, the multipurpose centres that were part of the nursery rehabilitation are also incomplete, even though much progress was made in their construction.

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
assisted natural regeneration) under Output 2.2.2 of the project was amended to make it measurable. This indicator cannot be measured since there will be no national forest inventory under the project. The indicator was therefore changed as follows: community forest cover increased by 5% in the project intervention regions. - Site-appropriate agroforestry techniques implemented across 500 ha - Improved bushfire management techniques	through formal plans			agroforestry practices. Five central nurseries (Kerewan, Wassu, Jarumeh-Koto, Jeloki, Dumbutu) rehabilitated, nursery beds demarcated but reticulation system pending.			
	Number of hectares brought under agroforestry	70 ha under agroforestry	500 ha under agroforestry	An aggregated area of 496.3 ha of farmland put under agroforestry.	S	S	The agroforestry area and planting targets were largely achieved (99.3%). However, plant survival has been very low due, in some cases, to late plantings and the use of weak seedlings, as well as inadequate protection for the seedlings which exposed them to livestock grazing. In addition, the planted seedlings needed watering during the long dry season which, in most cases, was not done by the farmers, nor did the project provide for watering.
		Limited bushfire management	Fire award schemes initiated	Two hundred rakes, 258 cutlasses, 115 bicycles, 400 knapsack sprayers,	S	S	The award scheme, though probably unsustainable at the national level, increased community commitment to forest protection in the hopes of winning

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
		practiced		250 fire beaters, four rice milling machines, four coos milling machines and 40 big cooking pots distributed to beneficiaries and trainings conducted on bushfire management.			an award. The protected community forests and jointly managed forest parks increased in stock and density, for example, Jeloki and Jalabiro, enhancing their resilience to forest fires.
Output 2.2.3 Controlled grazing implemented through community grazing agreements (ten) in the community forests and efficiency of fuelwood use improved by introduced cookstoves (2 000 households)	Number of grazing agreements	Seventeen grazing agreements (12 in Central River, north and five in Lower River)	Ten new grazing agreements	Six rangeland and four cattle tracks identified. Ten local conventions (agreements) signed.	MS	MS	Boundary pillars were erected for only five out of the ten rangelands. The pillars for the other five had yet, by the time of the evaluation mission, to be produced and erected. There were some delays in the erection of pillars around three cattle tracks due to community conflict.
	Number households using improved cookstoves	Four hundred fifty households using improved cookstoves	Two thousand households using improved cookstoves	Four thousand cookstoves constructed and distributed to 2 000 households.	S	S	There were delays at the level of the contractor to produce all cookstoves by the time of evaluation. However, delivery continued during the month of December 2022 by which all of the 4 000 cookstoves were distributed, according to the Project Coordinator. Community capacity to produce their own fixed clay stoves increased. Cookstoves proved to be very popular among the participating

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
							communities.
Output 2.2.4 Community-based forest enterprises strengthened (21 enterprises)	Number of EDPs	Two active business plans	Twenty-one business plans developed	Twenty-one EDPs developed and 20 of the enterprises supported (18 beekeeping and two tree nursery management efforts). Six hundred twenty-five beehives distributed to 18 enterprise groups. Sixty participants (30 males and 30 females) trained on improved business planning. Business incubation training was provided to 25 beekeeping entrepreneurs (15 males and ten females). Mentoring support on apiary	S	S	Forest enterprises were established and trainings were conducted on beekeeping, honey production and tree nursery management. Communities were trained on value-added products such as beeswax processing for body cream. Communities also received trainings on beehive construction (both men and women). The enterprise development intervention increased the popularity of and commitment to community forestry practices in the implementation regions.

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
				management, honey harvesting and tree nursery management provided to the 16 existing enterprises in the four regions. Training provided on simple recordkeeping for the 16 forest resources and services enterprises in Central River and Lower River (40 participants: 24 males and 16 females). Four contact and collaboration fairs organized for 21 forest enterprise interest groups with service providers and support institutions to promote strategic alliances aimed at			

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
				sustaining the enterprises.			
Component 3							
Outcome 3.1 Project implementation based on results-based management and the application of project findings and lessons learned in future operations facilitated	Project M&E system designed, established and applied throughout the project and across all components, provinces and project sites	No results-based management exists	An existing results-based management in place	M&E frameworks and plans developed.	S	S	Over the last two years, project monitoring improved markedly and an M&E system was put in place to monitor, track and provide recommendations for management on actions for the timely execution of activities.
Output 3.1.1 Project monitoring system providing systematic information on progress in meeting project outcomes and output targets	Set project targets and milestones achieved according to the workplans	Project monitoring system does not exist	M&E frameworks and systems created and functional	Project baseline assessment using the Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of Farmers and Pastoralists tool conducted (Kaba, 2018). M&E frameworks, including a monitoring plan and an indicator tracking	S	S	Over the past two years, project monitoring improved markedly and an M&E system was put in place to monitor, track and provide recommendations for management on actions for the timely completion of project activities. The documentation of success stories, lessons learned and the production of factsheets and newsletters was also done.

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
				tool developed and used. Programme Implementation Reports and project progress reports produced.			
Output 3.1.2 Project-related best practices and lessons learned published	Project results and lessons documented	Not applicable	A project publication with results and lessons documented	Project communications plan developed. Project factsheet, newsletters and press releases, including Facebook and Twitter, highlighting best practices and lessons learned prepared and shared with FAO and institutional stakeholders in the country. A project newsletter written and disseminated among	S	S	Knowledge management improved tremendously through the documentation of good practices and lessons learned.

Project strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	End-of-project target	End-of-project achievement	Progress rating [colour code]	Achievement rating	Comments on rating
				stakeholders. A press release on the project prepared and shared through FAO's website – these developments have increased the visibility of the project both nationally and internationally.			
Overall project rating						**S**	

Note: The criteria is rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU).

Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of reference

https://www.fao.org/3/cc9267en/GCP_GAM_031_GFF_Annex_1.pdf

Annex 2. Recap of mid-term review findings, conclusions and recommendations

https://www.fao.org/3/cc9267en/GCP_GAM_031_GFF_Annex_2.pdf

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