Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Mid-term evaluation of the project "Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador (RECLIMA)"

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Abstract

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the mid-term evaluation of the project "Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador (RECLIMA)". The project aims to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable family farmers in 114 municipalities of the dry corridor of El Salvador. RECLIMA is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with the support of the Government of El Salvador and the Environmental Investment Fund of El Salvador (FIAES, by its Spanish acronym), and the financial backing of the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

The evaluation considered five main criteria: i) quality of design; ii) quality and level of implementation; iii) progress towards the achievement of results; iv) information and knowledge management systems; and v) paradigm shift: sustainability, replication and scalability. Issues of gender equality and social inclusion were considered cross-cutting and integrated across all five criteria. A primarily qualitative evaluation approach was followed, using multiple methods of data collection.

The evaluation found that RECLIMA continues to be strategically aligned to national priorities and responds to the adaptation and resilience needs of producers. However, some systemic limits to achieving the desired paradigm shift were identified due to the multi-causal complexity of the target populations' vulnerability. Project implementation was behind schedule, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite limited time for field-level activities, the project made significant progress in operationalizing farmer field schools. In most cases producers appropriated agroecological practices at levels that exceeded project targets. The evaluation identified some challenges in areas of institutional coordination and communication with national partners, along with the need to continue strengthening the capacities of the various actors involved in project implementation. The project's monitoring and evaluation system was found to generate information that is being used for timely decision-making. However, key challenges identified include addressing the increased information flow anticipated in the second half of the project, making relevant information more readily available to implementing partners, and including a specific monitoring and follow-up plan for restoration actions. The project took the necessary steps to comply with GCF and FAO social and environmental standards.

The evaluation provides twelve recommendations focused on: extending the project's timeframe; improving communication, coordination and collaboration with national partners, other cooperation agencies and Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations; strengthening capacity development, reinforcing the Gender Action Plan, and building specialized capacities for the cultural management of the paradigm shift; strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems; and identifying a methodology to quantify and report on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as part of international climate commitments. Once the ongoing changes are consolidated and the improvements recommended by the evaluation are introduced, the project's intervention model has the technical and cultural potential for replication and scaling up to other areas of El Salvador and other countries in the region that have populations in the dry corridor.

Contents

Figures and tables

Acknowledgements

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The evaluation also benefited from the input of many other stakeholders, including representatives of partner institutions and local organizations, staff from other United Nations agencies in El Salvador, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations. Their contributions have been instrumental to the team's work and are greatly appreciated.

The mid-term evaluation was managed by Ms Nicole Fuhr from the FAO Office of Evaluation. The evaluation was led by Mr David Grajeda (evaluation specialist, gender and social inclusion specialist) with evaluation team members Ms Doris Cordero (climate change specialist) and Mr Mauricio Quesada (agricultural systems specialist). In addition, the evaluation greatly benefited from the advice and comments of an external peer reviewer, Mr Robert Hofstede. Special thanks also go to Ms Sarah Jaff from the FAO Office of Evaluation for providing administrative and logistical support.

Abbreviations

ADESCO	Community Development Associations, by its Spanish acronym
AFOLU	agriculture, forestry and other land uses
CENTA	National Centre for Agricultural and Forestry Technology “Enrique Álvarez Córdova”, by its Spanish acronym
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIAES	Environmental Investment Fund of El Salvador, by its Spanish acronym
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GHG	greenhouse gas
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NDC	nationally determined contribution
PMU	Project Management Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

Executive summary

Project and evaluation overview

1. The project "Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador (RECLIMA)" aims to improve the resilience of vulnerable family farmers in 114 municipalities in the dry corridor of El Salvador through three components:

   i. Component 1. Improving the resilience of livelihoods and production systems in family farms;

   ii. Component 2. Increasing the resilience of flows of environmental services at a landscape level;

   iii. Component 3. Improving governance and information flow in support of sustainability and scaling up.

2. The project is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with the support of the Government of El Salvador and the Environmental Investment Fund of El Salvador (FIAES, by its Spanish acronym), and the financial backing of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The project duration is planned for five years, between 2019 and 2024.

3. The total project budget is USD 127.7 million, of which USD 35.8 million is provided by GCF. The remaining USD 91.9 million comes from national co-financing provided by two government institutions – the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock – and a non-profit organization, FIAES.

4. The project is expected to benefit 50 000 households, each with an average of 4.5 members, for a total of 225 000 direct beneficiaries. Of the direct beneficiaries, 38 percent are expected to be women and 9 percent Indigenous/Afro-descendants. Indirectly, the environmental services generated by the adaptation and mitigation measures are expected to benefit 796 706 people living in the selected municipalities.

5. The mid-term evaluation has a twofold purpose: first, to provide accountability to GCF, the national government and local governments (municipalities); and second, to identify lessons and recommendations to improve implementation during the second phase of the project. The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the progress made towards its planned results and its contribution to the promoted paradigm shift.

6. A team of independent external consultants conducted the evaluation between September 2022 and March 2023. The evaluation considered activities implemented from the official start of the project until December 2022. Its geographical scope covered national and territorial levels and included field visits to a sample of 12 municipalities, equivalent to 26.1 percent of the total 46 municipalities served in the first phase of implementation.

7. The evaluation considered five main criteria: i) quality of design; ii) quality and level of implementation; iii) progress towards the achievement of results; iv) information and knowledge management systems; and v) paradigm shift: sustainability, replication and scalability. Issues of gender equality and social inclusion were considered cross-cutting and integrated across all five criteria. The evaluation followed a primarily qualitative approach, using multiple methods of data collection, including: document and literature review; semi-structured individual or group interviews with key actors; focus groups with community promoters, agricultural producers and

representatives of local organizations; and field visits to observe the different project interventions.

Summary of key findings

Quality of design

8. The project continues to be highly relevant and strategically aligned with national development goals, sector priorities, and the needs and priorities of partner institutions, the GCF and FAO. The delimitation of the dry corridor area of intervention, using a multi-criteria social and biophysical analysis, is considered a design success and a milestone in the country. The project interventions respond to the adaptation and resilience needs of producers and their families and are well grounded in studies and calculations of their carbon sequestration potential.

9. The project design has systemic limits to achieving the desired paradigm shift. Given the multi-causal complexity of the target populations' vulnerability, producers and their families have expectations and short term needs that fall outside of the project's intervention logic. Further, although RECLIMA contributes to the country's nationally determined contributions (NDCs) it is not clear which measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system will be used to record and report the project's realized greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions as a contribution to international climate commitments.

Quality and level of implementation

10. Project implementation is behind schedule. The reduction of face-to-face activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and a large part of 2021, coupled with the effects of extreme climate events, led to delays, particularly in the implementation of field level activities. Significant advances in operationalizing farmer field schools and training community promoters, producers and youth were made in late 2021 and 2022.

11. The project faced several internal and external challenges associated with high procurement volumes and global supply chain issues. This resulted in cases of late delivery of inputs and materials to producers. The project team has capitalized on this experience, taking corrective action to improve processes for phase two.

12. The project has adequately coordinated and collaborated with national partners, municipal actors and other donors. In the case of the three national partners (the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock - National Centre for Agricultural and Forestry Technology "Enrique Álvarez Córdova (CENTA), the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and FIAES), there is an opportunity to improve areas of institutional coordination and communication to enable partners to take a more active role in decision-making.

13. To date, the partners have fulfilled their co-financing commitments, with a contribution equivalent to 79.4 percent of the total resources committed. For its part, the Project Management Unit (PMU) has executed 54.8 percent of the funding provided by GCF. This imbalance is attributed to the institutions reporting co-financing associated with operating expenses during the pandemic, while the project was unable to make the planned investments due to the closure of field activities.

Level of progress towards the achievement of results

14. Progress towards expected results is below levels expected at mid-term. The project team and implementing partners have made an enormous effort to meet the proposed targets, despite having limited time to implement field activities. The most significant progress made is in

Component 1. Producers demonstrated levels of appropriation of the promoted agroecological practices that in most cases exceeded the project targets.

15. RECLIMA has positioned itself as a reference point in the country, both in technical and political issues related to the country's climate commitments. However, while progress has been made in strengthening the capacity of the various actors involved in project implementation, levels are not yet sufficient to ensure the achievement of the results and to contribute effectively to the paradigm shift.

Information and knowledge management system

16. The project's monitoring and evaluation system collects detailed and disaggregated data and generates information that is being used for timely decision-making. Key challenges identified include addressing the increased information flow anticipated in the second half of the project, making relevant information more readily available to implementing partners, and including a specific monitoring and follow-up plan for restoration actions in Component 2.

Gender and social inclusion

17. The project took the necessary steps to comply with GCF and FAO social and environmental standards. A gender approach was integrated in the design and implementation of activities and affirmative criteria applied to ensure women's access to the expected benefits. Measures to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples/Afro-descendants and youth in its activities and benefits were included, consistent with the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) letter signed by the National Indigenous Natural Resources Roundtable. Despite the measures and actions taken, the evaluation found expressions of dissatisfaction from Indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders about their level of participation in the project's benefits.

Paradigm shift: sustainability, replication and scalability

18. The evaluation found varying levels of understanding of the promoted paradigm across different project stakeholders. A high level of understanding was demonstrated by the project coordination team and partner institution's management and technical staff. However, there was a weaker perception of the link between the implemented practices and the new paradigm among community promoters and producers.

19. Although sustainability conditions are not yet optimal, there is strong evidence of the adoption and appropriation of the resilient agroecological practices promoted by the project. Once the ongoing changes are consolidated and the improvements recommended by the evaluation are introduced, the project's intervention model has the technical and cultural potential for replication and scaling up to other areas of El Salvador and other countries in the region that have populations in the dry corridor.

Summary of recommendations

FAO Representation in El Salvador and FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment

Recommendation 1. Request the GCF to extend the project cycle for two additional years, from 17 July 2024 to 16 July 2026, to achieve the full implementation of activities, consolidate the process of appropriation and sustainability of the new practices promoted, and ensure the achievement of project results.

FAO Representation in El Salvador

Recommendation 2. Consider adjusting the project's theory of change, taking into account the conceptual model and the corresponding theory of change proposal (Appendix 5).

Recommendation 3. Improve communication, coordination and collaboration processes with national partners, both bilaterally and within the project's governance structures. In the specific case of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, it is suggested that a bilateral technical roundtable be set up to address the critical points identified by the evaluation and adopt measures to strengthen joint work on strategic issues aligned with the project's results framework and the country's needs.

Recommendation 4. Enhance collaborations and synergies with other cooperation partners and agencies with the objective of linking participating producers with existing social and economic inclusion initiatives to address their immediate livelihood needs that fall outside of the project scope and to reinforce the adoption of the promoted agroecological practices.

Recommendation 5. Accelerate the implementation of Component 3 to promote the adoption of the political-normative framework to the global commitments on climate change and environment, which in turn will contribute to the sustainability of project actions.

Recommendation 6. Strengthen the capacity development process of project actors in three priority areas: i) individual: FAO methodologies and tools on educational communication for development; ii) institutional: digital transition of extension services; iii) enabling environment: updating of institutional strategic plans to enhance their contribution to the paradigm shift.

Recommendation 7. Within RECLIMA's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, consider automating online data reporting using a computer platform or available software, to facilitate the processing, generation and dissemination of relevant data.

Recommendation 8. Develop a monitoring and follow-up plan for forest restoration actions that specifies the location, owner and size of the planted area, along with other data such as planting density, species used, silvicultural arrangements, and the percentage of mortality and replanting.

Recommendation 9. Consider the design and implementation of a tool for observation, analysis and documentation of changes in the reconfiguration of the family economy and the impact on the increase in women's workload for participating producers. The tool’s objective would be to identify appropriate measures in reinforcement of the Gender Action Plan.

Recommendation 10. Consider the establishment of a national and territorial dialogue table with Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations with three main intentions: i) to clarify and position project parameters and contributions; ii) to reinforce the appropriation of the new paradigm; and iii) to address current and future disagreements about their participation in the project.

Recommendation 11. Strengthen the application of FAO's theoretical and methodological framework on communication for development to build specialized capacities in the cultural management of the paradigm shift at all levels.

National partner institutions

Recommendation 12. Within the framework of the agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU) technical commission, analyse the possibility of using a methodology, linked to international standards, for quantifying the reduction of GHG emissions in the activities of Components 1 and 2, so that they can be accounted for and recorded in the MRV system, or another system defined by the country (currently under construction) and reported as part of the climate commitments set out in the NDC.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1. The mid-term evaluation of the project "Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador (RECLIMA)" had a twofold purpose: first, to provide accountability to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), to the national Government of El Salvador and to local governments (municipalities); and second, to identify learnings and recommendations to improve project implementation during the second phase of the project.

2. The RECLIMA project is one of the first GCF projects approved and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It is also the first of its kind to be implemented in El Salvador. As such, this mid-term evaluation is of particular importance because its learnings can be useful for similar new and ongoing projects implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean.

1.2 Main users

3. The main users of the evaluation include the GCF and the project's implementing entities: FAO Representation in El Salvador; the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the National Centre for Agricultural and Forestry Technology "Enrique Álvarez Córdova" (CENTA, by its Spanish acronym), the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Environmental Investment Fund of El Salvador (FIAES, by its Spanish acronym). Additional users include local actors (municipalities, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants, local governance structures) and final beneficiaries (producers) as well as other donors and interested sector organizations.

4. The project implementing team (FAO and national partners), together with local actors and final beneficiaries, will use the findings, learnings and recommendations identified by the evaluation to make adjustments in the second half of project implementation. The evaluation will also serve as an input for the development of RECLIMA's revised logical framework.[1]

5. The GCF, in consultation with FAO, will use the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation to inform strategic decision-making in the second phase of project implementation. In addition, the evaluation will serve as an input for future evaluations of GCF interventions.

1.3 Evaluation scope and objectives

6. The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the project's progress towards the achievement of planned results, as well as its contribution to the promoted paradigm shift.

7. During the inception phase, the evaluation team prioritized and adjusted the evaluation questions to improve their usefulness in supporting decision-making. Issues of gender equality and social inclusion were integrated in a cross-cutting manner across all evaluation criteria, including through the identification of specific subquestions and indicators. Table 1 presents the main evaluation criteria and key questions for assessment.

[1] This is pursuant to the remediation grant agreement between GCF and FAO to deliver a revised logical framework by 30 June 2023.

Table 1. Main evaluation criteria and key questions

Criteria	Key questions[1]	
1. Quality of design	To what extent does the project design address the causal factors of the prioritized problem and respond to the needs and priorities of the distinct stakeholders, namely GCF and FAO, national institutions and beneficiaries?	⇧ Gender and social inclusion ⇩
2. Quality and level of implementation	To what extent has the project delivered planned activities and outputs as expected by the project's mid-term?	
3. Progress towards expected results	To what extent are the activities and outputs contributing to the expected results?	
4. Information and knowledge management systems	To what extent are information and knowledge management systems facilitating decision-making and the achievement of results?	
5. Paradigm shift: sustainability, replication and scale	What are the prospects for the project to contribute to the proposed paradigm shift?	

Note: [1]The full list of subquestions is found in Appendix 2.
Source: RECLIMA evaluation matrix.

8. The evaluation considered project activities from the official start of its execution period in August 2019 to the completion of the evaluation's data collection process in December 2022. The evaluation's scope covered national and territorial levels and included field visits to a sample of 12 municipalities. This is equivalent to 26.1 percent of the 46 municipalities participating in the first phase of project implementation.

9. The evaluation was conducted between September 2022 and March 2023. The evaluation process was divided into four phases: Phase 1 - initial design and preparation; Phase 2 - field data collection and complementary interviews; Phase 3 - analysis and presentation of preliminary findings; and Phase 4 - preparation and discussion of the final report.

1.4 Methodology

10. The evaluation was carried out by a team of three independent external consultants. Their combined methodological and subject matter expertise included evaluation of development projects, as well as thematic expertise in the areas of environment, climate change, rural development and production systems, gender, and social inclusion. The team included international and national consultants. An evaluation manager served as an institutional liaison with the FAO Office of Evaluation and provided guidance on evaluation design, data collection, drafting and evaluation reporting.

11. The FAO Office of Evaluation and an external peer reviewer were responsible for the assessment and quality assurance of key evaluation products, including the terms of reference, inception mission report, presentation of preliminary findings and the draft evaluation report.

12. The project partners participated in all evaluation phases. They contributed to the development of the evaluation's terms of reference, participated in a theory of change workshop as part of the inception mission, engaged in discussions on the preliminary findings, and reviewed and provided comments on the draft evaluation report. An evaluation reference group was composed of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and project focal points from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and FIAES, as well as the FAO Representation in El Salvador as the technical secretariat.

13. The methodology used by the evaluation complied with the quality standards, code of ethics and guidelines of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019), the United Nations Evaluation Group (2012), the guidelines

of the FAO Office of Evaluation and the GCF evaluation standards. As part of the data collection process, the evaluation team implemented ways to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of primary information sources (free, prior and informed consent, FPIC) prior to conducting interviews or focus groups. Moreover, cultural and gender sensitivity in dialogue with all actors, especially the final beneficiaries, was emphasized.

14. An evaluation matrix served as the guiding evaluation tool (see Appendix 2). It included evaluation questions and subquestions, observation and analysis guidelines, and data collection methods for each of the five evaluation criteria. The evaluation subquestions were assigned to the different stakeholder groups according to their role in the project.

15. Given the formative nature of the evaluation and early stage of implementation, the evaluation developed a primarily qualitative data collection approach. To ensure reliability and credibility, multiple data collection methods were used, as detailed below:

    i. Literature and document review: the literature review included standards, laws, programmes, plans and public policies linked to the project's theme and partner institutions as well as a specialized bibliography on the challenges of climate change and agriculture in El Salvador. A desk review of project documents, reports and data was conducted to develop a preliminary assessment of the implementation level, progress towards the achievement of results, and the identification of supporting and limiting factors. These were validated during interviews, meetings, focus groups and field observations.

    ii. Semi-structured individual or group interviews: interviews were conducted with individuals or small groups of key project stakeholders. These included technicians and authorities from the project partner institutions, municipalities, cooperation agencies and other entities. When possible, individual interviews were conducted with community promoters and final beneficiaries before, during and after visits to plots or restoration work sites in the selected municipalities.

    iii. Focus groups: this method was used to consult three types of local actors – community promoters, agricultural producers, and representatives of local organizations involved in territorial governance structures. Where possible, the evaluators conducted distinct focus groups with youth and female heads of households.

    iv. Site visits: the evaluators conducted site visits to observe different project interventions, such as demonstration plots, landscape restoration actions, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, soil and water management technologies, and water supply systems for human consumption or irrigation. During these visits, discussions were held with the producers and community promoters to learn about their experiences and level of appropriation of the activities implemented in their farms and neighbouring properties. Site visits made it possible to compare the specific information that had been reported in the project documentation and the information collected during the interviews and focus groups. The evaluators took photographs to further document their field observations.

16. To ensure consistency and standardization of data collection across the evaluation team members, predesigned templates, aligned with the evaluation subquestions, were used to collect information during interviews, focus group discussions and field visits. This facilitated the systematization and analysis of the information, as well as the traceability of data.

17. The evaluators, in consultation with the project team, selected a sample of 12 out of the 46 municipalities that had participated in the first phase of the project. The following criteria were

applied: i) departmental municipalities located in the different regions (Oriental, Paracentral and Occidental); ii) number of producers, including considerations for gender (including female-headed households), age and ethnicity (Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants); iii) different levels of progress in the activities of the three project components; iv) presence of local multiactor governance structures, such as community development associations (ADESCOs), water boards, and producer organizations; and v) level of challenges and successes. (see Table 2 and Appendix 3).

Table 2. Sample of municipalities selected for field visits

No.	Region or department	Municipalities	Components	No. beneficiaries in municipality
	Oriental			
1	La Unión	El Carmen	C1	376
2	Morazán	Cacaopera	C1, C2, C3	440
3	San Miguel	Ciudad Barrios	C1, C2, C3	552
4		San Miguel	C1, C2, C3	478
5	Usulután	Concepción Batres	C1, C2, C3	470
6		Mercedes Umaña	C1, C2, C3	486
7		San Francisco Javier	C1, C2, C3	366
	Paracentral			
8	La Paz	San Pedro Masahuat	C1, C2, C3	564
	Occidental			
9	Ahuachapán	Ahuachapán	C1	1 435
10		Atiquizaya	C1, C2, C3	645
11		Guaymango	C1, C2	555
12		Tacuba	C1	1 282

Source: RECLIMA mid-term evaluation field visit plan.

18. The evaluators systemized the information and data collected through different sources and methods using Excel spreadsheets aligned to each evaluation criteria. Next, they triangulated the data to compare and contrast evidence across different methods used and the different sources. Gaps and areas for further verification were identified and the level of accuracy and validity of the findings were gauged. As a rule, at least three types of data from different sources were used to validate each finding.

19. Following the completion of the final report, the FAO Office of Evaluation will identify opportunities to develop different types of learning products from findings, lessons learned and good practices. The products will target different audiences (participants and project partners, FAO and GCF) by using different formats and means of dissemination.

1.5 Persons and actors consulted

20. The evaluators consulted a total of 253 people, corresponding to 11 categories of actors through the different methods established (see Table 3 and Appendix 1). Field visits were conducted over a two-week period and included 25 focus groups, 19 individual or small group interviews, and 16 site visits covering agricultural plots, restoration areas, plant nurseries, farmer field schools and rainwater harvesting and storage systems. At the institutional level, a total of 35 individual or small group interviews were conducted.

Table 3. Number of people consulted according to different categories of actors

No.	Category of actors	Men	Women	Total
	Field visit			
1	Producers and community promoters	49	50	99
2	CENTA technicians	13	3	16
3	Mayors and municipal environmental units	13	6	19
4	Youth network	8	10	18
5	Local multistakeholder structures	23	6	29
6	Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants	12	9	21
	Subtotal of people consulted	118	84	202
	Institutional interviews			
7	National partners: CENTA, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, FIAES	11	8	19
8	Other cooperation actors	1	3	4
9	FAO (headquarters, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean)	2	3	5
10	FAO El Salvador: Representation and Project Management Unit (PMU)	14	8	22
11	GCF	0	1	1
	Subtotal people consulted	28	23	51
	Total number of people consulted	**146**	**107**	**253**

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team, based on Appendix 1. List of people consulted.

1.6 Facilitating factors and limitations

21. In its different phases, the evaluation process was facilitated by the high level of support and commitment of the FAO Representation in El Salvador and the project team, who provided the reference documents and managed the participation of different actors in interviews, meetings, and focus groups. In addition, the evaluation faced and resolved the following challenges and limitations: i) mobility restrictions in municipalities due to outbreaks of COVID-19, which delayed the field mission until 10 December 2022; and ii) proximity to end-of-year festivities and patron saint celebrations in some municipalities.

22. The use of statistical methods, such as surveys of final beneficiaries and local actors, were considered but ultimately not used by the evaluation team due to the following factors: i) challenges in establishing a statistically representative sample using available data; and ii) limited usefulness at the time of the evaluation given the early stage of project implementation. To mitigate the absence of statistical methods, the qualitative methods and the sample selection of municipalities and final beneficiaries were reinforced.

1.7 Structure of the report

23. Following this introduction, section 2 presents the background and context of the project. Findings are found in section 3, followed by conclusions and recommendations in section 4 and key lessons learned in section 5. The report is accompanied by five appendices.

2. Project background and context

2.1 Background

24. The RECLIMA project was designed between 2016 and 2018. It is important to note that guidance and tools for the design, implementation and monitoring of GCF-funded projects were under development during this period and have subsequently evolved.

25. The RECLIMA project is implemented by FAO with the accompaniment of the Government of El Salvador, and the financial support from the GCF. The national partners and co-executors of the project are the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, which fulfils the role of Designated National Authority before the GCF; the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; CENTA, an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; and the non-profit organization FIAES. By delegation of the GCF, FAO is responsible for project implementation.

26. The project aims to improve the resilience of vulnerable family farmers to climate change in 114 municipalities in the dry corridor of El Salvador, through an integrated landscape approach (see Table 4 and Appendix 4).

Table 4. Summary of project intervention logic

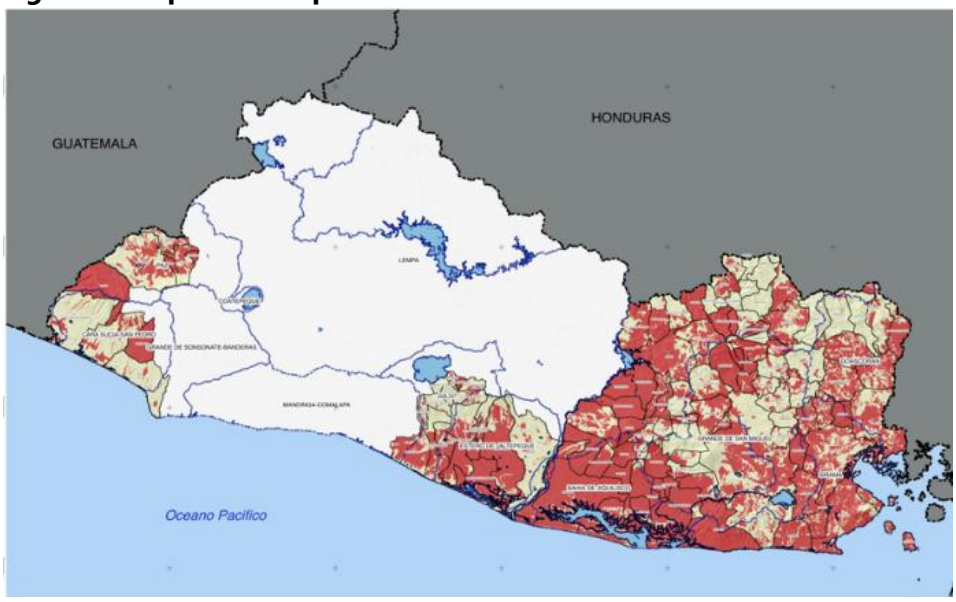
Intervention logic	Results and components
GCF Outcome Level Results	Adaptation Results Area 1.0, Increased resilience and enhanced livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, communities and regions. Adaptation Results Area 2.0, Increased resilience of health and well-being, and food and water security. Adaptation Results Area 4.0, Improved resilience of ecosystems. Mitigation Results Area 4.0, Reduced emissions from land use, deforestation, forest degradation, and through sustainable forest management, conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
Project Level Expected Results	A5.0/M5.0, Strengthened institutional and regulatory systems for climate response, low-emission planning and development. A7.0, Strengthened adaptive capacity and reducing exposure to climate risks. M9.0, Improved management of land or forest areas that contribute to emissions reduction.
Components (outputs and activities)	Component 1. Improving the resilience of livelihoods and production systems on family farms: *securing the resilience of food production systems and access to water through investments and technical assistance at the household level in 50 000 family farms.* Component 2. Restoring and reforesting degraded ecosystems to promote the protection of water sources with a landscape approach: *restoring degraded ecosystems off-farm to re-establish and maintain the services they provide and reduce rainwater and runoff erosion and infiltration. This will contribute to the recharge of aquifers and the stabilisation of water flows from which the target households depend for their domestic water supply.* Component 3. Improving governance processes and information flow in support of the sustainability and scalability of the project: *ensuring an enabling policy and governance environment to support the sustainability and scaling up of adaptation at the national level.*

Source: RECLIMA funding proposal and logical framework.

27. The project is implemented in 114 municipalities of the dry corridor which, together, represent 43.5 percent of the national territory. With a notable concentration in the east of the country

(76.3 percent), the municipalities served are distributed as follows in the three territorial areas: the Oriental zone (departments of Usulután, San Miguel, Morazán and La Unión), 87 municipalities; the Paracentral zone (La Paz and San Vicente), 17 municipalities; and the Occidental zone (Ahuachapán and Sonsonate), ten municipalities.

Figure 1. Map of the Republic of El Salvador



Source: UN Geospatial 2004. *Map of El Salvador*. New York, United States of America. www.un.org/geospatial/content/el-salvador

28. The final beneficiaries of the project are estimated at 50 000 households, each with an average of 4.5 members. Of the total of 225 000 direct beneficiaries, 38 percent are women and 9 percent are Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants. The indirect beneficiaries are estimated at 796 706 people, corresponding to the rest of the population of the selected municipalities. These populations will benefit from the environmental services generated by the adaptation and mitigation measures planned to regulate hydrological flows and capture carbon.

29. The project has a planned duration of five years, from July 2019 to July 2024. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, field activities did not fully begin until June 2021, 18 months later than planned. Considering this situation, the project management team readjusted the programming approach from three to two phases. The first phase, based on the CENTA extension services network, covered 46 municipalities in which 22 718 direct beneficiaries were reached. The second phase, based on letters of agreement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and municipal associations, will cover 68 municipalities in which the remaining 27 286 beneficiaries are expected to be reached.

30. The total project budget, including co-financing, amounts to USD 127.7 million, with contributions as follows: the GCF, USD 35.8 million (28 percent); Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, USD 74.2 million (58.2 percent); Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, USD 3.7 million (2.9 percent); and FIAES, USD 13.8 million (10.8 percent). As committed to in the co-financing letters, the national contributions are in-kind and are estimated on the value of the services contributed to the implementation of project activities.

31. Project governance includes three structures comprised of political and technical roles, namely: the project board, composed of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and FAO, as the secretariat; the executive steering committee, composed of technical personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(presidency) and FAO, as technical secretariat; and the territorial steering committee, composed of municipal representatives, town council confederation, local personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and FIAES, and local organizations and representatives of final beneficiaries. The Project Management Unit (PMU), composed of and supervised by the FAO Representation in El Salvador, is responsible for project implementation.

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Country context

32. With an area of 21 041 km^2, El Salvador has an estimated population of 6.5 million, of which: 53.2 percent are women and 47.8 percent are men; 74 percent are urban residents and 26 percent are rural residents. Eight Indigenous Peoples still exist. Five of them – Nahua (Pipil), Pre-Mayan, Lenca, Kakawira and Afro-descendants – are located in the RECLIMA project area.[2]

33. El Salvador is classified as a middle-income country. It has a gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 28 733 million, a year-on-year growth of 2.2 percent and a per capita income of USD 4 542.8 (Central Reserve Bank, 2021). The composition of GDP by sector shows a clear predominance of services at 32.3 percent. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries amount to 4.9 percent, equivalent to USD 1 413 million. Family remittances have continued to grow each year, reaching more than USD 6 981.7 million in 2022, representing 24.3 percent of GDP (Central Reserve Bank, 2022).

34. Despite the government's sanitary, economic and fiscal measures, COVID-19 has significantly affected the economy and people's lives. At the level of the main development indicators, it is estimated that the pandemic has slowed down and regressed the country's achievements in the last decade. The World Bank (World Bank, 2022) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean agree that poverty increased by 7.6 percent, compared to 22.3 percent recorded in 2019, while inequality increased from 0.38 to 0.39 points. The United Nations Development Programme(UNDP) 2021–2022 Human Development Report also draws attention to a new global "uncertainty complex," which has pushed back the Human Development Index in middle- and low-income countries. As part of this group of countries, El Salvador has lost a position in the world ranking: 124 in 2019 (UNDP, 2022).

35. In recent years, the country has presented macroeconomic imbalances that warn of potential risks in public finances. One of the most critical is the increase in non-financial public sector debt, which reached 89.4 percent of GDP in 2020. Although the country's authorities are taking measures to reduce it to levels prior to COVID-19 (71.3 percent of GDP), national analysts and international organizations agree that the country risks entering, over the medium-term, a scenario of illiquidity to pay debt services.

36. Within the public policy framework, the Government of El Salvador, under the mandate of President Nayib Bukele (from 1 June 2019 to 1 June 2024), has prioritized public security and the reduction of violence. In March 2020, through a regime of exception, it has pursued a campaign to combat gangs, perceived as the main source of violence and insecurity in the country over the last three decades.

[2] The other villages are: Maya Pocomanes, Maya Ch'orti'and Xincas.

2.2.2 Key environmental and climate challenges

37. El Salvador faces significant challenges in managing the biodiversity of natural ecosystems, along with mitigation, adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change. The most significant factor is linked to the use of natural resource by economic agents and social subjects in the territory, including rural families who have limited access to livelihood opportunities. Among the most visible effects of this situation is the progressive loss of forest cover. This has positioned the country as one of the most deforested in Latin America (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, 2012).

38. El Salvador's gross deforestation rate is estimated to be between 4 000 and 7 000 ha per year, reaching a loss of 59 600 ha between 2001 and 2018. This has led to 75 percent of the national territory presenting erosion and soil loss problems for agricultural production (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, 2012). Likewise, the loss of forest cover is observed in water recharge areas and riverbanks (Avalle, 2022).

39. The population most affected by low or irregular rainfall includes the approximately 2.2 million people living in the 114 municipalities of the Oriental, Paracentral and Occidental regions of the Mesoamerican dry corridor.[3] When the project was designed, FAO estimated that there were 190 000 people at the moderate to severe food insecurity threshold. This is due, *inter alia*, to the following socioenvironmental factors (FAO, 2016): i) lack of access to permanent sources of income in rural populations, particularly women and youth; ii) high levels of poverty and socioenvironmental vulnerability; iii) predominance of subsistence agriculture (basic grains) in the project's intervention area; iv) agricultural holdings on mostly leased land, followed by free occupants and owners; v) presence of infertile land prone to erosion and landslides; and vi) replacement of traditional production practices with techniques that damage soil and biodiversity.

40. The importance of the agriculture sector in the country's economy has decreased in recent decades, reaching negative numbers in 2022 (-2.0 percent). At the same time, remittances have been progressively positioned as the main means of livelihood of the rural population.[4] This has led to a shortage on the national market and a progressive dependence on food imports. In some areas, this has reached up to 90 percent (mid-term evaluation of the RECLIMA 2022 project, interviews with national actors linked to the project). Causes of this phenomenon include: i) international migration of producers, especially young people; ii) reduction of the rural population; iii) increased effects of climate change; and iv) displacement of the population due to gang violence and the emergency regime that combats them.

41. The Government of El Salvador has a broad policy-regulatory and institutional framework to address and resolve national challenges in the environment, climate change and agriculture sectors. The main references include: National Environment Policy (2022); nationally determined contributions – El Salvador (2021); Forest Policy 2016–2036; National Environment Strategy (2012); National Climate Change Strategy (2013); National Biodiversity Strategy (2013); Environmental Strategy for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of the Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors (2015); National Plan for Climate Change 2015; Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Plan for Climate Change (2017); and the National Programme for the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes (2013).

[3] This territorial strip is 1 600 km long and 100 to 400 km wide. It runs parallel to the Pacific Ocean, from the Dry Arc of Panama to the State of Chiapas in Mexico.

[4] There are an estimated 350 000 producers, and 35 percent of the rural population is economically active in the country.

2.3 Theory of change

42. Formulated in the design phase, the theory of change shows the main causal relationships between the different links in the results chain: i) paradigm shift in agricultural practices and the use of ecosystem services; ii) expected results; iii) activities and output components; iv) factors (barriers) that could potentially influence the effectiveness of the causal chain; and v) assumptions on which the links in the results chain are supported.

43. As part of the initial design and preparation phase, the evaluation team conducted a workshop to review and validate the project's theory of change. Technical staff from the national partner institutions (the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA, FIAES and the PMU technical team) participated. The methodology consisted of brief presentations by the evaluation team, followed by group work and presentations organized according to the project components.

44. Following the workshop, the evaluation team adjusted the project's theory of change, especially regarding barriers and assumptions identified (see Appendix 5). The evaluation team used the adjusted theory of change to guide the collection and analysis of information according to evaluation criteria and questions. With inputs obtained from interviews and focus groups, the team interpreted a conceptual model of the problem addressed by the project, organizing the critical factors into four dimensions or causal networks.

3. Findings

3.1 Quality of design

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent does the project design address the causal factors of the prioritized problem and respond to the needs and priorities of the various stakeholders, namely GCF and FAO, national institutions and beneficiaries?

Finding 1. The project continues to be highly relevant and strategically aligned with national development goals, sector priorities, and the needs and priorities of partner institutions, the GCF and FAO.

45. The project contributes to the fulfilment of the national goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to agriculture and the environment: SDG 2, End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture; SDG 3, Ensure health and well-being for all; SDG 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 6, Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; SDG 11, Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; SDG 13, Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; SDG 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; SDG 15, Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. In addition, the prioritization of subsistence agricultural producers is aligned with the United Nations principle of leave no one behind.

46. At the national level, although designed before the current presidential term, the project is consistent with the following strategic areas of the Cuscatlán Plan, assumed with the Government's Five-Year Plan 2019–2024. *Environment*: focuses on the recovery of ecosystem services, biodiversity loss and the fulfilment of global commitments through the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan. *Agriculture:* focuses on updating the agricultural policy to combat climate change; building rainwater reserves; renewing CENTA to direct the sector towards technification; reducing the costs of agricultural inputs for small producers; and reducing food imports (Government of El Salvador, 2019). Within the framework of these strategic orientations, the project also responds to the priorities and needs of the partner institutions: the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA.

47. The project continues to align with and respond to the priorities of GCF's current strategic framework. Overall, it corresponds to the fundamental objective of promoting a paradigm shift towards the adoption of a low-emission and climate resilient sustainable development model. This is especially relevant for two priorities of the Strategic Plan 2020–2023: i) reducing emissions in the forest sector and land use; and ii) increasing livelihood resilience among people and communities in terms of health, food security and water, and in ecosystems and ecosystem services (GCF, 2020).

48. The project is also aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031, in particular with better production and better environment. It also responds to three proposed cross-cutting issues: gender, inclusion and youth. Within this framework, it also responds to accelerators, through innovation, human capital, institutions, and governance (FAO, 2021). At the country level, the project contributes to Programme Area 3 of the 2022–2026 Country Programming Framework: Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture.

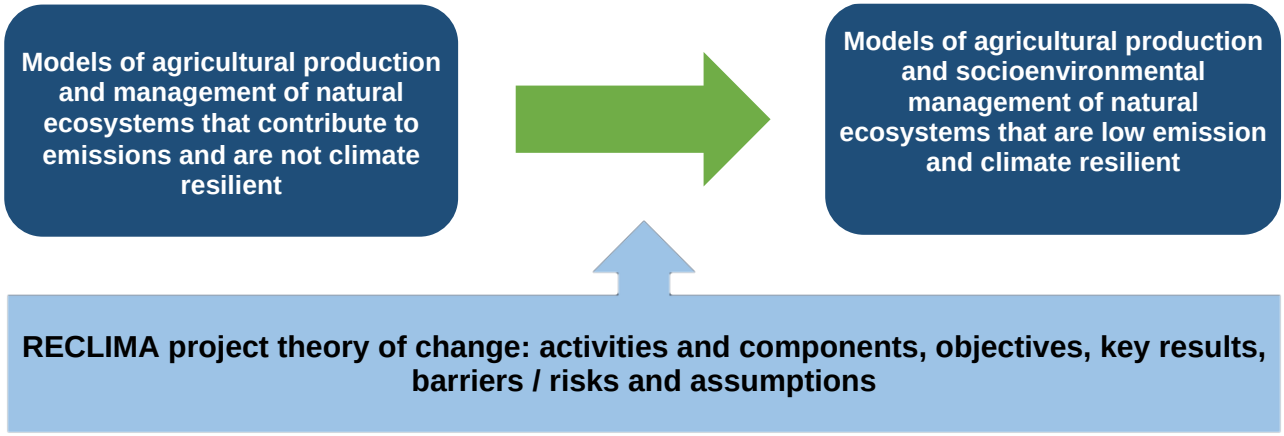
49. RECLIMA features the most ambitious climate change adaptation and mitigation goals at the national level. The climate change adaptation and mitigation activities implemented are consistent with those promoted through government technical assistance.

Finding 2. The theory of change clearly shows how the project intends to contribute to the proposed paradigm shift. However, it could better reflect the complexity of the problem and make more visible other critical causal factors or barriers, as well as the risks linked to the instability of the enabling environment.

50. The paradigm shift proposed by RECLIMA posits that *if* a sustainable agroecosystem management approach is applied at a landscape level, *then* vulnerable farming families will be more resilient to the effects of climate change *because* they will have safer food production systems, secure access to water, degraded ecosystems will be restored, and governance policies and arrangements will support scaling up and adaptation sustainability at the national level.

51. To contribute to this new paradigm, the project's theory of change selected a set of interventions that, for the purposes of this analysis, are summarized as follows: Component 1, promoting agroecological practices capable of capturing carbon and increasing the resilience of production systems; providing safe water to households; and building capacity for the sustainability and scaling up of these practices; Component 2, reforesting critical sites to recover ecosystem services and increase carbon reserves; Component 3, improving governance, information and local planning; and adapting the regulatory framework of the environment and climate change sector. The chosen interventions are theoretically well supported by the studies carried out in the design phase and their carbon retention calculations (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Paradigm transition promoted by the RECLIMA project



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on the RECLIMA project's theory of change and the GCF 2022–2026 Strategic Plan.

52. As shown in the above analysis (Figure 2), the main components of the projects' theory of change causal chain reflect a logical and coherent relationship, such that it seems clear how the interventions will trigger the desired changes, both at the objectives and results levels. Following the technical-scientific studies conducted in the design phase, the project further refined the interventions in the implementation phase by conducting gender-sensitive participatory rapid appraisals and developing farm plans.

53. The assumptions of the theory of change identify two key enabling conditions for the achievement of results and contributions to the paradigm shift: i) political and technical support from national partners; and ii) a minimum of social capital in the communities. In the first case, in general, the institutions have complied with their technical and financial commitments established in the design documents. In the second case, the evaluation team observed a high level of willingness

to collaborate on the part of local stakeholders, overcoming political-partisan tensions, especially visible in the municipal governments. At the community level, in the context of the government's anti-gang strategy, isolated cases of displacement of families, especially young people, were observed. For the time being these cases do not represent significant risks to the existing social capital.

54. The risks and barriers identified in the theory of change can be considered as the fundamental conditions or factors of the problem that the project has set out to address and that are therefore under its control. For example: limited awareness and capacities of key project stakeholders: producers, sectoral institutions, municipal governments and local development organizations. In addition, although they were not integrated into the theory of change, the funding proposal document includes a more complete analysis of other contextual risks. While these risks are further from the project's control, they can be anticipated by any development action in the country. For example: i) mobility of personnel of partner institutions and municipal governments due to political factors; ii) extreme weather events; and iii) social violence in the territories. However, the instability of the global environment, which has significantly impacted project implementation, was not identified as a risk.

55. Beyond the limitations identified, the main weakness of the project's theory of change is the limited analysis of the high level of complexity involved in the transition to the new paradigm promoted. This is due to the absence of a systemic approach evident in three factors: i) linear and unicausal vision of the expected changes; ii) fragmented vision of the causal factors of the problem, without considering the interrelationships between them; iii) partial attention to the causal factors of the problem, focusing on those that have a direct relationship with carbon sequestration, without considering the full range of factors that determine the vulnerability of families and communities to climate change.

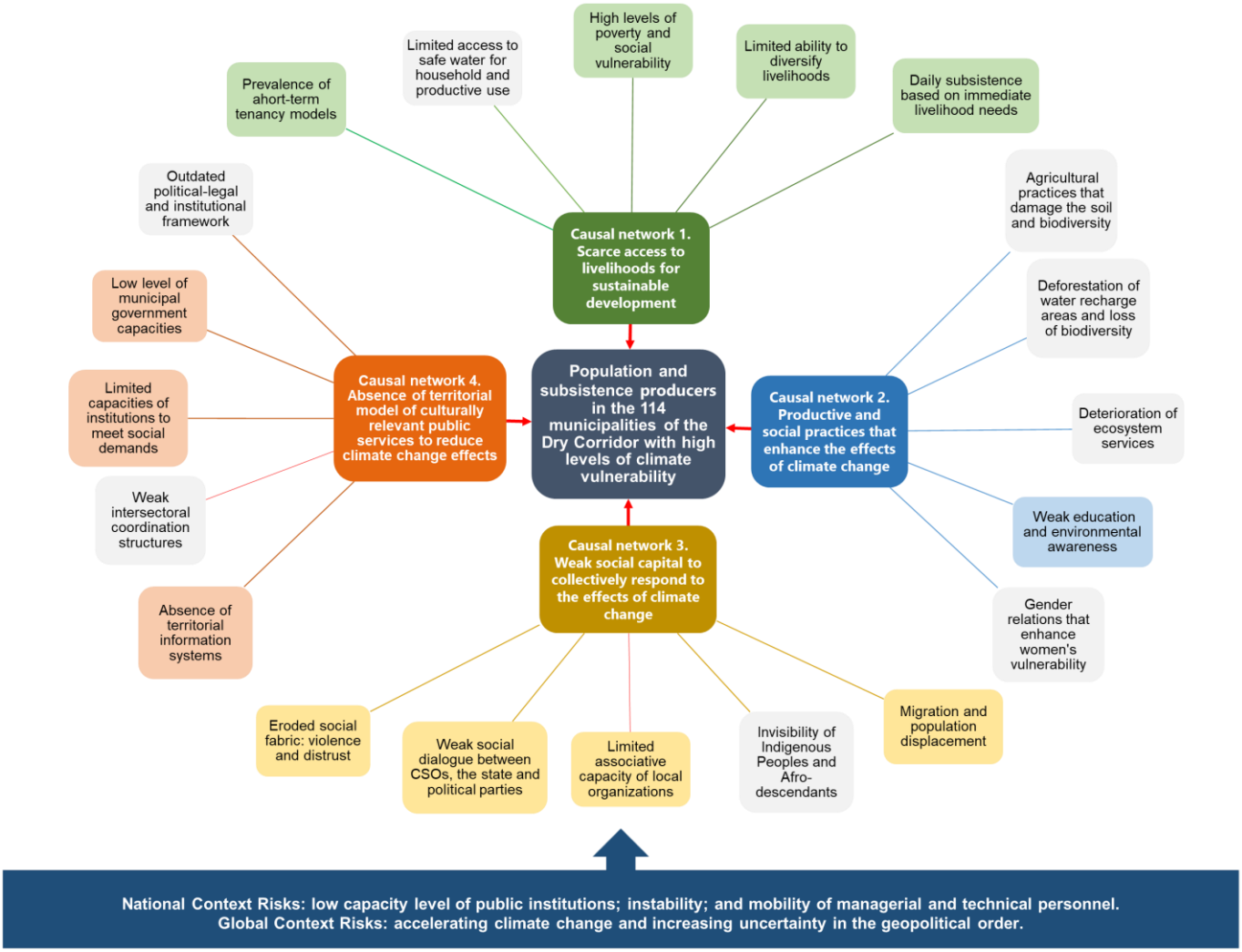
56. To visualize the systemic limitations identified above, the evaluation team developed a conceptual model of the problem addressed by the project, considering the following sources of information and knowledge: i) design documents; ii) studies of the formulation phase, especially the features of the dry corridor; iii) triangulated evidence of visits, interviews and focus groups in the selected 12 municipalities; and iv) inputs collected from the theory of change review workshop. In addition to these inputs from primary and secondary sources, the evaluation relied on systems theories developed by various authors (Varela, Maturana and Uribe, 1974; Capra, 1996; Glansdorff and Prigogine, 1971) and on good practices from studies on complex development problems in Latin America (Grajeda, 2016).

57. The conceptual model organizes 20 main factors into four interrelated dimensions or causal networks that form an ecosystem structural unit. The networks are: causal network one – limited access to livelihoods for sustainable development; causal network two – productive and social practices that enhance the effects of climate change; causal network three – weak social capital to respond collectively to the effects of climate change; and causal network four – lack of a territorial model of culturally relevant public services to reduce climate change effects. Additionally, the model distinguishes the main influencing factors in the national and global environment, which could potentially compound the problem (considered as risks theory of change format).

58. The model demonstrated that the RECLIMA project, based on its theory of change, currently addresses 8 of the 20 factors identified in causal networks. In the first causal network, the project addresses the factor of "limited access to safe water for home and productive use". In the second causal network, four factors are addressed: i) agricultural practices that damage soil and

biodiversity; ii) deforestation of areas of water recharge and loss of biodiversity; iii) deterioration of ecosystem services; and iv) gender relations that enhance women's vulnerability. The third causal network addresses the "invisibility of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants". In the fourth causality network, two factors are addressed: i) an outdated political, legal and institutional framework; and ii) weak intersectoral coordination structures (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Conceptual model of the problem addressed by the RECLIMA project



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on the project's information and knowledge, and systems theories.

59. According to the above conceptual model, the eight critical factors addressed by the project (identified in grey) are key to contributing to the paradigm shift. However, their scope has clear systemic limits, determined by the linear and unicausal approach of the theory of change model used by the GCF and the project. It would be desirable for the second phase of the project to take into account the unaddressed causal factors and the dynamic interrelationship between them, by reinforcing existing interventions and/or considering them as potential risks to the achievement of planned results, and pursuing collaborative initiatives with interventions led by other institutions and cooperation agencies in the territories.

Finding 3. The project design responds to the needs of producers and their families by contributing to their adaptive capacity and resilience. However, beneficiaries have expectations that fall outside of the project's intervention logic and short-term needs that are not sufficiently addressed.

60. The evaluation found that the design of the project is relevant and aligned to the needs of families in the municipalities of the dry corridor. These include: the recovery of soils through the promotion of agroecological practices and systems; access to safe water for households through rainwater harvesting (SCALL); access to efficient irrigation systems; the use of fruit trees and crop diversification to improve diet; and the recovery of water sources and ecosystem services.

61. The project represents a unique opportunity for these producers to invest in improving the adaptive capacity and resilience of their livelihoods, and thus reduce their exposure to the impacts of climate change. However, for rural families living in conditions of acute poverty, their underlying and most pressing short-term priority is to increase household income. The immediate needs of these families are so pressing that they may overtake and hinder the promoted project actions needed to reach a paradigm shift over the medium to long-term. For example, activities that yield benefits over the medium to long-term, such as the planting of hardwood trees, may not align with the short-term economic needs of producers.

Finding 4. The project design is based on a rigorous technical analysis that resulted in the definition and delineation of the dry corridor in El Salvador. The selection of participants targets subsistence producers and their families who maintain a high degree of climate vulnerability, putting their food security at risk.

62. The project's delineation of the dry corridor in El Salvador represents a very important milestone in the project design and is currently the main dry corridor reference that exists at the country level. The delineation is based on a multicriteria analysis in which social and biophysical variables were applied.[5] It further specifies the geographical area of intervention in six landscapes and 114 municipalities.

63. Within the territorial and landscape delineation, the project prioritized highly degraded critical areas whose population has strong levels of socioeconomic and environmental vulnerability and little resilience to the adverse effects caused by climate change. The prioritization of the intervention areas is also accompanied by a criterion related to RECLIMA's potential to favourably impact productivity levels and improve hydrological recharge.

64. In selecting beneficiaries, the project focused on subsistence farmers with a high propensity for food insecurity as they lack the necessary means to achieve adequate climate change adaptation and mitigation. The selection process required the knowledge and support of community promoters.[6] Individuals who meet the requirements are shortlisted and duly informed about the scope of the project, as well as the benefits and responsibilities they would have as beneficiaries. Furthermore, in line with the GCF's integrated results management framework, the project maintains gender-disaggregated beneficiary records.

65. The selection of community promoters represents a key success factor for the intervention model.[7] In this sense, project coordination stands out. In particular, the CENTA extension agents

[5] The variables used and their categorization can be reviewed in the Addendum to Annex B: Criteria for the prioritization of intervention municipalities.

[6] In the particular case of selecting beneficiaries of the rainwater harvesting systems at the household level, the community promoters support personnel from the Ministry of Health or community associations, by identifying and recommending locations where the systems could be installed within the prioritized municipalities.

[7] According to the consulted CENTA technicians, one element in favour of the transfer model promoted by RECLIMA that relies largely on the work of community extension agents is that the beneficiaries (producers) are generally more confident to exchange ideas, ask questions or share their experiences.

who, in some cases, had already identified the community leaders, only had to validate their profiles against RECLIMA's requirements. In other cases, the selection was carried out through community meetings where different territorial actors (including representatives of agriculture roundtables formed by CENTA, municipalities, ADESCOs, water boards, among others) elected their community promoters.

66. According to CENTA's experience, previously identified individuals typically met the requirements in terms of leadership, disposition and ease of expression. However, a selection limitation was the need for the community promoters to read, write, add, subtract and use a calculator due to the nature of the activities they would support and monitor in their region. In many cases they were not able to meet this requirement, and therefore they were not able to join the team of community promoters.

67. The selection of beneficiaries emphasized the importance of prioritizing female heads of households. The number of women participating in farmer field school (FFS) initiatives represents 38 percent of the population served. As such, in this first phase of implementation, the project met its established target (38 percent). A similar level was reported for community promoters of whom 39 percent are women.

68. In the case of household rainwater harvesting systems, pre-established criteria were used to select households. Here, the opinion and collaboration of the area's community promoters played an important role in the process. Challenges include ensuring that the population is aware and informed of the process, and that the selection comes from a collegial analysis that relieves the community promoters of decision-making responsibility of selecting beneficiaries from within their own community.

Finding 5. Components 1 and 2 contribute to El Salvador's nationally determined contribution (NDC) goals aligned with agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU) activities. This involves the reduction of emissions in the agricultural landscape, the restoration of ecosystems and degraded areas, and adaptation measures for the transition from traditional to sustainable agriculture.

69. Specifically, the project contributes to mitigation targets 1.2.1.A and 1.2.2.A and adaptation targets 2.1.1.A, 2.1.2.A and 2.1.4.A of the NDCs (2021).

i. Target 1.2.1.A for emissions reduction in the AFOLU sector. The country seeks to mitigate 50 857.5 tCO_2eq, in an area of 818 421 ha, through activities to reduce emissions and increase carbon sinks and reservoirs in the agricultural landscape. This includes 359 208 ha of corn and bean cultivation through the establishment of agroforestry systems; 195 590 ha of grassland through the establishment of silvopastoral systems; 18 930 ha of crop and pasture mosaics, corn and beans; and vegetation and sugar cane through the rehabilitation of riparian forests. These emissions are additional and will be accounted for, recorded and reported on by the Salvadorean State.

ii. Target 1.2.2.A based on the consolidation of a mitigation measure by 2025. By 2025, the country will have developed a strategy and adopted mitigation actions in bovine livestock at the national level to consolidate and present a measure with quantified greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation targets in the next NDC update.

iii. Target 2.1.1.A based on the number of practices. This goal seeks the implementation of practices for the transition from traditional to sustainable agriculture (in a social, economic and environmental sense) based on the application of soil, water and biodiversity conservation technologies in basic grain, vegetable and fruit crops.

iv. Target 2.1.2.A based on the amount of genetic materials. This goal seeks the implementation of genetic materials that can adapt to climate change. Their variability is associated with crops of basic grains (corn, beans, sorghum and rice), pastures, vegetables, and fruit and forest species.

v. Target 2.1.4.A based on the scope of agroclimatic information systems. Between 2020 and 2024, 20 000 producers in the eastern part of the country will receive clear, timely and sustained agroclimatic information through weekly newsletters, text messaging and an application to be developed. This will make them able to carry out adaptation practices in the face of variability and climate change based on decision-making, learning and forming variables.

Finding 6. Based on the Ex-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT), the project estimated a potential impact on 73 933 ha with a net carbon balance of 4 216 835 tCO2eq (over a 20-year period) or 2.9 tCO2eq per ha per year compared to the no-project scenario. It is not clear which mechanism will be used to record and report the project's realized GHG mitigation actions as a contribution to its international climate commitments.

70. The EX-ACT tool, developed by FAO, shows the benefits of project execution and its different components in terms of GHG mitigation potential when compared to the no-project scenario. The estimated emissions reduction and removal potential is 2.9 tCO_2eq per ha per year for an implementation period of five years and an accumulation period of 15 years, accounting for a total of 20 years. It includes the removal of GHG emissions in Component 2 from restored areas and in Component 1 from both the agroforestry and silvopastoral systems and the reduction of emissions from sustainable agriculture practices. This disaggregation is not integrated into the design document, rather it is included in the feasibility study and exercise performed with the EX-ACT tool during project formulation.

71. The design document proposes the measurement of GHG emissions in the third year of the project. This is to ensure compliance with the GCF assessment requirements towards Outcome M9.0, Improving the management of terrestrial or forest areas that contribute to the reduction of emissions (sustainable land use for carbon capture). In January 2023, the project started a calculation exercise, using the EX-ACT tool, to estimate the actual GHG emissions reduction and removal of the activities implemented in Components 1 and 2.

72. The design did not include an activity or budget to apply a methodology, linked to international standards, to quantify the removal and reduction of GHG emissions, with a greater level of detail than that carried out with the EX-ACT tool. At the time the project was designed, the level of precision and robustness of the methodologies and associated standards was not the same as it is today, when it is necessary to ensure the impact of the interventions in light of the country's international commitments.

73. El Salvador does not yet have an established system for the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of GHG emissions. As such, it is not clear which mechanism will be used to record and report the project's realized GHG mitigation actions as a contribution to its international climate commitments. This is expected to be defined soon as part of the discussions held by the national technical commission on agriculture, forestry and other land uses led by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, with support from RECLIMA. Currently, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources only has a system for monitoring restoration actions according to its internal needs. This system will require adjustments to integrate the actions carried out by partners. In response to this, the project has indicated that for the time being reporting will be made through the forestry sector monitoring platform managed by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

3.2 Quality and level of implementation

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent has the project delivered planned activities and outputs as expected by the project's mid-term?

Finding 7. The delivery of planned activities and outputs is behind schedule for all three project components.

74. For Component 1, the delivery of planned activities and outputs has not yet achieved the expected mid-term targets. The most significant advances are reported in the number of operational farmer field schools and the corresponding number of trained producers and trained youth. Below is a breakdown of the main achievements:

    i. The project has established and operationalized 686 farmer field schools, reaching 65 percent of the mid-term target. In total, 22 718 producers attended farmer field school activities, of which 38 percent were female heads of household, 22 percent were youth and 9 percent were Indigenous Peoples (Nahua, Pipil, Lenca, Kakawira or Pre-Mayan). All producers were reported to have adopted two or more of the resilience practices promoted through the farmer field schools. Through the evaluation field visits, the evaluators were able to corroborate that, in most cases, the levels of adoption of resilient practices are significantly exceeding the minimum target of two practices per family.

    ii. The project, through CENTA, has trained 638 community promoters (38 percent women and 62 percent men), as well as strengthening the capacity of CENTA extensionists. The implementation of resilient agriculture practices included the delivery of 87 422 fruit trees, material for the establishment of agroforestry and silvopastoral systems to be planted at the level of agricultural plots (681 289 trees), and the installation of 765 drip irrigation systems to promote efficient use of water.

    iii. Three hundred and twenty household rainwater harvesting systems were installed, reflecting a 32 percent progress with respect to the mid-term target. A significant affirmative measure is that 49 percent of household rainwater harvesting were allocated to women. The project still aims to install community rainwater harvesting systems to benefit 2 610 families.

Table 5. Component 1: percentage of progress towards mid-term targets

Code	Indicator	Final project target	Mid-term target	Mid-term reported level of progress	Percentage of progress towards the mid-term target
A.1.1.a	Area of agricultural systems with at least two applied resilience practices (ha)	56 600	43 360	20 391	47%
	Number of families applying two or more resilience practices	50 000	38 304	22 718	59%
A.1.1.b	Number of selected households with food security	23 065	23 065	1499	6.5%*
A.1.2.a	Number of farmer families with installed in-home rainwater harvesting systems	1 320	1 008	320	32%
A.1.2.b	Number of farming families with community rainwater harvesting systems	2 610 families (45 systems)	1 740 families (30 systems)	0 families (0 systems)	0%
A.1.3.a	Number of extension agents trained in adaptive problems and responses	130 CENTA extension agents from at least 40 CENTA regional agencies	40 CENTA extension agents from at least 18 CENTA regional agencies	N/A	N/A
A.1.3.b	Number of FFS initiatives operating in municipalities	1 415 FFS initiatives	1 051 FFS initiatives	686 FFS initiatives	65%
A.1.3.c	Number of active FFS participants in target municipalities	50 000 farmers	38 304 farmers	22 718 farmers	59%
A.1.3.d	Number of young people trained in climate-resilient agricultural and land use practices	5 000 young people	3 000 young people	5 781 young people	100%
A.1.3.e	Percentage of genetic resources requested by project technicians and extension agents attended by the CENTA Germplasm Centre and the Forest Development Centre, Forest Resources Division-Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	100%	50%	0	0%**

Notes:

* The project reports for indicator A.1.3.c a progress of 1 499 households with food security as measured by the Latin American and Caribbean Food Security Scale (ELCSA) instrument.

** The project reports for indicator A.1.3.e that it continues with the modernization process of CENTA and the General Directorate of Forestry, Watershed and Irrigation Planning (DGFC) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, particularly with the CENTA Germplasm Center and the Forestry Development Center (CEDEFOR), respectively.

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration, based on information provided by the project.

75. At the level of Component 2, there was an advancement in areas of intervention of 4 022 ha from 2021 to 2022. This included restoration actions carried out jointly by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, FIAES, municipal governments, academia and local organizations. This area corresponds to 52 percent of the 7 800 ha restoration project mid-term target.

76. The main advances in activities and outputs include: i) thorough and quality work using geographic information systems for the identification of priority areas for restoration; ii) the establishment of new nurseries and support to existing nurseries for the production of 486 500

plants (October 2022); iii) the prioritization of 14 forest and agroforestry species, and the development of didactic materials for their propagation in the nursery; and iv) intervention on 4 022 ha with restoration actions between 2021 and 2022.

77. During 2021, the project reported the restoration of an area of 1 611 ha by FIAES as part of co-financing activities. No information was obtained on planting densities and arrangements, species used, the location of planted areas and georeferencing, and the monitoring and evaluation activities of areas planted in 2021.

78. In 2022, the project reported restoration activities on 2 411 ha in water recharge areas, distributed as follows: i) 436 ha corresponding to areas restored with plants produced in RECLIMA nurseries; ii) 529 ha are work areas with territorial actions; iii) 1 159 ha correspond to areas restored with plants coming from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources nurseries; and iv) 260 ha were managed by FIAES.

79. The project has promoted reforestation days for the restoration of critical areas of water recharge, identified through a participatory process in the pilot phase. These were planned in collaboration with community organizations such as ADESCOs, water boards, educational organizations and municipal governments, with the active participation and empowerment of youth and women. During the evaluation field mission, restoration sites were visited with the accompaniment of members of water boards who expressed their interest in monitoring the planted trees, provided they have support from the project.

80. There was no evidence of the existence of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan to ensure the quality and maintenance of all the restored areas, as well as the consequent recovery of ecosystem services and the removal of GHG emissions. According to information provided by the project team, no actions have been carried out to integrate natural and assisted regeneration with native tree species for the restoration and protection of critical water recharge areas.

81. A new intervention strategy, based on the lessons of the pilot phase, has been designed for the implementation of Component 2 in 2023. Lessons principally relate to the technical and logistical requirements for restoration sites and the need to develop follow-up and monitoring actions. The strategy builds on information developed for the identification of priority areas for restoration and the capacities created to produce nursery plants. The evaluation team considers this strategy as positive progress for the project. It is based on the active participation of local organizations as partners in implementation through the signing of letters of agreement, assigning them responsibility for the establishment, follow-up and monitoring of the restored areas with support from the project and its partners.

Table 6. Component 2: percentage of progress towards mid-term targets

Code	Indicator	Final project target	Mid-term target	Mid-term reported level of progress	Percentage of progress towards the mid-term target
A.2.1.a	Ecosystem area outside the farm that has been effectively restored or protected	17 333 ha	7 800 ha	4 022 ha	52%
A.2.1.b	Resistant agricultural land area (tree planting and assisted regeneration)	11 320 ha	5 660 ha	0 ha	0%

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration, based on information provided by the project.

82. For Component 3, key progress is reported as follows: i) activation of local structures; ii) high levels of engagement in various project activities by the municipal environmental units and the mayors within the area of influence of the project; iii) initiation of a capacity building process with different actors of the National Environmental Management System (SINAMA, by its Spanish acronym), which concluded with training of 196 participants from the institutional environmental units and the municipal environmental units; and iv) the elaboration of 46 gender-sensitive participatory rapid diagnostics in coordination with groups of young people, women, ADESCOs, and municipalities.

83. The strengthening of the network of environmental observers and building their capacities for the effective use of data is being coordinated to build a structure to facilitate the dissemination of climate information. However, despite the efforts made, the project still requires actions to ensure the scalability and sustainability of its interventions.

Table 7. Component 3: percentage of progress towards mid-term targets

Code	Indicator	Final project target	Mid-term target	Mid-term reported level of progress	Percentage of progress towards the mid-term target
A.3.1.a	Number of local organizations effectively involved in planning and governance to support adaptation	684 organizations (114 ADESCOs, 114 producer associations, 342 civil protection committees and 114 municipal civil protection committees)	414 organizations (69 ADESCOs, 69 producer associations, 207 civil protection committees and 69 municipal civil protection committees)	57 organizations (57 ADESCOs)	14%t
A.3.1.b	Number of municipal environmental units, municipal women's units, ADESCOs and community water management	570 organizations (114 municipal environmental units, 342 ADESCOs and 114 water boards)	345 organizations (69 municipal environmental units, 207 ADESCOs and 69 water boards)	223 organizations (145 municipal environmental units, 57 ADESCOs and 25 water boards)	65%
A.3.1.c	Number of climate change adaptation planning instruments identified	222 instruments (8 territorial planning documents, seven basin management plans, 69 participatory strategic plans, 69 municipal risk management plans and 13 local sustainable development plans)	96 instruments (3 territorial planning documents, three watershed management plans, 30 participatory strategic plans, 30 municipal risk management plans and 13 local sustainable development plans)	0	0%
A.3.2.a	Number of regulatory instruments, policies or planning instruments that are supportive of adaptation and mitigation measures	17 instruments (9 updated climate change adaptation provisions, 6 updated climate change provisions and 2 new policies)	12 instruments (6 strengthened and 6 updated)	1	8%

Code	Indicator	Final project target	Mid-term target	Mid-term reported level of progress	Percentage of progress towards the mid-term target
A.3.2.b	Numbers of officials from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and local governments with training guidelines to support adaptation and mitigation measures and plans	650 officers (21 from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 59 from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and 570 from local governments)	650 officers (21 from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 59 from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and 570 from local governments)	196	30%
A.3.3.a	Number of knowledge platforms for sharing experiences and lessons learned on adaptation measures among the Government, community service offices and other actors	Not defined	Not defined	0	0%
A.3.3.b	Number of planning instruments from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, municipalities and community service offices that reflect mid-term trends in climate change and its implications	131 instruments (6 national strategies, 11 national policies, and 114 municipal development plans)	0 instruments (methodologies for incorporating information on climate change forecasts into planning instruments are under preparation)	0	0%

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration, based on information provided by the project.

Finding 8. A number of external and internal factors affected the scheduling of activities and the achievement of mid-term targets. The most significant include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and emergencies caused by extreme climate events.

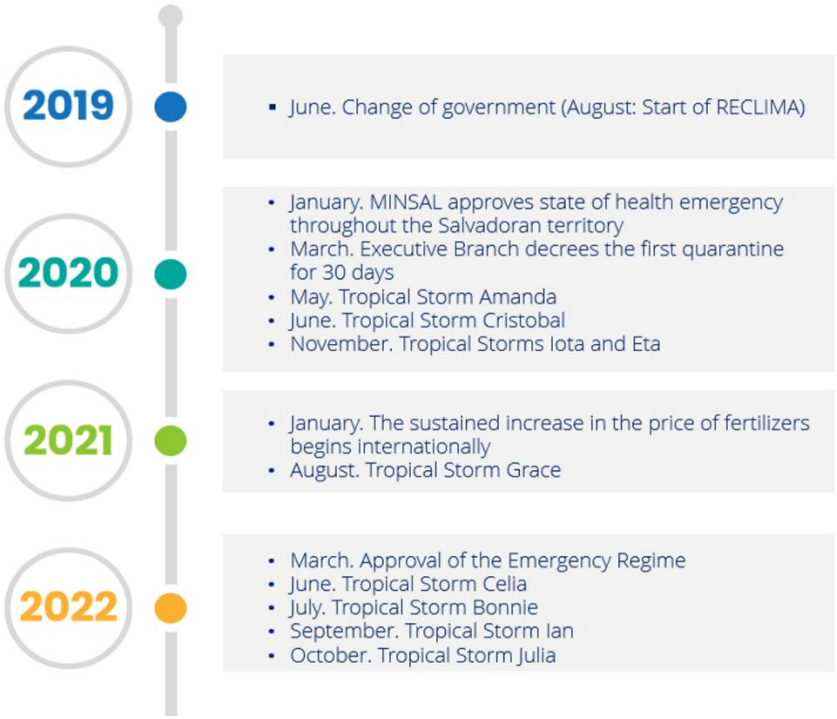
84. Following the declaration of an international public health emergency by the World Health Organization on 23 January 2020, the Ministry of Health approved an indefinite state of emergency throughout the Salvadorean territory (Agreement 301). Subsequently, on 11 March 2020, the executive body decreed the first quarantine for 30 days. This marked the beginning of an almost total closure of key economic activities. A reopening process began on 16 June 2020 that prioritized the construction, textile and medical (non-emergency) sectors. However, as COVID-19 cases continued, in-person activities were restricted for the remainder of 2020 and a large part of 2021.

85. In addition to the pandemic, the country's agricultural sector was affected by several tropical storms and hurricanes between June 2020 and October 2022: Amanda, Cristobal, ETA, IOTA, Grace, Celia, Bonnie, Ian and Julia. It is estimated that 50 percent of households growing maize and beans lost half of their production to the combined effect of the pandemic and these extreme weather events. At times, CENTA's extension staff was almost exclusively dedicated to emergency response, which limited their monitoring of the project's field activities. The impact of the

pandemic and weather events provoked an estimated 18-month delay in the scheduling of field activities.

Other external factors affecting project implementation included: i) a new government taking office in June 2019, signifying not only a change of political party and executive body authorities, but also national priorities; ii) global supply chain slowdowns and bottlenecks, contributing to procurement delays and the late delivery of inputs and materials to producers; iii) increase in the prices of agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers and foliar products, leading to prioritization of CENTA extension staff to the delivery of emergency agricultural packages.

Figure 4. Principle external factors affecting project implementation (2019–2022)



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.

86. One aspect of note is high level of rotation in the leadership of the agriculture portfolio, with four ministers of agriculture and livestock since 2019.[8] This challenge, identified as a risk in project design, did not adversely affect project implementation.

87. Among the internal factors contributing to implementation challenges was the evolving GCF project operational guidance and tools. As one of the first GCF projects to be implemented by FAO, the project's design and implementation took place while guidance and tools were still under development. Additionally, as described in Finding 9 below, FAO's internal processes had to be adapted for the timely implementation of large projects.

88. Project implementation delays, particularly at the field level, and the consequent impacts on progress towards planned project targets and results, raises the need to extend the project timeline. The evaluation considers that a 24-month extension is required to achieve final project targets and results. The feasibility assessment of reaching targets within this extended timeline is based on consultations with the key implementation partners, along with consideration of three criteria: i) strong implementation capacity observed between September 2021 and

[8] Óscar Enrique Guardado (current Minister appointed in December 2022); Enrique Parada (March 2022–December 2022); David Josué Martínez (April 2021–March 2022); Pablo Anliker (June 2019–April 2021).

December 2022 – in particular the network of community promoters and the support of CENTA extensionists and local organizations, in the second phase; ii) current pace of progress towards the targets of the three components, considering more than 22 000 producers (44 percent of the total 50 000 expected by project end) was reached as of December 2022; and iii) level of execution of GCF financing, equivalent to 54.8 percent (see Finding 12).

Finding 9. The management of procurement processes faced multiple internal and external challenges, many of which were solved with relative success. However, this resulted in some unintended effects, such as the late delivery of vegetative materials and, in some cases, culturally inappropriate tools. The project team has capitalized on this experience, taking corrective actions to improve processes for phase two.

89. The FAO Representation in El Salvador and the Project Management Unit faced multiple challenges in procuring the type and quantity of agricultural inputs, equipment and materials required for the implementation of field activities in the project's first phase. Internally, FAO faced challenges adapting procurement processes to allow for the timely approval of high-volume of purchases for a project of this size.

90. Externally, procurement processes faced multiple challenges related to the national and global context. First, it was not possible to contract local suppliers. None of the local suppliers responding to the tenders could meet the United Nations' requirements for global suppliers and the volume of purchases required. The only viable option was to launch an international tender. The management of this process also faced setbacks from the significant disruptions to global supply chains. One of the most visible effects was the slowdown of transport from the port of embarkation in the supplier's country to the port of disembarkation in El Salvador.

91. The PMU, with the support of FAO Representation in El Salvador, took a series of measures to resolve the described bottlenecks, especially those related to FAO procedures. One of the most significant changes was an increase in the delegated authorities for purchases from USD 50 000 to USD 200 000 at country level. This change resulted in more timely approvals. In addition, the quality control procedures of inputs and materials were streamlined, from the technical specifications to the final guarantees.

92. Despite the measures taken by both the PMU and FAO Representation in El Salvador, the challenges in the procurement process resulted in some unintended effects at the end of the logistics chain. Based on evidence collected during the field visits, the evaluation team documented: i) cases of late delivery and resulting loss of some vegetative material (forest and fruit trees) due to plantings that did not coincide with the rainy season (reported in all 12 of the visited municipalities); and ii) cases of cultural inadequacy of farm materials, mainly billhooks and machetes (reported in 8 of the 12 visited communities). The project field team and community promoters explained the context leading to the delays in response to the producers' fully justified concerns and in the end the situation did not present a reputational risk for the project nor FAO.

93. Based on the experience and lessons learned from the first phase of the procurement process, the PMU and FAO Representation in El Salvador took corrective measures to ensure the timely delivery of the materials and inputs to the producers participating in the second phase, which will cover the remaining 68 planned municipalities. Among other measures, it is worth noting the decision to make purchases from the largest local supplier whose tools are familiar to the producers. Improvements have also been made to the purchasing and procurement plan, including the mapping of delivery logistics.

Finding 10. The project is adequately managing the coordination and collaboration of implementing partners at all levels, namely governance bodies, partner institutions and local structures. Some challenges in interagency coordination, especially in relation to the three national partners (the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and FIAES), were identified.

94. The project has established coordination and collaboration networks for the different actors involved in its implementation, both at the national and territorial level. At the national level, with partner institutions: the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and FIAES. At the territorial level, with CENTA's extension networks (technicians and community promoters), municipalities (including the municipal environmental units and women's units) as well as organizations involved in local participation structures (ADESCOs, agricultural roundtables, water boards and Indigenous organizations).

95. Although in general there is a fluid relationship and coresponsibility for the smooth running of the project, there are different levels of coordination with the partner institutions. With the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA, there is a high level of strategic and operational coordination, reflecting their central role in project implementation. This was particularly evident in the first phase of field activities, which relied on CENTA's network of extensionists. Coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and FIAES is concentrated at the national level, mainly due to their limited territorial presence.

96. In the case of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, although there is adequate dialogue with the ministerial office, there is less communication and coordination with the technical bodies. This led to a lack of clarity around project parameters and unmet expectations with respect to requests for activities that may not be aligned with the project's results framework, nor with the activity planning exercises carried out.

97. The project's governance bodies function properly. Each fulfil their political–strategic and technical–operational roles. These are the Project Board, the Executive Steering Committee and the Territorial Steering Committee. In addition to this overall assessment, the evaluation reports two factors that have limited optimal performance: i) suspension of in-person meetings due to the governmental closure of activities to contain the impact of COVID-19; and ii) institutional staff mobility, both at the level of ministers and technical personnel who serve as focal points.

98. The meetings of these bodies are structured around strategic and operational issues. For example, the minutes from the last executive steering committee meeting on 15 December 2022 recorded the following discussion topics: i) information on project progress and challenges; ii) obtaining inputs to prepare the annual performance report; and iii) obtaining inputs to prepare the project's 2023 annual operating plan (RECLIMA Project, 2022). However, all project partners indicated that the Executive Steering Committee and territorial Steering Committee meetings could have more spaces to analyse and discuss technical issues and receive detailed information on the project's actions including its strategic scope. This would facilitate a more active participation in decision-making, and greater awareness of the project's management and progress.

99. To address technical areas specific to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, stakeholders interviewed suggested the need to hold more frequent technical meetings to discuss strategic issues aligned with both the project's results framework and the country's priorities (landscape restoration inside and outside protected areas, climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, forest nurseries, among others). These discussions could be used to generate joint and aligned actions that respond to the needs of the project and the country.

100. The project's operational management reflects a high level of quality, both in technical and administrative–financial processes. The degree of involvement and commitment of the FAO Representation in El Salvador in monitoring and quality assurance can be highlighted among positive factors. In addition, the quality of the PMU's technical staff and territorial teams has been verified and supported by qualified, committed and well-coordinated professionals.

Finding 11. FAO Representation in El Salvador has played an active role in outreach and collaboration with other cooperation agencies. At the territorial level, these opportunities have the potential to link participating producers to services that are not covered by the project.

101. Adapting agricultural production systems to the effects of climate change for the most vulnerable communities is a priority item on the international cooperation agenda with El Salvador. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022 and 2026 positions this as Strategic Priority 2, which aims to promote "inclusive, innovative and sustainable economic transformation, as well as adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change" (United Nations El Salvador, 2021). It is also prioritized by the European Union as part of the national coverage of its flagship regional programme, EUROCLIMA, which includes actions related to sustainable forest management, biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as resilient food production (EUROCLIMA, 2023).

102. As part of the European Union's Green Transition and Digital Transformation priorities from the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP 2021–2027) in El Salvador, the FAO Representation in El Salvador formulated a project to strengthen agroecological research and the digitization of services in the sector. This is in collaboration with the Catholic Relief Services from the United States of America. It also supports CENTA in the development of an application to identify plagues in corn and beans. Further, there are ongoing efforts to build synergies with bilateral initiatives of the United states Agency for International Development (USAID), Canada, and agencies such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

103. The project implements collaborative actions with other cooperation agencies on specific issues. At the national level, one initiative is participation in the Women and Climate Change Coalition, made up of the embassies of Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Costa Rica in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and other national institutions. At the territorial level, it is worth mentioning the implementation of training plans on sustainable agriculture and gender issues, in collaboration with the Catholic Relief Services and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

104. The sector's multiple initiatives, especially those that coincide in timelines and regions, offer opportunities to enhance the project's contributions to the paradigm shift in the 114 municipalities served. Specifically, an area of possible collaboration could be the linkage of producers to these initiatives. This could meet the needs and expectations that do not fall under the project's intervention logic, as shown by the conceptual model in section 3.1. An example may be technical assistance in improving food production and marketing, as well as diversifying livelihoods – especially for women and young people.

Finding 12. As of December 2022, national partner institutions have met 79.4 percent of the total committed co-financing. This corresponds to USD 91 828 492 and exceeds the programmed level. The reported contributions align with the activities of the three components.

105. The contribution of the national partners, formalized in the co-financing letters in the GCF funding proposal, corresponds to USD 91 828 492 or 71.9 percent of the total budget of USD 127 687 744.

Reported each year, the contributions of each partner are in-kind and estimated on the value of the activities implemented each year. This is linked to the three components of the project. The commitments establish the amount reporting for each year, starting in 2020 and considering Year 1 of implementation (see Table 8).

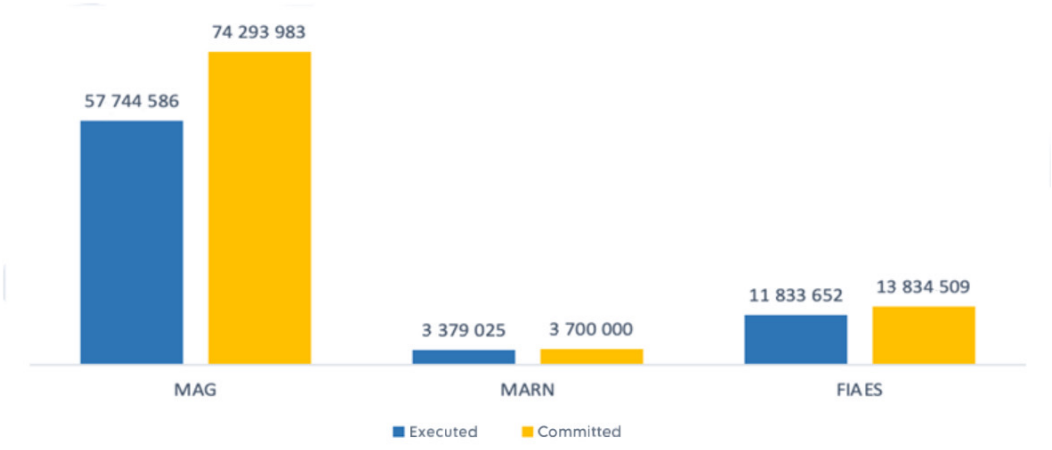
Table 8. Structure of project co-financing: by year and total

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total USD
GCF	5 641 177	13 994 435	9 022 414	4 756 569	2 435 018	35 849 616
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	13 722 403	14 179 346	14 814 791	15 572 695	16 005 749	74 294 984
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	741 727	741 727	741 727	741 727	741 727	3 708 635
Subtotal	16 898 639	17 771 073	18 406 518	19 164 422	19 597 476	91 838 128
FIAES	2 434 509	2 850 000	2 850 000	2 850 000	2 850 000	13 834 509
Total (USD)	22 539 816	31 765 508	27 428 932	23 920 991	22 032 494	127 687 744

Source: Adapted from GCF. 2018. FP089: Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador (RECLIMA). In: *Green Climate*. Songdo, Republic of Korea. Cited 15 March 2023. www.greenclimate.fund/project/fp089

106. As of December 2022 (Year 3), partner institutions reported contributions of USD 72 957 263, equivalent to 79.4 percent of the total committed resources. This means that only USD 19 597 476 (21.3 percent) has yet to be reported. According to the funding documents, this corresponds to 2024, the last year of execution (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. National partners co-financing – executed vs committed



Notes: MAG: Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; MARN: Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; FIAES: Environmental Investment Fund of El Salvador
Source: Evaluation team's elaboration with data from the PMU, December 2022.

107. As of December 2022, the project management team had executed the second disbursement of GCF funds, corresponding to USD 19 635 612. This is equivalent to 54.8 percent of the total available resources. The first disbursement was approved in January 2020 and the resources made it possible to cover operating expenses until 2021. The second disbursement was approved in early 2022 and has been used for major purchases of inputs and materials for the activities of Components 1 and 2. This means that by December 2022 the disbursements corresponding to Year 1 (2019) and Year 2 (2020) had been executed, leaving a gap of two years with respect to programming. If, as requested by the project, the third disbursement is executed in 2023, the year foreseen for project completion, two disbursements would be pending, making it necessary to consider extending the project's life cycle to 2025.

108. The different levels of execution of national co-financing and GCF funding can be explained as follows: by institutional mandate, in compliance with the commitments acquired in the funding proposal, national partners reported the execution of co-financing activities during the years 2020 and 2021, despite the effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic during this period. The amounts reported correspond to operating expenses, associated with staff salaries, which were maintained during the pandemic. The execution of GCF funding was affected differently by the pandemic and other external factors, due to the fact that most of the funds are directly linked to results. For example: purchases of inputs and materials for producers; salary for community promoters. In other words, funding has been more sensitive to the impact of the pandemic and other unforeseen events.

109. With respect to the above, the evaluation confirms that the partners have fully complied with the annual co-financing commitments. There is no need to request new co-financing because most of the activities of the second phase of the project are aligned with GCF funding. In a scenario of extending the project life cycle to 2025, consideration could be given to redistributing the remaining co-financing during this period to synchronize the two funding modalities with the new extended programming.

110. The evaluation also verified the quality of national partner co-financing based on their contribution to the activities of the three components and the progress towards project results. Taking the 2021 report (Year 2) as a reference, an example of the activities reported by each partner is presented in the following points.

i. Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Component 1: research and transfer of agricultural technology; technical support for the implementation of project activities; capacity building support; and information generation and dissemination at territorial level.

ii. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Component 1: validation of adaptation technologies and capacity building for innovation and adaptive management. Component 2: facilitation of plans and agreements for the restoration of ecosystems; and design of project activities with the Regional Centre of Forest Seeds. Component 3: promotion of water culture with citizen participation and the NDC compliance agenda.

iii. FIAES, Component 2: facilitation of plans and agreements to implement the restoration of especially relevant ecosystems, tree planting and assisted natural regeneration; and maintenance of restored areas.

3.3 Progress towards expected results

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent are the activities and outputs contributing to the expected results?

Finding 13. Progress towards expected results is below that expected at mid-term. The most significant progress has been made in Component 1. The main limitation has been the delayed start of field activities.

GCF Outcome Area 1. Adaptation: increased resilience and enhanced livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, communities, and regions.

111. As of December 2022, the project reached a total of 22 718 farm families through the farmer field school approach (38 percent of farm families are female led, 22 percent are youth and 9 percent are Indigenous Peoples), benefiting a total of 102 231 people. This represents a 59 percent advancement towards the mid-term target of 50 000 farm families applying adaptation measures, benefiting a total of 172 368 people. It is important to mention that, to date, the project maintains an adequate registry of all beneficiaries, disaggregated by gender, age and ethnicity.

112. Both climate-friendly farming methodology and practices had been largely unknown to most farmer field school participants. Given the current levels of participation and acquired knowledge, as well as the field results of producers applying the promoted practices, the potential for technological adoption by the RECLIMA beneficiaries is quite high. The most valued practices include: i) Bokashi composting, supermagro, sulphocalcium and natural repellents replacing conventional chemical fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides;[9] ii) avoid stubble burning to conserve soil nutrients; iii) build individual terraces; iv) establish forage banks from improved grass seed; v) establish agroforestry and silvopastoral systems; vi) develop living and dead barriers; vii) crop rotation; viii) distanced tree planting; and ix) planting in level curves.

113. One aspect to consider within Component 1 is the agricultural package provided by central government. As part of the package, subsistence farmers are provided certified pest-resistant seeds and other agricultural inputs[10] representing a complementary component to the RECLIMA plan. However, in some areas of the project's influence, producers noted deficiencies in seeds (maize and beans) with production falling below expectations in the 2022 harvests.

114. The development of organic alternatives for soil fertilization (Bokashi composting) not only brings enormous benefits to the environment, but also, according to 100 percent of beneficiaries consulted in the field, provides excellent production results. It should be noted that the use of agroecological or organic inputs and fertilizers contributes to the reduction of GHG emissions, helping to achieve the mitigation objective of the project.

115. Equally relevant is the contribution of organic fertilizers to reducing the overall production costs for families participating in RECLIMA. Within the context of increased international costs of agricultural inputs, the price of fertilizers began to surge at the beginning of 2021 with prices more than doubling by April 2022.

116. During phase one, RECLIMA provided organic matter to producers for demonstration purposes so that they could learn how to make Bokashi composting in the farmer field school. Likewise, it provided inputs for productive purposes so that families could produce the organic fertilizer that would later be used in their plots. The process of purchasing most of the organic fertilizer components (e.g. chicken manure, molasses, charcoal and rice chaff) has been the responsibility of the project. To ensure the sustainability of these processes, it is important that producers also know the supply options that will allow them to meet their future needs.

117. In other areas, drip irrigation systems have been installed as part of the actions aimed at water resources management. This had enabled the open production of chili and tomatoes. These actions have an important replication potential through the learning circles of the farmer field school approach. This promoted technology is particularly relevant to subsistence farmers as it does not require a high level of investment.

118. One of the main unexpected positive results identified in the first phase of project implementation is greater social cohesion in the communities as a result of their participation in the farmer field schools. Additionally, instant messaging applications have facilitated greater knowledge

[9] According to consultations carried out in the field by the evaluation team, some herbicides and insecticides substituted by farmers are: Paraquat (Gramoxone), Tamarón, Lannate and Lasonate.
[10] This includes fertilizer, seed processor and foliar fertilizer.

exchange, a key contributing factor for the sustainability of the processes promoted by the project.[11]

GCF Outcome Area 2. Adaptation: increased resilience of health and well-being and food and water security.

119. RECLIMA's baseline on the food security conditions for the target households indicate: food security for 6.60 percent of households; mild food insecurity for 66.3 percent; moderate food insecurity for 22.8 percent; and severe food insecurity for 4.3 percent. This information comes from a survey sample of 478 registered households. However, a second survey has yet to be conducted so it is not possible to determine whether the mid-term target has been achieved.

120. As part of water resources management, the project has promoted the installation of 320 rainwater harvesting systems at the household level with a capacity of 1 700 litres each. This represents a 32 percent progress towards the mid-term target of 1 008 systems at the household level. Rainwater harvesting systems represent a significant change in the recipient families' quality of life. They guarantee not only water access but also water quality.[12] At this point, it is highlighted that 49 percent have been oriented to female heads of households. This represents a key affirmative measure given the implications in time and physical effort that water transport generally requires.

121. The project's installation of community rainwater harvesting systems for the second phase is pending. Coordination with institutions, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, ADESCOs and municipalities, will be very important for the selection and installation of the systems.

GCF Outcome Area 4. Adaptation: improved resilience of ecosystems.

122. The project reports actions that contribute to improving the resilience of ecosystems in about 24 413.4 ha, distributed as follows: i) 20 391.4 ha of family plots where adaptation practices are implemented for sustainable agriculture, representing an advancement of 53 percent towards mid-term target of 38,304 ha; and ii) 4 022 ha[13] that correspond to water recharge priority areas, where reforestation and other restoration activities have been carried out, representing a 52 percent progress towards the mid-term target of 7 800 ha.

123. The project works with multiple stakeholders on the development of restoration actions. At the institutional level, actions are coordinated and articulated with FIAES and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (mainly on nursery issues). At the local level, work to identify, prioritize and implement actions at water recharge sites, and coordinate reforestation days is being coordinated with local actors, including ADESCOs, water boards and municipalities, among others. Additional actions have been realized in coordination with women, youth and Indigenous organizations.

124. At territorial level, planning meetings have been held with the environmental governance structures in the territories, such as water boards and municipalities, to plan and develop actions that contribute to the restoration of water recharge areas.

[11] The extension model has enabled a wide communication network. At least 46 WhatsApp groups have been created, linking CENTA extensionist and community promoters. Additionally, more the 638 WhatsApp groups have been created between the community promoters and the 22 718 producers they serve.

[12] An evaluation field visit verified the delivery of rainwater harvesting to an area with a high prevalence of kidney disease due to water quality.

[13] APR 2022 reported a distributed area of 13 067 ha, which could not be verified or triangulated by the evaluation team.

125. The project provides technical facilitation of the AFOLU National Technical Commission, made up of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. The purpose of the Commission is to establish the climate governance actions as defined in the AFOLU agenda of El Salvador. This includes the identification of needs for updating different laws, policies and plans for climate change mitigation and adaptation, beyond those defined in the NDC document (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 2021). It is important to clarify that the actions and goals of this commission are independent of the project but could contribute to providing feedback to the project and vice versa.

126. The new strategy for restoration activities during the second phase is based on lessons learned from the pilot phase, new technical information, and capacity building of local organizations. This, along with the development of follow-up and monitoring activities, will contribute to the achievement of the results and established targets. It is expected that as the restoration actions are consolidated – through the establishment and growth of new vegetation, including trees planted on agricultural plots, water recharge areas and in other spaces – the process of recovery of the flows of environmental services at landscape level will begin.

GCF Result Area 4. Mitigation: reduced emissions from land use, deforestation, forest degradation and through sustainable forest management and conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

127. This is the first project in El Salvador to invest directly in actions that promote carbon sequestration in soil and biomass. The project design proposes measuring GHG emissions in RECLIMA's third year. The project plans to start a calculation exercise in January 2023 to estimate the actual reductions and removals of GHG emissions from the activities implemented in Components 1 and 2. At the time of the evaluation it was not possible to obtain data to assess the level of progress towards the mid-term target (of 2 108 433 tCO2-eq captured).

128. The establishment and growth of new vegetation, including trees planted on agricultural plots, in water recharge areas and in other spaces is expected to consolidate the restoration of intervention areas. This should make the environmental recovery process flow at the landscape level, increasing the removal of GHG emissions alongside reduced emissions from sustainable agriculture activities. Through these actions the targets set in the design phase should be reached.

129. Finally, according to the project's theory of change, the achievement of GCF's overall goals is based on the synergies of the three components. Based on data collected during the field visits and documents reviewed, it can be affirmed that there is a clear causal relationship between adaptation practices at the level of producers' plots and carbon sequestration targets and NDC-related commitments in agricultural lands. While insufficient progress has been made, the potential of critical area restoration practices to contribute to overall goals has been observed. In the case of Component 3, the contributions will only be visible in the medium to long-term, as an effect of the improvement of the enabling conditions for the paradigm shift. This is both at the local level and the policy–regulatory framework level.

130. Regarding the theory of change assumptions, observations confirm the process of building a shared vision for the new paradigm, given the compliance with the co-financing and institutional support obligations of the national partners and the high level of adaptation of the producers' agroecological practices.

Finding 14. While activities are contributing to expected results, more time is needed to achieve them. Key factors influencing the achievement of results include land tenure structures, weak municipal capacities and cultural transformation processes.

131. The implemented project activities have contributed to greater agroecological knowledge and behaviour change among RECLIMA beneficiaries. However, socioenvironmental challenges need to be taken into account to achieve the expected results.

i. *Land tenure structures.* According to the Report of Socioeconomic and Gender Characterization of the Rural Population of El Salvador (RECLIMA, 2017) and the Multi Purpose Household Survey (2015) as sources, land tenure in the municipalities of the dry corridor is characterized by ownership (46.8 percent), followed by free occupation (24.1 percent) and leased land (23.5 percent).[14] Despite this, the reality of the producers served by the project, according to their farm plans, is that 52 percent are tenants, 45 percent are owners, 2 percent are cooperatives and 1 percent are settlers. As such, land tenure becomes an important constraint for defining agricultural landscape restoration strategies.

ii. *Weak capacity of municipalities.* The weak financial and human resources capacity of municipalities, and in particular their environmental units, presents a challenge to the achievement of project results, especially for Components 2 and 3. The capacity of municipalities was further deteriorated by the reduction in the Economic and Social Development Fund (FODES), which consists of an annual contribution to municipalities from the State budget, from net current revenues. This contribution went from 10 percent to 1.5 percent at the end of 2021. This reduction further limited the operations of local governments, having a direct impact on their economic and social development projects, as well as on the number of employees available in this area.[15] This, in turn, generates pressure on local governments to promote productive activities (for example, land subdivision projects) over conservation activities, due to the economic income generated by the former.

iii. It is important to point out that, for a good part of the municipalities in El Salvador, which are small and mostly rural, such as those served by RECLIMA, the FODES is their main source of revenue.[16] Consequently, municipalities have a high level of dependence on economic and social development projects. This has direct repercussions for the project, given the key role of local governments in territorial coordination and logistics in support of project objectives. Further, the involvement of local governments is an important factor for the longer-term sustainability of project processes and actions at territorial level.

iv. *Project duration and viability of targets.* In general, the results of the three project components propose changes at the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices among local actors, especially producers. As these processes imply cultural transformations of a certain depth, they are viable only in the medium to long-term. Hence, sustained support is required beyond the project duration. In addition, in the case of RECLIMA, some Component 3 targets may be excessively ambitious due to the weakening of municipal capacities over recent years.

[14] There are other forms of tenure, such as colonies, cooperatives and sharecropping, that cover the remaining 6.6 percent.

[15] https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/Posibles-despidos-en-municipalidades-ante-reduccion-del-FODES-20211007-0001.html

[16] Even considering that the government provides various subsidies to municipalities, FODES represented, in the middle of the previous decade, on average 90 percent of public sector transfers to municipalities, as well as 55 percent of the total income of municipalities at the national level, although in some cases, this percentage may have been significantly higher.

Finding 15. The project has laid the groundwork for capacity building across the three dimensions considered by the FAO and United Nations approach: individual, organization and enabling environment. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen key areas to support the results achievement and to contribute, in a significant manner, to the paradigm shift by the project's end.

132. Capacities are defined as the "ability of individuals, organizations, and society to manage their affairs properly." Based on this premise, FAO defines capacity building as "the processes by which people, organizations and society as a whole build, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time" (FAO, 2014). To this end, its methodological approach establishes the consideration of three interrelated dimensions: individual, organization and enabling environment (UNEG, n.d.). Beyond the mere transfer of information and technical knowledge, this approach involves the facilitation of learning processes that lead to changes in the practices or effectiveness of the participating subjects (Prieto Castillo, 1989).

133. Based on these criteria, and considering the short implementation period, the project has laid the initial foundations for the development of capacities needed to contribute to a paradigm shift in producers' agricultural systems and local communities' ecosystems management. These efforts aim to develop technical capacities among those in charge of implementing the activities of the three components: i) PMU technical personnel; ii) CENTA technical personnel, community promoters and producers; and iii) municipal environmental units and representatives of local organizations.

134. The training content includes, *inter alia*: i) induction on the project intervention model; ii) farm plans; iii) agroecology practices; iv) sustainable agriculture; v) sustainable management of natural ecosystems; and vi) a gender approach and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants. Some examples are: an environmental education module and the strengthening of community nurseries for reforestation actions, facilitated in collaboration with the Gerardo Barrios University in the department of San Miguel; the mainstreaming of the gender approach in climate change adaptation actions with the United Nations Population Fund; and the capacity strengthening of 130 CENTA technicians in sustainable agriculture.

135. The overall assessment from actors consulted in the field and through interviews with staff from partner institutions highlight the quality of capacity building initiatives, especially at the individual level. In the case of the FFS, teaching materials, such as workbooks, booklets, leaflets and posters have reinforced the training of producers in soil recovery practices and techniques.

136. Based on triangulated evidence, the evaluation team agrees with some of the actors consulted that the capacity building process is still insufficient. At the level of the dimensions of the FAO model, there is a lack of capacity building in institutions and in the development of an enabling environment that is conducive to contributing to the paradigm change.

137. At the institutional level, deficits were noted in the management of the results-oriented strategic planning cycle for sustainable development and adaptation to climate change, and also in the intersectoral management at territorial level. In the case of CENTA, the most complex challenge is the renewal and updating of the technical staff of the extension service, which, on average, exceeds the age limit of the public service. In view of the innovation processes promoted by FAO and other cooperation partners such as CRS and the European Union, there is also a need to facilitate accelerated training in information technologies in order to migrate the traditional extension system to a digital or hybrid support (face-to-face and virtual).

138. Capacity building aimed at strengthening an enabling environment that is conducive to a paradigm shift within the framework of Component 3 includes the updating or creation of a

political–legal framework for the fulfilment of the global commitments of the climate change summits. This includes adapting the public policy instruments of the agricultural sector. The need to address staff mobility and the instability of partner institutions is also perceived as a critical factor for the sustainability of the capacities created, even though this falls outside the scope of the project intervention.

139. At the individual level, there are still important gaps in developing the capacities of the project's key actors when it comes to conceptual frameworks and methodologies for understanding and managing the complexity of the paradigm shift. Although no explicit demands were identified, there is a need to design and implement training processes for senior management. These are aimed at the authorities and partners' management staff, especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. In fact, these bodies need to manage the necessary transformations in these sectors and ensure their commitment and influence on the enabling environment.

3.4 Information and knowledge management systems

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent do information and knowledge management systems facilitate decision-making and the achievement of results?

Finding 16. The project's monitoring and evaluation system collects detailed and disaggregated data and generates information that is being used for timely decision-making. Key challenges identified include addressing the increased information flow anticipated in the second half of the project, making relevant information more readily available to implementing partners, and including a specific monitoring and follow-up plan for restoration actions in Component 2.

140. The project's monitoring and evaluation system is fed by various sources of information, depending on the activities and products that are reported. Some are generated directly by the project team, while others are generated by the implementing partners. One of the main sources of information at the field level corresponds to the monthly progress reports that are sent from the CENTA offices and are channelled by the PMU through the monitoring and evaluation unit. The reports are simple and mainly collect quantitative information, the advantage of which is their practicality. However, their format does not provide space for recording lessons learned, good practices or more qualitative aspects. This is a weakness.

141. The RECLIMA baseline provides a diagnosis of the situation at the beginning of the project and provides a characterization of the intervention areas and their populations in general. This data could be complemented with specific data on the initial conditions of families reached through the project (direct beneficiaries) by referencing data from the producers' farm plans.

142. The project maintains technical sheets for each of the indicators of the logical framework. This facilitates measurement and interpretation consistency. The tabs provide a detailed description of each indicator, its calculation formula and the names of those responsible for measurement, among other factors. The collection and analysis of data is disaggregated by gender, age and ethnicity. Additionally, the project has very useful complementary instruments for measuring specific indicators, such as: i) the protocol for the implementation of the methodology of the Latin American and Caribbean Food Security Scale (ELCSA, by its Spanish acronym); and ii) the user manual for the farmer field school data collection tool.

143. While the project's M&E system is being used to measure progress and provide information for decision-making to the PMU, relevant information could be made more readily available to implementing partners. Additionally, it is important to mention that Component 2 lacks a specific

monitoring and follow-up plan for forest restoration actions. This could be integrated as another element of the project's M&E system.

144. Considering the quantity of information and data that will be generated in phase two of the project, there are opportunities to improve capacities to manage increasingly large volumes of data. For example, moving towards a computer system that facilitates online reporting by extensionists and the project's technical team, and at the same time, allows RECLIMA's M&E unit to generate progress reports automatically. This could be done without undermining the internal validation mechanisms already in place. Once these improvements have been made, it is important to generate a culture of data use for decision-making so that the automated system can be used and adopted. It should be noted that the project document (Funding Proposal) does not contemplate the development of an IT platform.[17]

145. At the logical framework level, indicators linked to key result A2.0 (increased resilience of health and well-being, and increased food and water security) require measures to make it possible to identify the impact attributable exclusively to the project, isolating other factors that may also affect the indicator, such as interventions by other projects, increased family income from the flow of remittances, among other aspects.

Finding 17. There are a number of good practices and experiences emerging from phase one of RECLIMA. Communications and knowledge management activities aimed at sharing experiences, lessons learned and the progress of results with different audiences have not yet been sufficiently leveraged.

146. Project activities are leading to good practices and experiences at the field level that could be better systematized, so that they can serve as a pedagogical resource for the remainder of the project's implementation. This could further facilitate the field work of extension technicians and community promoters and contribute to replication potential. On this point, the project's proactive use of some of the lessons learned and good practices in its implementation strategy for phase two, is recognized. For example, both the RECLIMA farmer field school guide and the document "Sustainable agricultural practices to improve resilience to climate change" have been updated based on the good practices identified during the implementation of phase one and will be used by the partners for the implementation of phase two. The same is true for Component 2.

147. The knowledge management component of the information system is not sufficiently leveraged to build a learning community on the project's key themes. These include: climate change adaptation and restoration practices; productive landscapes; a paradigm shift in agronomic systems; and the link between human communities and ecosystems. Also, project stakeholders noted challenges in obtaining detailed information on the project's activities, progress, lessons learned and results.

148. The project's brand is an element that could be better developed both at territorial and institutional level. While some actions have been taken, it is important to coordinate with implementing partners so that they jointly transmit the same messages from their institutional platforms.

[17] The computer system could maintain in a centralized platform the georeference of each of the producers' plots, characterize them, keep a photographic record, detail the inputs and materials that have been delivered, as well as view their evolution (online) according to the farm plans that are being defined. It is important to mention that the project currently keeps the plots geo-referenced through KoboCollect, and the information has been included in the FAO platform. In addition, there are records detailing the inputs and materials that have been delivered to producers.

3.5 Gender approach and social inclusion[18]

Finding 18. The project has made significant progress in incorporating a gender approach into the design and implementation of project activities in the 46 municipalities reached during phase one. Areas where the project's Gender Action Plan could be reinforced were identified.

149. Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the principles of the environmental and social safeguards applied by GCF and FAO. The project has adopted all measures established to comply with this principle in the design and implementation of activities. In particular, Performance Standard 1 (PS 1): GCF Environmental and Social Risk and Impact Assessment and Management (ESRM) and FAO Environmental and Social Standard 8 (NAS 8): Gender Equality. As part of these standards, during the design phase, the Environmental and Social Action Framework was prepared, including a Gender Action Plan, based on field consultations with a sample of women from the participating municipalities and focus groups with gender specialists from partner institutions. In addition, a gender analysis was integrated into 46 participatory rapid appraisals.

150. The documents and tools prepared detail the differentiated impact of the effects of climate change on women, due to the traditional roles exercised and the inequalities existing within households and rural communities in general. These include double or triple working hours and almost exclusive responsibility for family care tasks (children, husbands, grandfathers, grandmothers). As a result, women are more vulnerable than men to phenomena such as droughts and crop failures, water shortages for domestic and productive consumption, and overall limitations to their livelihoods. Additionally, women face risks of malnutrition and other health conditions, as well as exposure to violence and crime due to their work in fetching water from sources distant from their homes, among others.

151. The Gender Action Plan proposes a roadmap for addressing and reducing gender inequalities and empowering women in project activities. As part of this plan, the evaluation team identified relevant advances aimed at empowering women and reducing exclusion gaps in development benefits. Among others, the following are worth mentioning: selection of 38 percent of women heads of household out of the total of 50 000 target households; inclusion of 38 percent of women out of the total of 638 community promoters selected, based on affirmative gender criteria; delivery of 49 percent of SCALL systems to women heads of household; promotion of women's leadership in community nurseries; training 205 community promoters, including 88 women, in topics of gender equality, leadership and self-esteem, prevention of violence, harassment and sexual abuse, nutritional food security; training of 48 CENTA technicians in gender, environmental and social safeguards and communication for development; design and delivery of didactic material to support the training work of male and female producers in the farmer field schools; participation in a national forum for the exchange of project experiences in gender mainstreaming; spaces for reflection to take advantage of the "gender bonus" in the solutions to climate change in the country.

152. The evaluation team confirmed the findings of the project's gender studies on the prevalence of gender inequalities in the households of the producers reached. In this context, it observed a phenomenon of reconfigured gender relations and responsibilities due to the greater participation of women in agricultural work, increasing their conventional workload. This phenomenon, which is not attributable to the project, is primarily driven by two economic

[18] The assessment of gender equity and social inclusion was a cross-cutting issue in the evaluation, with specific subquestions and indicators throughout the five evaluation criteria. For example, see 1.1, 1.14, 1.15; 2.1.4, 2.1.5; 3.1.1, 3.2.3, 3.3; 4.1.3, 4.2.2 in Appendix 2.

strategies for the diversification of livelihoods: i) the participation of men in formal and informal non-agricultural work in urban areas; and ii) the migration of young people and men, especially to the United States of America.

153. The evaluation team's field visits also identified practical needs of women producers who attend the farmer field schools with their children, due to their exclusive responsibility for child care. To address these needs, the Gender Action Plan has foreseen the installation of a child care system based on the shared responsibility of the participating women, supported by a mobile day-care kit. Although these measures are positively valued, some community promoters consulted in the focus groups suggested reinforcing them, considering the number of women heads of household participating in the project: 19 000 women, equivalent to 38 percent of the producers.

Finding 19. The project has taken sufficient measures to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants in the implementation of the project activities. However, there remain areas of uncertainty around project parameters and the distribution of project benefits.

154. Under international law as part of the environmental and social safeguards, the project has taken steps to comply with Environmental and Social Standard 9 (NAS 9): Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Heritage and, by extension, Afro-descendants living in the 114 municipalities served. It also aligned with the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (FAO, 2010). The requirements of this standard include the respect for and strengthening of exercising their specific rights, culture and worldview; free, prior and informed consent on development actions in their territory; special relationship with natural assets, by virtue of their centrality in their way of life; use of their ancestral knowledge about natural ecosystems; and access to fair benefits and opportunities (FAO, 2015).

155. In the design and approval phase of the funding proposal, the project fully complied with the following requirements: i) signing a of free, prior and informed consent letter with the National Indigenous Bureau of Natural Resources to define the level of participation in project activities and establish that consent "can be withdrawn in case of non-compliance with the agreements established in this document;" and ii) elaboration of the environmental and social framework for guaranteeing compliance with the respective safeguard (NA6). The latter includes the establishment of a compliance mechanism to address any non-compliance of the participating persons, institutions or organizations. It is worth mentioning that the following Indigenous Peoples have been identified in the project area: Nahua (Pipil), Premayas, Lencas and Kakawiras (FAO-Mesa Nacional Indígena de Recursos Naturales, 2019).

156. The Indigenous Peoples' plan also includes a matrix of activities, among which, the following stand out: i) inclusion of ancestral knowledge in farm plans; ii) inclusion of the milpa system in the FFS curriculum; iii) access to rainwater harvesting systems; and iv) participatory design of a monitoring system for the consent agreement, as part of the implementation of environmental and social safeguards (RECLIMA Project, 2019).

157. Based on these documents, the project has implemented the following actions: i) selection of 9 percent of Indigenous Peoples from the total number of community promoters; ii) inclusion of Indigenous and Afro-descendant producers in the prioritized population; iii) participation in community nurseries; iv) training of 205 community promoters on the identity and rights of Indigenous Peoples; and v) diploma course on management and protection of forest seeds, in coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. In addition, the integration of the ancestral milpa system and Indigenous knowledge on creole seeds in the technical assistance package for producers has been verified.

158. Project coordination maintains a channel of dialogue with Indigenous organizations in the municipalities, such as ASEINKA in Cacaopera and APOKAN in Ahuachapán. Despite the measures taken, the evaluation team noted a lack of clarity of project parameters and areas of tension concerning the level of Indigenous and Afro-descendant participation and access to project benefits. For example, interviewees expressed expectations of higher quotas for community nurseries and number of producers selected. Additionally, the evaluation noted gaps in the empowerment of young Indigenous community promoters and the conceptual connection of the new paradigm with an ancestral Indigenous worldview.

159. The project has also taken measures to include as many young people as possible among both producers and community promoters. The main ones are: i) the selection of young people as 20 percent of producers; and ii) the inclusion of young people as community promoters. These measures are significant given their potential to reduce participation in international migration and increase the possibilities of generational renewal in the sector. In addition, it represents an innovation potential for agricultural practices through the use of digital farmer field school technologies.

3.6 Paradigm shift: sustainability, replication and scalability

Evaluation Question 5: What are the prospects for the project to contribute to the proposed paradigm shift?

Finding 20. Although generally satisfactory, the level of understanding and appropriation of the new paradigm varied across different types of project stakeholders. In particular, producers and local actors demonstrated less understanding of the link between the promoted activities and the intended paradigm change.

160. A high level of understanding and appropriation of a new development paradigm is a fundamental condition for change. In the case of RECLIMA, stakeholders involved in the management and implementation of the three components' activities articulated different levels of understanding and appropriation of the paradigm shift. The project team (coordinator, PMU, territorial technicians) demonstrated a high level of understanding and commitment. They are convinced of the causal power of the interventions (strategies, products, activities) and planned results in making agriculture sustainable and resilient to climate change through the sustainable management of natural ecosystems in the 114 municipalities of the Salvadorean dry corridor.

161. The level of understanding and appropriation among the technical staff of the partner institutions is satisfactory, but some doubts about the causal power of the intervention model to achieve the transformations required by the new paradigm were articulated. In the case of Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA extensionists, there is a clear awareness of the importance of replacing agriculture based on chemical inputs and soil-harming practices with agroecological standards. However, they recognize that this change implies multiple variables and demands a sustained process, which goes beyond the project's lifecycle. In this sense, the adoption of a systemic approach in the theory of change could increase the potential of the project to contribute to the paradigm shift (see Finding 2 and Appendix 5).

162. While the community promoters demonstrated a strong commitment to the project, their level of understanding and appropriation of the new paradigm is still developing. In particular, there is a weak perception of the link between the practices of Components 1 and 2 and the meaning and transformational scope of the new paradigm. In three focus group cases, community promoters were asked to explain what the paradigm shift is all about. Six out of ten promoters limited their explanation to sustainable and resilient agriculture, relying on the slogan of the project shirts they wore at the time of the focus groups.

163. For their part, participating agricultural producers prioritized two benefits in implementing the promoted agroecological practices: i) soil fertilization to produce more and better; and ii) reduced production costs by replacing chemical inputs (fertilizers and pesticides) with organic inputs. Beyond the clear perception of these benefits, they could not visualize a sufficiently solid connection of these practices' other components of a transition to a new paradigm: carbon capture; resilience of production systems; recovery of ecosystem services; and biodiversity conservation in their territories. There is no clear understanding of how each project component can contribute to the proposed paradigm shift.

164. Based on the distinct levels of understanding and appropriation of the new paradigm, project stakeholders perceive that the project has the potential to scale up and replicate results beyond the households and municipalities currently reached. Some models, tools and practices have more potential than others. There is a continued need to strengthen capacities and to address risks and barriers.

Finding 21. Considering the transformative potential of the implemented actions along with the progress observed in the adoption of new practices, the project has real and potential possibilities to contribute to the sustainability, replication and scaling up of the promoted paradigm. To this end, it will be necessary to address challenges in strengthening the ownership and appropriation of the new paradigm, more fully developing capacities, and facilitating cultural change.

165. Given the recent start of field activities (June 2021), it is not yet possible to make a conclusive assessment on the project's sustainability conditions. An initial sustainability assessment was made by analysing three criteria:

i. Appropriation: while variations were found between the three components, the level of appropriation is high across all the partners and actors involved in the activities: national partners; extension agent networks; community promoters; agricultural producers; mayors; and municipal environmental units. In the case of community promoters, the vast majority expressed their satisfaction with the knowledge acquired and conveyed the pride they feel in their work. Most expressed their willingness to continue working as community promoters after their participation in the project ends. For Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants, although they have been consulted and participate in project activities, their ownership and appropriation of activities remains low. This could be linked to their areas of discontent and the still weak link between the new paradigm and their cosmovision and culture. For Component 3, appropriation of activities is somewhat lower among members of local structures, such as water boards and agricultural committees. This is most likely a reflection of the recent start of activities under this component and insufficient information.

ii. Capacity building and cultural change: capacity building efforts are ongoing. Among the most significant advances to date, producers stand out for their progress in learning and adopting new agroecological practices. This has been facilitated by the network of CENTA extensionists-community promoters. To ensure the sustainability of this process, both extensions and community promoters pointed out the importance of having local options for the supply of organic fertilizer components, such as chicken manure and molasses. In addition, they pointed out the insufficiency of community nurseries and local compost bins. Additionally, facilitating a cultural change process to move from one paradigm to another requires time and specialized approaches. In this regard, it is worth recalling the specialized knowledge and tools developed since the 1990s by FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), which include a conceptual

framework for strengthening the management of cultural change by the region's extension services (Prieto Castillo, 1989).

iii. Enabling environment: considering the national partners' and local authorities' level of interest and ownership, it can be inferred the political–institutional environment is conducive for the sustainability of the project results. However, it is necessary to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the partner institutions and achieve the proposed adjustments to the regulatory frameworks established in Component 3. In the case of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, it is necessary to establish a more fluid and transparent coordination, in order to work hand in hand in the definition and/or coordination of feasible activities to be implemented jointly within the framework of the project planning and implementation, avoiding creating expectations that cannot be addressed by the project.

iv. Another barrier or limiting factor within a context of subsistence agriculture, is producers' expectations of immediate economic benefits from the adoption of the promoted practices, both from owner producers and plot tenants. The financial and sociopolitical risks are considered minimal for now, since there is a tacit consensus among political and development actors on the importance of taking measures to adapt the country and the agricultural sector to the effects of climate change. Nevertheless, support for subsistence producers, such as those covered by the project, could be given more or less priority in the future, depending on the political leanings of the national authorities.

166. Based on the above analysis, it can be affirmed that the replication and scaling up of the project intervention model, with some variations in each component, is technically and culturally feasible. In Component 1, the practices with the greatest potential are: i) soil fertilization techniques using organic inputs, especially Bokashi composting; ii) use of crop stubble for water infiltration and moisture retention; and iii) use of rainwater harvesting systems for safe water supply to households and irrigation in plots.

167. The replication potential for Component 1 practices was confirmed by the community promoters consulted during the field visits. In particular, they highlighted the interest of non-project producers in adopting Bokashi production, considering its short-term benefits in soil fertilization and the comparative advantage in terms of prices with respect to other non-organic inputs. It should also be mentioned that the country has made progress over the last 20 years in integrating adaptation measures into support and incentive programmes for agricultural producers, including agroecological practices such as those promoted by the project.

168. The extension model promoted by the project also reflects replication and scaling up possibilities in other areas of the country. The CENTA technicians consulted during field visits pointed out the ability to reach more producers through the collaborative network established with community promoters. In addition, this potential could increase by strengthening digital components in extension practices. However, they stressed the challenge of continuing to provide an economic incentive to community promoters. Options currently being explored include the provision of non-economic incentives or the incorporation of community promoters into other projects.

169. The process of implementing the activities of Components 2 and 3 is still in the early stages. Notwithstanding, local actors clearly recognize the relevance of the activities envisaged for the recovery of ecosystem services. In particular, the reforestation of water recharge areas and riverbanks, as well as the strengthening of local structures for the management of socioenvironmental governance.

170. In support of the replication and scaling up processes identified in the previous paragraphs, it should be noted that the project has developed an exit strategy or sustainability, scaling up and replication strategy. This is activity C1.3, strengthened capacities for sustainability and scaling up of adaptation strategies. Considering the level of programming progress, this activity had not yet been implemented by the time the field phase of the evaluation was completed.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Quality of design

Conclusion 1. Project activities and results remain consistent with the priorities and needs of the country and partner institutions to strengthen the resilience of agricultural production systems and community livelihoods to the effects of climate change.

Conclusion 2. The project's theory of change describes how it aims to contribute to the new paradigm. Its interventions are theoretically well grounded in studies and analyses of the socioenvironmental reality of the affected population. However, there are clear systemic limits for addressing the multi-causal complexity of the vulnerability of rural families and communities.

Conclusion 3. A large portion of RECLIMA's target population do not have the means to invest in the adaptive capacity and resilience of their livelihoods. The project presents them with valuable opportunities in this regard. However, subsistence farmers face significant pressures to satisfy their most immediate short-term needs (income generation) owing to their critical poverty levels. This may create obstacles to appropriating actions, linked to the desired paradigm shift, that may only yield benefits in the mid to long-term.

Conclusion 4. The selection of project beneficiaries and intervention sites was rigorous and consistent with GCF and FAO standards. The project design's definition and delineation of the dry corridor in El Salvador is currently the main reference used at country level. Attention to disaggregating data by sex, age and ethnicity made it possible to prioritize groups in vulnerable conditions, and to integrate participation quotas in the selection criteria that include women heads of household, youth and Indigenous Peoples.

Conclusion 5. The project seeks to improve the adaptive capacity and resilience of the beneficiary population, and to contribute to El Salvador's nationally determined contributions through mitigation and adaptation actions. However, the project does not have a monitoring and follow-up plan for forest restoration actions that would allow follow-up and reporting of emission reductions and increased flow of environmental services results. Likewise, the country does not yet have a measurement, reporting and verification system, so it is not clear what mechanism will be used to record and report realized greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Level and quality of implementation

Conclusion 6. The project faced a series of challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing mobility restrictions and biosecurity measures, extreme weather events, procurement delays, and the instability of global supply chains that led to delays in project implementation, especially at the field level.

Conclusion 7. The project established coordination and collaboration networks with national partners and stakeholders in the target municipalities. In the case of the governance bodies, there is acceptable functioning, backed by efficient support from the FAO Representation in El Salvador and the PMU. Strengthening communication and coordination with national partners could improve awareness of the project's management and progress, facilitate a more active participation in decision-making, and better align areas of technical cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

Conclusion 8. There is a high alignment of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategic priorities across cooperation agencies operating in El Salvador, including the European Union and other United Nations agencies. With the support of the FAO Representation in El Salvador, the project has managed collaborative initiatives with some cooperation agencies and academic centres. There are opportunities

to further enhance collaborations in areas of complementary actions that could address the needs and expectations of producers that are not being met because they fall outside the scope of RECLIMA.

Conclusion 9. The FAO Representation in El Salvador and PMU faced a series of significant challenges in managing procurement processes and supply chain logistics. In some cases this led to unintended impacts. Many of these issues have been resolved with relative success and are not expected to pose challenges in the second phase of the project.

Conclusion 10. The three national partners (the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and FIAES) have fully complied with their co-financing commitments in alignment with project activities. However, there is an imbalance in the execution levels of national co-financing and GCF disbursements. This is because institutions reported operating expenses (such as payment of personnel) during the pandemic, while the project was unable to make investments related to the planned activities and results, due to restrictions on mobility and face-to-face interaction.

Progress towards results

Conclusion 11. The project team and implementing partners have made an enormous effort to reach planned mid-term targets. The results obtained as of December 2022 correspond to only 17 months of effective work in the field. Considering the positive changes observed to date, it is possible to affirm that the project activities are contributing to the expected results. More time is needed to achieve results and consolidate the appropriation of new practices.

Conclusion 12. The project has positioned itself as a reference in both technical and political issues related to the country's climate commitments by supporting the nationally determined contributions, which is reflected in the leadership exercised in the secretariat of the AFOLU national technical commission.

Conclusion 13. Given the recent start of activities, capacity development across implementation actors is not yet sufficient to ensure the achievement of results and contribute effectively to the paradigm shift. Based on the FAO model, more work is needed at the institutional level. At the level of enabling environment, the process of adapting the political-normative framework for compliance with global environmental and climate change commitments is advancing slowly.

Information and knowledge management system

Conclusion 14. The project's monitoring and information system is being used to make timely decisions. There are opportunities to more efficiently and effectively manage increasingly large volumes of data, include specific monitoring and follow-up plans for forest restoration actions, and make relevant information, including good practices, more readily available to different audiences.

Gender approach and social inclusion

Conclusion 15. In compliance with GCF and FAO social and environmental standards, the project has taken effective measures to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of project activities. Significant advances include the effective use of affirmative criteria in the selection of producers and community promoters, as well as the capacity building of the main implementing actors. In addition, as a phenomenon unrelated to the project, the evaluation identified an increase in the workload of women given their greater participation in agricultural work. This is driven by the need for rural families to diversify livelihoods leading to greater participation of men in informal urban labour and youth migration to the United States of America.

Conclusion 16. As part of the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, the project has taken appropriate measures for the participation of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants in its activities. This includes signing a letter of consent with the National Indigenous Natural Resources Roundtable, in which the country's main Indigenous organizations participate. The agreements established are in the

process of being implemented, but the evaluation team noted areas of discontent regarding the allocation of project benefits, which could potentially lead to the risk of withdrawal of the consent granted.

Conclusion 17. The project has taken effective measures for the participation of youth in the implementation of its first phase of activities, including Indigenous youth. These measures have allowed their inclusion as producers and community promoters in the different municipalities and present opportunities for innovation in agroecological practices, including the use of digital tools.

Paradigm shift: sustainability, replication and scalability

Conclusion 18. There are varying levels of understanding and appropriation of the new paradigm promoted by the project. There is a high level of understanding and appropriation in the coordination team and the management and technical staff of the partner institutions. Producers and community promoters show a limited understanding of the significant link between the implemented practices and the desired paradigm shift.

Conclusion 19. The conditions for sustainability, scaling and replicability in support of the desired paradigm shift are not yet optimal. Key challenges remain to strengthen capacities, especially with respect to the management of cultural change and the reinforcement of the systemic approach to the theory of change.

4.2 Recommendations

FAO Representation in El Salvador and FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment

Recommendation 1. Request the GCF to extend the project cycle for two additional years, from 17 July 2024 to 16 July 2026. Additional time is needed to implement planned activities, consolidate the process of ownership and sustainability of the new practices promoted, and ensure the achievement of the project results. The determination of two additional years is based on stakeholder consultations and the evaluation team's analysis of the impact of external events on the original schedule, the current pace of implementation and the current level of progress towards the targets. The requested extension is considered sufficient for the full implementation of field activities, the execution of the total GCF financial resources and the achievement of the planned targets.

FAO Representation in El Salvador

Recommendation 2. Consider adjusting the project's theory of change, taking into account as inputs the conceptual model and the corresponding theory of change proposal (Appendix 5).

Recommendation 3. Improve communication, coordination and collaboration processes with national partners, both bilaterally and within the project's governance structures. In the specific case of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, it is suggested that a bilateral technical roundtable be set up to address the critical points identified by the evaluation and adopt measures to strengthen joint work on strategic issues aligned with the project's results framework and the country's needs.

A priority issue, both for the country and for the project, identified during the evaluation, is the need to work together with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to identify water recharge areas, with secondary forest cover, intervened forest or in different stages of natural succession, where the project can develop a combination of vegetation protection activities, and natural and assisted regeneration, to contribute to the achievement of planned targets.

Recommendation 4. Enhance collaboration opportunities and synergies with other cooperation agencies in targeted municipalities with the objective of linking participating producers with existing social and economic inclusion initiatives that address immediate livelihoods needs that fall outside the project's scope and that reinforce the adoption of the promoted agroecological practices.

Recommendation 5. Accelerate the implementation of Component 3 as a way of promoting the adoption of a political-normative framework for compliance with global environmental and climate change commitments. Component 3 seeks to improve governance and information flow in support of project sustainability and scalability, by strengthening local planning, governance and coordination in support of adaptation and restoration; adjusting regulatory, policy, planning and incentive instruments in support of proposed adaptation and mitigation measures; and strengthening capacities for information management in support of adaptation planning and scaling up.

Recommendation 6. Strengthen capacity building processes for project implementation stakeholders, considering the FAO approach, in the following priority areas: i) individual: FAO methodologies and tools on educational communication for development; ii) institutional: digital transition of extension services; and iii) enabling environment: updating of institutional strategic plans to enhance their contribution to the paradigm shift.

Recommendation 7. For RECLIMA's M&E system, consider automating the production of online data through the use of a computer platform or available software, in order to facilitate the reporting, processing and dissemination of relevant information.

Recommendation 8. Develop a monitoring and follow-up plan for forest restoration actions that will provide information on the location of planted areas, the owner, the surface area, and other data such as planting density, species used, silvicultural arrangements, and the percentage of mortality and replanting. This plan will be integrated as part of the actions of Component 2. It is suggested that the local organizations that will be implementing the forest restoration actions be responsible for collecting the information in the areas they restore and transfer it to the project every three or four months. The project will then be responsible for integrating the data into a subsystem for monitoring and follow-up of the restored areas, which will be part of the project's M&E system. This recommendation can be implemented within three months. The project, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and FIAES, may carry out additional monitoring by visiting one or two randomly selected restored sites every two or three months to verify the data reported by local organizations.

Recommendation 9. Consider the design and implementation of a tool for observation, analysis and documentation of the changes in the reconfiguration of the family economy of the selected producers and their impact on women's workload, with the aim of identifying appropriate measures to reinforce those included in the Gender Action Plan.

Recommendation 10. Consider the establishment of a national and territorial dialogue table with Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations to address their disagreements (if any), and position the project's parameters and contributions and reinforce the appropriation of the new paradigm by making visible the conceptual links with the ancestral Indigenous worldview and culture.

Recommendation 11. Strengthen the application of FAO's theoretical and methodological approaches for development communication to build specialized skills in the cultural management of a paradigm change at all levels – especially among CENTA technicians, community promoters and local organizations contracted for the second phase.

Partner institutions

Recommendation 12. Within the framework of the AFOLU technical commission, analyse the possibility of using a methodology, linked to international standards, for quantifying the reduction of GHG emissions in the activities of Components 1 and 2. This way, they can be accounted for and registered in the measurement, reporting and verification system, or another system that the country defines, and reported as part of the climate commitments set out in the NDC.

5. Key learnings

171. Based on current theoretical approaches, the evaluation team adopted the following definition of learning: new ways of seeing, understanding and doing, as incorporated or reflected by the people and institutions that make up the learning community of the RECLIMA project (Maturana, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2014). Considering the pedagogical dimension of a mid-term evaluation, the present evaluation has transversally incorporated the identification of learning as part of the analysis criteria in the evaluation matrix (see subquestions 2.1, 3.3, 4.2 and 4.3). The inputs for the identification and conceptualization of learning were obtained through the data collection methods used by the evaluation: interviews, observation visits and focus groups. In addition, the evaluation team provided spaces for reflective analysis during field visits and work meetings. Based on this, the following are the main lessons identified that could have the potential to nurture the project's learning community.

Learning 1. An increasingly complex global context, as noted in the latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, along with changes in the national political-institutional contexts, increasingly demand the adoption of adaptive planning and programming models. In the experience of the RECLIMA, the application of this learning is essential to maintain its relevance and reinforce the effectiveness of its theory of change for the achievement of planned results. For this reason, based on the analysis of the evidence collected (see Findings 8 and 9), it has been recommended that at least the following adaptations be made: extension of the project duration and integration of improvements in the theory of change.

Learning 2. As documented in Finding 9, the process led by the FAO Representation in El Salvador to increase the delegated authority level for expenditure approvals for the RECLIMA project shows a successful case of adaptive management, with the potential to strengthen FAO's institutional learning in relation to the implementation of large projects, both in the region and globally.

Learning 3. Compliance with the environmental and social safeguards requirements of the RECLIMA project and any other GCF project requires the adoption of a project lifecycle approach, including at different phases: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Observations reported in Findings 18 and 19 demonstrate the importance of adopting a flexible stance, being open to learning and opportunities for improvement to the instruments developed in the design phase.

Learning 4. Although the effectiveness of the carbon sequestration practices in achieving results are scientifically well supported, their implementation is not sufficient to achieve a paradigm shift in the agricultural production model and the socioenvironmental management model of natural ecosystems. This requires considering and addressing the level of multivariable complexity involved in such a cultural change, as suggested in the conceptual model of the problem developed by the evaluation team (see Finding 2).

Learning 5. Due to their own reactive dynamics to the changing environmental conditions, subsistence farming economies present constant adaptive changes, often involving changes in gender relations. This can represent opportunities for equality or accentuate existing exclusion gaps. Careful observation of these changes, as noted in Finding 18, is a key learning that can contribute to strengthening the project's gender equality approach.

Learning 6. By virtue of the centrality of their spirituality, worldview and culture, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants in Latin America have been able to manage natural ecosystems in ways that ensure their ecosystem benefits for present and future generations. Due to the poverty and livelihood deprivation they have experienced over the years, as well as implicit and explicit policies of discrimination, this connection has been eroded, to the point that it is invisible to new generations. In a sustainable development project such as RECLIMA, located in Indigenous and Afro-descendant territory, there is an

opportunity to establish a significant connection between the paradigm shift promoted by the project and the ancestral way these peoples relate to the land and other natural ecosystems, which technically also constitutes a socioenvironmental paradigm.

Learning 7. The digitalization of social and productive relations is an irreversible process, driven by the IV Industrial Revolution. Despite the existing gaps due to unresolved social lags, it is imperative to transition towards digitalization in agricultural extension systems, taking into account gender, age and ethnic gaps, as an emerging learning process. The project supports this process of innovation in CENTA's extension service. Further opportunities for digital transition are observed among the participating young community promoters.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

Last name	First name	Category/role
	GCF	
Celebi	Nuray	Portfolio Management Specialist, Division of Portfolio Management
	FAO	
Recalde	Diego	FAO Representative of El Salvador
González	Emilia	Assistant FAO Representative of El Salvador
Mercedes Proano	María	Policy Officer, FAO RLC
Rodríguez	Kairusam	Environmental and Climate Finance Unit Specialist, FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
Carrazón	Julián	Lead Technical Officer, FAO Regional Office for Mesoamerica
Hinojosa Ramos	Sergio	GCF Funding Liaison Officer, OCB
Thiel	Hans	Senior Investment Support Officer, FAO Investment Centre
	National partners	
Ventura	Edwar	Adviser to the Ministerial Office, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Colorado Panameño	Eva María	Director of International Cooperation and Climate Change, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Giovanni Molina		Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources-DOA Manager
Rodríguez	Claudia Joana	DEB Technician, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Biaza Avelar	Vladimir	DEB Technician, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
García	Douglas E.	Monitoring and Control of Residual Waters Manager, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Ayala	Pablo Ernesto	DOA Meteorology Manager, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Laguardia	Jessica M.	Head of UCC, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Castro	Kathy	DGI Environmental Management Manager, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Reyes	Edgardo	CENTA Executive Director
Cabrera	José	Office of Planning and Sectoral Policies (OPPS), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Alarcón	Mario Antonio	Head of Planning Unit, CENTA
Torres	Francisco A.	Head of Transfer Unit, CENTA
Rodríguez	Ericka	El Salvador Agency for International Cooperation (ESCO)
Cornejo	Miriam	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Martínez	Evelia	Climate Change Unit, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Barrera	Yolanda	Monitoring and Systematization Technician, FIAES
Pacas	Mariano Alfonso	Technical Manager, FIAES
Pérez	Carlos	Financial Manager, FIAES

Last name	First name	Category/role
Project team		
Peñate	Mariano	Project Coordinator
Cardona de Barahona	Alma	Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist
Martínez	Cecilia	Territorial Technical Unit Subcoordinator (Eastern Region)
Mejía	Karen Michelle	Organization, Gender and Indigenous Peoples Specialist
Lemus	Marcela	Resilient Agriculture Specialist
Cárcamo	Raúl	Agroecosystems and Water Specialist
García	Josué	Monitoring and Evaluation System
Rivas Vega	Oscar	Food and Nutrition Security Specialist
Martínez	Víctor	Finance Specialist
Alvarenga	Vanesa	Eastern Region technician
Espinoza	Víctor	Eastern Region technician
Escobar	Iris	Eastern Region technician
Rivas	Zandra	Eastern Region technician
Ayala	Juan José	Eastern Region technician
Vásquez	Emmanuel	Eastern Region technician
Rivera	Rodolfo	Eastern Region technician
Bonilla	Eduardo	Eastern Region technician
Arriola	Omar	Eastern Region technician
Torres	Guadalupe	Eastern Region technician
Domínguez	Carlos	Territorial Technical Unit Subcoordinator (Western Region)
Other partners in the sector		
Gestenberg	Birgit	UN Resident Coordinator in El Salvador
Otamendi	Natalia	International Cooperation Officer, EU Delegation in El Salvador
Pleitez	Rafael	Assistant Resident Representative and Chief Economist, UNDP El Salvador
Ávila	Ryna	Sustainable Development and Resilience Programme Officer, UNDP El Salvador
Community promoters/producers		
Mercedes Umaña municipality		
Turcios	Ana Leticia	
Argueta	Maria Delia	
González	Heydee Rosmelida	
Coreas	Mirna Nohemy	
Cortéz	Juan Francisco	
Villalta	Roberto Carlos	
Díaz Cruz	Jesús Alberto	
González	Susana	
Cortéz	Ena Erlinda	
Caballeros	Wilfredo	
Guadalupe Salazar	Reyna	
Reynaldo Díaz	José	
Chopín Meléndez	Roberto	
Yoritza Quiroz	Ana	
Concepción Batres municipality		
Martínez	Sulema	
González	Alma Yusiris	
Guevara	Rosa Yasmina	
Díaz Díaz	Martiza Nohemy	
Nochez	José Roberto	
Sarai Rivera	Norma	
de Jesús Márquez	Manuel	

Last name	First name	Category/role
Miguel		
Hernández	Felipe Antonio	
Martínez	Gertrudis	
Ramírez Vanegas	Isaías	
Municipio El Carmen		
Pérez	Sonia	
Velásquez	Jaime	
López	Ricardo	
Luis Cruz	José	
Castro	Ingmar	
Lemus	Inés	
Rivera	José Pablo	
Andrade	José Juan	
Adalberto Coreas	Balmore	
Heriberto López	Francisco	
Odín Beyona	Melvin	
Santos Castro	Juan	
Edgardo Álvarez	Abel	
San Francisco Javier municipality		
Alejandra Guzmán	Jhosselyn	
Oscar Carranza	José	
Damari Sigüenza	Dilcia	
Larín Mejía	Sandra Idaira	
Pineda Oliva	Catarina Armida	
Alvarado	Ana Ruth	
Rivera	Esequiel Fausto	
Yanes	Elmer Alexander	
Lemús	Douglas Eliseo	
Samayoa	Julio César	
Tacuba municipality		
Avinoan España	Martín	
Aguilera	José Miguel	
Liset de la Cruz	Claudia	
Aguilar	José Manuel	
Salazar	Moris Alexis	
Plutarco	Pedro	President and community promoter. Canton La Paliadura, Tacuba
Atiquizaya municipality		
del Carmen Perdomo	Blanca	
Marisol Flores	Julia	
Alonso Figueroa	Luis	
Isaac Estrada	Franklin	
Cerón González	Erick Mauricio	
Muñoz	Juan Francisco	
Ahuachapán municipality		
Elida Sierra	Blanca	
del Carmen Morales	Elsa	
Esthenie Palacios	Edith	
Hernández	Guillermina	
Elena Estrada	Blanca	
Perdomo Cabezas	Angelina	
Stephanie Rincón	Gloria	
Lilian Esquivel	Blanca	
Arévalo	Vilma Elena	
Ena Hernández	Blanca	
Galicia	María Corina	
Estela Pimentel	Blanca	

Last name	First name	Category/role
Mercedes Magaña	Nidia	
Margarita Onofre	Nelly	
Jamilet	Karina	
Yudith	Yolanda	
Ernesto Cuenca	Mauricio	
Bonilla	Reynaldo	
Natalia Perdomo	Erika	
Pimentel	Dalila esperanza	
Velásquez	María Esperanza	
Marroquín	Imelda Noemy	
Lizeth Esquivel	Evelin	
Beatriz	Lorena	
Consuelo	Ana	
Ciudad Barrios municipality		
Denis		Community promoter, Ciudad Barrios
Vladimir		Community promoter, Ciudad Barrios
Manueles	Luis Francisco	
de la Paz Ayala	Milagro	
Heriberto Molina	José	
Castellón	R.A. García	
Bonilla	Jorge	
Prudencio	Gustavo	
Fredy Calix	José	
Orlando Palacios	José	
Castillo	Brenda Carolina	
Mauricio López	José	Community promoter
Amaya López	Edwin Misael	Community promoter
Herrara	Gerardo	Community promoter
CENTA Technicians		
Quintanilla	Rosa María	Mercedes Umaña municipality technician
Martínez	Wilmer	Mercedes Umaña municipality technician
Zelaya	Víctor	Mercedes Umaña municipality technician
Gómez González	Helber	Agency Coordinator, Sensori Municipality
Francisco	Nelsón	Ciudad Barrios municipality technician
Aguilar	Carlos	San Francisco Javier municipality technician
Galicia	Gabriel	Atiquizaya municipality technician
Armando Gómez	Manuel	Atiquizaya municipality technician
Mejía	Martín	Head of the Agencia Concepción Batres, Usulután
Chávez	Tatiana	Concepción Batres technician, Usulután
Crisóstomo Soto	Juan	Agencia La Cañada technician, La Unión
Portillo Miranda	Edgar René	Agencia La Cañada technician, La Unión
Herrera	Gilberto	Head of the Agencia Ahuachapán
Calderón	Ana Cecilia	Ahuachapán extensionist technician
de Jesús Núñez	Manuel	
Contrepares	Fernando	Coordinator, San Pedro Masahuat
Mayors and technicians from Municipal Environmental Units (UMA)		
Ciudad Barrios		
Hernández Ortiz	Alexis	Water board
Liliana Álvarez	Cliria	Chapeltique Unidad Ambiental Chapeltique
Arias	Fátima	Ciudad Barrios municipality
Rivera Contreras	Alexis	San Luis de La Reina municipality
Portillo Guzmán	Rafael	Sesori municipality
Netanael Ramos	Erick	Environmental Unit, Carolina municipality
Vladimir Díaz	William	Environmental Unit, San Simón municipality

Last name	First name	Category/role
Osorio	Rubenia Isabel	Ciudad Barrios municipality
Fredy Rivera	José	Environmental Unit
Roberto Batres	Jesús	UMA technician, Mercedes Umaña
Nolasco	Ismael	Mayor of Carolina municipality
Atilio Pineda	José	Mayor of Chapeltipeque municipality
Francisco Soto	Santos	Mayor of San Simón municipality
Osmín Martínez	José	Mayor of Vía San Antonio municipality
Serrano	Rutilio	Mayor of Sensori municipality
Arias	Fátima	Mayor of Ciudada Barrios municipality
Alfredo Portillo	Carlos	Mayor of San Luis de la Reina municipality
Acosta	José	Mayor of Ciudad Barrios municipality
Carlos Arías	Roberto	Councillor of Atiquizaya Mayor's office
Agricultural and livestock committees and other local governance structures		
Estela Ruíz	Juana	Mayor of San Francisco Javier municipality
del Carmen Palacios	Juan	Member of the Agricultural and Livestock Committee, San Francisco Javier
Noé Orellana	José	San Francisco Javier municipality
Rodríguez	Juan	Member of the Agricultural and Livestock Committee, San Francisco Javier
Manuel Grijalva	José	Agricultural technician Atiquizaya Mayor's Office
Gálvez Chávez	Walter Enrique	Environmental Sanitation Inspector, MINSAL, Atiquizaya municipality
Rodríguez Zaldaña	Fanny Patricia	Food specialist, SIBASI MINSAL, Atiquizaya municipality
Estes Zaldaña	Mario	Agricultural and Livestock Committee, Tacuba municipality
Alfredo Salazar	Jesús	Agricultural and Livestock Committee, Tacuba municipality
Herrera Ruiz	José Julio	Agricultural and Livestock Committee, Tacuba municipality
Rivera DeLeón	Santana	Environmental Unit Technician
Lipson Romero	José	Head of Citizen Participation and Sanitation Unit, Jucuarán municipality
Lizama Leiva	René	Technical Manager, ASIBAHIA
Dionisio Portillo	Fausto	Agricultural and Livestock Unit and Mayor-in-charge, Chirilagua municipality
Medrano de Andrade	Lorena	Head of the Environmental Unit, Concepción Batres
María Rivera	Ana	Municipal Women's Unit, Ereguayquin municipality
Alfaro	Secundino	Manager, Ereguayquin Mayor's Office
López	Gabriel	AM Concepción Batres
Portillo	Eliodoro	Chirilagua municipality
José River	Juan	Environmental Unit technician, Alcaldía Jucuarán
Rivas	Alejandro	Environmental Unit, San Pedro Masahuat
Rodas	Santos	Environmental Unit, San Pedro Masahuat
Baudilio García	Oscar	Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit
Hernandez	Felipe	Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit
Ramos Torrez	Leonardo	Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit
Marcela Pineda	Yuri	Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit

Last name	First name	Category/role
Leticia Ramos	Aida	Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit
Angel S.	Miguel	CENTA, Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit
Sandoval	Ignacio	CENTA, Guaymango, Agricultural and Livestock Unit
Pérez	Bety	Coordinator of the Consejo Coordinador Nacional Indígena Salvadoreño (CCNIS)
Amadeo Martínez	Jesús	Senior Adviser of CCNIS
Pérez	Néstor	CCNIS
Guzmán	Carlos	CCNIS Representative in Atiquizaya municipality
Pablo Díaz	Pedro	Representative of the Indigenous Community Development Association, Tacuba municipality
Amanda Zuñiga	Lubia	Representative of the Indigenous Community Development Association, Tacuba municipality.
Marroquín Barrientos	Yaninera	APOKAN Representative
Cabrera	Yohalmo	APOKAN President
Carlos Marroquín	Roberto	APOKAN scholarship student
Güinea	José	APOKAN scholarship student
Amílcar Ruíz	Carlos	APOKAN Activities Coordinator
Pérez de Hernández	María Josefina	ASEINKA
Del Carmen Pérez de Morales	Cecilia	ACASAPAV
Pablo González	Juan	ASEINKA
Fidel Claros	María	ASEINKA
Ortiz Ch.,	Prudencio	ASECONEPP
Luna Pérez	José Santos	
Martínez Pérez	Modesto	UAM – Cacaopera
Ortiz	Virginia	ASEINKA
Valaperez	Paula	
Perez M.	V.	ASEINKA
Domilio Amaya	Josué	Manorsam Youth Network
Vigil Hernandez	Elici	Manorsam Youth Network
Alfredo Rodriguez	Wilber	Manorsam Youth Network
Haydali Portillo	Sulema	Manorsam Youth Network
Del Carmen Moreno	Lorena	Manorsam Youth Network
Elizabeth Díaz	Yessica	Manorsam Youth Network
Vasquez G.	Jakeline Takana	Manorsam Youth Network
Magdalena Vasquez	Marla	Manorsam Youth Network
Dirye M.	Juan	Manorsam Youth Network
de Jesús Ortiz	Elder	Manorsam Youth Network
Arturo Sosa	José	Manorsam Youth Network
Rubia Martínez	Ana	Manorsam Youth Network
del Carmen Portillo	María	Manorsam Youth Network
Bladimi Herman	José	Manorsam Youth Network
Ingris Aguilar	Rosa	Manorsam Youth Network
Raquel Rivera	Vanesa	Manorsam Youth Network
Calero Ventura	Ruth Saray	Manorsam Youth Network
Rivera Reyes	Mario Alonso	Manorsam Youth Network

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

Criteria, questions and subquestions	Observation and analysis guidelines	Data collection methods
Design quality (relevance)		
1. To what extent does the project design address the causal factors of the prioritized problem and respond to the needs and priorities of the various stakeholders, namely the GCF and FAO, national institutions and beneficiaries?		
1.1 To what extent do the activities and outcomes address the current needs of the beneficiary populations (women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants)?	1.1.1 Perceptions of beneficiary populations (women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants) on the extent to which activities respond to their current needs for improving the resilience of production systems and access to water for home and productive consumption. 1.1.2 Extent to which expected activities and results address and provide solutions to the critical causes of vulnerabilities of production systems and the livelihoods of families and local communities to the effects of climate change. 1.1.3 Extent to which activities and expected results address and provide solutions to the critical causes of landscape ecosystem degradation in prioritized municipalities. 1.1.4 Integration level of gender, youth and Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants' considerations into the project design, including the allocation of financial resources so that they can benefit from project interventions. 1.1.5 Methodology used and how it was applied to calculate estimated direct and indirect beneficiary populations (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants) and prioritized municipalities.	Review and analysis of documents: financing proposal; strategy for selecting municipalities and project beneficiaries; environmental and social framework; gender action plan; Indigenous Peoples consultation document; RECLIMA Indigenous Peoples participation plan and framework; baseline study; and feasibility study. Analysis on the country and sector context. Semi-structured interviews: local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; technicians from municipal environmental units; and local organizations. Focus groups: promoters and producers (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants).
1.2 To what extent do activities and expected results remain consistent with the GCF and FAO strategic framework and country priorities at the national and local levels?	1.2.1 Level of alignment of activities and expected results with the existing GCF and FAO strategic framework. 1.2.2 Extent to which expected activities and results address and provide solutions to the critical causes of weakness among key institutions and local governments regarding the country's adaptation and mitigation priorities and challenges, including the resilience of agricultural producers and local communities.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; annual performance reports; FAO CPF; FAO El Salvador strategic framework; GCF strategic framework, diagnosis of institutional strengthening needs. Country and sectoral context analysis: policies; laws; and institutional plans. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; FAO headquarters; representative of the designated national authority before the GCF; authorities from CENTA, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, FIAES; agriculture and environment committees; and municipalities.
1.3 How is the causal logic contained in the theory of change and the logical framework coherent and reflective of how planned outcomes and the proposed paradigm shift are expected to be achieved?	1.3.1 Extent to which causal logic is coherent and logically presents paths to the intended changes. 1.3.2 Extent to which barriers, risks and assumptions reflect the current context of the project	Theory of change update and validation workshop: PMU; CENTA authorities; the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; FIAES; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Document review and analysis: funding proposal; and logical framework.

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

Criteria, questions and subquestions	Observation and analysis guidelines	Data collection methods
		Semi-structured interviews: local technicians; promoters; and producers.
1.4 How do activities and expected results contribute to national commitments on forest restoration and climate change?	1.4.1 Forms and extent to which the information generated by the project is linked to the NDCs and other national reporting systems related to the country's international commitments. 1.4.2 Ways and extent to which the expected results contribute to the country's climate commitments. 1.4.3 Extent to which the design responds to supporting the needs of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in order to meet the goals of the National Climate Change Strategy and the NDCs.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; annual performance reports; and analysis of policy and planning frameworks related to climate change. Country and sectoral context analysis: policies; laws and institutional plans; NDCs of El Salvador; the National Ecosystem and Landscape Restoration Programme. Semi-structured interviews: authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, FIAES, AFOLU committee and PMU specialists.
1.5 In relation to Component 2, how was the GHG emissions reduction calculated in the design phase of the project? Have measurements and reports of GHG emissions reduction been made during implementation?	1.5.1 Methodology used in the design phase to calculate the GHG emissions reduction from the proposed activities. 1.5.2 Methodology used in the implementation phase to calculate the reduction of GHG emissions from the activities implemented. 1.5.3 Contribution of the project's GHG emissions reduction to the country's climate commitments. 1.5.4 Monitoring protocols and the MRV system.	Document review and analysis: M&E system; logical framework; and tracking tools. Semi-structured interviews: M&E specialists from the PMU; focal points and specialists from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and FIAES.
Level and quality of implementation (efficiency)		
2. To what extent has the project managed to deliver on the implementation of activities and delivery of expected outputs in the mid-term?		
2.1 What is the execution level of activities, product delivery and implementation quality, as expected in the mid-term?	2.1.1 Number and percent of funds disbursed compared to plan and mid-term objective. 2.1.2 Level of activities implemented and products developed compared to the mid-term objective. 2.1.3 Level and quality of participation and institutional support of partners and stakeholders in the development of activities and products. 2.1.4 Level and quality of participation and degree of appropriation of the beneficiaries (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants) of the activities developed (practices, agricultural packages). 2.1.5 Extent to which activities and outputs are gender-sensitive and responsive to the diverse needs of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants. 2.1.6 Analysis on the feasibility of finalizing the proposed activities within the given budget and project timelines. 2.1.7 Identification of good practices and lessons learned. 2.1.8 Internal and external factors that have positively or negatively influenced project implementation.	Review and analysis of documents: financing proposal; input report; annual performance reports; implementation manual; annual work plans; environmental and social framework; gender action plan; and the Indigenous Peoples participation plan and framework. Analysis of financial and performance data. Semi-structured interviews: PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; and municipalities. Focus groups: promoters and producers (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants)
2.2 To what extent and in what way have the counterparts delivered the	2.2.1 Percent of co-financing committed compared to the mid-term objective. 2.2.2 Type and quality of co-financing contributions compared to what has been planned.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; annual performance reports; and co-financing letters Financial data analysis

Criteria, questions and subquestions	Observation and analysis guidelines	Data collection methods
committed co-financing, and how has this affected project implementation?	2.2.3 Capacity level of partner institutions in the implementation of co-financing activities. 2.2.4 Extent to which the level of compliance with co-financing has contributed to or limited the achievement of results.	Semi-structured interviews: authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and FIAES; the AFOLU committee; PMU specialists.
2.3 Have the project board, the executive steering committee and the territorial steering committee met as scheduled and made decisions that are necessary for project implementation, according to their competencies?	2.3.1 Number and type of meetings held versus planned. 2.3.2 Level and quality of partner institutions' participation in meetings, including role ownership and decision-making. 2.3.3 Extent to which gender considerations are incorporated into governance and decision-making processes. 2.3.4 Perceptions on the effectiveness of governance and coordination mechanisms to support efficient and effective project implementation.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; annual performance reports; meeting notes and decision logs. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES.
2.4 Has the FAO team provided the required oversight, guidance and support (technical, administrative, financial), within the expected time frame?	2.4.1 Extent that management arrangements, functions and responsibilities are appropriate, efficient and clear (at FAO El Salvador, the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, the FAO Subregional Office for Latin America and FAO headquarters). 2.4.2 Perceptions on the level and quality of support provided against time, cost and quality expectations. 2.4.3 Existence of bottlenecks in management processes (technical, administrative, financial). 2.4.4 Adaptation level of the quantity and profiles of technical and operational personnel to project management needs,	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; implementation manual; and the FAO GCF accreditation framework agreement. Process mapping (technical, administrative, financial). Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; FAO Subregional Office for Latin America; and FAO headquarters.
2.5 To what extent has the project leveraged and is leveraging agreements, initiatives and complementarities with other climate finance projects and initiatives to maximize synergies and avoid duplicating activities?	2.5.1 Extent to which the project has complemented other ongoing initiatives at the local level (by stakeholders, donors and governments) in climate change adaptation or mitigation efforts. 2.5.2 Extent to which the project is coherent and complements other actors for other local climate change interventions	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; annual performance reports; and co-financing letters. Mapping climate finance initiatives. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; other donors; international organizations; community service offices; and non-governmental organizations.
Progress towards achieving results (effectiveness)		
3. To what extent do the developed activities and products contribute to the expected results?		
3.1 How are activities and outputs contributing to the achievement of the expected results, and what has been the level of compliance with the indicators? ▪ Component 1: To what extent have family farmers improved the resilience of livelihoods and production systems as a result of project activities? ▪ Component 2: To what extent has the resilience of environmental	3.1.1 Form and extent to which activities are contributing to the expected results. 3.1.2 Barriers, assumptions and risks that may affect or limit the achievement of the expected results. 3.1.3 Perceptions of beneficiary populations (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants), partners and other stakeholders on the extent that project activities contribute to improving the resilience of production systems, access to water for home and productive consumption and the restoration of ecosystems. 3.1.4 Internal and external factors that have positively or negatively influenced the achievement of the expected results.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal;, logical framework; annual performance reports; monthly progress reports; environmental and social framework; gender action plan; and the Indigenous Peoples participation plan and framework. Review and analysis of documents: financing proposal; input report; annual performance reports; and implementation manual. Theory of change workshop. Analysis of financial and performance data. Semi-structured interviews: PMU, authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

Criteria, questions and subquestions	Observation and analysis guidelines	Data collection methods
service flows at the landscape level increased? ▪ Component 3: To what extent have governance and information flow improved in support of the sustainability and scalability of the project?	3.1.5 Feasibility analysis on achieving the expected results within the given project deadlines. 3.1.6 Evidence that results have been achieved as expected in the mid-term (logical framework indicators).	CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; and municipalities. Focus groups: promoters and producers (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants).
3.2 To what extent are the approach and capacities developed, including increased resilience to climate change, sufficient to ensure the achievement of results both at the individual level in promoters and beneficiaries (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants), and at the level of national partner institutions?	3.2.1 Perceptions of FAO quality and added value in developed capacity building activities (individuals, organizations, enabling environment). 3.2.2 Perceptions on the extent to which capacity building activities are increasing resilience to climate change and contributing to the achievement of expected outcomes (individuals, organizations, enabling environment). 3.2.3 Implemented approach is gender-sensitive and responds to the different needs of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants. 3.2.4 Existence of good practices and lessons learned. 3.2.5 Evidence that results have been achieved as expected in the mid-term (logical framework indicators).	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; logical framework; institutional capacity diagnosis; annual performance reports; monthly progress reports. Environmental and social framework; gender action plan; and the Indigenous Peoples participation plan and framework. Semi-structured interviews: PMU, authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; and municipalities. Focus groups: promoters and producers (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants).
3.3 To what extent has the project contributed to the empowerment of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants?	3.3.1 Evidence that results are contributing to the advancement of gender parity. 3.3.2 Extent to which the project has addressed and contributed to the transformation of factors limiting the access of women, young producers and Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants to decisions, livelihoods and productive, environmental and social benefits. 3.3.3 Level of progress in the implementation of the gender action plan and Indigenous peoples plan. 3.3.4 Evidence that results contribute to the empowerment of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants. 3.3.5 Perceptions of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants on the extent to which the project is contributing to their empowerment. 3.3.6 Good practices and lessons learned.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; logical framework; annual performance reports; monthly progress reports; environmental and social framework; gender action plan; and Indigenous Peoples' participation plan and framework. Semi-structured interviews: local CENTA technicians; FIAES; producers; promoters; youth organizations; women; and Indigenous Peoples. Focus groups: promoters and producers (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants).
3.4 Have any unexpected project results, positive or negative, been identified?	3.4.1 Type of unexpected results, positive or negative, and key factors that have influenced them. 3.4.2 Quality and timing of the monitoring and reporting of unexpected results.	Document review and analysis: annual performance reports; and monthly progress reports. Semi-structured interviews: M&E specialists of the PMU; focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; water boards; and municipalities.

Criteria, questions and subquestions	Observation and analysis guidelines	Data collection methods
Information and knowledge management systems		
4. To what extent do information and knowledge management systems facilitate decision-making and the achievement of results?		
4.1 To what extent is the M&E plan practical and sufficient to measure progress on outcomes and inform timely decision-making on necessary corrective measures?	4.1.1 Extent to which the project design included baseline indicators and clear benchmarks to measure performance. 4.1.2 Extent to which the plan includes the monitoring of project risks and environmental and social safeguards. 4.1.3 Extent to which robust data disaggregated by sex, age and ethnicity are being collected. 4.1.4 Level of knowledge and participation of partner institutions in the implementation of the M&E plan. 4.1.5 Use level of information for decision-making and types of adjustments made to achieve institutional learning and outcomes. 4.1.6 Limiting factors and barriers in information use to make adjustments in project management.	Document review and analysis: logical framework; baseline study; M&E; the learning and accountability system; monitoring system; monitoring tools; GCF integrated results management framework; environmental and social framework; gender action plan; and the Indigenous Peoples participation plan and framework. Performance data analysis. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; the FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment; PMU (coordinator, specialists); and authorities of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES.
4.2 Considering the communications strategy and knowledge management (Result A.3.1), how is the project managing the generated information and knowledge (databases, accessibility, updating) and sharing its experiences, lessons learned and results progress with the different audiences?	4.2.1 Number and type of communications and knowledge management products. 4.2.2 Extent to which communication is regular, effective and tailored to different audiences (partners, stakeholders, promoters, producers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants and the general public). 4.2.3 Evidence that communications is contributing to stakeholder awareness of activities, progress, lessons learned and project outcomes.	Review and analysis of documents: communications strategy; M&E system; and learning and accountability communication products. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers, promoters; agriculture and environment committees, water boards; municipalities; and other donors and international organizations.
4.3 To what extent has the project supported the development or strengthening of systems or platforms for the management and exchange of information on climate change?	4.3.1 Evidence that results have been achieved as expected in the mid-term (logical framework indicators). • A platform for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned on adaptation measures. 4.3.2 Perceptions of stakeholders and partner institutions on the quality and usefulness of the platform developed or planned.	Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; water boards; municipalities; and other donors and international organizations.
Paradigm shift: sustainability, replicability and scalability		
5. What prospects does the project have in contributing to the proposed paradigm shift?		
5.1 Scaling: to what extent does the project have the potential to generate an impact on the national scale and beyond the project itself?	5.1.1 Extent to which activities create opportunities to focus on innovative solutions and develop or adopt new technologies, business models, modality shifts or processes. 5.1.2 Stakeholder perceptions on the potential to scale up project outcomes at the national level. 5.1.3 Barriers, assumptions and risks that may affect or limit the scaling up of results at the national level and beyond the project.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; logical framework and theory of change; and annual performance reports. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; and other donors and international organizations.
5.2 Replication: what is the real and potential replicability of the project?	5.2.1 Extent to which the project is generating models, tools and pilots that can be adopted by other actors or initiatives without project intervention.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; logical framework and theory of change; and annual performance reports.

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

Criteria, questions and subquestions	Observation and analysis guidelines	Data collection methods
	5.2.2 Evidence of new initiatives (in the planning, design or implementation phase) and actors that promote the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures that are influenced by the project results. 5.2.3 Stakeholder perceptions on the potential to replicate models and tools. 5.2.4 Barriers, assumptions and risks that may affect or limit the replicability of project models and tools.	Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; water boards; municipalities; and other donors and international organizations.
5.3 Sustainability: are there institutional arrangements in place to ensure the long-term and financially sustainable continuation of results and activities beyond the end of the intervention?	5.4.1 Exit strategy advancement level. 5.4.2 Extent to which financially feasible adaptation measures have been identified and implemented which, in turn, provide economic benefits to the producers implementing them. 5.4.3 Extent to which progress has been made in integrating adaptation measures into producer support and incentive programmes, including the agricultural package programme. 5.4.4 Stakeholder perceptions on the potential to sustain results and activities beyond project completion. 5.4.5 Barriers, assumptions and risks that may affect or limit the sustainability of project results.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; logical framework and theory of change; and annual performance reports. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; water boards; municipalities; and other donors and international organizations. Focus groups: promoters and producers (women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants).
5.4 What is the degree of understanding and appropriation of the paradigm promoted by institutions, local actors and final beneficiaries?	5.4.1 Level of awareness on behalf of stakeholders and beneficiaries on the proposed paradigm shift. 5.4.2 Stakeholder perceptions on the extent to which the results of each component can contribute to the scope of the proposed paradigm shift. 5.4.3 Financial, sociopolitical, institutional, environmental and governance risks that may affect or limit the potential to achieve the desired impact and proposed paradigm shift.	Document review and analysis: funding proposal; logical framework and theory of change; and annual performance reports. Semi-structured interviews: FAO Representative of El Salvador; PMU; authorities and focal points of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, CENTA and FIAES; local technicians from CENTA and FIAES; producers; promoters; agriculture and environment committees; and water boards.

Appendix 3. Field visit plan

Region or department	Municipality	No. of participating producers	Date	Component	Local actors	Activities
San Miguel	Ciudad Barrios	552	5 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, microregion (MANORSAN), mayor's office, youth network	1. Focal group with multiple actors 2. Youth focus group (plot visit) 3. Youth interview 4. Interview with local organizations
Usulután	Mercedes Umaña	486	6 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, youth network, municipal mayor's office	1. Visit to the plot (promoters and beneficiaries 2. Producer focal group 3. Interview with municipal environmental unit
La Unión	El Carmen	376	6 Dec	C1	CENTA	1. Focus group with producers and promoters 2. Producer interview 3. Field visit to plots 4. Interview with supervisor and head of CENTA 5. Interview with local organizations
Morazán	Cacaopera	440	6 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, Indigenous Peoples (ASEINKA), water board, mayor's office	1. Interview with local actors, the mayor's office, ASEINKA and water boards 2. Visit to nursery and restored area 3. Producer focus group
San Miguel	San Miguel	478	7 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, Gerardo Barrios University (nurseries), FIAES, municipal environmental unit	1. Visit to the El Salitre nursery (FIAES, academy) 2. Plot field visit 3. Producer focus group 4. Interview with municipal environmental unit
Usulután	Concepción Batres	440	7 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, microregion (ASIBAHIA), municipal environmental units	1. Focus group with multiple actors (microregions, mayor) 2. Plot visit 3. Producer focus group 4. Interview with local organizations
Usulután	San Francisco Javier	366	7 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, mayor's office, municipal environmental unit	1. Visit to restoration areas 2. Visit to FFS 3. Producer focus group 4. Producer interview
La Paz	San Pedro Masahuat	564	8 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, mayor's office, municipal intersectoral committee, water boards	1. Intersectoral bureau meeting (CENTA, mayor, Ministry of Health) 2. Visit to restoration zone 3. Beneficiary focus group (rainwater harvesting) 4. Interviews with local organizations

Region or department	Municipality	No. of participating producers	Date	Component	Local actors	Activities
Ahuachapán	Ahuachapán	1 435	8 Dec	C1	CENTA	1. Interview with the head of CENTA 2. Ministry of Health interview 3. Visit to FFS 4. Target group beneficiaries 5. Local governance structure focus group 4. Interview with local organizations
Ahuachapán	Atiquizaya	645	9 Dec	C1, C2, C3	CENTA, mayor's office, agriculture committee	1. Focus group with the expanded agriculture and environment committee (CENTA, mayor, Ministry of Health) 2. Visit to the restoration site 3. APOKAM youth producers focus group (headquarters) and AFROS 4. Interview with young and Indigenous Peoples or Afro-descendent producers
Ahuachapán	Guaymango	555	9 Dec	C1, C2	CENTA, mayor's office, agriculture committee	1. Focus group with the expanded agriculture and environment committee (CENTA, mayor, Ministry of Health) 2. Visit to FFS 3. Beneficiary focus group (rainwater harvesting) 4. Interview with local organizations
Ahuachapán	Tacuba	1 282	10 Dec	C1	CENTA, mayor's office, agriculture committee, Indigenous Peoples, Catholic Relief Services	1. Focus group with the expanded agriculture and environment committee (CENTA, mayor, Ministry of Health) 2. Visit to FFS 3. Beneficiary focus group (rainwater harvesting) 4. Interview of beneficiaries
		7 564				

Appendix 4. Logical framework

GCF Results Area	Indicator	Target	
		Mid-term	Final
GCF Results Area 1 – Adaptation A1.0, Increased resilience and enhanced livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, communities, and regions.	A1.2 Number of males and females and percentage of population benefiting from the adoption of climate-resilient livelihood options.	172,368 people in 38,304 farm families (of which 38% are female led) in the 114 target municipalities apply adaptation measures to increase the reliability of agricultural yields and ecosystem service flows.	225 000 people in 50 000 farm familes (of which 38% are female led) in the 114 target municipalities apply adaptation measures to increase the reliability of agricultural yields and ecosystem service flows.
GCF Results Area 2 – Adaptation A2.0, Increased resilience of health and well-being, and food and water security.	A2.2 Number of food-secure households (in areas/periods at risk of climate change impacts).	Number of food-secure households remains at least at baseline levels.	Number of food-secure households remains at least at baseline levels.
	A2.3 Number of males and females with year-round access to reliable and safe water supply despite climate shocks and stresses.	7 830 people (approximately 52% female) in 1 740 farm families benefiting from 30 community-based rainwater collection systems.	11 745 people (approximately 52% female) in 2 610 farm families benefiting from 45 community-based rainwater collection systems.
GCF Results Area 4 – Adaptation A4.0, Improved resilience of ecosystems.	A4.1 Extent of ecosystems strengthened, restored and protected from climate variability and change.	7 800 ha of degraded areas outside of protected areas are under conservation and restoration in the project area.	17 333 ha of degraded areas outside protected areas are under conservation and restoration in the project area.
		38 304 ha on farm with improved resilience due to the application of adaptation measures.	56 600 ha on farm with improved resilience due to the application of adaptation measures.
GCF Results Area 4 – Mitigation M4.0, Reduced emissions from land use, deforestation, forest degradation, and through sustainable forest management, conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.	M4.1 Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCo_2eq) reduced or avoided and/or GHG removals by sinks.	2,108,433 tCO_2eq captured by mid-term.	4 216 835 tCO_2eq captured over the project period.

Component	Code	Activities	Code	Subactivities and investments GCF	Indicator (logical framework)
Improved resilience of livelihoods and production systems in family farms	A.1.1	Promotion of climate-resilient agriculture exceeding 56 000 ha.	SA.1.1.1	Facilitation of participatory situation analysis and validation of adaptation technology.	A.1.1.a: 56 600 ha of agricultural systems with at least two resilience measures applied.
			SA.1.1.2	Provision of technical assistance for the implementation of agricultural resilience measures.	
			SA.1.1.3	Facilitation of the formulation of farm adaptation plans.	A.1.1.b: 23 065 selected food-secure households.
			SA.1.1.4	Provision of materials and equipment for the application of climate change adaptation measures.	
	A.1.2	Improved water collection and management in 3 390 households.	S.A.1.2.1	Investment in the establishment of rainwater collection, treatment and storage systems in homes and communities.	A.1.2.a: 1 320 farm families with rainwater harvesting systems at home.
			S.A.1.2.2	Counselling and training support for families receiving rainwater harvesting systems.	A.1.2.b: 2 610 farming families with community rainwater harvesting systems.
	A.1.3	Strengthen human and institutional capacities for sustainability and scale up adaptation strategies.	S.A.1.3.1	Capacity building for innovation and adaptive management.	A.1.3.a: 244 trained extension practitioners.
			S.A.1.3.2	Capacity building for CENTA staff on adaptation issues and strategies.	A.1.3.b: 1 415 FFS initiatives operating in municipalities.
			S.A.1.3.3	Training of young people on climate-resilient agricultural and land use practices.	A.1.3.c: 50 000 active FFS participants in target municipalities.
			S.A.1.3.4	Strengthening institutional capacities for the supply of genetic material for adaptation strategies at the farm and landscape level	A.1.3.d: 5 000 young people trained in climate-resilient agricultural and land use practices.
					A.1.3.e 100% of genetic resources requested for forest development and delivered.
Improved resilience of environmental service flows at the landscape level	A.2.1	Restoration of vegetation cover in critical locations to promote hydrological services and increase carbon stocks.	S.A.2.1.1	Facilitation of plans and agreements to implement the restoration of ecosystems or areas of particular importance for resilience in the intervention landscapes.	A.2.1.a: 17 333 ha of ecosystems outside the effectively restored or protected farm.
			S.A.2.1.2	Acquisition and supply of planting and nursery materials and equipment.	
			S.A.2.1.3	Tree planting and assisted natural regeneration.	A.2.1.b: 11 320 ha of resilient agricultural land (tree planting and assisted regeneration).
			S.A.2.1.4	Maintenance of restored areas.	
			S.A.2.1.5	Planning for the administration of ongoing protection and maintenance.	
Improved governance and information flow in support of sustainability	A.3.1	Strengthening local governance and planning structures in support of adaptation.	S.A.3.1.1	Train local project beneficiary organizations in soil and water management with adaptation practices to participate in local planning and decision-making processes.	A.3.1.a: 684 local organizations effectively involved in planning and governance in support of adaptation.
			S.A.3.1.2	Multistakeholder review and analysis of the provisions of existing planning instruments.	A.3.1.b: 570 municipal environmental units, ADESCOS and community water administration strengthened.

Component	Code	Activities	Code	Subactivities and investments GCF	Indicator (logical framework)
			S.A.3.1.3	Promote local environmental governance structures for adaptation.	A.3.1.c: 159 planning tools analysed and adjusted to anticipate climate change adaptation.
	A.3.2	Adjustment of regulatory, policy, planning and incentive instruments in support of proposed adaptation and mitigation measures, FAO Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.	**S.A.3.2.1**	Facilitate inter-agency analyses and discussions on the needs and options for the modification of policy, planning and regulatory instruments.	A.3.2.a: 15 regulatory instruments, policies or planning instruments favourable to the proposed adaptation and mitigation measures.
			S.A.3.2.2	Develop specific proposals for changes to regulatory, policy and planning instruments.	
			S.A.3.2.3	Develop guidelines and provide training to officials from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the local government on provisions in support of proposed adaptation and mitigation measures in policies and plans with a focus on the agriculture and forestry sectors.	A.3.2.b: 650 officials from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the local governments strengthened in proposed adaptation and mitigation measures and plans.
	A.3.3	Capacity building for information management in support of adaptation and scale up planning..	**S.A.3.3.1**	Strengthen climate information management systems in support of medium- and long-term planning for climate change adaptation.	A.3.3.a: knowledge platform for sharing experiences and lessons learned on adaptation measures.
			S.A.3.3.2	Develop platforms for the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned, and joint planning between government actors and community service offices.	A.3.3.b: 131 planning instruments from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, municipalities and civil society organizations that reflect mid-term trends in climate change and its implications.

Appendix 5. Proposal to adjust the RECLIMA project's theory of change

The evaluation team developed a conceptual model of the problem addressed by RECLIMA (populations and subsistence producers in the dry corridor of El Salvador with high levels of vulnerability to the effects of climate change). The model identifies four interrelated causal networks, forming a structural unit, that are influenced by national and global contextual factors. Some of the causal factors are outside the scope and reach of the project. Based on this model, the evaluation team proposes adopting a systemic approach to readjust the project's theory of change. The readjustment aims to enhance the strategies and interventions currently being implemented. To this end, without affecting the logical structure of the three components, new activities and/or improvements are suggested to address critical factors of the problem and enhance the effectiveness of the project in achieving results and contributing to the paradigm shift. The following activities and/or improvements are proposed:

i. Component 1: Link participating producers with socioeconomic inclusion initiatives in municipalities, both from public institutions and cooperation agencies. This action would expand opportunities to diversify the producers' livelihoods, and strengthen the conditions for the appropriation and sustainability of adaptation practices implemented in their plots. It will also mitigate the risks associated with the perception and expectations of producers regarding the immediacy of the benefits of agroecological practices promoted on their plots.

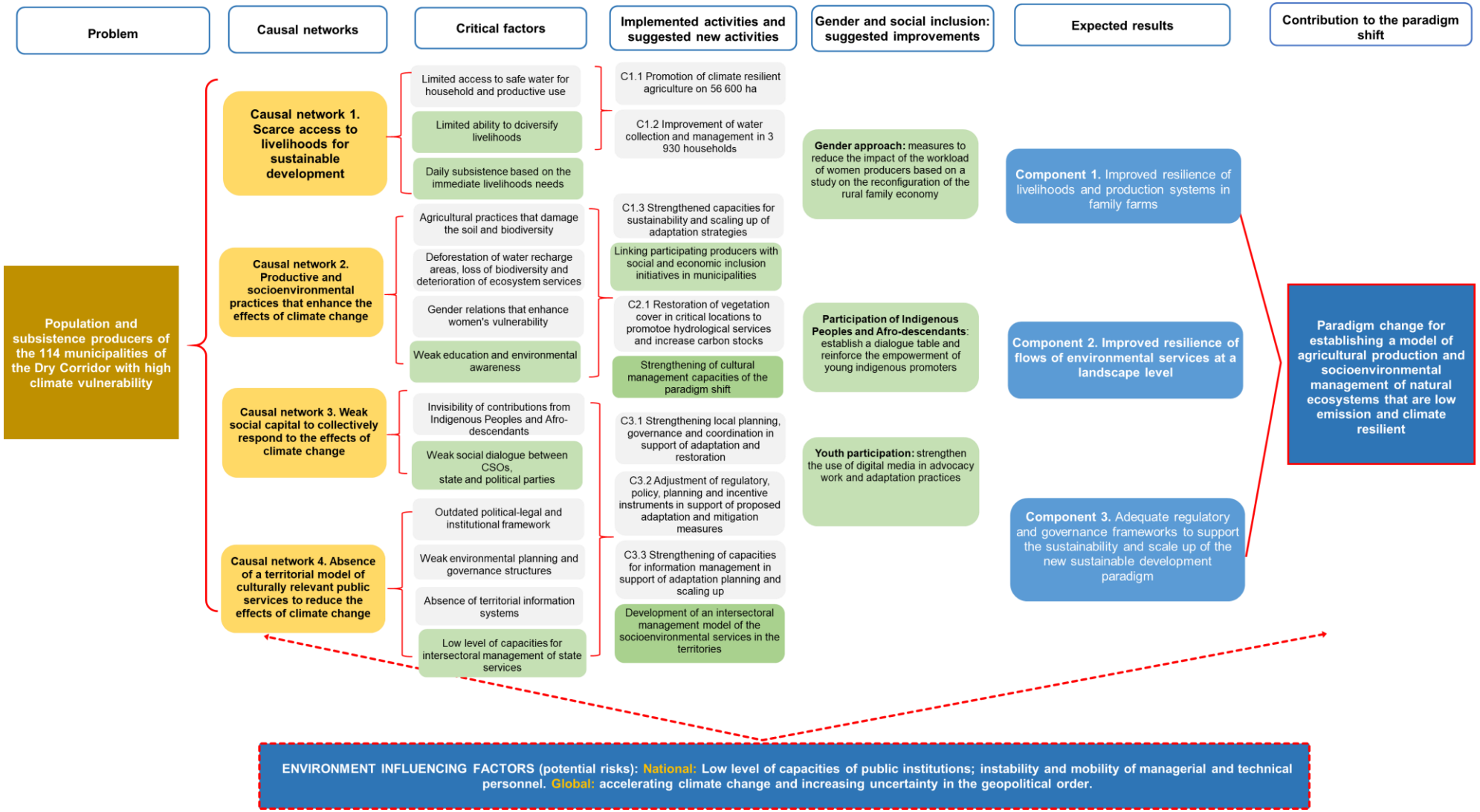
ii. Components 1 and 2: Strengthen the cultural management capacities for paradigm change. This activity consists of strengthening the capacities of community promoters and extension technicians to facilitate the cultural transition towards the new paradigm proposed by the project. To this end, FAO's specialized knowledge in educational communication for development should be considered. Likewise, as part of the social ecosystem, it is desirable to incorporate primary and secondary schools, as well as develop communications campaigns in collaboration with local media.

iii. Component 3: Develop an intersectoral management model of local socioenvironmental services. This seeks to expand the strategic scope of activities envisaged in this component, especially C3.1: strengthening local planning, governance and coordination. The activity consists of designing and implementing an intersectoral management model for the services of institutions present in the municipalities, integrating various local actors, such as municipal governments, academic centres, ADESCOs, water boards and agriculture committees. Such a space could also present an opportunity to facilitate the participation of partner institutions, namely the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-CENTA and FIAES.

iv. Gender approaches and social inclusion: Considering the evaluation's findings, three adjustments are proposed: strengthening dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants; studying the impact of changes in the household economy on women's inequality; and strengthening the use of digital media among youth participants. Under a systemic approach, the proposed theory of change would incorporate barriers as factors in causal networks, making them susceptible to being addressed. Assumptions are addressed in the activities, while risks are reinterpreted as "Influencing factors of the environment", which connotes the existence of opportunities to enhance the interventions of the project's intervention model.

v. The following figure shows the causal relationships of the different components of the suggested theory of change: problem addressed; causal networks of the problem; critical factors of the problem addressed; activities implemented and new activities suggested; improvements in gender and social inclusion approaches; expected results; and contribution to the paradigm shift. For easy distinction, new activities and suggested improvements are shown in green.

Appendix Figure 1. The causal relationship among the components of the adjusted theory of change



Note: Proposed new activities and improvements in green.
Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team.

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