

Thematic Evaluation Series

Evaluation of FAO's support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017)

**Sector level study in forestry and climate change
with special focus on REDD+**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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1. Background

1.1 Background, purpose and scope

1. The forestry and climate change study was completed in phases. The evaluation of FAO's support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017); hereafter referred to as the SDG 13 Evaluation was to be informed by several preparatory studies, and considering the role of FAO in the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) and importance of REDD+ work in FAO's action to combat climate change, the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) identified a need for a REDD+ desk review. The study was undertaken from late February to April 2020 to help build a better understanding of FAO's UN-REDD work and overall FAO REDD+/forestry and climate change products and related lessons learned, summarize earlier evaluation findings, identify information gaps – and importantly – provide suggestions for methodology to feed into the SDG 13 Evaluation. A separate REDD+ “scoping study” was completed in time to feed into the evaluation Terms of Reference, through developing a more operational concept for transformational change and an analytical approach to extract evaluation question specific information from available OED evaluation reports and climate change related project design documents.
2. This preparatory work was also useful to engage key REDD+ FAO staff and external stakeholders, including UN-REDD, early in the process to discuss the scope of the evaluation and elicit feedback and suggestions. In addition, the adopted two-stage approach enabled a more focused implementation of the overall SDG 13 evaluation and better triangulation, since use could be made of a comprehensive desk analysis.
3. There were two major limitations including shortage of REDD+ project evaluation reports and mid-term reviews and inability to conduct country/field visits. These constraints were partly alleviated through the evaluation country case studies, which also addressed forestry and climate change when relevant, and being able to make use of the analyses conducted during the desk reviews phase.

1.2 Short overview of methodology and sources of data behind the findings

4. The study of FAO's forestry and climate change work addressed all the SDG 13 Evaluation questions and relied on the same evaluation approach and methodology, with an exception of carrying out the above mentioned REDD+ desk review and synthesis of related OED evaluation findings and other available evidence.

Main methods:

- i. interviews of key external stakeholders;
- ii. country case studies;
- iii. mapping and reviewing FAO's forestry and climate change related normative products: a list of products developed;
- iv. mapping and carrying out quantitative content analysis of FAO's forestry and climate change related project portfolio 2015–2020: Report: *Contribution of FAO's Work in*

REDD+ and Forestry and Climate Change to SDG 13/Climate Action: Scoping Study and Preliminary Analysis prepared;

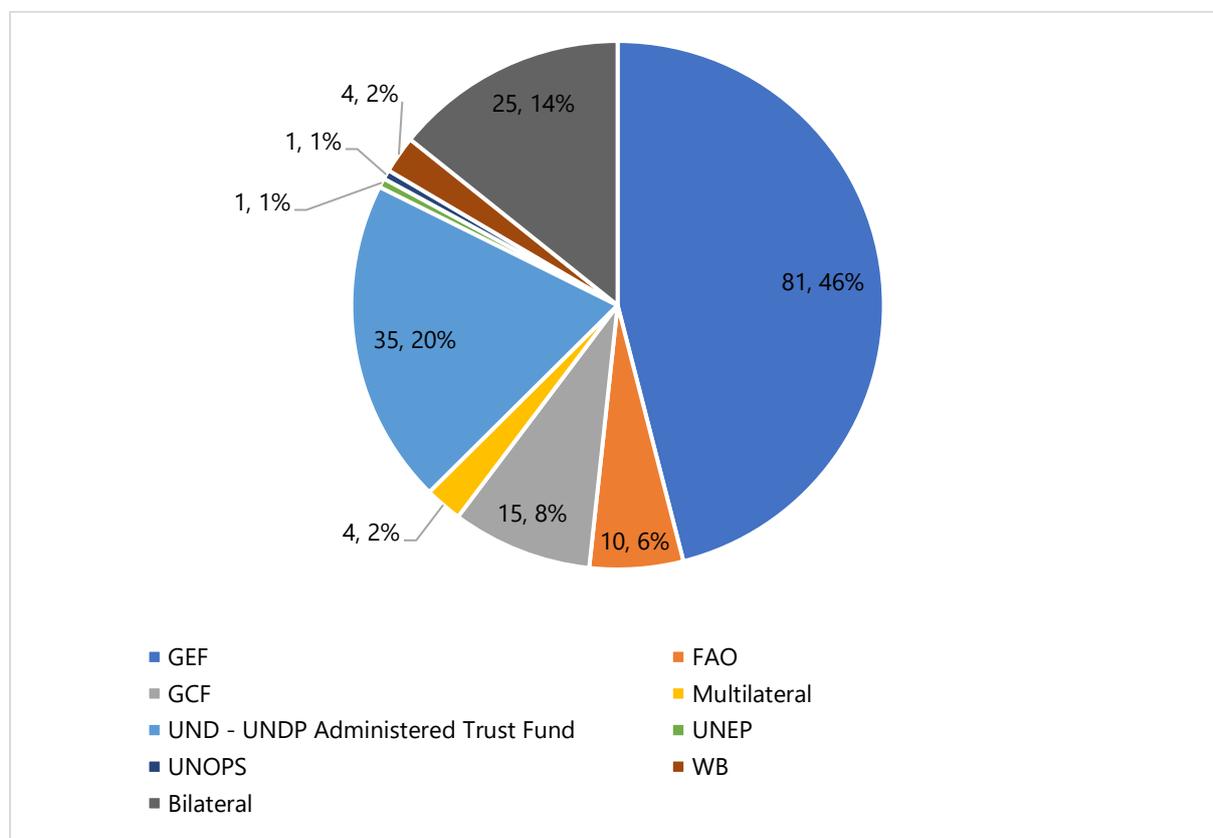
- v. identifying and synthesizing main findings of FAO/OED forestry and climate change related evaluations, applying quantitative content analysis and qualitative analysis of the evaluation reports: A report *Synthesis of FAO OED climate change-related Evaluations from the Climate Action/SDG 13 Perspective* prepared;
 - vi. review of peer reviewed scientific articles, including some produced by FAO staff.
5. **Interviews:** In total, 32 interviewees from March to October 2020 (as of 28 October 2020) and in addition 32 interviewees (Viet Nam, Bangladesh, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) in Bangkok) from the *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Integrated Natural Resource Management for Sustainable Agriculture (SO2)* in 2018.
- i. External stakeholders – 17 + 21 = 38
 - ii. FAO staff – 15 + 11 = 26
 - iii. Total interviewees – 64
6. **Analyzed FAO Forestry and climate change related project portfolio:** FAO REDD+ related project portfolio used in the portfolio analysis comprises in total 171 projects but in the quantitative content (MAXQDA) analysis only 137 projects were analyzed (34 were dropped for various reasons).
7. **Analyzed FAO/OED forestry and climate change related evaluations:** 41 evaluation reports (2015-20).

1.3 Overview of the identified FAO forestry and climate change/REDD+ related project portfolio

8. **Projects by source funding.** In total, the overall portfolio includes 171 projects. Figures 1 and 2 describe the allocation of projects by source of funding; FAO-GEF and UN-REDD projects dominate with a combined share of 66 percent. There are 81 FAO-GEF REDD+ related projects, with a share of 46 percent of the total portfolio. These projects include already completed projects, ongoing projects and also new approved projects which have not yet been mobilized.
9. **Total budget.** The total budget of all these projects, excluding the CGF projects on results-based payments, is USD 0.504 billion (USD 0.715 billion when GCF RBP projects are included).
10. This analysis indicates that during this evaluation period, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has emerged as a very important source of funding for FAO's REDD+ related projects, followed by the UN-REDD (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] administered Joint Donor Joint Trust Fund) GCF is an important new source of funding. However, most of these projects have not been mobilized, and some of the listed projects have not yet been even approved formally.
- i. FAO- GEF – USD 190.2 million
 - ii. UN-REDD – USD 134. 5 million
 - iii. Bi-lateral – USD 81.2 million

11. **Geographic distribution.** Two-thirds of the 176 projects are under FAO-GEF (81) and UN-REDD (35), followed by bi-lateral funding (25).

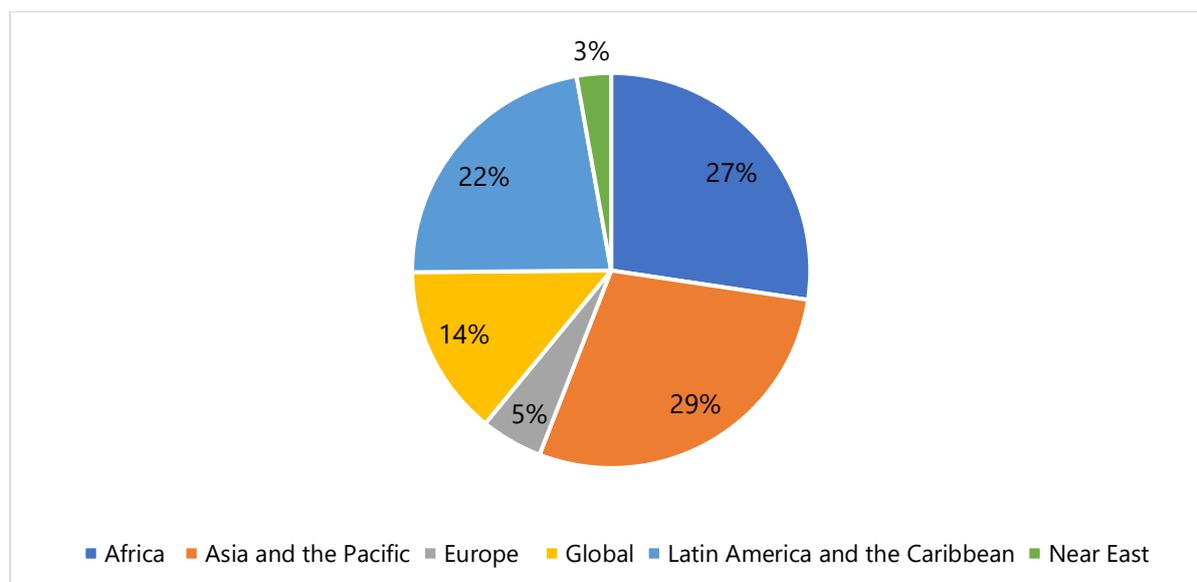
Figure 1: Number and relative share of the mapped FAO REDD+ related projects in 2015-2020



Source: Evaluation team

12. Asia and the Pacific Region and Africa have the most projects, followed closely by Latin America and the Caribbean. Together these three regions account for 78 percent of the mapped projects.

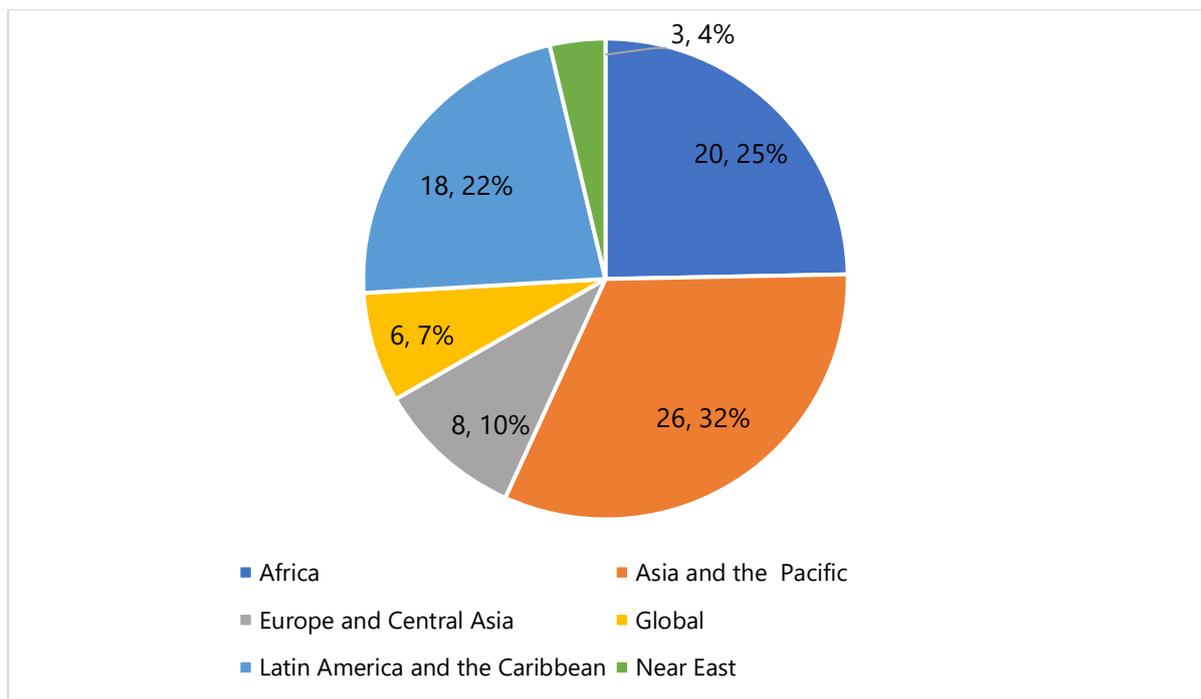
Figure 2: Geographic distribution of the mapped FAO REDD+ related projects in 2015-2020



Source: Evaluation team

13. In the case of the GEF portfolio of 81 projects, Asia and the Pacific and Africa account almost for 57 percent of the projects with most projects (26) in Asia and the Pacific (Figure 3). There are also 18 projects in Latin America and the Caribbean.
14. In case of the FAO-GEF portfolio, 30 projects (from 2015 to 2020) have been initially identified as "REDD+ projects" while in this exercise, 81 projects were mapped to be linked directly or indirectly to REDD+. About 32 percent of these 81 projects are directly forestry/sustainable forest management (SFM)-related, 22 percent REDD/Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU), and 46 percent integrated, often not under the Forestry Policy and Resources Division (FOA) but implemented e.g. by Animal Production and Health Division (NSA) or Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB) or Land and Water Division (NSL).
15. **Age of the portfolio.** The overall portfolio is quite young with 54 percent of all the mapped projects starting 2018 or afterwards. The FAO-GEF portfolio is even younger when viewed separately. Out of the 81 projects, 49, or 60.5 percent, have started the year 2018 or afterwards.

Figure 3: Geographic distribution of FAO-GEF REDD+ related projects in 2015-2020



Source: Evaluation team

2. Initial findings by evaluation question

EQ 1. Is FAO making a relevant and effective contribution to globally agreed climate action targets?

1.1. What have been FAO's main contributions (direct and indirect through other SDGs) to SDG 13, and to the Paris Agreement, and how relevant are such contributions?

Finding 1. REDD+ action, including UN-REDD¹ where FAO is a partner, are integral elements of the Paris Agreement and contribute to action to meet global climate change mitigation targets while being aligned with national strategies and programs.

16. In 2015, the adoption of the SDG goals and targets - including SDG 13 on climate action - and the Paris Agreement established a foundation for the implementation of climate action and sustainable development objectives across all sectors. In the case of forests, the Paris Agreement (Article 5), for the first time under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), explicitly recognized the role of REDD+ as a central part of the global climate efforts to achieve net-zero emissions. The COP 19 Warsaw Framework identified four pillars for REDD+: National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS); Forest Reference Emission Levels (FREL); Safeguards Information Systems; and National Strategies or Action Plans. The Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) encourages countries to specify action to address climate change in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and requests Parties to provide information to enable tracking progress in achieving the NDCs.
17. Matching the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for REDD+ against SDG 13 targets and Paris Agreement decisions demonstrates that FAO's REDD+ work, especially on NFMS and FREL and capacity building initiative for transparency, contribute to the SDG 13 A, SDG 15.2 which is linked to SDG 13, and to the Paris Agreement's ETF and related NDC reporting, which also contribute to SDG 13 A.²
18. In total, 55 of 197 NDCs submitted by April 2018 indicated in their NDCs that they aim to implement REDD+ as part of their contribution to address climate change (Pham et al, 2018). An in-depth analysis conducted by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Climate Focus (2018) found that 83 percent of NDCs contain references to ongoing or planned efforts in the forest sector, including forest landscape restoration (FLR). The 25 countries with the highest forest cover have all included forest-related mitigation measures in their NDCs (FAO, 2018). According to FAO (2017), forestry sector is represented in more than 80 percent of the 38 NDCs in the Asia-Pacific.
19. Through their existing NDCs, many countries have communicated that their mitigation efforts in the forest sector will be coordinated through their REDD+ frameworks, highlighting the importance of REDD+ especially for measuring and reporting on mitigation outcomes (GCF, 2019).

¹ The UN-REDD Programme was launched in 2008, with FAO as one of the partners together with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP, all with specified roles in the partnership. It encompasses 64 partner countries and is a flagship United Nations partnership for the Paris Agreement, and for delivering on the Sustainable Development Agenda. The Programme supports nationally led REDD+ processes in developing and emerging countries including national REDD+ readiness efforts in 64 partner countries, spanning Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

² Source: *The evaluation study "Contribution of FAO's Work in REDD+ and Forestry and Climate Change to SDG 13/Climate Action", August 1, 2020.*

20. REDD+ can also deliver non-carbon co-benefits which contribute to other SDGs (e.g., SDG 2 and SDG 5).

Finding 2. The current FAO REDD+ related portfolio and delivered outputs are largely relevant considering contributions to SDG 13 and climate action despite in most cases making no reference to the SDG goals or the Paris Agreement.³

21. Based on the Quantitative Content Analysis of 41 FAO REDD-related evaluation reports, and 137 REDD+ related project documents, the majority of the projects are not explicitly aligned to contribute to SDG 13. Only 8 percent out of 137 projects refer explicitly to SDG 13, and most of them deal with the GEF-supported Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT). CBIT global and national projects are explicitly linked to SDG 15 and the Paris Agreement in addition to SDG 13. Twenty-seven (27) percent of the assessed portfolio refer to the Paris Agreement.
22. However, when looking at the objectives and type of work imbedded in the assessed project design documents, it is apparent that most of them are relevant from the perspective of SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement. Capacity building, improving information and reporting and support to strategy processes feature strongly in more than 90 percent of the project documents. Work on NFMS, FREL and especially MRV dominates the assessed project portfolio.

Finding 3. FAO has made transformational contributions to climate action objectives and targets at global normative and policy level and at country level through its UN-REDD and other REDD+ related work on developing methodologies and best practices in forest reference emissions levels (FREL), monitoring reporting and verification (MRV), and multi-purpose national forest monitoring systems (NFMS) and strengthening related country capacities.

23. According to the external stakeholder interviews, FAO's work on FREL, MRV and NFMS system development and capacity building, often through the UN-REDD Programme, is uniformly highly valued both globally and at the country level for helping countries implement the Four Pillars of the UNFCCC Warsaw Convention. In several interviews, FAO was seen to provide key outputs for transformational change to enable moving towards results-based payments (RBP) for improved forest and land management and leveraging large-scale funding. Practically all the external stakeholder interviews highlighted at least one of the transformational elements of FAO's REDD+ support, dealing especially with relevance (e.g. link to NDCs) and systemic change with focus on capacity development. There were only few references to scale and sustainability, and in case of scale, there were concerns regarding limited opportunities for scaling and accessing large-scale financing.
24. Several interviews, including those dealing with climate mitigation funds, highlight the relevance and achievements of FAO's support in forest monitoring at country level to enable delivering e.g. GCF and multilateral FCPF and BioCF ISFL funding to reward reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increased sequestration through better land management. Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, Indonesia, and Viet Nam are examples of countries benefiting from FAO support, and are now front-runners to unlock results-based

³ Source: *The evaluation study "Contribution of FAO's Work in REDD+ and Forestry and Climate Change to SDG 13/Climate Action", August 1, 2020.*

- finance for carbon emission reductions through the World Bank's FCPF's Carbon Fund and BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes.
25. In 2019, FAO supported four countries through REDD+ in RBPs, while 40 countries were further supported to develop national forest monitoring systems. Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia, all of which have received REDD+ support from FAO were amongst the first countries to receive RBPs from the GCF. As of September 2020, Colombia has been provided USD 28.2 million for 7 million tons of emissions avoided and Chile USD 63.6 million for 12 million tons of emissions avoided. These countries have received significant REDD+ support over the years as has Ecuador that has received USD 18.6 million managed by the UNDP, FAO's UN-REDD partner for mitigating 4.8 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.
 26. The UN-REDD Programme, with FAO in the lead, has supported MRV, NFMS and FREL development and capacity building in 64 countries. About 70 percent of that support has come from FAO, and FAO has hence played a major role in a globally important climate mitigation initiative that has also been FAO's first major climate change area of work.
 27. Of the total 50 countries that had submitted FRELs/FRLs to the UNFCCC secretariat by January 2020, 29 countries (around 60 percent) have received UN-REDD support. According to consolidated progress report (UN-REDD, 2020) the UN-REDD Programme has supported 45 countries in developing NFMS; and 18 eighteen countries have received support and made progress on their National Forest Inventories (NFIs).
 28. In addition, 34 countries have advanced their National REDD+ Strategies or Action Plans, four (Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay) in line with the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for REDD+ with GCF Board approval to pay these pioneer countries more than USD 228 million for the their emissions reductions. Bangladesh, Honduras, and Mongolia all finalized national REDD+ strategies or action plans in 2019, bringing to 28 the number of countries that have adopted, with UN-REDD support, strategic policy frameworks to institutionalize forest solutions to climate change.
 29. At present, FAO is also assisting 30 countries in the planning and implementation of the REDD+ mitigation actions, which are reflected in their REDD+ strategies and NDCs.
 30. In total, beyond UN-REDD more than 80 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean have received support from FAO in their REDD+ readiness and implementation phases, with focus on MRV, FREL, and NFMS work but also contributing also to national REDD strategy/action plan, and investment plan formulation and improving forest governance with focus on land tenure using VGGT for assessment of tenure regime. Although UN-REDD has dominated the work – in the past some 90 percent of FAO's national forest monitoring (NFM) work was linked to UN-REDD – bilateral cooperation and working with a range of partners such as the World Bank (WB), GEF and the Green Climate Fund as well as the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) have become increasingly important in FAO actions to reduce emissions and enhance carbon sequestration.
 31. In terms of impact of FAO support linked to REDD+ and UNFCCC, 70 percent of the 60 REDD+ submissions to UNFCCC have used Open Foris tools/platforms such as SEPAL (System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring), many autonomously.
 32. In the Asia-Pacific Region, FAO has provided a major contribution to regional REDD readiness work through supporting NFM and MRV in most countries where UN-REDD is

active and in selected FCPF countries. The developed NFM systems generate information to improve forestry planning and resource monitoring and establish reference emission levels in several countries. Most important countries in terms of work have been Viet Nam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia, and Timor-Leste. Partial but important support in strengthening national forest resource inventory and information systems and capacity has been provided, e.g. to Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan, Nepal, Solomon Islands, and Fiji. In addition, FAO support has been central to establish reference emission levels in about 70 percent of the Asia-Pacific countries.

33. In **Ecuador**, FAO has contributed to SDG 13 mitigation targets mainly through ongoing forest-carbon work (originally within the UN-REDD program, now included in a GCF-GEF project PROAmazonia), through which it has reduced deforestation and received results-based payments.
34. In **Honduras**, interviewed national stakeholders ranked FAO's REDD+ support for preparation of actions for the implementation of REDD+, preparation of REDD+, and 'Empowerment of rural woman for climate action in the forestry sector of Western Honduras', high amongst the FAO country portfolio. Especially capacity building, tools and techniques generated by the projects for the preparation of REDD+ Honduras represented a milestone in FAO's participation in climate action. The contribution of FAO-supported REDD projects allowed the country to design its strategy and respond to its commitments, reporting to UNFCCC the emissions reference levels.
35. In **Bangladesh**, REDD+ initiatives feature at the top of the list in terms of the scale of operation, budget allocation and duration of support. FAO's support for the development of MRV and FREL to implement REDD+ work and strengthening NFM, forest cover monitoring, and Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) reporting through REDD+/ 'Strengthening National Forest Inventory and Satellite Land Monitoring System in support of REDD+ in Bangladesh' (GCP/BGD/058/USA), and REDD+/ 'Strengthening environment, forest and climate change capacity in Bangladesh of the MoEF and its agencies' (GCP/BGD/053/USA) are considered very relevant and contributing to SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement. Other key results include Land Cover Map 2015, capacity development of the Forest Department officials, strengthened institutional arrangements, technical, GHG reporting and MRV capacities within the government, and CIP EFCC – a framework for mobilizing and delivering effective, coordinated, sustainable and country-driven investment programmes in environmental protection; sustainable forest management; climate change adaptation and mitigation; and environmental governance. However, the evaluation of the UN-REDD National Programme in 2019 concluded that the programme has successfully established technical readiness but only partially achieved strategy and institutional readiness.
36. FAO is currently implementing the 'Strengthening capacity for monitoring environmental emissions under the Paris Agreement in Bangladesh' project, which directly supports the country's NDCs. Specifically, it strengthens institutional arrangements, technical, GHG reporting and MRV capacities within the government.
37. In **Viet Nam**, FAO support has strengthened national forest inventory and monitoring methodology, tools and capacity, and now more reliable information is for planning and reporting nationally and contributing to mandatory international reporting, including UNFCCC and FRA. FAO has supported the REDD+ process through contributing to the MRV

and FREL development and helped with the development and implementation of a sub-national approach to REDD+ in four provinces.

Finding 4. FAO's UN-REDD work and related support, e.g. in NFM, have moved the REDD+ process forward and contributed to transformational change but otherwise FAO's forestry and climate change project portfolio is scattered, and largely based on a "traditional" project approach comprising relatively small projects with limited or no links to transformative processes.

38. Transformational change/paradigm shift is explicitly discussed in just a few project design documents excluding FAO's UN-REDD related work that supports a stage-wise long-term REDD+ process that is transformational by nature. In the rest of the portfolio, FAO-GEF projects stand out because they pay more attention to drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and are more integrated by nature. They pay relatively more attention to adaptation, including NAP(A)s, enhanced transparency, small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) as well supporting integrated approaches to sustainable land management, and make more references to SDGs, Paris Agreement, and sustainability. Other FAO REDD+ related projects pay more attention to mitigation, SFM, NFMS, MRV/FREL work and in general to supporting formal REDD+ processes but focus more on forestry work.⁴
39. The forestry and climate related interventions focus the most on the systemic dimension of transformational change followed by relevance; capacity development support really stands while scale and sustainability receive less attention.
40. **Relevance:** The issue of drivers/sources of GHG emissions (CO₂, methane etc.) and low-carbon development pathways receive surprisingly little attention considering that these issues are the core of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. There is some evidence on shifting towards more integrated, multi-purpose land use approaches and sectoral approaches that pay attention to climate change including CSA, and SLM especially in the GEF-financed projects. Newer projects appear to address more the underlying, cross-sectoral drivers of carbon emissions related to unsustainable land use and even consumption than the pre-2015 designed projects.
41. Mitigation, adaptation and resilience appear to receive equal attention in the overall portfolio. Without the FAO-GEF portfolio, FAO's forestry and climate change work would be dominated by mitigation.
42. **Systemic dimension:** Capacity building and support to national strategies and programs dominate; most projects appear to be about capacity building. Cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation and policy support and strengthening information/access to information receive attention in 30-40 percent of the assessed projects. Legal reform has received very little attention. Market change and incentives, and behavioral change have not been addressed in the majority of the projects.
43. **Scale dimension:** Replication and scaling-up issues are referred to in about 70 percent of the evaluated projects. Catalytic effects have received limited attention and potential for large-scale impacts at national or global level and large-scale financing are barely mentioned, which erodes the basis for scaling up beyond the project. In fact, they are referred to only in just a few project documents (FAO-GEF projects). However, the FAO

⁴ Source: The evaluation study "Contribution of FAO's Work in REDD+ and Forestry and Climate Change to SDG 13/Climate Action", August 1, 2020.

REDD+ portfolio includes several GCF supported projects, many of them not yet approved or mobilized, which will have access to large-scale RBP funding.

44. Under the **sustainability** dimension, environmental sustainability receives attention, and financial sustainability to some extent but social sustainability does not feature much. In fact, social sustainability is not even mentioned in most of these evaluations. Financial and social sustainability issues, and sustainability in general, receive more attention in the FAO-GEF design documents than on average in the overall portfolio. Partnerships with state organizations and other UN agencies dominate; only few project design documents refer to partnerships with civil society organizations and private sector.
45. In several external stakeholder interviews, it was stated that FAO tends to work on its own, in relatively small grant-based projects, which limits the impact, financial leverage and sustainability of FAO interventions.

Finding 5. FAO has introduced state-of-the art tools such as the tools (SEPAL, Collect Earth, Collect Mobile etc.) that have enhanced country-level capacity to monitor and report on forest cover and carbon stocks that have improved national policy-making and forest sector planning as well as reporting to UNFCCC, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCDD), CBD and global FRA with influence on global REDD+ decision-making and climate change debate.

46. According to the majority of external stakeholder interviews, the development of Open Foris and its SEPAL, Collect Earth and Collect tools, for forest monitoring has been a major achievement that contributes directly to SDG 13 and Paris agreement through better, more efficient country level climate change monitoring and reporting to the UNFCCC.
47. SEPAL is being used by many countries, not only by those supported by FAO. It is part of the Open Foris initiative which has resulted from ten years of development. Open Foris, more specifically, Collect Earth and Collect are widely used for example, by the FCPF countries and WB staff working for FCPF and BioCF ISFL, and are regarded as essential for delivering the FCPF and BioCF ISFL funds.
 - i. In terms of impact, countries are widely using Open Foris benefiting also from related FAO training and support, and as a result 70 percent of the 60 REDD+ submissions to UNFCCC have used Open Foris tools or platforms. Some countries do it autonomously including the recent submission by Mexico. According to Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), SEPAL has lowered costs, removed barriers, and improved forest monitoring. The strategic mid-term review of SEPAL (2017) indicated that SEPAL has played a role in the most recent REDD+ submissions.
 - ii. For example, UNCDD, WB, CIFOR, and WRI are using Open Foris tools. UNCDD has used Collect Earth in forestry and climate change, especially in SIDS such as Mauritius, Cabo Verde, Antigua and Barbuda, and Samoa to detect the land cover changes.
 - iii. SEPAL now has more than 4 300 registered users from 160 countries – offering users' easy-to-use cloud-based access to satellite data and supercomputing power, including from mobile devices.
 - iv. During 2019, access via mobile phones was introduced as well as access to daily high-resolution data from a private Planet Labs for eight forest countries – Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Mexico, and Mozambique. These countries are front-runners to unlock results-based finance for carbon emission reductions through the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund and BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes.

- v. SEPAL is also being deployed in new and novel applications such as for peatland monitoring, landscape restoration monitoring, and near real-time fire assessment and alerts.
- vi. A new tool, Earth Map was launched under Open Foris and linked to the Hand-in Hand Initiative, in September 2020. It is a free and open-source tool developed by FAO in the framework of the FAO-Google partnership to support countries, research institutes and even farmers with internet access to monitor their land in an easy, integrated, and multi-temporal manner.

Finding 6. FAO is providing valuable methodological contributions and statistics on forest resources and land use and related carbon stocks and emissions that influence global REDD+ decision-making and climate change debate and contribute to national policymaking.

- 48. At country level, FAO's support has strengthened NFM capacity and provision of information needed to improve national forest management planning and policymaking in addition to improving international reporting, e.g., to the UNFCCC. A fresh comprehensive peer-reviewed study (Neeff, T. and Piazza, M., 2020) found out that in most of the 38 assessed countries, the majority of them receiving FAO support, NFM data helped to bring issues to the attention of policymakers and support policy design and evaluation of public policy, and have commonly contributed to national on REDD+ and climate change strategies.
- 49. FAO is providing global forest resource data and estimates of GHG emissions from AFOLU sectors which are widely used in various international fora. FRA is based on the concept multipurpose forest resource assessment and provides very valuable information related to climate action and SDG 15 reporting (15.1.1, 15.2.1) and 15.1.1 which are relevant also for SDG 13. Within the UNFCCC, FAO contributes to articles 13 and 14 in the Paris Agreement. Article 13 is about transparency in the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) submissions from countries, and article 14 is about the Global Stocktake of the implementation of the Paris Agreement in 2023. FRA has also a link to the Paris Agreement Enhanced transparency framework; FRA and NFM teams have worked together to develop the ongoing GEF-supported CBIT-Forest project.
- 50. According to the interviews, FRA data, despite some inaccuracies, has been an asset in the climate change debate because it is the only information that is globally accepted and enjoys country ownership. UNFCCC and other UN agencies and secretariats for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) need information that is provided by countries.
- 51. The FRA cooperation with UNFCCC is close; there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between FAO and UNFCCC that includes agreements on sharing remote-sensing mapping data/products and other data and information sets related to the agriculture, forestry and other land use sector including geospatial data, and reporting of national GHG inventories in the agriculture, forestry and other land use sector, and sharing good practices and lessons learned from adaptation and mitigation actions and contribution to the knowledge products. UNFCCC uses FRA information routinely for comparing FRA and AFOLU GHG emissions data to country reports as part of the review process. In addition, FRA data are used to support the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) including its Assessment Reports, and the Rio Conventions (Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). FRA data also contributes also to the monitoring the progress towards the Global Forest Goals (GFG) of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and related Global Set of Forest

related indicators of which three of them are climate change related. According to the interviews, also UN-REDD and WB REDD work make use of FRA data.

52. FAO's on AFOLU GHG reporting regularly makes use of FRA data including the latest 2020 report on GHG emissions from forestry issued by the ESS in 2020.
53. FRA expertise has been used in the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) that is hosted by FAO and helps to coordinate international support to developing countries on forest and GHG monitoring for REDD+ and related activities. FAO contributed to the work of GFOI regarding the Methods and Guidance Documentation to complement IPC-compliant methods and guidance materials for REDD+ measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV).
54. FAO and UNCCD provided countries with modelling data on soil organic carbon to draw a baseline and put in place monitoring. Therefore, countries have available information about the trend of land degradation. This work was done under the Global Soil Partnership in the Land and Water Division (CBL).

Finding 7. FAO has produced a significant number of normative products such as guidelines, best-practice documents and tools some of which are widely used by other organizations and at country level and many others which are not really well known, or information on their use is not available.

55. Based on the interviews of external stakeholders, the following normative products are highly valued and used in climate change related work globally and in the country operations of various organizations:
 - i. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT): UN-REDD has adopted guidelines as a guiding framework for addressing tenure issues in the context of REDD+ and emphasize the importance of customary ownership rights and the collective tenure rights of indigenous peoples and local communities; The Tenure Facility and Rights and Resources Initiative also use the guidelines.
 - ii. National forests management system guidelines and related training materials.
 - iii. Open Foris and its tools such as Collect Earth and SEPAL and related training materials.
 - iv. Ex-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT), used widely, e.g. by GEF and WB.

Finding 8. There are some less successful interventions and missed opportunities including climate action not being included in the objectives and outcomes of project design documents.

56. Based on the interviews of both FAO staff and government staff (Viet Nam), some missed opportunities were identified:
 - i. Based on the *Final Evaluation of the Conservation Agriculture Scaling-Up (CASU) Project*, Zambia suffers from deforestation and forest degradation linked to agriculture, livestock, and rural energy (charcoal). The project was about conservation agriculture/CSA but according to the final evaluation there was no link to REDD, very little on climate change in general and no reference to SDG 13 or in fact any SDGs.
 - ii. The *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Programme (2018)* highlighted in its background serious issues related to unsustainable land use and forestry and climate change, but concluded that, climate change and gender – two

- cross-cutting issues under the current FAO Strategic Framework – were not adequately addressed; there were no explicit climate-oriented interventions.
- iii. Based on the *Final Evaluation of the Project "Building a Global Agenda of Action in Support of Sustainable Livestock Sector Development"* (2019), livestock's role in overgrazing and as a driver of deforestation directly and indirectly through the expansion of feedstock (soya) was not addressed although it is well known that in many countries livestock production is accelerating CO₂ emissions and reduction in carbon stocks linked to clearing of forests.
 - iv. The Global Forest Survey: the study that collects data on forests and that could have improved FRA's estimations was halted by FAO because of issues arising from possible inconsistency with data that countries themselves would be providing. At present, having alternative sources of data, including those provided by the Global Forest Watch is viewed by several interviews as positive thing, because it promotes additional scrutiny and transparency, e.g., when reporting to the UNFCCC.
 - v. In Viet Nam, considerable effort was put into helping the country to prepare a USD 50 million GCF proposal for REDD+ implementation in the Central Highlands. FAO pulled out from the process just before the government was to submit the final draft to the GCF due to the views of the new FAO country representative. As a result, there is no proper follow-up work on REDD+ implementation in the country, after all the effort FAO has put over a decade in supporting REDD+ in Viet Nam. At the same time, FAO's action may have affected its credibility as a GCF delivery partner in Viet Nam.

1.2. Is the climate agenda mainstreamed across FAO's portfolio of programmes and projects to ensure enhanced relevance and coherence with FAO's mission on climate action, SDG 13, the Paris Agreement and the evolving international climate agenda?

Finding 9. FAO does important REDD+ related and other climate change related work including FRA, FLEGT, FRA, forest and landscape restoration, and support to sustainable forest and peatland management that contributes to climate action targets and the Paris Agreement without being labelled as a REDD or climate change project, and without necessarily monitoring and reporting delivered climate change results.

57. The interviews of both external stakeholders and FAO staff and the review of the FAO climate change related portfolio and delivered normative products highlighted relevant work and achievements that contribute to climate action, especially linked to FAO's forest (and) landscape restoration; sustainable land management, forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT); and peatland management and monitoring work.
58. In **Ecuador**, climate considerations have been mainstreamed in the FAO's country portfolio, and partly due to FAO's influence, also in the NDCs. FAO's support to the national REDD+ process through UN-REDD, and good progress made in implementation of the REDD action plan and moving towards RBP, convinced the Ecuadorian government of the positive investment in climate action and when the country developed its NDC it asked the UN agencies including FAO to include the agriculture and forestry in the NDC.
59. **Forest and landscape restoration.** The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLMR) at the policy level works with Adaptation Plans and NDCs to include restoration in countries in Africa. Under FLRMR, there are projects, funded by different agencies including The International Climate Initiative (IKI) (with funding from BMU) and GEF, that focus on forest landscape restoration (FLR) but also contribute to climate action and to the Paris

Agreement although climate change mitigation and adaptation are not necessarily the most important objectives.

- i. The project The Paris Agreement in action: upscaling forest and landscape restoration to achieve nationally determined contributions GCP/INT/296/GER(BMU) aims at demonstrating the potential of FLR options in the context of the Bonn Challenge to achieve the NDCs by promoting joint mitigation and adaptation approaches in Africa, the Pacific Islands and in the Mediterranean. It is a new project with no concrete results yet.
- ii. The Restoration Initiative (TRI) is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded programme implemented by FAO, IUCN, and UNEP; FAO manages 50 percent of the USD 100 million program. Targeted countries are: Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Myanmar, Pakistan Sao Tome and Principe, United Republic of Tanzania. One of the main objectives of the national TRI projects is to create bankable projects for scaling-up. These are new projects and until now the restored areas remain very small. Only a few hundred hectares in total, which means that their carbon enhancement impact is still marginal.

60. **Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade.** The FAO-EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Programme Phase III is guided by the EU FLEGT Action Plan that contributes to SDG 15, Target 15.2), and the Paris Agreement and CBD Aichi targets. The programme is about reducing deforestation and forest degradation linked to illegal logging. Under this phase III, FAO is supporting forest governance in 26 countries and Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) processes in 15 countries. Honduras and Viet Nam are their programme countries.

- i. There are similarities between FLEGT and REDD+. The ultimate objective is the same as for REDD and hence REDD and FLEGT are closely related. When illegal logging is reduced you also avoid deforestation and forest degradation, which are at the core of REDD. There is also a close link to REDD+ in a sense of the overall logic; both FLEGT and REDD+ are based on the creation of market incentives for adopting good practices, and promoting changes in governance systems, policies and regulatory frameworks to strengthen SFM.
- ii. Despite the close link between climate mitigation through REDD+ and FLEGT action, the project design document and the mid-term evaluation of this programme do not clearly refer to climate action. The project has no climate change related objectives or targets, they do not report contribution to the SDGs, including SDG 13 at all, but decreasing illegal logging contributes especially managing forests sustainably (SDG 15) and related to that to mitigating climate change (SDG 13).

61. **Peatland management and monitoring.**⁵

- i. There are two global projects: Development of an Innovative Peatland Monitoring System – SEPAL (Global, Indonesia), and The Global Peatlands Initiative: Assessing, Measuring and Preserving Peat Carbon. FAO's work on peatlands makes direct contributions to SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement but no impacts can yet be reported because projects are ongoing but very relevant outputs have been already produced. In Indonesia, FAO developed cloud-based free peatland monitoring tools which will be integrated into the online platforms SEPAL and Collect Earth Online (CEO). FAO

⁵ Drained peatlands are currently responsible for 5 percent of the global anthropogenic GHG emissions.

issued in the fall of 2020 a report: *Peatlands mapping and monitoring – Recommendations and technical overview* (FAO, 2020c). This report, and work contributes to both SDG 13 and SDG 15 (see the cover page).

- ii. FAO was been instrumental, together with UNEP, in forming the Global Peatlands Initiative. This is an effort by leading experts and institutions formed by 13 founding members at the UNFCCC COP in Marrakech, Morocco in 2016 to save peatlands as the world's largest terrestrial organic carbon stock.

Finding 10. FAO has positioned itself reasonably well in relation to the evolving context for climate change, especially considering the evolution of the REDD+ process in the last five years, but there are now new demands and opportunities which will require changes in FAO support to REDD+.

62. REDD+ process and needs have evolved over time and FAO has also evolved to respond to new needs, e.g. improving access to forest resource data, addressing land tenure issues and governance issues related to FLEG(t). Thinking of the current situation and the future, the interviews of both external stakeholders and FAO staff at different levels indicate that the major changes in the context for forest-related climate change work are linked to (i) the Paris Agreement and NDCs, (ii) shift from REDD+ readiness to implementation, and (iii) results-based payments (RBP) to reward for emission reductions from sustainable forest and land management.
63. The Paris Agreement and the importance given to REDD+, sustainable forestry and NDCs create country demand for REDD+ related NDC commitments and reporting on mitigation and adaptation achievements. Partly related to the above, and in particular to the Paris Agreement, there's a need to support countries in enhancing the transparency of reporting, and related monitoring of the NDC commitments.
64. There has been a major shift from REDD+ readiness work to implementing national REDD strategies and action plans. MRV/FREL/NFMS support is still needed in many countries but there is increasing need now to start implementing REDD strategies and addressing drivers of deforestation on the ground which implies major demand for multisectoral support, cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration and scaling up mitigation action.
 - i. There are at least 60 countries that are ready to translate their national REDD+ plans/strategies into investment plans. The implementation of these REDD+ plans will require a transformative, long-term, a programmatic approach instead of delivering small and fragmented projects.
 - ii. The delivery of forest-related emission commitments will require addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation which means that REDD+ is evolving out from forestry to a broader climate change issue with strong connectivity between forestry, climate change and agriculture. This requires cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration, which in principle is something FAO could deliver based on its comparative advantage.
 - iii. Main drivers are outside forestry, especially agriculture, and in Latin America also livestock and related crops are behind unsustainable forest land use and increased emissions. Irrespective of REDD+ process, there is increasing pressure to make agriculture and livestock more sustainable also in terms of impact on land use and forest resources to reduce emissions and protect biodiversity, while ensuring food security. There will also be increasing demand for support to make commodity

- production and consumption and related value-chains, which drive driving deforestation and related carbon emissions, more sustainable.
- iv. Moving in a broader landscape, FAO will have a more important role in supporting countries in their land tenure issues.
65. In several interviews, including both FAO staff and external stakeholders, it is increasingly understood that a project-based narrow sectoral approach will not alone help to reduce emissions from unsustainable forest land use. There is a need for a concerted set of long-term programmatic integrated approaches that address drivers of unsustainable land use, including deforestation and forest degradation. The nature of needed support, including involvement of the private sector and commercial aspects and needed scale, suggest a need for blended financing and partnerships, instead of a more traditional FAO-alone grant-based project approach. At the same time, the donor environment has also changed. There has been less REDD readiness financing partly because donors have become impatient and want to see results on the ground. The influence of donors and the change in the finance structure are putting pressure on UN-REDD to deliver concrete, more ambitious mitigation impacts (measured in tons of CO₂).
66. Cross-sectoral policies, coordination and implementation become more important during implementation and that's where FAO can potentially contribute, assuming it will make effective use of its comparative advantage of being the only UN agency covering agriculture, livestock, forestry and land-based sectors in general, and with a mandate to help FAO Members.
67. Green Climate Fund is moving forward and will help with REDD+ implementation in the most "REDD-advanced" countries, but also with readiness work in other countries. Many countries will need support to access this financing, which also provides a role for FAO and maybe also a rationale for expanding the work of the FAO Investment Centre in this thematic area. However, based on the GCF interviews and experts dealing with GCF, there is preference for large-scale programs mixing grant and loan finding and involving a broader range of partners FAO has been used to work with.

Finding 11. There is only limited evidence of FAO project interventions, outside forestry, that address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and related GHG emissions; REDD+ remains internally largely as forestry-driven process.

68. Unlike GEF-7, that has adopted the principle of addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in an integrated cross-sectoral manner in its portfolio allocation, in FAO the clear majority of REDD+ related projects are within FOA.
69. Based on the portfolio review some positive examples of integrated projects, addressing this important dimension of transformational change, and contributing to SDG 13 could be identified:
- i. Decision Support for Mainstreaming and Scaling Up of Sustainable Land Management.
 - ii. Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture (Turkey).
 - iii. Mitigating Agriculture GHG Emissions Towards Wider Opportunities (MICCA).
 - iv. Securing Tenure Rights for Forest Landscape-Dependent Communities: Linking science with policy to advance tenure security, sustainable forest management and people's livelihoods.

- v. Climate Change Adaptation to Reduce Land Degradation in Fragile Micro-Watersheds located in the Municipalities of Texistepeque and Candelaria de la Frontera" increased vegetation cover to protect and conserve the soil and aquifer system and promoted integrated natural resources management practices to stop deforestation and forest degradation in micro-watersheds.
 - vi. Promotion of climate-smart livestock management integrating reversion of land degradation and reduction of desertification risks in vulnerable provinces (FSP) in Ecuador.
 - vii. Climate-smart livestock production and land restoration in the Uruguayan rangelands (PPG).
 - viii. Contributing to the integrated management of biodiversity of the Pacific Region of Colombia to build peace (FSP).
70. The FAO REDD+ team does not include experts working outside FOA.

Finding 12. Most of the REDD+ and REDD+ related projects do not set explicit, quantitative mitigation/emission reductions/carbon stock enhancement target and do not monitor and report on carbon impacts.

71. The review of 137 project design documents and 41 evaluation reports indicates that very little attention has been paid to carbon outcomes. Low-carbon development pathways and carbon outcomes do not receive much explicit attention in the project design, nor in the design of new projects, but FAO-GEF projects try to track carbon impacts.
72. Ex-ACT has been developed by the FAO Investment Centre with support from CBL, surprisingly it is used systematically in the WB and GEF project cycle from design to monitoring impacts but not in FAO's own projects which are likely to have carbon impacts.
73. Evaluation reports have paid little attention to quantification of carbon outcomes and they also do not provide much hard evidence on non-carbon outcomes e.g. improved biodiversity conservation or improved livelihoods of local people.
74. The lack of hard information on carbon outcomes is partly explained by the "young" project portfolio, with 54 percent of all the mapped projects starting 2018 or afterwards. The FAO-GEF portfolio is even younger when viewed separately. Out of the 81 projects, 49, or 60.5 percent, have started the year 2018 or afterwards.

Finding 13. No strong evidence was found on addressing trade-offs in a systematic, analytical manner in forestry and climate change related work but examples of strong synergies that contribute positively to climate action were identified.

75. There are synergies and trade-offs in forest and landscape restoration and climate mitigation and adaptation objectives. In comparison with REDD+, FLR includes similar activities but the REDD approach is to have an immediate impact on the carbon stock, while FLR is about maximizing multiple services and not maximizing the carbon sequestration, which means that there are trade-offs e.g. enhancing or maintaining biodiversity and maximizing carbon stocks and sequestration services. However, in principle, an increase in biomass through restoration will increase carbon stocks. FAO's FLRM and WRI have developed a conceptual planning tool – a wheel – that allows assessment of trade-offs. The trade-off between objectives is done at landscape level during the planning phase with local stakeholders. Climate mitigation is only one of the multiple possible objectives.

76. There are great synergies between FAO's FLEGT work and climate action because of the closeness of the REDD+ and FLEGT ultimate objectives and some of the action; there are no trade-offs between SDG 15 and SDG 13 but synergies, also in practice. In the Mekong Region, FAO is involved with a NICFI-supported initiative linked to UN-REDD that tries to address illegal logging and trade as part of REDD+ action. In Viet Nam, REDD+ Action Plan includes FLEGT VPA action. In Colombia, where FAO-FLEGT programme has worked for a long time, FLEGT actions are written into the national REDD strategy.

1.3. What type of initiatives have been, or are likely to be, most effective to achieve significant and sustainable, results, and why? (policy advisory, governance and institutional development; data, information and knowledge management; direct assistance to stakeholders, South-South and Triangular Cooperation [SSTC]; farmer organizations, traders, schools, mobilization of resources, etc.)

Note: This evaluation question is formulated more to look for conclusions. It overlaps with the first two evaluation sub-questions. The evidence for findings 13, 14, and 15 is provided above and not repeated here.

Finding 14. Programmatic long-term multi-country interventions implemented in partnership with other key players to support country REDD+ processes that combine policy and strategic support, development of tools and providing related support to countries, and provision of data have been effective in contributing to improved capacities and access to information to enable better national global and global policy dialogue and decision-making and mobilization of financial resources for scaling.

77. In **Ecuador**, the effectiveness of FAO's work on climate change is due to a combination of different initiatives. The basis of the work has been the collaboration in the UN-REDD programme. There, its main role was policy advisory (development of the REDD Action Plan) and the provision of data and information (forest inventories and FRL). Based on this, the FAO portfolio and its normative work expanded to a series of project that mobilized millions worth of international funding through which, FAO became an important stakeholder not only on forestry, but also on climate action related to agriculture and sustainable land management.

Finding 15. Individual field forestry projects can be relevant considering SDG 13 targets and Paris Agreement, but evidence suggests that they are in most cases not effective in contributing to transformational processes e.g., due to sustainability issues, inadequate partnerships and weak links to policy and strategic reform processes.

78. In case of forestry and climate change, the review of progress reports and interviews of external stakeholders indicate that FAO-supported field projects have made significant contribution to SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement when they have been linked directly to UNFCCC specified pillars of REDD+, including developing a national forest monitoring system and contributing to the formulation of a national REDD+ strategy or action plan.
79. Review of close to 150 forestry and climate change related projects, demonstrates that the project portfolio is largely based on a "traditional" project approach comprising relatively small, fragmented projects with limited or no links to transformative processes. Transformational change/paradigm shift is explicitly discussed in just a few project design documents, in most cases linked to capacity development but much less on scaling and creation of enabling conditions.

Finding 16. The most impactful guidelines, best-practice documents and tools related to forestry and climate change – including Open Foris and its tools Collect Earth and SEPAL – NFMS and MRV development, and FRA share the common features of linking tool and method development at global level with field level support and implementation and improving the tools based on field experience, developing methods and tools which serve multiple purposes in addition to climate change, and linking all of this work to global processes and country level processes to enable both more sustainable management of forest resources and better monitoring and reporting.

EQ 2. Is FAO fit for purpose to significantly contribute to globally agreed Climate Action targets?

Note: 2.1 and 2.3 are merged as suggested in the original set of evaluation questions.

2.1. To what extent are overall FAO Strategic Objectives, Results Framework and Strategies (current and under development) aligned with global policies and strategies such as Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement?

2.3. Does FAO have clear and articulated institutional strategies and plans to support climate action?

Finding 17. The FAO Climate Change Strategy and strategic objectives and results framework do not guide most of FAO's forestry and climate change related work, but the guidance comes from elsewhere, including global processes and agreements as well as NDCs, and appears to be adequate and aligned with corporate general guidance.

80. Based on the interviews of FAO staff, FAO Climate Change Strategy does not guide their work; in fact, most of the interviews did not know about the contents of the strategy. Although, the corporate strategic objectives and results reporting systems were seen as too general for guiding climate change work, it was not seen as an issue because of the other guidance that linked to FAO supported initiatives.

81. Main guidance for FAO's REDD+ work is provided by the UN-REDD process and its adopted objectives and working principles, the UNFCCC REDD+ decisions including especially the Warsaw Framework, the Paris Agreement and its commitments to NDCs and related country demand. In regional and country offices, most of the demand for FAO's support is currently linked to the implementation of the UN-REDD process and NDCs and related donor dialogue and coordination as well as changes in donor funding priorities.

Note: Responses to 2.2 and 2.4 merged because they overlap.

2.2. How is FAO's mission on climate action reflected/included in the institution's governance, operative structure?

2.4. How relevant and adequate are FAO's delivery mechanisms, human and financial resources and monitoring systems to address country/regional level needs and to plan, budget, monitor and communicate FAO's support in achieving the targets posed by SDG 13 and by the Paris Agreement?

Finding 18. Weaknesses in the organizational structure, incentive framework and resource availability have made it difficult to support cross-sectoral work to address underlying drivers of deforestation and forest and land degradation and resolve climate change issues in a more holistic manner and has resulted in FAO working too much in silos.

82. The organizational structure, incentive framework and available resources have made it difficult to support cross-sectoral work to address underlying drivers of deforestation and forest and land degradation and resolve climate change issues in a more holistic manner. Both the interviewed FAO staff and external stakeholders commented on the work still taking place too much in silos although internal cross-sectoral collaboration has increased in the last five years.
83. Interviews with FAO staff identified a lack of corporate incentives for increasing intersectoral work, administrative/budgetary constraints, and old sectoral silo work culture that despite improvements still prevails, as key constraints for doing more integrated cross-sectoral work and sharing resources within the organization. However, many also stated that this type of integrated work is often done based on personal relations and initiatives, e.g. the FRA team and ESS work effectively together in developing AFOLU GHG emissions statistics and FOA's FLRM have cooperated in restoration work with experts at the old CBL.
84. It is likely that integrated, cross-sectoral work is easier in the country offices. RAP has a Natural Resources and Environment Group (NRM) that works in an integrated manner and is strongly involved in the climate change work and the SDG 13 is the main topic in the group. The work covers forestry and climate change, fisheries, land, water and climate change and resilience, including also DRR. The GCF and GEF project development groups are placed within the NRM to support countries to access financing to scale up e.g. CSA, adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction efforts in agriculture and land sectors.

Finding 19. Partly due to the organizational structure, FAO REDD+ work has remained a forestry-driven process internally and also when collaborating and communicating with key external stakeholders, although effective REDD+ implementation would require a more integrated cross-sectoral approach.

85. Many stakeholders commented that there still appears to be a gap between the agricultural colleagues and forestry colleagues; in REDD+ work when interacting with FAO they deal almost solely with forestry people. One reason for that was the way FAO work has been organized along the sectors.
86. Interviews also indicated that there is some cross-sectoral collaboration, but it is largely based on individual initiatives.

Finding 20. Human and financial resources and delivery mechanisms have been adequate until now to support REDD+ readiness work, CBIT-Forest and multi-purpose work such as FRA and NFMs in the countries and monitor SDG 13, SDG 15 and Paris Agreement targets, however when REDD+ moves to the implementation phase, constraints will likely emerge.

87. Based on the stakeholder interviews, FAO's REDD+ work has been quite well financed, and has allowed expanding staff for years based though on extra-budgetary funding. REDD+ related funding has also provided important incremental funding to strengthen other forestry work, especially on NFM and FRA, and incorporate climate change concerns into that work.
88. In some countries there has been shortage of relevant technical experience, however in the Asia-Pacific region, interviews with FAO country staff and key government stakeholders indicate that RAP and FAO headquarters have provided valuable support for REDD+ related work.

Finding 21. FAO's human resource limitations, ways of partnering in project implementation, and inadequate experience managing (very) large projects, hinder moving effectively towards large-scale programmatic implementation based on partnerships and blended financing.

89. Within the organization there is still high quality technical expertise but often it is not available for implementation work, country offices often lack needed expertise, and in recent years FAO has started relying increasingly on consultants, and lower position staff. The increasing use of consultants was criticized quite strongly due to varying quality of inputs, high management fee and not making effective use of in-built FAO capacity.
90. In the external stakeholder interviews, FAO was commended for strong technical knowledge in many areas needed to address forestry and climate change issues. But at the same time, it was often stated, that FAO does not appear to have enough human resources and experience to run big projects.
91. FAO has also limited experience in partnering with DFIs, regional and national development banks to scale up financing. The interviews with UN-REDD and GCF staff indicated that the volume of funding needed to implement REDD+ on the ground is substantial, requiring a new approach to financing based on mixing grants, loans and also mobilizing private sector financing and investments, which poses challenges if the tradition has been to implement smaller grant-based projects, and scrambling for project funding in competition with others.

EQ 3. Does FAO optimally engage partnerships that leverage the effect of its work on climate action towards impact generation?

3.1. Is FAO's collaboration with its main (public and private) development partners (UN and others) effectively building on FAO's comparative strengths and weaknesses on climate change related areas?

Finding 22. FAO has several comparative advantages – including strong country presence and technically strong government relationships having key relevant sectors within the organization – in forestry and climate change work, but it does not make effective use of its potential to address inter-sectoral issues which are essential for effective REDD+ implementation in the countries, addressing drivers of deforestation and land degradation and reducing related GHG emissions.

92. The interviews with external stakeholders were very consistent in identifying FAO's comparative advantages; these findings are similar to the findings of the *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Integrated Natural Resource Management for Sustainable Agriculture (SO2)* in 2018.
93. FAO has **strong technical capacity** highly relevant for REDD+ including forest resource assessment, national forest monitoring, MRV and FREL methodology, use of remote sensing for strengthening national monitoring of forest carbon, and related capacity development. For example, in the UN-REDD partnership the other partners do not have this capacity. FAO also has technical capacity in some aspects of governance such as tenure and forest policy, but evidence of related results in the context of forestry and climate change were limited. Interviews were conducted with two leading global organizations dealing with the rights of indigenous peoples (IP) and forest and land management and related tenure issues which could contribute to REDD+ while addressing sustainable land management and rights of IPs, in general.

94. FAO has **global country presence and a long history of working with forestry and other relevant agencies**; FAO staff works more closely with countries and also in the field with government staff, which does not happen to the same extent with other UN organizations. This was almost uniformly identified as FAO's comparative advantage. Some key partners though stated that this can also be a problem because too often FAO does not address an important issue unless government takes an initiative, which reduces effectiveness of policy engagement, e.g. in strengthening tenure and rights of indigenous people.
95. From the REDD+ perspective, FAO enjoys in principle a very important **comparative advantage of having all the relevant sectors – crops, livestock, fisheries, forestry and sustainable land management, biodiversity, water and climate – within the organization**; but based on the interviews both of external stakeholders and FAO's own staff, it does not yet make an effective use of it, despite some improvements in inter-sectoral collaboration in recent years. Several international REDD+ partners stated that when they communicate with REDD+ experts in FAO, they interact almost solely with forestry (FOA) people.
96. Some external stakeholder interviewees stated that FAO has started recently to venture with its REDD+ work into areas where it is not very strong and others such as DFIs and UNEP are better established, including financing and investment. Also, FAO's comparative advantage in large-scale implementation was questioned.

3.2. To what degree has FAO's collaboration with State partners or development/multi-lateral partners been effective in leveraging climate action at country and at global level?

Finding 23. FAO, in its forestry and climate change related work, engages actively in partnerships and is commonly seen as a good technical partner especially in supporting state agencies, but the strong focus on state partnerships also creates challenges.

At country level:

97. According to stakeholder interviews globally and at country level and based on the earlier FAO OED evaluations including SO2, FAO has strong partnerships and good relationships with sectoral ministries – in the case of REDD+, mainly with the ministry responsible for forestry. REDD+ implementation and climate change reporting are nationally owned processes lead by government organizations and FAO's connections and country presence provide comparative advantages.
98. However, according to several interviews, FAO has not been good in establishing partnerships outside their regular government partnerships and addressing sometimes sensitive issues important for REDD+ because it is so closely linked to the government. Within the REDD+ and research community it is widely known that reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation requires active engagement of other ministries including agriculture and finance, private sector, and civil society organizations, and dealing also with sensitive issues such as land tenure, illegal logging, and the role of private sector.
99. Although, the UN-REDD partnership is working reasonably well, there is sometimes competition and inadequate coordination at country level, e.g. regarding financial management and reporting, and now when REDD+ is moving to the implementation stage, there is increasing competition for resources, e.g. concerning GCF and GEF rather than working more collaboratively.

100. At the country level, FAO's work on national forest monitoring makes use of partnerships with several universities but has only very limited engagement with the private sector and civil society organizations.

At global level:

101. The interviews with FAO partners, linked directly or indirectly to UN-REDD, indicated that FAO is a respected partner that adds value and is a good collaborator. The UN-REDD Programme is a partnership between UNEP, UNDP and FAO. Additionally, the UN-REDD Programme collaborates with several other initiatives, including WB, GFOI, UNFCCC, IPCC and SilvaCarbon platform that has been used in several countries including Bangladesh where FAO is active.
102. The development of Open Foris has been based on strong partnerships with the private sector including Google, and partners such as the Norwegian Space Center and International Climate Initiative (IKI), and SERVIR (a joint venture between NASA and the USAID). The development of Open Foris has also benefited from inputs from UN-REDD, several member countries, universities, and research agencies.
103. GFOI is an important partnership for FRA and has contributed to IPCC methodology for carbon accounting for REDD+. It is led by the Governments of Australia, Norway, the United States of America, and FAO as well as the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS). It is supported by the (UNFCCC) Secretariat, the greenhouse gas inventory programme of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the WB FCPF supports REDD+ countries to develop their national forest monitoring systems and MRV procedures, and hence has similar scope as FAO's own work.
104. In forest and landscape restoration work, partnerships are common. In the GEF-financed Restoration Initiative FAO is in partnership with GEF (financing), IUCN (heads the Global Partnership on FLR), WB (FIP), WRI, IUFRO, and UNEP. In FLR work until now, FAO has not cooperated with private sector, mainly because private investors are struggling with financial feasibility issues but in late 2020 cooperation with two private companies in Africa had been established.

3.3. Are new, innovative partnerships in support of SDG 13, (e.g. in financing, know-how and technologies, research, advocacy, etc.) being forged or adhered by FAO and are these showing concrete results?

Finding 24. Partnerships with state organizations and other UN organizations, and globally also with academia dominate with some innovative partnerships also with the private sector.

105. Based both on the MAXQDA analysis of 137 forestry and climate change related projects and review of 41 evaluation reports, partnerships with state organizations (ministries, departments, extension organizations etc.) and farmers groups/organizations (e.g. producer groups) dominate. Most of these projects are "traditional" field projects where the main point for entry has been through the national or local sectoral ministry/department. Only some evaluation reports refer to partnerships with civil society organizations and even less to private sector at country level. However, there are examples of partnerships with private sector, academia and INGOs at the global level.
106. Positive examples of private sector and research organization engagement include:
- i. FRA partnerships with research agencies, universities, and private companies have been used to both access and develop new technology for the public good; countries

can have easier and quicker access to up-to-date remote sensing information at a lower cost. The 2019 mid-term review of the FRA 2020 concluded that FAO and its FRA team have introduced important technological partnerships with partners such as Google, NASA, the Joint Research Center (European Union), University of Wageningen, etc. FAO signed a formal three-year partnership agreement with Google in COP 21 in Paris in 2015.

- ii. Cooperation with Google has been strengthened, and in early 2018 it was formally agreed that Google Earth Engine will provide free access to more than 170 FRA countries to its huge, almost all-encompassing satellite/remote sensing imagery and databases and tools during the FRA 2020 process, including making use of Google tools. The new Earth Map tool is also based on the Google partnership. The established partnerships have improved efficiency and enabled benefits that FAO could not deliver on its own, e.g. access to state of the art knowledge and technology and data sources.
- iii. Further, FAO FRA and NFM teams have worked with Google and NASA SERVIR to develop jointly tools such as CEO. This work has engaged actively the private sector including companies providing software such as Saiku, BitRock and GDA and Amazon's cloud-based computational capacity in addition to Google.

3.4. Is FAO using its internal implementation modalities to effectively contribute to globally agreed climate action targets (in SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement) through sharing knowledge, best practices, and experiences as well as by adapting/replicating/scaling up climate change adaptation and mitigation technologies?

Finding 25. In case of forestry and climate change work, FAO is sharing some knowledge and best practices internally and especially externally.

107. Evidence on external sharing is provided under 1.1.
108. FAO staff interviews and review of documentation, including published scientific papers, demonstrate that in case of forestry and climate change, FAO is sharing information and best practices related to greenhouse gas monitoring and carbon accounting based on informal internal cooperation, e.g. in case of FRA data being used in global statistics for UNFCCC and as a basis for FAO reporting on GHG emissions from AFOLU sectors.
109. FOA and CBC have contributed to IPCC carbon methodology and UNCDD work through sharing its knowledge and best practices in REDD+ carbon accounting and soil carbon through a Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) hosted by FAO and the Global Soil Partnership.

Finding 26. Most of the external stakeholders emphasized the need for FAO to make better use – internally in headquarters and especially in its country work – of its potential comparative advantage in having capacity in all the relevant sectors to address drivers of deforestation and land degradation and reduce related GHG emissions.

110. In interviews, it was commonly stated that FAO should link agriculture (crops and livestock) and forestry better at the country level, using its strong technical background in several sectors and playing the role of an external "integrator", making better use of this comparative advantage in leveraging complementary technical support and financing through partnerships. This would require organizational changes in the way FAO work internally to reduce working in silos; the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and related GHG emissions come from outside the forest sector.

111. New partnerships need to extend beyond forestry and encompass sustainable agriculture, sustainable agricultural commodity supply chains, and energy.
112. In interviews of key partners working globally with REDD+, it was commonly stated that while FAO should expand its support to help with the implementation of REDD+ strategies and action plans, e.g. through supporting CSA and better intersectoral coordination and collaboration in countries, it should continue paying attention to strengthening multipurpose national forest monitoring and climate change reporting at the country level. This will contribute to the two key pillars of the REDD+ transformational process and will help to attract donors and more importantly large-scale payments to flow into countries against good performance in reducing emissions.
113. Interviewees also stated consistently that FAO should work more on helping countries to develop institutions and structures, including cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder platforms, to promote more sustainable land use. FAO should also become more active in contributing to improved land tenure, and good governance including difficult issues such as reducing illegal logging with national authorities. In general, since FAO is not an implementing agency in sense of DFIs, FAO could focus more on fostering the enabling conditions for the transformational change to attract more large-scale financing both from the public and private sector. Some of this work could be done in with other organizations, potentially establishing partnerships based on the blended financing concept.
114. FAO's support in CSA was valued in many interviews, and it was stated that FAO should strengthen its work on turning crop and livestock production sustainable also from the perspective of land use change impacts and related climate impacts to foster transformational change at the country level. Comprehensively defined sustainable food system promotion would reduce emissions from forest without linking it to a complicated REDD+ infrastructure.

EQ 4. How is FAO integrating gender and social inclusion (vulnerable groups) in work related to climate change?

Finding 27. FAO is addressing gender adequately in its forestry and climate change work, but indigenous peoples, youth and social inclusion issues in general do not feature strongly in the projects and unfortunately not much hard evidence on related concrete achievements is available.

115. Based on the quantitative content analysis of 41 FAO REDD+ evaluation reports, gender equality features in about 95 percent of the evaluated projects, and strongly in about 75 percent of the projects. About 50 percent of the evaluated REDD+ related projects refer to gender mainstreaming. However, only about 30 percent of the evaluated projects refer to gender analysis/assessment, and less than 1 percent to gender budgeting. Vulnerable groups are addressed in about 50 percent of the evaluated projects. Youth and indigenous people are discussed in about 40 percent of the evaluated projects. Concepts like pro-poor development, leaving no one behind, social inclusion, social protection, and human rights/rights-based approach do not commonly feature in the assessed evaluation reports, with some exceptions.
116. Based on the quantitative content analysis of 137 FAO REDD+ related project (design) documents, gender equality issues are addressed in the majority (95 percent) of the assessed project portfolio but references to gender analysis/assessment and gender budgeting are quite limited. Only five project designs include gender budgeting. Vulnerable groups and FPIC receive attention in about one third of the project designs.

Concepts like pro-poor development, leaving no one behind, social inclusion, social protection, and human rights/rights-based approach do not commonly feature in the project design documents.

117. In Honduras, FAO works with women, as well as rural and indigenous youth, to promote the conservation and responsible use of forests to reduce poverty in 2 000 families.
118. In REDD+ related work, FAO has conducted a number of gender analyses to support the formulation of new projects including the initiatives such as 'Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest)' and 'Global Transformation of Forests for People and Climate: a focus on West Africa'.
119. Since the project portfolio is averagely new, there are only a few evaluation reports or mid-term review reports available, so one cannot draw conclusions about how well gender and social inclusion issues, including IPs are addressed concretely. However, if gender budgeting or IPs are not even mentioned in the design document, a question arises if they will be addressed during the implementation.

Finding 28. In case of REDD+ related work, significant attention has been paid to gender equality and indigenous peoples' issues.

120. FAO/UN-REDD has published several useful tools to provide guidance on gender mainstreaming in the context of REDD+. These include the Methodological Brief on Gender, the Checklist on Gender Responsive Workshops and the UN-REDD Gender Marker Information Brief.
121. FAO/UN-REDD has provided its advisory support by setting up criteria and indicators for evaluating and tracking, on an annual basis, etc. within the framework of the FAO Gender Marker System. Advisory support is provided to help colleagues identify entry points and implement gender actions.
122. FAO/UN-REDD in organizing events and capacity building activities reinforces the UN Economic and Social Council guidance that women, at a minimum, should at least make up 30 percent of any decision-making body, committee, consultation, or workshop. Gender disaggregated data is regularly collected and compiled for monitoring purposes.
123. FAO/UN-REDD has documented and shared its experience on gender through various channels including the UN-REDD Newsletter, the FAO website, and related social media. In addition, FAO/UN-REDD through the Discussion group on REDD+ and Forest Governance in 2020 has organized a webinar entitled Empowering rural and indigenous women in forest-related climate actions.
124. Some indicative examples of impacts from 2018–2019 include: At the national level, guidance provided to Peru helped mainstream a gender approach in its proposed Climate Change Law and in the 2018-2020 Stakeholder Participation Plan; a gender approach was integrated into the Honduras draft REDD+ National Strategy, including in its main objective statement.
125. UN-REDD supported the inception and launch of the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform and helped design and consult a new phase for the Community-based REDD+ Initiative with two new goals: to serve the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform and to promote the participation of indigenous peoples in country NDC processes.

126. In interviews of organizations dealing with IP's rights and forest and land tenure, no cases arose where FAO would have been criticized by IPs groups or in general, or where would have been conflicts related to FAO's own work in REDD+ implementation in the countries. At the same time, FAO was not seen to enjoy a comparative advantage in working with IPs.
127. UN-REDD has adopted VGGT as a key instrument to deal with forest/land tenure issues, including IPs, and UN-REDD and REDD are working to establish social and environmental safeguard (information) systems (SIS) in 65 partner countries. When it comes to REDD+, SIS and social and environmental safeguards in general, they were seen useful as safeguard tools with untapped potential to use them actively to strengthen rights of indigenous people and local communities with insecure land tenure.
128. The important role of VGGT in helping to address IPs' rights and securing the tenure and resource rights was highlighted in many interviews, but it was also suggested based on country level observations that maybe FAO itself does not make enough use of this tool. Using this tool, and in general strengthening security of land tenure, e.g. under the REDD+ umbrella, can reduce risk of conflicts between local communities, state and private companies, help to meet SDG targets, and facilitate investments.
129. Based on RRI research but not specific to FAO's REDD+ work, locally affected IP groups/populations, women and vulnerable groups are too often inadequately involved in the design of REDD action; they are increasingly consulted but they need to be more engaged in actual decision-making. This was also one of the findings of a major evaluation covering all NICFI work on REDD+ including UN-REDD (NICFI, 2018). Most countries lack a legal foundation for carbon rights, and/or benefit-sharing arrangements are yet unclear, partly because the rights of IPs are not always clear or recognized.

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