

**Project Evaluation Series**

**06/2022**

## **Evaluation of the project**

**“Action Against Desertification in support of the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and of the UNCCD action plans in Fiji and Haiti, and South-South cooperation in the Africa Caribbean and Pacific countries”**

**Project code: GCP/INT/157/EC**

**Management response**

**Evaluation of the project “Action Against Desertification in support of the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and of the UNCCD action plans in Fiji and Haiti, and South-South cooperation in the Africa Caribbean and Pacific countries” – Management response** **11/2023**

Evaluation recommendation	Management response <b>Accepted,</b> <b>Partially accepted</b> or <b>Rejected</b>	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Time frame	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b></p> <p>Institutional/management model. Concentrate future FLR projects on the African continent to increase political and policy coherence and lower the administrative load (having to work with partners in very different time zones, often in remote locations, that also demand specific attention, and may differ in organizational and administrative “culture”). Work in conjunction with, and under the same broad content umbrella offered by the GGWSSI. Having new FLR initiatives work under and with GGWSSI would mutually reinforce both approaches and create cross-pollination with both initiatives learning from their respective experiences.</p>	<p><b>Partially accepted</b></p> <p>As FAO of the UN, we are supposed to support all member countries, but not “concentrate” only on Africa.</p>	Use the generated methodologies and technologies to adapt to communities’ contexts and countries’ specific situations.	FAO’s Action Against Desertification at the Forestry Division – NFO	Any time funds permit it and request for support made by member countries	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b></p> <p>Decentralized, flexible management model. Overall, project logic should prevail over institutional logic. The management model should give more responsibility to local/decentralized levels, with central headquarters providing overall leadership and guidance/support, and not having to decide on every aspect and detail of project implementation. In this model, central authority has a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot or should not be performed at a more local level. The keywords here are: subsidiarity, decentralization, accountability, flexibility. Reporting on activities, and disbursement/budget justifications should be as light as possible, again with a maximum of responsibilities being borne by the decentralized/national PMU levels.</p>	<p><b>Rejected</b></p> <p>The project logic followed project cycle processes established for all FAO projects. The recommendation is another model which cannot be implemented for and/or outside FAO’s institutional project management systems (see FPMIS, GRMS). In addition decentralized offices do not necessary have all the required expertise to deliver technical projects.</p>	N/A	N/A	N/A	No

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<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b></p> <p>Partnerships. FAO’s, and thus AAD’s, comparative strength, among other things, derives from the fact it can provide evidence-based, high-quality, technical capacity building to farmers on the technical intervention matters related to land degradation, restoration and reforestation. Its geographical outreach and impact could and should, however, be complemented and increased if the organization that has a technical intervention focus partners with major donors and organizations that have a strong livelihood and process approach and puts more emphasis on development-oriented capacity building for greater buy-in and sustainability. The keywords here are: grassroot-informed institutional literacy, sustainable organizational structures, capitalization on successes and consolidation of past/future interventions.</p>	<p><b>Partially accepted</b></p> <p>Although an important recommendation in the context of developing countries, the project had been conceived and implemented according to the funding contract with the donor (European Commission – EC). Consideration of some aspects like grassroot “literacy”, etc. would look like diversion of resources toward what is not initially agreed on.</p>	<p>Outside the project scope as agreed on in the contract with donor EC.</p>	N/A	N/A	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b></p> <p>Programmatic approach. Addressing landscape restoration, and investing time and money in reforestation, would require a more holistic, multidisciplinary programmatic approach that covers all material, but also the more conceptual socioeconomic aspects of D/LDD-mitigation. A programmatic approach also allows for rectifying mistakes or improving matters, where necessary and possible, and for a longer period of time (see Recommendation 5).</p>	<p><b>Accepted</b></p> <p>The programmatic approach has been initially requested, but it was chosen to limit actions and operations to selected countries and districts, mainly within Africa’s GGW – Sahel and considering the</p>	<p>Based on this experience, continue developing funding proposals and resources mobilization for a programmatic approach per landscape analogues, e.g. GCF or GEF.</p>	AAD in Forestry Division	Develop programmatic project proposals which could be operational and implemented as soon as funds are available	Yes

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	similarity of the ecology and the landscape.				
<p><b>Recommendation 5.</b></p> <p>Intervention duration. Within a programme approach and logic, increase the total initiative/programme/project duration for greater progress, achievements and impact, with a time horizon of at least 8 to 12 years. Indeed, after signing the initiative contract, the intervention should start with an inception phase (a so-called year-zero or pre-phase of the intervention) that should take at least from 1.5 to 2 years to – literally and metaphorically – prepare the grounds and sensitize beneficiaries (and stakeholders at all levels), get them accept and buy into the project and intervention logic, and convince national/political institutions that "it is all about the people" (and not about themselves/the institutions).</p>	<p><b>Accepted</b></p> <p>Totally agreed with this recommendation on increase duration so that to generate meaningful impact on the ground, mainly for restoration (tree planting) project and additionally in the context of drylands, arid and semi-arid water scarcity contexts.</p>	Accumulate concrete case studies with and without success due to long or short durations; engage with donors to better make and defend the case of extended durations; and create a synergetic continuum (complementarities) of restoration projects/programmes.	NFO, CFI, PSR	Whenever new similar projects are developed	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 6.</b></p> <p>Tailor-made solutions. Invest in tailor-made solutions and approaches, for which respective, local management units and service providers should be trained and monitored so as to provide the best possible solutions for each specific situation. This requires flexible, decentralized design and implementation features as described above.</p>	<p><b>Partially accepted</b></p> <p>Tailor-made solutions are considered in the framework of defined priorities and implementation strategies of the GGW programme</p>	This is already continuing for project management, but will be further reinforced.	AAD-GGW/NFO	With new funding to consider and apply where possible and/or specificities tailor-made solutions	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 7.</b></p> <p>Large- versus small-scale. Adapt large-scale interventions to address specific problems, respecting local characteristics, and integrate/combine large-scale, machine-based approaches with smaller-scale, more labor-intensive ones. The heavy-machinery</p>	<p><b>Accepted</b></p>	This is already continuing for the project implementation management, but will be further reinforced	AAD-GGW/NFO	When any new funds will be available for such similar large combined	Yes

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model should be reviewed/adapted to local conditions, where needed, and scaled to conform to local characteristics/limitations in order to build and guarantee sustainability and replicability.				with small interventions.	
<b>Recommendation 8.</b> Large-scale land restoration. A large-scale approach to land restoration using the Delfino plough can successfully prepare large surface areas for improving water storage and the subsequent planting of trees/shrubs and herbs/grasses if and when i) adequate baseline data confirm that heavy machinery will not be harmful for the soil or plant/animal environment; ii) this kind of technical intervention follows successful sensitization and training of target communities (and by extrapolation, all stakeholders that should be involved in this kind of restoration-cum-livelihood improvement activity) on organizational, financial (cost for running/repairing the hardware) and entrepreneurial matters; and iii) is planned, organized and managed together with local populations who should get/claim ownership of the whole range of interventions and invest their own resources in the initiative.	<b>Partially accepted</b> Large-scale land restoration has been assessed with communities’ consultations and suitability of types of sites, etc. before implementing the interventions.	Continue with the AAD/GGW approach on large scale land restoration to scale up efficient interventions.	AAD-GGW/NFO	New funding permitting	Yes
<b>Recommendation 9.</b> Inception. In future, projects should have a kind of two-pronged approach, starting with a long inception phase that should build awareness at all institutional and stakeholder levels on the problems deriving from climate change and land degradation, but also on the ways local communities and institutions could address them. This first phase should set out/create the proper environment so that subsequently all stakeholders would be able to express and devote themselves to attaining the objectives set out at the beginning. During that inception phase, the project should create strong PMUs in the respective countries, lodging them with the relevant line ministries and/or national agencies in charge of managing the GGWSSI (Africa) and/or land restoration. Institutionalizing	<b>Partially accepted</b> The GGW initiative has the advantage of being already structured by governments and regionally, so that inceptions should be straightforward, instead of re-starting as for stand-alone project.	Continue the support of the implementation and in consideration of existing structures and means.	AAD-GGW/NFO	Whenever new funds permit it	Yes

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management teams and attaching them to these national agencies would give them greater visibility and credibility, and may also be a factor that would guarantee greater post-project sustainability.					
<b>Recommendation 10.</b> Put people first. Restoration is not only about trees and shrubs (or foresters or forestry departments); instead, it is first and foremost about putting people really first. Future FLR project should address all issues covered by the word agrosilvopastoral, and holistically integrate crop and animal production aspects in its reforestation/landscape restoration approach. This would also mean having a greater focus on wood (fuel)-related issues, whereas NTFP processing and marketing should be maintained as possible sources of income. This would also imply that before the start of any intervention, the project should take stock of the beneficiaries' development/intervention priorities, and match/integrate these with its D/LDD-mitigation interventions. If the beneficiaries' priorities are food and adequate nutrition provision, the latter should be addressed with the highest priority, with D/LDD- activities becoming secondary. Government policy also should promote/enable/foster stakeholder participation at all levels of the decision-making and implementation chain.	<b>Accepted/</b>	People first and communities are already at the centre of the AAD approach for implementing the GGW activities on the ground.	AAD-GGW/NFO	When new funding will be acquired and made available	Yes
<b>Recommendation 11.</b> Blueprint for action. Getting the commitment on, and overall support from initiation to completion and beyond, to any FLR initiatives, would imply the need to first organize a number of baseline surveys that combine an analysis of the physical elements of the problem at hand (in this case: land degradation and desertification) with the socioeconomic/human factors that have resulted in the situation deteriorating or problems not having been addressed, and with a focus on defining the priority areas that local communities want to see addressed (the assumption being that	<b>Partially accepted</b>	This may just need some complements, as the blue print for action has already been set up for the GGW priority actions and strategies and for all countries.	AAD-GGW/NFO	Ongoing	Yes

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<p>food insecurity and addressing food crop production would come first; in that case, the project should define an intervention strategy that would prioritize the latter livelihood issues, and bring in FLR as a secondary, but focal activity). This should then be followed by multi-stakeholder dialogues and sensitization workshops involving all relevant people, but especially the communities in the planned intervention areas, before the start of any promises or concrete initiative. During this fact-finding and sensitization period, the intervening organization should also make it quite clear that it will not come in as a service provider, or come and “assist” the local populations. Instead, right from the start, it should make it clear that there will only be investment in crop production and land restoration, if prior to that the local communities had committed (not just pledged) the financial and human resources for putting into place and what is deemed necessary to address the main problems at hand. This would mean bringing in notions of, and training communities on, how to save and operate microfinance systems, which are the main vehicle to help mobilize the much-needed local resources to allow communities to sustainably become owners of their own destiny and initiatives (i.e. building financial literacy). This basically also means that the project would try to either work with existing formal groups of beneficiaries that may have worked in the same thematic fields of crop/animal production and restoration, or that new groups must be formed and trained. The next step is then to formalize the collaboration between these groups and the project by providing capacity training on creating and managing committees, and further provide them with the necessary conceptual tools and hardware to allow them to invest themselves in participatory community/village land-use plans and subsequently, project activities.</p>					

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<p><b>Recommendation 12.</b></p> <p>Foster dialogue. To protect plantations against grazing or browsing domestic animals, while taking into account the prohibitively high costs of fencing, FLR projects should invest the time and means to foster a dialogue between migrating/transhumant cattle growers and sedentary farmers/communities that engage in tree/shrub plantations in order to sensitize them to FLR thematic, and the potential benefits from FLR (e.g. provision of forage harvested from restored land in the dry season).</p>	<b>Accepted</b>	Foster dialogue with all stakeholders/users/beneficiaries of the landscapes, i.e. farmers, herders, plant users, pastoralists, etc., very critical for success and impacts.	NFO	To be considered in new funding	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 13.</b></p> <p>Present/provide alternative means of livelihood to herders. In many dry areas, grazing by goats/sheep is a traditional land use model. Extensive enclosures of forest plantations can impose drastic changes in the habits and economies of the affected rural communities. In such situations, it would be unwise to initiate planting programmes unless alternative means of livelihood can be presented/provided beforehand to goat/sheep herders. This would require (and should thus be considered by future FLR interventions) the integration of community development schemes (for example, improved agriculture or animal husbandry, better communications, schools, or medical welfare) and increased opportunities for employment by the development of rural industries (such as afforestation programmes and rural forest industries).</p>	<p><b>Partially accepted</b></p> <p>The integration of community development schemes is often the best way to achieve success and impact with restoration interventions. However, the reality so far, is that donors or governments usually focus on limited sectors of their responsibility and their mandate – see separation of ministries.</p>	Intensify work, synergy and collaboration with other rural development actors.	Forestry Division / FAO Hand in Hand	Model to try implementation when new projects in place	Yes



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<p><b>Recommendation 14.</b></p> <p>Business approach. Future FLR projects should have a more business-like approach. This means they should/must respect a strict financial and economic costing logic, and ex-ante provide cost–benefit analyses for the planned interventions, including the definition of payback- and break-even periods. This also means it is necessary to develop sound business plans that take on board both material and immaterial costs and benefits at the local (financial analysis) and national (economic analysis) levels. Beneficiary groups could also benefit from training in entrepreneurial and financial skills such as cost–benefit calculations and business planning, and of a community-run financial reserve/buffer/savings account.</p>	<b>Accepted</b>	The cost and benefit analysis of restoration interventions is underway; although not all aspects of FLR can/should be manage as business-like.	FAO – AAD at the Forestry Division	When and/or as soon as field data collection will be completed	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 15.</b></p> <p>Develop NTFP value chains by linking NTFP groups to private enterprises that could help create and develop viable markets for the products developed by the beneficiary groups, e.g. through contract farming or outgrower schemes. The assumption is that private firms collaborating with the beneficiaries’ NTFP groups will continue to invest in processing and retailing even when the project is finished (and as long as the markets for these products remain viable). Having the private sector on board should also motivate beneficiaries to continue to improve and work on their activities and incentivize communities for greater ownership and responsibility to address and manage land degradation.</p>	<b>Accepted</b>	Develop more partnership (PPP) with the private sector on NTFP.	NFO	New funds/projects permitting	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 16.</b></p> <p>Build multi-stakeholder ownership. Invest in sensitizing beneficiaries to the intervention’s problematics and thematic, and obtain expression of complete engagement prior to the start of any activity. A greater level of involvement of all stakeholders – including, but not limited to beneficiaries, service providers and line</p>	<b>Partially accepted</b>	Support projects should consider existing frameworks initiated by other	AAD-GGW/NFO	Whenever new funding permits such a support for GGW implementation	Yes

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ministries – would generate more solid commitment and partnership to fight drought and desertification and nurture potential spillovers. For that, it is key to find "champions" and key reference/leading persons with charisma who can train those with a high potential and a solid, vested local basis and sound local roots, and empower them to negotiate with local and regional (and if need be higher-level) governments and private operators. This would provide grassroot organizations with the necessary skills and competencies, and institutional capacity, to guarantee local buy-in. In addition, this would mean putting national governments and their line ministries and agencies in the driving seat. Together, these approaches should not only bring more sustainability but also guarantee greater continuity in land restoration projects sensu lato.	projects, as is the case for GGW initiative.				
<b>Recommendation 17.</b> Communication. FLR projects should have a more programmatic, linear and well- prepared approach to communication and informative outreach. The approach should involve stakeholders across the whole intervention chain and on all levels, and be based on success stories. It should also be linked to the GGWSSI implementation strategy and include a dedicated communication officer. The communication strategy should be monitored and adapted along the project, whereas outreach and impact should be monitored and quantified in detail, and the results fed back into the strategy to increase and optimize communication effects.	<b>Accepted</b>	AAD-GGW to continue its support to all involved stakeholders across land restoration interventions.	NFO	Whenever possible as a necessity for FLR activities in implementation	Yes
<b>Recommendation 18.</b> M&E. Future projects should invest time and money in developing a shared M&E tool, which would allow for collecting the quantitative and qualitative baseline data (socioeconomic, environmental...) that is needed to eventually feed into and set up a performant M&E system that should enable monitoring of all aspects of project implementation, including progress, deviation from initially agreed	<b>Accepted</b>	To include M&E in all future restoration projects, e.g. UN decade of Ecosystem restoration (2021–2030).	NFO	During the implementation of e.g. UN decade of Ecosystem restoration (2021–2030)	Yes

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planning, impact... This would also imply having a solid theory of change established, with a firm set of evaluation criteria that would cover all aspects of the intervention. The management model should also allow for adjustments to be incorporated during project execution, to adapt to changes that might occur. More in general, M&E should focus on both quantitative and qualitative issues, going beyond pure metrics and focusing on (the reasons for) processes, success and failure.					
<b>Recommendation 19.</b> Geospatial monitoring. Although the satellite imagery techniques have been developed and tested in other settings, each specific use still needs to be validated and confirmed. The technique should be fine-tuned to correct or improve (in particular) lack of ground-truthing, and lack of detail regarding the mix of trees, herbaceous species, tree diameters and canopy sizes. If further developed, refined and confirmed, a geospatial, satellite imagery-based monitoring tool like the one tested under AAD could be a valuable and cheap M&E tool that would allow for obtaining more objective, quantitative data that would be easier and quicker to interpret and share. This would allow for i) monitoring land restoration surface areas to be prepared for planting (e.g. for service contracts with external/private providers); and ii) monitoring the success/failure of seedling and plant development in reforested plots.	<b>Accepted</b>	Continue M&E satellite imagery and radar detection techniques of all invested/planted plots and sites put under restoration.	AAD-GGW/NFO	This is a continued process for which FAO is supporting member countries, in the framework of Hand-in-Hand geospatial platform	Yes
<b>Recommendation 20.</b> Guidelines for complex M&E. Assessing FLR (reforestation of trees/shrubs) together with revegetation (herbs/grasses) success is often complex. There are several stages in the FLR process to consider, together with several objectives and a multitude of indicators and drivers. Due to the idiosyncrasies of individual FLR projects, it may not be possible to develop an integrated planning and evaluation model that captures all drivers of success. These	<b>Accepted</b>	M&E system should be put in place for reliable, transparent and independent assessments of restoration projects so as to learn about progress, failure/success.	AAD-GGW/NFO	Whenever new projects are conceived and/or implemented	Yes

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success drivers can be grouped into technical/biophysical drivers; socioeconomic drivers; institutional, policy and management drivers; and FLR project characteristics, and should be considered as guidelines in setting up a well-performing, ad hoc M&E system.					
<b>Recommendation 21.</b> Guarantee sustainability by building the "right" mechanisms into interventions at concept preparation. This could mean securing (moral) ownership and buy-in from beneficiaries, but also building in sustainable financing mechanisms <sup>37</sup> at whatever stakeholder levels. <sup>38</sup> At the grassroots level, this would mean developing (and providing training in) elementary microfinance approaches, with a focus on local (in kind) resource mobilization (saving first!) for creating the solid financial basis that would allow for local-level, community-driven (co-)investment in the activities and hardware promoted by projects such as AAD. Capacity building in, and for land restoration and reforestation interventions should have a very strong/much stronger focus on the softer aspects of building partnerships and putting technical interventions on the ground.	<b>Accepted</b>	To be considered whenever possible in coming projects formulation and implementation.	NFO	For new projects when they are being conceived	Yes

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