Mid-Term Review of FAO-GEF Project

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Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Multi-country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems – Phase I

(SOILCARE Phase I)

Final Report

MTR conducted on February 19, 2025

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

(May 2025)

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ASLAC	Latin America and the Caribbean Soil Partnership (ASLAC)
BD	Bulk Density
C1	Component 1 (of the SOILCARE I project)
C2	Component 2 (of the SOILCARE I project)
C3	Component 3 (of the SOILCARE I project)
C4	Component 4 (of the SOILCARE I project)
C5	Component 5 (of the SOILCARE I project)
CARDI	Caribbean Research and Development Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Community (Secretariat)
CARSIS	Caribbean soil information system
CARSOLAN	Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCAP	Caribbean Community Agricultural Policy
CCCCC	Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
COTED	Council on Trade and Economic Development
CSA	Climate smart agriculture
CSAC	Climate smart agriculture compliance (tool)
CSIDS	Caribbean Small Island Developing States
CSIS	Caribbean Soil Information System
CSSG	Caribbean Soil Support Group
CTO	Chief Technical Officer (of PISLM)
DPSIR	Drivers, Pressures, Statues, Impacts and Responses
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FP	Focal Point
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GIS	Geographical Information System
GLOSIS	Global Soil Information System
GLOSOLAN	Global Soil Laboratory Network
GSP	Global Soil Partnership
Ha	Hectare
HNVI	High Nature Value Index
LD	Land Degradation
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LoA	Letter of Agreement
LSKH	Land and Soil Knowledge Hub
LTO	Lead Technical Officer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
MTR	Mid-Term Review

NDC	National Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPA	Operational Partnership Agreement
OPIM	Operational Partners Implementation Modality
PA	Project Assistant
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PISLM	Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management
PISLM/HLMB	Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) for Caribbean SIDS High Level Ministerial Body
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAC-NAT	Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility for New Adaptation Technologies (in the Caribbean subregion)
RWH	Rainwater Harvesting
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SISLAC	Soil Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SOILCARE I	Caribbean Small Island States (SIDS) Multi-country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape, Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems (Phase 1)
SSLMFG	Sustainable Soil and Land Management Framework Group
SSM	Sustainable Soil Management
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programmes (FAO)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TEV	Total Economic Valuation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USD	United States Dollar
UWI	University of West Indies

0. Executive summary

0.1 Introduction

1. The purpose of the MTR is to produce findings and recommendations that support the project's decision-makers responsible for the project's execution – the Project Steering Committee (PSC) members, the Project Management Unit (PMU), and implementation - FAO's Budget Holder (BH), MTR Manager (RM), Project Task Force (PTF), FLO, LTO and other technical staff of FAO – take informed decisions to "effect change", through improving the project's relevance, performance and potential impact. The scope of the MTR is to review all components of the project from its official inception date on 24/11/2021 to 30/11/2024 and cover all eight (8) participating Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia), which includes the target population and stakeholders in each country. The main objective of the MTR is, "address and rate the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, factors affecting performance (including design, coherence, project implementation and execution, stakeholder engagement, M&E, communication, and co-financing), and cross cutting dimensions including gender equity and equality, environmental and social safeguards and indigenous peoples)".
2. The MTR was conducted through three (3) main phases: (i) an inception phase in which a participatory stakeholder analysis, a review and reconstruction of the theory of change, the field agenda and evaluation matrix were all prepared to aid the MTR process; (ii) a field phase to collect primary data in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada, St. Lucia, Guyana and Belize supported by remote and/or in-person semi-structured interviews and focal group meetings with stakeholders and end partners/beneficiaries. The third phase involved a synthesis of main findings to produce the present MTR report. Two (2) consultants – an international consultant, acting as team leader (TL) and a consultant from the Caribbean subregion, acting as the LDN Specialist were hired by FAO to conduct the MTR. During the field phase, the TL carried out interviews in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada, St. Lucia and Guyana between 02/11/2024 and 19/12/2024, and the LDNS conducted interviews in Belize between 13/01/2025 and 17/01/2025.

0.2 Main findings

Relevance - *Question 1: Is the project relevant and coherent?*

3. **The project's strategic relevance continues to be highly satisfactory**. The project has strong political support at the sub-regional level from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) through its Council on Trade and Economic Development [environment and agriculture], or COTED. Similarly, at the national level, all eight participating governments fully recognise SOILCARE I represents an important initiative in the sub-region supporting through which they can address the growing need for land degradation neutrality (LDN). In fact, SOILCARE I not only aligns with national commitments and pledges to UNCCD, in particular Target 15.3 under Sustainable Development Goal 15 (SDGs), but also implicitly supports other SDGs, in particular SDGs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17. Consequently, the project directly supports adaptation efforts as prescribed in

their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under UNFCCC, and supports the halting of biodiversity loss in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework of CBD. Triangulated evidence also confirms the project enjoys high levels of support from the targeted communities in all seven countries participating in Components 2, 3 and 4 (C2, C3 and C4). Equally, the project's emphasis on soil analysis and mapping, plus actions at 25 pilot sites to promote sustainable land management, sustainable soil management and climate-smart agriculture (SLM/SSM/CSA) are fully consistent with GEF7's Focal Areas of Land Degradation (LD), Climate Change (CC) and Biodiversity (BD) and FAO's strategic and regional objectives. Caveats in the project's relevance relate to over-ambitious targets under C2-C4, the general lack of robust legislation in place in all countries to guide the planning and sustainable management of their land resources and the lack of inclusion of soil biodiversity in the soil analysis promoted under C1.

4. **Coherence with other on-going interventions in the sub-region is satisfactory** thanks to the project's emphasis on supporting the development of a number of groups and networks that have facilitated collaboration and information exchange. These include the creation of the Sustainable Land and Soil Management Framework Group (SSLMFG) in 2024, the Caribbean Soil Support Group (CSSG), which now has a seat in the Latin American and Caribbean Soil Alliance (ASLAC) and the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARSOLAN) as part of the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN). However, synergies established with other GEF and non-GEF projects has been mixed. On the one hand, PISLM's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH), is foreseen to be integrated into the "SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub" managed by UNEP (under SOILCARE II) and collaboration is foreseen with ongoing projects such as the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP) funded by IFAD in Grenada. However, formal synergies with other GEF-funded projects or with FAO's Global Soil Doctors Programme (under its Global Soil Partnership) or with FAO's Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCPs) in the Caribbean were not evident, or in need of strengthening to support the transition to SOILARE II.

Effectiveness - *Question 2: To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?*

5. **The project is not on track to achieve its objectives before the project's closure in November 2025**. Progress in delivering planned outputs and outcomes under C1-C5 has been mixed. The project is on track to deliver key outputs under C1, thanks to the establishment of CARSOLAN to oversee the upgrading of national soil laboratories in each of the eight participating countries through which standard operating procedures (SOP) have already been applied successfully to produce new national soil data sets and maps in four participating countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, and St. Lucia), while in Belize, Guyana and Jamaica, these outputs are planned to be delivered in the second half of 2025. However, in Haiti triangulated evidence indicates that the soil mapping exercises will have to be restricted to the Northern region of the country due to the continuation of political instability and social unrest in large areas of the country. In addition, the software has been developed with FAO's support to establish the Caribbean soil information system (CARSIS) within PISLM which is planned to be fully operational in 2025. Progress in delivering planned outputs under C5 has generally been satisfactory. This has included the awarding of five scholarships to increase the number of soil

scientists in the Caribbean sub-region, the establishment of PISLM's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH), the creation of the SLSMFG and the Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism in Dominica in 2024.

6. Meanwhile, progress on delivering planned outputs under C2-C4 is behind schedule, indicating the achievement of SLM/SSM/CSA targets is highly unlikely in the time remaining. Main achievements so far have been the completion and validation of the Drivers, Pressures, Statues, Impacts and Responses (DPSIR) reports for all seven participating countries in 2024 to guide SLM/SSM/CSA interventions in a total of 25 pilot sites. These reports have also integrated the completion of climate risk analysis and land capability assessments and are supported by the production of guidelines on how to apply CSA. In addition, the project has established Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility for New Adaptation Technologies (RAC-NAT) on a 25-acre (10 ha) site owned by the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Trinidad to conduct field research on resilient crop varieties. However, the identification of suitable implementation plans and targets for the 25 pilot sites have not been prepared and adopted by the national project steering committee members to date, demonstrating capacity, co-funding and project oversight constraints in all seven participating countries.

Efficiency - *Question 3: To what extent is the project being implemented efficiently and cost effectively [and] to what extent is the pledged co-financing being delivered?*

7. **The project's capacity to convert its resources into results in an efficient and cost-effective manner has been moderately unsatisfactory except under C1 and C5**. Physical progress (47% to 31/12/2024), financial progress (48.3% to 31/12/2024) and total number of beneficiaries (583 people, of which 227 are women) were all found to be far lower than expected after the completion of 36 of the 48 months planned for operations to 31/12/2024. Moreover, the project has spent on average USD 6,757/beneficiary, which is very high compared to other GEF-funded projects reviewed by the MTR team. In-kind co-finance received to 31/12/2024 was USD 11,480,000. Considering the project required additional training from FAO in 2025 to calculate cofinance contributions correctly, and the fact this amounts to only 44.5 per cent of planned cofinance, the project's ability to leverage co-finance for every US Dollar spent from GEF funds is relatively low (USD 1.00:2.91). This situation has also demonstrated important financial risks prevail that have not been adequately addressed in the project implementation and progress reports (PIR/PPR), even though there is evidence that in-kind contributions have demonstrated their added value in some key areas, such as the realisation of the DPSIR framework analysis, through which the vast majority of stakeholders interviewed confirmed greater awareness on the importance and purpose of LDN in their respective countries.

Sustainability - *Question 4: What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project?*

8. The prospects of sustaining the project's results after the project's closure are mixed. On the one hand, the sustainability of outputs and outcomes achieved under C1 and C5 is likely because they are/will be embedded in permanent institutions such as the Ministries of Agriculture, or in sub-regional and national legislation dedicated to and/or supportive of advancing LDN.

However, ineffective levels of risk management in the project's planning, implementation and monitoring are evident, in particular the application of mitigation measures in a timely and comprehensive manner to address, for example, capacity gaps, resource limitations and logistical challenges that are affecting the project's performance. Under these circumstances, the prospects of sustaining the expected results under C2-C4 are considered unlikely, especially as there are no exit strategies in place to date to clarify how they will be funded and consolidated in each country in the post-closure period.

Factors affecting performance – executing and implementing agencies - *Question 5.1: To what extent are implementing and executing agencies effectively discharging their roles and responsibilities?*

9. **The quality of the project's execution by PISLM acting as the project's executing agency has been satisfactory to date, especially when considering it continues to face significant resource and logistical constraints.** This achievement has been aided by the decision of CARICOM/COTED to convert PISLM into an Inter-governmental organisation (IGO) in 2024 to spearhead the subregion's commitment to restoring 25 per cent of priority degraded lands in the Caribbean by the end of 2025, known as the 25x25 Initiative (2014-2025). As a result, PISLM's role in bringing governments, civil society and local communities together in the subregion has grown, thus facilitating greater dialogue on the policy reforms, technical support, and capacity building required to achieve SLM/SSM/CSA actions that directly support the 25x25 initiative. Nonetheless, PISLM lacks human resources in some key areas such as on the oversight needed to prepare and apply the abovementioned site plans for the 25 pilot sites chosen under C2-C4, on GIS thematic mapping on soils, results-monitoring and on the management of the complex logistical challenges associated with operations in Caribbean SIDS (CSIDS). To this end, FAO's role as implementing agency has been fundamental in addressing some of these capacity gaps. For example, FAO has been instrumental in supporting PISLM produce high resolution soil maps and supporting the application of SOP in the soil analysis training provided under C1.
10. However, the MTR team found there is a strong need to improve relations and the level of collaboration between PISLM (including its project management unit) and FAO in order to optimise LDN efforts and the project's impact in the subregion as foreseen in the Theory of Change (see appendix 8b) and within the current context of the 25x25 initiative. In particular, PISLM and FAO-SLC lack an adequate coordination mechanism to guide the development of a more coordinated approach to addressing the current overlapping goals and targets of UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD, as mentioned under Q1 above.

Factors affecting performance - stakeholder participation - *Question 5.2: To what extent and how have multi-sector stakeholders at different levels been involved in project design and implementation?*

11. **All the project's main stakeholders interviewed stated they have participated in the project design and implementation phases,** although the MTR team identified several weaknesses in the project's design that suggest the participation achieved has not applied effective risk

management, which in turn has affected the project's performance. Areas that have not been adequately addressed by the regional and national project steering committees in the project design include the lack of adequate resources and training on (i) accounting rules governing GEF funding under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) of FAO; (ii) calculating in-kind co-finance contributions at the national level; (iii) the development of an effective results-based monitoring, reporting and communications system; (iv) application of an integrated approach that promotes the active participation of some key government institutions missing in the project's steering committees at the national and subregional levels, especially those linked to planning, finance and private enterprise development; (v) identifying realistic indicators and targets for C2-C4, which in their current format appear to be over-ambitious in the space of just four years for implementation.

Factors affecting performance - knowledge activities/products - *Question 5.3: How is the project assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences?*

12. **The project is in the process of finalising the design and testing of the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH) where all the project's technical files, learning materials and communications will be centralised within PISLM**, before forming an integral part of SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub funded by GEF/UNEP (in SOILCARE II). Consequently, a key aim of the SOILCARE initiative (phase I and II) is to increase stakeholder access to their knowledge products to support learning and the potential upscaling of the LDN process. Nonetheless, there is currently a general lack of adequate monitoring of the qualitative aspects of the project (such as changes in practices, attitudes and knowledge) as well as information in some key areas, such as on the marketing potential of CSA products that the MTR team considers are important to guide and support the upscaling of the LDN process in the Caribbean subregion.

Factors affecting performance – M&E system - *Question 5.4: Is the project's M&E system adequate, practical, and sufficient?*

13. **Overall, the MTR team found the M&E system applied in the project is primarily geared to support** reporting to the GEF secretariat on the project's operational progress and fulfilment of targets set out in the results matrix of the Prodoc and which are updated annually in the PIRs. Consequently, it is not an adequate and practical method to track data of subregional and national interest, in particular pledges and commitments to UNCCD/SDG 15.3, UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD/GBF, or to capture and promote learning on the actions that deliver high levels of added value, or stimulate transformational changes at the community and local government levels vis-à-vis LDN.

Factors affecting performance – M&E plan - *Question 5.5: Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan?*

14. **Overall, the M&E system is operating as per the requirements of the M&E Plan specified in the Result's Matrix format applied in the PIRs**. However, given this is a project-led approach to M&E planning, the potential that this plan will continue to be monitored beyond the project's closure of operations is highly unlikely. In particular, the M&E plan managed by the project, does not align adequately with the M&E plan applied by each of the eight participating countries, which focuses mainly on national needs and commitments to LDN.

Cross-cutting priorities - on gender - *Question 6.1: To what extent are gender equality and empowerment and other equity issues mainstreamed in the project, both in design and implementation (including M&E)?*

15. The project does not currently track changes in gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in its M&E system to determine the number of women who have assumed decision-making roles and responsibilities. Instead, it only tracks women's participation rates in the project's main activities under C1-C5, which currently stands at 38.9 per cent. **This achievement is considered moderately satisfactory when considering the minimum participation rate specified in the Prodoc should be at least 40 per cent of all participants under C1-C5**.

Cross-cutting priorities - on ESS - Question 6.2: *To what extent have environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?*

16. **The MTR Team found insufficient evidence to indicate the project has been applying the ESS checklist correctly in the PIRs** and in its actions planned in the 25 pilot sites selected for SLM/SSM/CSA actions. For example, question 3 in the ESS in the Prodoc was triggered but there is no evidence that mitigation actions were identified to address this, in particular the introduction of CSA crop varieties that have previously not been grown in the pilot sites before, especially under C3 and C4.

Progress towards achieving the project's development objective

17. The SOILCARE I project is, through the production of high-quality soil data and maps, trainings and technology transfer, **providing decision-makers in the Caribbean with the opportunity to take informed decisions on advancing the LDN process for the first time in the subregion**. Moreover, the project's support to land and soil conservation techniques, and adaptation of agricultural practices to the effects of climate variability and change offers an important step forward in increasing farmers' resilience, advancing soil health over soil fertility to sustain productivity and environmental sustainability and to safeguard food security, sovereignty and nutrition in CSIDS.

Overall risk rating

18. The overall risk rating of the project as defined by the risk categories applied by the GEF secretariat is "**moderate**".

0.3 Conclusions

20 **Conclusion on question 1 - *Is the project relevant and coherent?* (Conc. 1): The project's relevance at all levels and coherence with other projects is satisfactory. Outcomes and objectives remain consistent with the policies and priorities of the executing agency, participating government institutions and GEF's focal areas and objectives. The project has also established synergies with other GEF-funded projects, in particular with the SIDS-SIDS project. Two main shortcomings affecting relevance and coherence are: first, the risk that local stakeholders have not seen any mobilisation of activities on the ground under C2-C4, which may lead them to question the relevance of the pilot projects if they do not start to deliver results soon, and second, the project design and implementation have not effectively demonstrated the socio-economic value of restoring and conserving ecosystem services. Consequently, important information is not feeding into policy dialogue to inform decision-makers at the subregional, national and pilot site levels with regards to (i) SLM/SSM/CSA representing the best way forward in the transition to LDN, and (ii) that this transition is not an end itself (to meet UNCCD targets), but a means to delivering greener, more inclusive and resilient development that supports pledges to the UNCCD, NDCs and to targets under the CBD's Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).**

21 **Conclusion on question 2 - *To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?* (Conc. 2): The project is not on track to meet its objectives by its end of duty (closure) date on 23/11/2025. Project effectiveness has been mixed, with satisfactory advances under C1 and C5 that indicate the majority of outcomes foreseen under these two components are likely to be achieved before the project's closure on 23/11/2025. Meanwhile, progress under C2-C4 has been slower than planned, resulting in the lack of operations in all 25 pilot sites selected. The general lack of progress in the seven participating countries on designing site plans and activities for these sites is evident and suggests more needs to be done to strengthen the national platforms and PISLM expertise to resolve these problems in 2025. However, even if these platforms are strengthened, more time will be required to implement the project's proposed responses to land degradation at all 25 pilot sites.**

22 **Conclusion on question 3 - *To what extent is the project being implemented efficiently and cost effectively [and] to what extent is the pledged co-financing being delivered?* (Conc. 3): the project's capacity to convert its resources into expected outputs and outcomes has been slower than planned. Implementation delays have been a principal cause behind the slower than planned physical progress, lower expenditure of GEF funds than planned and less co-finance mobilisation to 31/12/2024 than projected in the Prodoc. The MTR team concludes these are important signs that the project's design has not paid adequate attention to the capacity requirements and the human and financial resources needed to fulfil the implementation of the project as proposed in the Prodoc. This includes the lack of effective risk management and adequate communication channels between PISLM and FAO-SLC to address these inefficiencies in a comprehensive and timely manner in the interests of optimising the project's cost-effectiveness in 2025.**

23 **Conclusion on question 4 - *What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project?* (Conc. 4): the sustainability of outputs and the expected outcome under C1 is likely where they are embedded in PISLM, or in the participating authorities at the national level who have reiterated their support to continuing SOILCARE in a second phase and, potentially, in a third phase (proposed at the COP16 in December 2024). Meanwhile, the sustainability of outputs and outcomes achieved under C2-C4 is unlikely unless adequate sources of funding are in place and the targets applied under C2-C4 are realistic and supported by a clear and comprehensive exit strategy. Under C5 the main concerns are the lack of clarity on the future funding of the LSKN and the mobilisation of funds to kick-start the LDN Transformation Financial Mechanism (SCCF) in 2025 to fund CSA development under C3 and C4. Under these circumstances, the MTR team concludes the project has not applied effective risk management to ensure the expected outputs and outcomes under C2-C4 are congruent with the capacity, resources and logistical constraints that PISLM and the participating CSIDS currently face to implement the project. Moreover, the lack of up-to-date land policies and legislation in the subregion to guide land-use planning, address land tenure conflicts, and secure private and civil society engagement in the development of the restoration economy, represent significant barriers that need to be removed before SLM/SSM/CSA can be sustained and alternative livelihoods developed.**

24 **Conclusion on question 5.1 - *To what extent are implementing and executing agencies effectively discharging their roles and responsibilities?* (Conc. 5.1): several factors are affecting the project's performance. As stated in the previous conclusion, firstly the project's design has some shortcomings that result in an over-ambitious list of outputs and targets to be fulfilled in just four years of operations. Second, the national soil maps are progressing well, but it appears they are being conducted largely in isolation of each other by FAO, rather than through dedicated trained staff in PISLM, which restricts learning and ownership. Third, information exchanges through the knowledge hub have been delayed. This has restricted learning and identification of good practices that could and should be integrated into the pilot sites to support the development of agroforestry and other agricultural practices supporting SLM/SSM and CSA, which also open up opportunities to develop non-timber forestry products (NTFPs). Currently, there is no mention of the promotion of the "restoration economy" in the Prodoc, or PIRs. Fourth, the project's M&E does not include qualitative indicators to support analysis on the project's contribution to delivering transformational changes under C1-C5, especially in terms of knowledge, attitudes, practices (KAP), although the short videos of soil scientists could be used to support analysis of such changes through a more effective communication strategy**.

44 **Conclusion on question 5.2 - *To what extent and how have multi-sector stakeholders at different levels been involved in project design and implementation?* (Conc. 5.2): Stakeholders at the subregional level, including PISLM, confirm they were involved in the project's design and, in some cases, continue to participate in the project's planning and**

implementation. However, staff rotation within the eight participating countries has resulted in changes of representatives in the PSC. Given the PSC only meets once a year and that the M&E plan is not geared to developing adequate learning and communications on the project's performance, the MTR team concludes more guidance and oversight of the project's operations is required by the PSC and FAO-SLC. This has been compounded by insufficient levels of communication and collaboration between PISLM and FAO-SLC, in particular the Task Force it has established for the project.

45 **Conclusion on question 5.3 - *How is the project assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences?* (Conc. 5.3)**: **The project's capacity to promote learning, innovation and advocacy campaigns to encourage legislative reforms that support the mainstreaming of SLM/SSM/CSA has been moderately unsatisfactory so far. This has not been aided by the relatively late recruitment of the communications officer in 2023 and delays in the launching of the LSKH, which is now foreseen in 2025**.

46 **Conclusion on question 5.4 - *Is the project's M&E system adequate, practical, and sufficient?* (Conc. 5.4): In line with conclusion 1, the M&E system applied only serves to report on operational progress and the degree to which targets set in the Results Matrix are being achieved. M&E reporting is therefore designed to inform the GEF Secretariat on progress and achievements in a standard format (PIRs). Under these circumstances, the MTR team concludes that the M&E system is not adequately aligned to the specific needs and interests in the subregion, in particular that the LDN process in the Caribbean needs to be coordinated with activities conducted under the UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD/GFB. In addition, the absence of qualitative indicators will restrict learning on the results, good practices and lessons learned in each country**.

47 **Conclusion on question 5.5 - *Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan?* (Conc. 5.5)**: **the M&E plan is applied in conformity with the reporting format in the PIRs, and FAO's six-monthly PPRs. The reporting on the project's implementation progress cover both the annual and six-monthly periods covered between November 2021 and June 2024. The quality of the monitoring system has generally been let down by (i) the lack of clear indicators for some outcomes, in particular the number of beneficiaries planned under C1 (see Table 6) and the project's contribution to meeting national voluntary pledges on LDN to UNCCD by 2030 as described in subsection 4.1.1 where there are some errors in the Prodoc (on targets in Grenada and St. Lucia that do not tally with their own pledges and land degradation figures submitted to UNCCD); (iii) unrealistic targets set under C2-C4 considering the lack of capacity and resources of extension staff; (iv) the absence qualitative indicators to support learning on changes in capacity, knowledge, attitudes and practices at the national and local levels; (v) the general lack of application of the gender equality action plan foreseen in the Prodoc and FPIC in the project M&E (see also conclusion 6.1)**.

48 **Conclusion of question 6.1 - *To what extent are gender equality and empowerment and other equity issues mainstreamed in the project, both in design and implementation (including M&E)?* (Conc. 6.1): the project is not fully applying GEWE in line with the action plan provided in the Prodoc. Instead, it has mainly concentrated on securing the forty-percent-rule, with current participation rates of women standing at 39 per cent. This is likely to continue when the application of project actions under C2-C4 start in 2025. Under these circumstances, the MTR concludes the project's M&E system is only able to track participation rates, rather than track women and other vulnerable group's level of satisfaction with the training and capacity building provided by the project through which their specific needs can be addressed and acted upon.**

49 **Conclusion on question 6.2 - *To what extent have environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?* (Conc. 6.2): the Prodoc has not applied the ESS checklist correctly, in particular omitting responses to question 3, which was triggered, but also omitting the triggering of question 2 concerning interventions in protected areas, which is the case in Barbados and Grenada. This has not been picked up and addressed in the PIRs, in part because the PIRs do not apply the same ESS checklist format. Instead, the ESS section applies a different format and has included a new safeguard (the Grievance Redress Mechanism), for which there is no evidence of training, or guidelines, provided by FAO-SLC to date. As a result, the MTR team identified very little evidence to conclude the mechanism is being applied in accordance with UN rules and procedures. As such, it is unclear how far the project is able to protect all stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups, from unfair practices and/or treatment.**

5.1. Recommendations

50 **Recommendation 1 (R1) in response to all Conclusions - to FAO and PISLM: it is recommended PISLM and FAO-SLC meet as soon as possible to resolve the lack of trust and insufficient communication that currently exists between the two parties. The agreement reached should be integrated into the abovementioned workplan proposed between PISLM and FAO's Project Task Force for the project.**

Suggestions on how to implement R1:

- The meeting should take the form of a workshop through which PISLM and FAO-SLC meet to cover a mutually accepted agenda that covers the OPIM/OPA, LoAs, procurement, reporting and M&E.
- FAO-SLC should ensure that regular contact is maintained with PISLM through a combination of weekly meeting and at least one meeting per annum in-person in one or more of the implementing countries (outside of Barbados).
- FAO-SLC should ensure the FAO country offices operating in the region engage more actively one of the office staff in supporting the project's implementation, stimulate

synergies and/or information exchange on FAO's TCP active in the participating countries and provide support in areas such as quality assurance when requested by the Task Force.

51 **Recommendation 2 (R2) in response to Conclusion 1 - to PISLM, FAO, PSC and the SSMFG: To enhance the project's relevance and coherence, it is recommended that greater emphasis is given to calculating the socio-economic value and benefits of ecosystem restoration and conservation of the project sites. These data should be validated and used to support the design of a regional policy influencing plan (PIP) designed to encourage decision-makers to fully integrate SLM/SSM/CSA in relevant regional, national and sector legislation in support of the development and upscaling of the restoration economy (covering agriculture, environment, business and finance and education sectors, among others).**

Suggestions on how to implement R2:

- FAO should draw on other GEF-funded projects that have successfully adopted similar approaches, such as under The Restoration Initiative (TRI), and discuss with PISLM the options for developing capacity on, for example, (i) Total Economic Value (TEV) studies, (ii) cost-benefit analysis (CBA), designed to integrate the economic assessment of land use into public and private sector decision-making, based on the land degradation initiative (LDN); (iii) FAO's global assessment of land degradation and improvement (GLADA).
- Hold an extra-official meeting of the PSC to discuss the planning and implementation of the recommendation.
- PISLM recruits a consultant to oversee capacity development and application of at least one of these methods as a precursor to developing a policy influencing plan supporting the strategic relevance of mainstreaming of SLM/SSM/CSA in the subregion's legislative framework to promote the transition to greener and bluer economies and greater coordination between FPs for UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD.

52 **Recommendation 3 (R3) in response to Conclusions 2 and 4 - to PISLM, FAO, the PSC, the SSMFG and CSSG: considering the large amount of delays in the project's implementation and in the interests of achieving the project's outcomes and objective the project should have a no-cost extension of up to 24 months. The actual length of the extension should be determined following the application of the following suggestions.**

Suggestions on how to implement R3:

- The recruitment of a technical officer (discussed with PISLM during the field mission), should have ToR that focus on supporting the PM oversee the identification, adoption and implementation of the site implementation plans for all 25 site plans proposed under C2-C4. A key part of the ToR should focus on the selection of targets by the national steering committee members that are realistic and achievable in the no-cost extension period selected by the regional project steering committee members.

- The results of the TEV, CBA or GLADA should be used to clarify the purpose and goal of the pilot sites. In addition, effective risk management, a tentative exit strategy and sustainability plan proposal should all be included in the site implementation plan. In Haiti, this should be based on non-state actors engaged in community-based bottom-up approaches to sustaining SLM/SSM/CSA.
- Conduct a tender to select a consultancy that can conduct the marketing studies required to support the planning and implementation of alternative economic development activities foreseen in each of the participating countries under C4. In this way the project can determine the products and services that can generate a sustainable income and promote the development of the restoration economy at the 11 pilot sites selected. In the event no products or services are considered viable, main stakeholders should agree to switch the pilot site to C3, or remove the pilot site in order to concentrate resources in the other pilot sites.
- Following completion of these two exercises, main stakeholders should conduct a revision of the baselines and targets established in the Results Matrix (RM) under C2-C4. New, baselines and realistic and achievable targets should be agreed and integrated into the RM and the extension period required, confirmed, agreed and adopted by the PSC.
- The FAO's Project Task Force should integrate a specialist on risk management to oversee training, monitoring and reporting applies an effective risk management strategy that recognises it is a cross-cutting issue throughout the project's planning and implementation, rather than an independent exercise.

53 **Recommendation 4 (R4) in response to Conclusions 2, 5.4 and 5.5 to PISLM, FAO, the PSC, and the SSMFG and CSSG: the project should strengthen the Project Steering Committee and the national platforms established in each country for SOILCARE I.**

Suggestions on how to implement R4:

- It is strongly recommended that the PSC includes the following representatives to guide the successful implementation of activities under C2-C4: (i) up to three regional representatives specialised in the development of agribusinesses associated with the development of the green (and blue) economy, preferably with first-hand experience on regenerative farming practices that emphasise soil health and development; (ii) one regional representative specialised in mobilising finance and access to international funds supporting LDN-related actions; (iii) one specialist on environmental education and advocacy.
- It is strongly recommended that the PSC meets twice yearly and assigns adequate time and resources to ensure all key points are dealt with in a comprehensive manner.
- It is strongly recommended that the national platforms for SOILCARE I are expanded to include: (i) the national FP for UNCCC/NDCs; (ii) the national FP for CBD/GBF; (iii) a senior representative from the public and private sectors responsible for business development and finance, preferably sustainable agribusiness development; (vi) a senior national representative responsible for land policy (where relevant); (v) a senior representative responsible for environmental education.

- It is recommended the national platforms become permanent national committees for UNCCD-UNFCCC-CBD, to support coordinated approaches to LDN, adaptation to climate change and recovery of biodiversity in the extension period and into SOILCARE II.

54 **Recommendation 5 (R5) in response to Conc. 5.3 on systematisation of results, lessons and good practices - to PISLM, FAO and the PSC: to enhance the project's capacity to promote learning, innovation, and advocacy for regional and national legislative reforms, it is recommended the project launches the Knowledge Hub without further delays and the communication officer should support the development of the advocacy campaigns needed to support the implementation of the project.**

Suggestions on how to implement R5:

- FAO-SLC should provide guidance from one of its communications officers on how to develop an effective communication strategy that builds on the results of R1-R4. This could be done during the workshop proposed under R1, or separately.
- It is recommended the Knowledge Hub is officially called the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub of the Caribbean (LSKH-C).
- All main stakeholders should assess and agree on the funding of the operation and maintenance of the LSKH-C as well as cover adequate levels of quality assurance.
- The access protocols to the LSKH-C should be clarified as soon as possible.

55 **Recommendation 6 (R6) in response to Conclusions 5.4 and 5.5 - to PISLM, FAO and PSC: it is recommended that the M&E plan and system: (i) provide a more comprehensive understanding of the project's impact and (ii) support meaningful learning.**

Suggestions on how to implement R6:

- To enhance the M&E system's effectiveness, it is recommended that the system is revised to include impact indicators on the project's contributions to: (i) LDN/UNCCD, NDCs/UNFCCC, the GBF/CBD, and relevant SDG targets under SDG 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17; (ii) regional and national legislative changes (in policies, strategies and plans); (iii) qualitative changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices of stakeholders and partners (end beneficiaries) that include vulnerable groups such as women, youth, elders, and the disabled, at the local level.

56 **Recommendation 7 (R7) in response to Conclusion 6.1 - to PISLM, FAO and PSC: it is recommended the project should go beyond meeting the 40 percent rule concerning women's participation and focus more on ensuring that the training and capacity-building activities meet the specific needs of women and other vulnerable groups. The M&E system should be expanded to track the level of satisfaction among these groups, whether their needs are being effectively addressed, and whether there is a reduction in their vulnerability leading to more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.**

Suggestions on how to implement R7:

- The PISLM and FAO-SLC should include in the agenda of the workshop proposed under Recommendation 1, or separately if preferred, how to improve bi-annual follow-up of GEWE and IP participation and empowerment using indicators that are currently adopted and applied in the Caribbean by CARICOM.
- FAO-HQ should ensure greater coherence on the GEWE format applied in the Prodoc is the same in the PIRs (or vice versa) to avoid confusion and to support learning.

57 **Recommendation 8 (R8) in response to Conclusion 6.2 - to PISLM and FAO: the project should ensure that the ESS checklist is properly applied in line with the Prodoc to ensure responses are provided on questions 2 and 3. In addition, FAO-SLC should provide training and guidelines on the application of the ESS and the Grievance Redress Mechanism to ensure that the latter is applied in accordance with UN rules and procedures.**

Suggestions on how to implement R8:

- The PISLM and FAO-SLC should discuss how to improve annual follow-up of the ESS as part of the agenda in the workshop proposed under Recommendation 1.
- The FAO-HQ should ensure greater coherence on the ESS format applied in the Prodoc is the same in the PIRs (or vice versa) to avoid confusion and to support learning.

0.5 Table B - GEF ratings

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating[1]	Summary comments[2]
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Strategic relevance was confirmed to be high at both CARICOM and at national government levels, where the project is directly supporting government pledges to UNCCD and SDG 15.3. Particularly significant is the selection of intervention sites in the Northern part of Haiti where security is stable, and farmer groups maintain control of local resources. At the local level, baseline data has been collected through the DPSIR framework analysis in all seven participating countries. Stakeholders and farmers interviewed reconfirmed the promotion of SLM/SSM and model farms is highly relevant, although in some cases refurbishing of technology must be adapted to Caribbean conditions and needs, and the provision of water resources is considered by farmers as a prerequisite to participation in the development of model farms (especially in Grenada). Caveats identified are, first, the project's expected outputs and outcomes for components 2 to 4 are very ambitious when compared to the resources and time assigned in

[1] See rating scheme at the end of the document.

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

		the project document. Second, the absence of robust land policies and/or legislation in all participating countries represents a major gap in the enabling environment to combat key drivers of land degradation and upscale good practices identified through SOILCARE I. Third, raising capacity on the physical and chemical analysis of soils in CARICOM countries is highly relevant, but does not include analysis of soil biodiversity which is crucial to plant growth, fixing carbon and nitrogen, decomposing organic matter and controlling pathogens, among others.
A1.1. Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The project is fully consistent with the following Focal Areas of GEF-7: Land Degradation (LD), Climate Change (CC), which includes the achievement of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and Biodiversity (BD) by supporting efforts to reduce biodiversity loss.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	The project directly supports the achievement of SDG 15.3, but also contributes indirectly to meeting targets under other SDGs, in particular, SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action) and 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (global partnerships). As such, the project also has direct linkages to UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD/GFB. Relevance of the project at the regional and sub-regional level has been enhanced by the official endorsement of PISLM as an inter-governmental organisation (IGO), in particular strengthening the case for coordinating policies on SLM/SSM through CARICOM/COTED from 2024. At the national level, the project directly supports the pledges of all participating governments to UNCCD as well as other relevant legislation, such as their national adaptation plans. End beneficiaries interviewed also confirm that the project responds to their needs and aspirations. This includes indigenous peoples who have been specifically selected to participate in the project in countries such as Guyana where progress on LDN is crucial to safeguarding their livelihoods well-being and cultural identity.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	MS	PISLM is responsible for coordinating all projects supporting SLM, especially since CARICOM's endorsement of the Sustainable Land and Soil Management Framework Group (SSLMFG) in 2024. PISLM also has established complementarity with the following: (i) the Caribbean Soil Support Group (CSSG), which was established by the project to operate at the sub-regional level; (ii) the Latin American and Caribbean Soil Partnership (ASLAC) where the project has supported the inclusion of the CSSG Chair in the alliance; (iii) the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) managed globally by FAO, which has supported capacity building of institutions such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC); (iv) the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARSOLAN), established by the SOILCARE I project to form part of Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN); (v) the Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development institute (CARDI); (vi) The Caribbean Youth Environment Network. In addition, synergies with ministries responsible for agriculture and environment are evident to support the development of the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS) within PISLM, or with specific government-led

		programmes such as sustainable yam production in Jamaica, which is being coordinated with SOILCARE I; (vii) the GEF-funded project "SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub" (managed by UNEP) which will integrate PISLM's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub, once complete (now foreseen under SOILCARE II); (viii) collaboration with ongoing projects in the eight participating countries such as the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP) funded by IFAD in Grenada. However, formal synergies with other GEF-funded projects operating at the national or sub-regional level or with FAO's Global Soil Doctors Programme (under the GSP) that aims to promote farmer-farmer training on SSM and CSA, or FAO's Technical Cooperation programmes in the Caribbean were not evident, but under consideration in the design of SOILCARE II.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	MS	The delivery of planned outcomes has experienced delays under all components. Despite good progress under C1 and C5, it is highly unlikely the project will achieve its objectives in the time remaining to November 2025, because planned activities under C2-C4 have not yet started in the seven participating countries concerned (excludes Antigua and Barbuda, which opted out of C2-C4 components). Several external factors have caused these delays including bureaucratic hurdles associated with the first GEF disbursement, tendering of equipment, slow clearance of soil samples through customs in Trinidad, and severe weather events such as hurricanes and floods in 2024, which greatly affected Grenada and parts of St. Lucia and Jamaica.
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	MS	Progress in delivering planned outputs has been mixed. Under C1 the project has delivered the following planned outputs: (i) training and guidance on taking soil samples to develop new national soil maps has been completed in four countries, which includes bulk density assessments for the first time. FAO is validating the soil maps. However, this output has experienced delays in three countries (Belize, Guyana and Haiti); (ii) CARSOLAN has been officially established and is overseeing the upgrading of the soil laboratories in all eight participating countries in accordance with standard operating procedures (SOP). However, delays in the procurement of laboratory equipment means the upgrading process is still ongoing; (iii) training on soil analysis by UWI-St Augustine campus experienced delays in clearing soil samples through customs in Trinidad, meaning the completion of training on applying SOP will not be completed until 2025; (iv) the CARSIS is in the process of being developed within PISLM using opensource software. Technical support and training provided by FAO will aim to link the CARSIS to Global Soil Information System (GLOSIS) once its standards and database design have been completed in 2025. Outputs under C2-C4 have been limited to preparatory studies required before on the ground actions supporting land

		rehabilitation (15,000 ha/1,250 households), model farms (20,000 ha / 1,800 households) and adaptation to climate change (20,000 ha /1,800 households) can commence. Main outputs so far include: (i) finalisation and stakeholder validation of the DPSIR reports for all seven participating countries in 2024 (subject to FAO's final endorsement). The DPSIR reports provide guidance on project interventions to be conducted in all 25 pilot sites selected for project support under C2-C4; (ii) climate risk analysis completed at all pilot sites; (iii) land capability assessments completed at all 25 pilot sites; (iv) guidelines on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) validated by stakeholders in 2024; (v) the RAC-NAT facility has been established and is operational in Trinidad promoting and conducting field research on the production of local varieties of chilli peppers. Under C5, main outputs include: (i) SOILCARE scholarship programme is operational, and five scholarships have been awarded; (ii) the PISLM's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub has been designed and is expected to be launched in early 2025; (iii) the SLSMFAG was established in 2024; (iv) the secretariat for the Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism is in the process of establishment by PISLM in Dominica.
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes[3] and project objectives		
- Outcome 1	S	The project is on track to provide valuable soil data and maps to support informed decision-making (Outcome 1) in seven participating countries, and in Haiti, although interviews suggest it may be more feasible to concentrate on the Northern part of Haiti due to the problems of security in many areas of Haiti.
- Outcome 2	MU	Rehabilitation of degraded areas in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia covering 15,000 ha and engaging 1,250 partners (end beneficiaries) is unlikely given none of the activities planned at the intervention sites have started with just 11 months of the project's implementation phase remaining.
- Outcome 3	MU	Increases in soil productivity through CSA covering 20,000 ha and engaging 1,800 households are unlikely to be achieved in the time remaining in any of the five participating countries (Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia) given none of the activities have started so far with just 11 months of the project's implementation phase remaining.
- Outcome 4	U	The achievement of resilient food production systems engaging value chains with the private sector, covering 20,000 ha and 1,800 households (linked to outcome 3) is unlikely given market analysis, access to finance and other planned activities have not yet started to achieve this outcome by November 2025.

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

- Outcomes 5.1 to 5.5	MS	Regional capacity development, knowledge management and integration of LDN into regional and national policy frameworks (outcomes 5.1-5.3) are moderately likely in the time remaining given these actions have completed their design and testing phase and are ready to start implementation in 2025. However, the PISLM may require a new staff member to be trained with FAO's support to fully deliver these outcomes as planned in 2025. Achievement of outcome 5.4 is unlikely in the remaining time in the project, despite the establishment of the LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism in Dominica given its mandate and funding still needs to be agreed upon by the COTED in 2025. Finally, there is insufficient evidence that gender-sensitive monitoring is in place to date (outcome 5.5) given the M&E system only assesses women's participation rates in project activities. Participation rates of other vulnerable groups (youths, elders, disabled, etc.), or on qualitative data such as changes in women's empowerment, or human-rights are not integrated into the M&E system and plan.
- Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/ outcomes	MU	Overall progress towards achieving the project's objectives and outcomes is mixed. Achievement of outcome 1.1 is likely and this would represent a major success for SOILCARE I given the challenges SIDS face in establishing access to reliable soil data. Moreover, it is highly likely this achievement will be supported by the achievement of outcomes 5.1-5.3. However, achievement of outcomes 2 to 4 is unlikely, indicating the project's targets under components 2-4 are not realistic in relation to the resources and time allocated, unless a major extension is granted. In particular, the promotion of alternative livelihoods is unlikely to materialise unless they are supported by private sector and civil society engagement.
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	UA	Not rated in MTRs
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency[4]	MS	Overall physical progress has suffered from several delays and is estimated to be around 47 percent to 31/12/2024 while total expenditure of GEF funds stands at USD 3,939,630 to 31/12/2024, equivalent to 68.3% of the GEF's budget allocation for the project. The total number of direct beneficiaries who have participated in capacity development and trainings under all five components to the same date totals 583, indicating the project has spent on average USD 6,757 on each beneficiary, which is high, but is partly explained by the lack of activities under C2-C4. The total level of in-kind co-finance stood at USD 11,680,000 at 31/12/2024, equivalent to 44.5% of total planned co-funding.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		

[4] Includes cost efficiency and timeliness.

D1. Overall likelihood of risks affecting sustainability	L	The sustainability of results under C1 is rated "likely" on the grounds the soil laboratories, networks and land and soil information systems are all embedded in PISLM, national government institutions, or UWI's own teaching infrastructure. However, the PISLM may need additional staff to oversee the development of the new networks established, as well as monitor the financial sustainability of initiatives such as the RAC-NAT Facility established in Trinidad, which has not been addressed to date to support the expansion of CSA. Conversely, sustainability of the 25 pilot actions promoting SLM/SSM and model farms under C2-C4 is rated "unlikely" because: (i) there is insufficient time to apply a sustainability plan for the SLM/SSM and model farms, especially as they have not yet started in the field; (ii) upscaling of SLM/SSM and model farms is unlikely unless adequate land use legislation and law enforcement is in place to support the transition to greener and more sustainable development in the sub-region; (iii) there is a lack of business representation in the project's planning and decision-making to ensure key services and investment from the private sector are adequate to develop the value chains needed to sustain the alternative livelihoods foreseen. Under C5, the sustainability of the SSLMFG, the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub, and mainstreaming of LDN into policy and planning are rated "likely" given they are integrated into PISLM, or part of the national governments' commitments to SDG 15.3. Finally, the sustainability of the Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism is rated "moderately likely" on the grounds the mobilisation of funds will rely heavily on the donor community for many years to come.
D1.1. Likelihood of financial risks affecting sustainability	L	Financial risks are "unlikely" to affect the sustainability of outputs and outcomes under C1 and C5, but are "likely" to affect the consolidation and upscaling of good practices established under C2-C4 for the following reasons: (i) the majority of government stakeholders stated they have resource limitations to support both the implementation and sustainability of SLM/SSM and model farms; (ii) access to co-finance is likely to remain less than planned, especially where it is linked to projects that will end operations in 2025; (iii) insufficient synergies with other projects, especially FAO TC programme which is supporting resilient and sustainable farming in different areas of participating countries. (iv) the opportunities to develop alternative income streams from, for example, carbon trading, is unlikely due to the lack of economies of scale; (v) engagement of the private sector, supported by incentives to invest in actions supporting LDN and adaptation to climate change, is low.
D1.2. Likelihood of socio-political risks affecting sustainability	MU	Socio-political risks are rated "moderately unlikely" on the grounds all eight participating countries have taken steps at the national level and through the CARICOM/COTED (for Agriculture and Environment) to support the development of PISLM as an IGO and recognise the importance of continuing the LDN process through a second phase of SOILCARE. In Haiti it is moderately likely that the decentralised approach to LDN in the North of the island can be

		sustained where community-based control of the LDN process is evident, but socio-political instability remains a constant threat that will prevent the expansion of good practices elsewhere in the island.
D1.3. Likelihood of institutional and governance risks affecting sustainability	ML	Institutional risks are "moderately unlikely" to affect the sustainability of outputs and outcomes under C1 and C5, while under C2-C4 they are "moderately likely" be affected by the following gaps: (i) a general lack of staff and adequate equipment (vehicles, computers, mapping software) to promote, sustain and upscale the LDN process; (ii) a lack of decentralised decision-making, especially in larger countries such as Guyana, Jamaica and Belize where central government can take time to take decisions; (iii) a lack of participation of institutions that work with the private sector to identify funding opportunities lined to LDN.
D1.4. Likelihood of environmental risks affecting sustainability	MU	Environmental risks are rated "moderately unlikely", because the project's SLM/SSM and model farms are designed to rehabilitate degraded areas that are vulnerable to extreme weather and climatic events. Nevertheless, the lack of effective land use planning and law enforcement are risks that will need to be addressed to ensure bad practices do not return to the intervention sites over time.
D2. Likelihood of catalysis and replication	ML	The production of new national soil maps is "moderately likely" to support the replication of LDN where it leads to tangible economic benefits that, at the same time, catalyse improvements in human, social, physical and environmental capital. CSA, agro-forestry and forestry actions are considered the most viable to catalyse change and enhance local governance over the sustainable use of natural resources. However, replication is unlikely where the following barriers are not resolved: (i) land conflicts and rights (especially where indigenous peoples are concerned); (ii) policies, subsidies and/or regulations that favour unsustainable practices, over sustainable alternatives are in operation; (iii) lack of access to information, education, extension services and finance to sustain soil health, biodiversity, in-situ seed banks to respond to disasters and severe climatic events.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness[5]	MS	The project's design has the following shortcomings that have affected performance and not been adequately addressed by the PSC: (i) the lack of adequate training by FAO-SLC in the inception phase covering accounting of GEF funding and co-finance, the development of an effective results-based monitoring system, progress reporting requirements and communication strategy; (ii) insufficient resources allocated to oversee coordinated implementation of the project at the national level, given the majority of participating SIDS have very limited resources; (iii) the

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

		project's design lacks an integrated approach that promotes the participation of some key government institutions, especially those linked to planning, finance and private enterprise development; (iv) the selection of three components (C2-C4) encourages a fragmented approach rather than an integrated one that supports South-South dialogue and cooperation; (v) the targets under C2-C4 are over-ambitious in a sub-region where government institutions have limited capacity and resources.
E2. Quality of project implementation	MS	The quality of the project's implementation under C1 and C5 has been satisfactory, with important achievements in place such as the creation of SSLMFG, CARSOLAN, the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub and CARSIS, which will provide access to high resolution soil maps for the first time. However, the slow procurement of soil laboratory equipment has delayed the upgrading process to 2025, and contributed to delays of some key activities linked to C2-C4. The quality of implementation of the SLM/SSM and model farms foreseen under C2-C4 cannot be determined at this stage. Key findings from the preparatory work completed for C2-C4 are that the following activities have been understated, or not adequately addressed : (i) integration of native varieties of trees, plants and grasses into SLM/SSM plans; (ii) development of robust rainwater harvesting and water resources management techniques to reduce the effects of prolonged dry seasons; (iii) capturing and integrating local knowledge and innovation into the plans for model farms, (such as innovative inter-cropping techniques); (iv) using trees as wind breaks, fodder and fruit provides; (iv) the review of the existing farm sites in order to allow for the relocation of specific activities to more appropriate locations (rather than focusing on upgrading/rehabilitating existing infrastructure in the same locations); (v) marketing studies to support the development of phased production of different adapted crops that support effective rotation methods and generate regular income; (vi) effective communication on the role improved soil quality plays in improving nutrition, rather than focusing primarily on food security; (vii) the need for SLM/SSM and model farm promoter networks at the local level to upscale good practices in and around the intervention sites.
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, CTA, etc.)	MS	The quality of FAO's technical support has been moderately satisfactory. On the one hand its ability to provide high quality technical services in areas such as soil mapping, promotion of the Soil Doctors Programme by the GSP in Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia (not directly part of SOILCARE I, but planned for inclusion in SOILCARE II) and training on SOP in the soil laboratories has been satisfactory. On the other, the MTR found relations between the FAO-SLC Task Force for SOILCARE I and PISLM have become highly strained and risk a breakdown in trust. Key factors attributed to this are: (i) the application of the OPIM as a control mechanism rather than a means to developing a robust and long-term partnership between FAO and PISLM. In particular several stakeholders complained the OPIM's requirement for spot checks has resulted in FAO sending experts who speak poor English and

		who are not from, or familiar with, the Caribbean subregion; (ii) insufficient communication and field visits by the BH, LTO and CTA to the project to enhance understanding on, and find solutions to, the main challenges affecting implementation, including capacity, logistical and financial challenges to implement the project in eight countries all of which have their own specific political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental needs and aspirations.
E2.1 Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc.)	S	The vast majority of stakeholders confirmed satisfaction with the level of engagement, support and guidance provided by the PSC, which meets online to deliberate on annual work plans, progress reporting, policy reviews on the enabling environment and delivery of outputs and planned outcomes. Nevertheless, stakeholders recognise the need to apply a more integrated approach that secures the participation of staff from departments responsible for business development, planning, and finance, as well as from the private sector (and from civil society). Working groups were generally found to be providing positive support to the delivery of outputs.
E3. Quality of project execution	S	The quality of the project's execution by PISLM is satisfactory. Its role in the subregion has grown following its IGO status in 2024. In particular, CARICOM countries now recognise PISLM as one of the lead agencies in achieving the 25x25 initiative (2014-2025), which aims to restore 25% of degraded lands in the Caribbean by end of 2025. As such, SOILCARE I, has facilitated PISLM's role in bringing governments, civil society and local communities together to discuss and agree on the policy reforms, technical support, and capacity building required to achieve the 25x25 targets, ensuring land restoration contributes to environmental, economic, and social resilience in the subregion. However, PISLM lacks capacity to execute the project in some key technical areas (such as on GIS and soil mapping) and faces complex logistical challenges due to its centralisation in Guyana, although a new office headquarters is planned to be established in Grenada in 2025. A major caveat in its project execution is the need to improve its working relations and communication with FAO, to clarify each other's roles and responsibilities in the subregion, such as the execution of the 25x25 initiative. This is important given PISLM provides a new opportunity in the subregion to coordinate the achievement of the overlapping goals and targets of UNCCD, UNFCCC (NDC's national adaptation plans and targets) and CBD (Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes the restoration of 30% of degraded ecosystems).
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU and executing partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	MS	The quality of the PMU to oversee the project's day-to-day implementation has been satisfactory but relies heavily on national project assistants (PA) to organise project implementation in each participating country. As nominated government staff, the PAs have limited authority, capacity and logistical support to convene high-level meetings, carry out regular field visits, or oversee procurement and training requirements. This situation has resulted in a several national consultations to validate the project sites identified in the project document, which took time to complete and which resulted

		in some changes in project sites by the national project steering committees on the grounds that they no longer met the SLM/SSM/CSA requirements of SOILCARE I. This has contributed to slower than planned implementation and revealed some technical and administrative gaps in the PMU, in areas such as the application of results-based M&E that supports learning (currently limited to table filling on implementation progress), on procurement and enterprise development (including marketing and financing) to support the development of the restoration economy and CSA.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MU	The MTR team confirms financial management of GEF funds and co-financing is carried out in accordance with FAO rules and regulations. However, submission of GEF expenditure and co-funding contributions has not been completed in a timely manner. In the case of GEF funds, this situation was been exacerbated the shortage of US Dollars in Guyana in the final quarter of 2024, which delayed calculations on total expenditure of GEF funds to 31/12/2024. In addition, FAO-SLC had to provide additional training to PISLM/PMU staff on calculating co-funding contributions from all eight participating countries in the first quarter of 2025. This has resulted in the provision of new figures on total in-kind co-finance to the MTR team at the time of writing (end March 2025). Overall, this confirms the need for FAO-SLC to provide more guidance material and participate in bi-annual meetings to ensure the current shortfall in co-finance is addressed in the subregion.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Overall, the MTR found emphasis on establishing partnerships and stakeholder engagement has been satisfactory. For example, several partnerships have been established between PISLM and soil scientists, technical groups and networks of stakeholders under C1 and C5 (see section A1.3). Moreover, in some cases these partnerships directly link into regional and global partnerships, such as CARSOLAN-GLOSOLAN, or CARSIS-GLOSIS. Stakeholder engagement during the selection process of the 25 pilot sites has been satisfactory. This has been aided by the large number of validation consultations that have taken place under the DPSIR framework analysis conducted in all eight participating countries. However, at the country level, partnerships designed to engage national focal points for UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD have not yet materialised to support the project adopt a more integrated approach to LDN.
E6. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products	S	The project is in the process of finalising the design of the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH) which is designed to be the cornerstone of the project's communication strategy. Selected technical documents and maps, videos, images, flyers, and other communications on project activities will be transferred from PISLM's server to the LSKH in early 2025. The project's knowledge products will form an integral part of the LSKH's wider role of acting as a hub for knowledge products produced by all the regional projects executed by PISLM. As a result, stakeholders from different projects will have access to each other's knowledge products to

		support learning and promote the adoption and upscaling of good practices supporting the LDN process. The main caveat identified is the absence of a phone application to enhance local access to guidance materials on applying LDN actions such as, among others: (i) a step by step guides on implementing SLM/SSM, and/or a model farm, (ii) the benefits of paying for services such as soil analysis and marketing to support decision-making on the selection of the most environmentally appropriate and economically sustainable and resilient cropping/inter-cropping system; (iii) conduct simple book keeping using phone apps/internet technologies to calculate turnover, gross and net profits, forecasting, budgeting and cashflow management; (iv) marketing and marketing strategies; (v) innovation to keep adapting, manage shocks and record upload good practices that can be shared to support the upscaling of the LDN process.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MS	The quality of the M&E system is satisfactory from the point of view of tracking the implementation of outputs to meet targets set in the Prodoc. However, this approach is considered to be at most moderately satisfactory given there is no tracking of qualitative indicators and risks to promote learning on the knowledge, attitudes and practices that are/are not taking place at all levels of government and within civil-society.
E7.1 M&E design	MS	The M&E system is designed to respond to the reporting needs of the PIRs and PPRs. Consequently, its role in tracking national pledges and commitments to UNCCD, UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD has been largely overlooked.
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	MS	The implementation of the M&E plan has been applied in conformity with FAO's requirements. However, it has been moderately unsatisfactory when considering it has not been subject to a review since it was launched in late 2021. Although no major difficulties in implementing the M&E plan were identified, it is evident M&E remains primarily a project tool rather than a PISLM tool that, for example, seeks out ways to engage civil society and the private sector in driving the LDN process forwards.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MS	Overall, several factors are at play that have affected the project's performance and scope, that have not been adequately addressed to optimise the added value of GEF's support.
F. CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	The project is mainly concentrating on measuring women's participation rates in the project's main activities. Although the overall participation rate of women compared to men is moderately satisfactory at 38.9% (227 women out of a total of 583 participants), this does not constitute a gender strategy. In particular there is a need for additional monitoring of other vulnerable groups (youths aged 15-25 years old, elders, the disabled). In addition, there is no

		monitoring of the number of women and other vulnerable groups who have assumed decision-making roles.
F2. Human rights issues	MU	The MTR found little evidence the project is applying a rights-based approach to the LDN process, nor the rights of indigenous peoples in countries such as Guyana. Moreover, the MTR found no clear-cut information on how far the application of free, informed and informed consent (FPIC) is applied when relevant in countries such as Guyana and Belize.
F2. Environmental and social safeguards (ESS)	U	There is no concrete evidence the project staff has been adequately trained by FAO-SLC to effectively apply the ESS checklist when completing the PIRs. This is especially the case with respect to question 3 in the Prodoc, which was triggered on the grounds the project would: (i) introduce crops and varieties previously not grown; (ii) provide seeds/planting material for cultivation; (iii) involve the importing or transfer of seeds and or planting material for cultivation or research and development; (iv) supply or use modern biotechnologies or their products in crop production; (v) establish or manage planted forests. Despite the lack of implementation of actions under C2-C4 PISLM should update FAO-SLC on how far the measures proposed will be mitigated during implementation.
Overall project rating	**MS**	

Ratings: Highly satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately satisfactory (MS), Moderately unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U) Highly unsatisfactory (HU) Unable to assess (UA). Additional ratings for Section E: Likely (L), Moderately likely (ML), Moderately unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U)

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope of the MTR

25 The purpose of the MTR is to produce findings and recommendations that support the PSC members, the Project Management Unit (PMU), and FAO – take informed decisions on improving the project's relevance, performance and potential impact. The scope of the MTR covers the period 24/11/2021 (official entry of duty date) to 31/12/2024 and should include interviews with stakeholders from all eight (8) participating Caribbean countries, namely Antigua and Barbuda (A&B), Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia. Site visits to a selection of these countries require the interview of main government stakeholders, members of civil society and academia and selected members of the local communities targeted to participate in project activities promoting sustainable land management and sustainable soil management (SLM/SSM) and sustainable and resilient farming (model farms).

26 The MTR was conducted through three main phases. First, an inception phase, in which a participatory stakeholder analysis, a review and reconstruction of the theory of change, the field agenda and evaluation matrix were prepared and incorporated in the MTR's Inception Report (IR). Second, a field phase conducted between 30/11/2024 and 21/01/2025. The field phase was carried out as follows. From 02/12/2025 to 20/12/2024 the TL carried out primary data collection in Jamaica, Trinidad (University of the West Indies), Grenada, St. Lucia and Guyana, and completed remote interviews with key government stakeholders from A&B and Haiti. From 13/01/2025 to 21/01/2025, the LDNS conducted interviews with key stakeholders in Belize and provided her main findings to the TL soon after.

27 The third and final phase of the MTR involved a synthesis of the main findings to produce the draft and final versions of the MTR report. A summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations from the draft report was presented remotely on 05/02/2025.

1.2 Objective of the MTR

28 The **objective of the MTR** is to "*address and rate the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, factors affecting performance (including design, coherence, project implementation and execution, stakeholder engagement, M&E, communication, and co-financing), and cross cutting dimensions (such as gender equity and equality, environmental and social safeguards and indigenous peoples)*."

Box 1: Main questions for the MTR

1. Relevance (rating required)	Is the project relevant and coherent?
2. Effectiveness (rating required)	To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?
3. Efficiency (rating required)	To what extent is the project being implemented efficiently and cost effectively [and] to what extent is the pledged co-financing being delivered?
4. Sustainability (rating required)	What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project?
5.1-5.5 Factors affecting progress (ratings required)	*To what extent are implementing and executing agencies effectively discharging their roles and responsibilities?* *To what extent and how have multi-sector stakeholders at different levels been involved in project design and implementation?* *How is the project assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences?* *Is the project's M&E system adequate, practical, and sufficient?* *Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan?*
6.1-6.2 Cross-cutting priorities	*To what extent are gender equality and empowerment and other equity issues mainstreamed in the project, both in design and implementation (including M&E)?* *To what extent are environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?*

Source: MTR Terms of Reference (30/07/2024).

1.3 Intended users

29 The primary users of the present MTR report are:

- The GEF Secretariat and the FAO's Headquarters (FAO-HQ), in particular its GEF Coordination Unit (GCU), where the MTR manager, the GEF funding liaison officer (FLO) and the GEF Technical Officer (GTO) are based, plus other technical staff responsible for the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), and sustainable and resilient agriculture/rural livelihoods development.
- FAO's Budget Holder and Project Task Force for SOILCARE I, supported by the Lead Technical Officer (LTO) and other members of the Project Task Force (PTF), based in FAO's Subregional Office for the Caribbean in Barbados.
- The Executing agency, PISLM, which is the inter-governmental organisation (IGO) responsible for combatting land degradation in the Member States of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). Its main role is to promote sustainable

land management or sustainable soil management (SLM/SSM) and assist CARICOM countries to develop legislative frameworks to address soil erosion and reduce the effects of climate variability and change in order to improve food security, nutrition and livelihoods in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (CSIDS).

- The national and subnational government staff directly associated with the project's implementation, in particular the UNCCD focal points (FPs) who are also members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and representing each of the eight participating countries in the project (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and St. Lucia).
- Other implementing partners of SOILCARE, such as the University of the West Indies (UWI) which is responsible for component 1 of the project, other universities and research centres directly/indirectly participating in the project from the Caribbean subregion, civil society organisations, youth groups and farmer organisations who are supporting the implementation of components 2 to 5.

30 Other potential users of the MTR report are, among others:

- Other relevant GEF-funded programmes and projects operating in CARICOM countries and which support actions associated with SLM/SSM.
- FAO's own programmes operating in the sub-region, which are supporting SLM/SSM and climate smart agriculture, such as its Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP).

1.4 Methodology

31 The MTR team was composed of two independent consultants. Mr. Warren Olding, acting as team leader (TL), who is an environmental planner by profession from the UK who has over 30 years work experience in sustainable rural development, natural resources management (NRM), biodiversity conservation, adaptation to climate change (ACC) and promotion of small agrobusinesses. He has extensive work experience around the world including the Caribbean sub-region. Ms. Gina Young, acting as the LDN specialist (LDNS), is a land management and spatial data specialist from Belize and has over 10 years work experience in the Caribbean sub-region. The MTR process commenced on 01/11/2024 with the recruitment of the TL. Following completion of the IR and first round of interviews in the sub-region in December 2024, the LDNS was contracted in January 2025 to complete the interview process in Belize and support the TL prepare the draft MTR report.

32 The work methodology for the MTR process was set out in the IR in accordance with the provisions in the MTR's Terms of Reference (ToR) issued on 30/07/2024 and in line with the Norms and Standards (2016) of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the FAO-GEF Guidelines for MTRs (2020) and FAO's specific corporate policies on gender, indigenous peoples and other cross-cutting priorities. The work methodology focused on triangulating all findings as far as possible through the following actions:

- A document review. This review covered documents prepared between the project's start date on 24/11/2021 and 31/12/2024, the cut-off date for the MTR process. Key documents analysed included the Project Document (Prodoc), project implementation reports (PIR) produced annually for the GEF Secretariat, six-monthly

project progress reports (PPR), project task force reports (PTFR), back to office reports (BTOR) of PTF staff, PSC minutes, technical and financial reports, and a selection of the project's communications.

- Semi-structured interviews (in-person and remote). The MTR team identified a wide and comprehensive sample of main stakeholders from all eight participating countries for interview following the completion of a participatory stakeholder analysis exercise with FAO and PISLM staff during the inception phase. This exercise enabled the MTR team identify stakeholders and partners as follows: (1) priority for a remote/in-person interview; (2) desirable for an interview; (3) complementary. Every effort was made fully engage women and other vulnerable groups in the interview process.
- Focal group meetings (in person and remote). The stakeholder analysis facilitated the identification of small groups of stakeholders or partners (end beneficiaries) to be interviewed remotely in A&B and Haiti or through visits to selected pilot sites. The latter involved visits to local stakeholders and partners in Jamaica, Grenada, St. Lucia and Guyana who have been selected to participate in SLM/SSM and model farms foreseen under components 2 to 4 (C2, C3 and C4).
- Direct observations in the field. These were conducted after interviews or focal group meetings to assess the current state of selected pilot sites and identify local knowledge and innovative practices that could support the application of SLM/SSM and the development of model farms which will start implementation in early 2025 under C2-C4.

33 In the three main phases of the MTR process the methodology focused on the following actions. In the **inception phase** the MTR carried out: (i) a revision of the Theory of Change (ToC) which was shared with stakeholders from PISLM in the field phase for comments before being finalised in the current MTR report (see also section 3 below and Appendix 8); (ii) participatory stakeholder analysis to identify and rank the stakeholders and partners (end beneficiaries) considered as a "priority", or "desirable" for interview (see Appendix 2); (iii) elaboration of the Evaluation Matrix to guide the interview process on the most pertinent questions and sub-questions to be asked to interviewees (see Appendix 3); (iv) carried out the document review (see Appendix 4).

34 In the **field phase** the work agenda was regularly updated to complete the wide selection of stakeholders and partners considered a priority or desirable for interview (see Appendix 1). All interviews and focal group meeting were conducted in accordance with UNEG rules and regulations and the recommendations of the national governments visited. Due to time constraints and lack of resources it was not possible to identify and interview indirect stakeholders who may become important direct stakeholders in the project prior to project closure.

35 Third, a **synthesis phase** to assess the data collected from primary and secondary sources, in the inception and field phases and triangulate findings. Overall, the MTR team is

satisfied that it was able to achieve the triangulation needed to justify its findings, conclusions and recommendations in the present report.

1.5 Limitations

36 The main limitations to the MTR have been: (i) the limited number/absence of direct flights each day between the islands, forced the MTR mission to cut short some meetings and/or site visits planned; (ii) the political instability and insecurity in Haiti forced all interviews with main stakeholders from that country to be conducted remotely; (iii) despite contacting the UNCCD focal point in Barbados for an interview, no response was obtained and all interviews planned with main stakeholders and end partners in the demonstration sites were cancelled in Barbados.

2. Project background and context

2.1 Project background

37 The growth of unsustainable agricultural and forestry systems, mining, and poorly planned settlement expansion in the Caribbean small island developing states (CSIDS) and mainland members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has resulted in significant soil erosion, resulting in the loss of fertile topsoil and subsoil, an increase in greenhouse gas emissions as well as other forms of land degradation. Stakeholders confirm, for example, increases in soil acidification, aluminium toxicity, and salinization, among others. This is also leading to an associated decline in the cation exchange capacity of soils (to retain nutrients and water), which is threatened further by the growing effects of climate variability and change, in particular prolonged dry seasons and more intense storms. As a result, human vulnerability to droughts, flash floods and other disasters is rising in the Caribbean as well as threatening food security and nutrition and moves to more sustainable development.

38 Between 1996 and 2000, all the member states of CARICOM ratified the UNCCD and since 2015 are fully committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.3: "*combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world*" by 2030. In support of this commitment, the High-Level Ministerial Body (HLMB) of the Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) in the Caribbean agreed a multi-country approach to achieving the targets under SDG 15.3.

2.2 Project description – SOILCARE I

58 A summary of key information about the SOILCARE I project is provided in Box 1 below. Its main purpose is to address the drivers of land degradation and the barriers to achieving LDN in eight CARICOM countries: Antigua and Barbuda (A&B), Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia. These drivers include overexploitation of forest resources, the expansion of unsustainable agricultural practices, poorly planned mining practices and settlement expansion.

59 The Prodoc identified the following main barriers to achieving LDN: (i) a general lack of up-to-date soil data, including soil carbon data in the CARICOM region; (ii) policy fragmentation at the national and regional levels that prevents integrated approaches to sustainable land management (SLM) in decision-making frameworks at the national and CARICOM levels; (iii) weak institutional and legal frameworks; (iv) inadequate levels of public education on SLM and its importance to national and regional development; (v) insufficient human resources and capacity in key areas, in particular soil scientists; (vi) insufficient access to climate smart agriculture tools and methods to guide the identification and implementation of sustainable agricultural practices; (vii) a lack of capacity in proactive planning to address changes in international trade and its implications on the productive landscape.

60 In response to these barriers, a central theme of the project is the strengthening of capacity of soil scientists, government staff, non-state actors and farming communities in advancing LDN in the eight participating countries ensuring they have access to the tools needed to develop the

legislative framework, funding and measures needed to achieve LDN by 2030. The project recognises that through this approach it can also contribute to reducing the vulnerability of farming systems to climate variability and change and promote sustainable alternative livelihoods to diversify the rural economy.

Box 2. Basic information on SOILCARE I

A. **GEF Project ID Number**: 10195
B. **FAO project number**: GCP/SLC/214/GFF – GCP/SLC/215/SCF
C. **Recipient countries**: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia.
D. **Implementing Agency**: FAO
E. **Executing partner/agency**: Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) in Caribbean Small Island Developing States.
F. **GEF-7 Focal Areas**: Land degradation (LD) in particular priorities LD-1-1: sustain agriculture and rangeland systems; LD-1-4: integrated landscapes and resilience; LD-2: enabling environments for land degradation neutrality (LDN) and sustainable land management (SLM); and Climate change adaptation (CCA), in particular CCA-2: mainstreaming climate change adaptation and resilience.
G. **FAO Strategy/operational program**: SO2 (Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner), Outcome 2.1: Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that increase and improve agricultural sector production in a sustainable manner. Country Programming Framework (CPF): Outcome 3: Improved management of natural resources (rangeland, agricultural land, water and forest) at national and community level; Outcome 4: Improved livelihood resilience of targeted populations.
H. **Date of GEF CEO endorsement**: 23 September 2021
I. **Project implementation start date:** 24 November 2021
J. **Project total budget:** USD 33,953,021
K. **GEF grant amount**: USD 8,155,205
L. **Total co-funding amount**: USD 25,797,816 (revised to USD 10,239,178 in 2022).
M. **Project end date:** 23 November 2025
N. **Development/Project objective**: To Strengthen Caribbean SIDS with the necessary tools for adopting policies, measures and reforming legal and institutional frameworks to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and Climate Resilience.
O. **Main components**: 1) Updating of Soil Information and Data as a Basis of Strengthening LDN and SLM Processes; 2) Addressing the Drivers of Land Degradation Through the Rehabilitation of Land and Soil Degraded Areas; 3) Resilience Building to Land Degradation, Natural Disasters and Climate Change through Climate Smart Agriculture and Drought Risk Management; 4) Enhancement of Food Systems and Alternative Livelihoods; 5) Mainstreaming SLM and Sustainable Soil Management (SSM), Strengthening Knowledge Management, Enhanced Training and Capacity Development, the Building of Financial Capability to Implement SLM, the Regional LDN Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation
P. **Date of Mid-Term Review (MTR)**: 01 November 2024 to 31 January 2025.

61 To these ends, the **project's objective** is *to strengthen Caribbean SIDS with the necessary tools for adopting policies, measures and best practices and support review of legal and institutional frameworks to achieve climate-resilient LDN*. The following five components and their expected outcomes (results) were adopted in the Prodoc to achieve this objective:

- **Component 1 (C1)**: Updating of soil information and data to strengthen LDN and SLM processes. **Expected outcome 1**: Caribbean countries use soil data to make informed decisions and contribute to regional and global soil and climate knowledge systems.
- **Component 2 (C2)**: Addressing the drivers of land degradation through the rehabilitation of land and soil degraded areas [through] the promotion of integrated landscape management and restoration and the identification and implementation of livelihood alternatives for communities. **Expected outcome 2**: Land and soil degraded areas in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia are rehabilitated, ecosystem services restored, and sustainable livelihoods built.
- **Component 3 (C3)**: Resilience building to land degradation, natural disasters and climate change through climate smart agriculture and drought risk management**. Expected outcome 3**: Soil productivity restored through climate smart agriculture model farms established on selected landscapes in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, and St. Lucia, and applied regionally.
- **Component 4 (C4)**: Enhancement of food systems and alternative livelihoods through the promotion of innovations in agriculture and livestock production systems and mobilisation of the private sector through the establishment of the LDN Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). **Expected outcome 4**: Food production systems and alternative livelihood options implemented with innovative technologies and private sector support are more resilient and adapted to climate change in Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica and St. Lucia.
- **Component 5 (C5)**: Mainstreaming SLM and sustainable soil management (SSM), strengthening knowledge management, enhanced training and capacity development, the building of financial capability to Implement SLM, the regional LDN strategy and monitoring and evaluation **Expected outcomes**: **5.1:** Regional institutional capacity development and training programme established; **5.2**: Knowledge management, technical assistance and communication on SLM and SSM strengthened and enhanced; **5.3**: Climate resilient SLM and regional LDN strategy integrated into Caribbean Community regional policy frameworks, decision-making processes and national planning processes; **5.4**: New investment and financing in SLM and SSM with private and public sectors secured; **5.5**: A gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework established and guiding project planning and implementation.

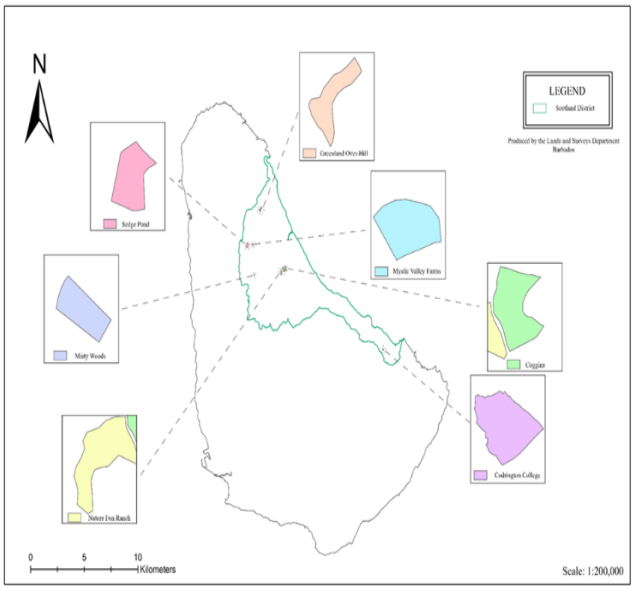
62 The project's intervention sites selected for C2-C4 have undergone some changes since their inclusion in the Prodoc in 2021 in order to meet the selection criteria for: (i) C2: the restoration of degraded hot spots, which will be promoted at eight (8) pilot sites selected; (ii) C3: development of climate smart agriculture (CSA) to enhance resilience to the effects of climate variability and change, which will be promoted at six (6) pilot sites; (iii) C4: promotion of sustainable and diversified livelihoods with the private sector, which will cover 11 pilot sites. The current pilot sites in the seven participating countries are shown in figures 1-7 below. A&B is excluded because it is only participating in component 1 of the project.

63 The project's duration is four years (24/11/2021 to 23/11/2025) and has total budget of USD 33,953,021 of which **USD 8,155,205 is provided by GEF** as a grant and USD 25,797,816 in the form of in-kind co-finance provided by all participating countries. The executing agency (EA) of

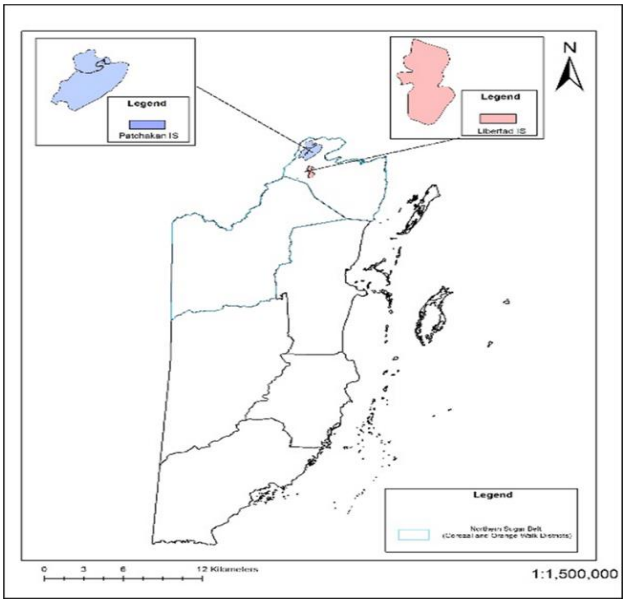
the project is the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM), which became officially recognised as intergovernmental organisation (IGO) in 2024. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) assumes the role of GEF's implementing agency (IA).

64 A regional project steering committee (PSC) has been established to bring together the UNCCD focal points (FPs) from all eight participating countries, soil scientists and other stakeholders. Its mandate is to oversee the project's planning, implementation and results in accordance with the provisions prescribed in the Prodoc. Meanwhile, day-to-day operations are managed by a project management unit (PMU) led by a project manager (PM) who reports to PISLM's executive board. To support country-based operations, the PMU has established project assistants (PAs), who are government-nominated staff who coordinate projects operations in their respective countries.

Figures 1-2: Location of the project sites in Barbados and Belize

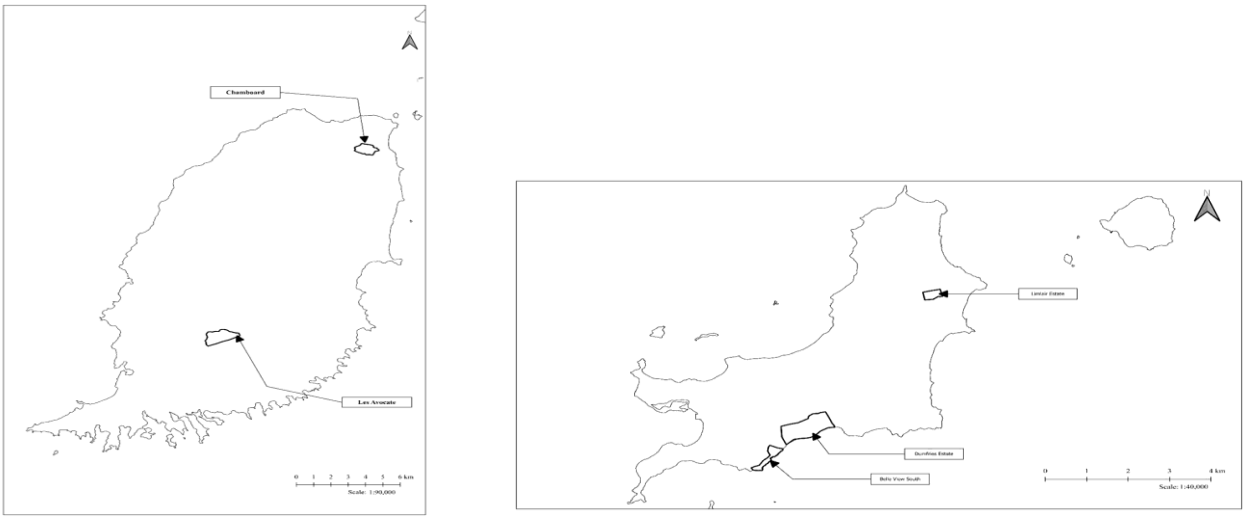


Source and copyright: Lands and Surveys Department.



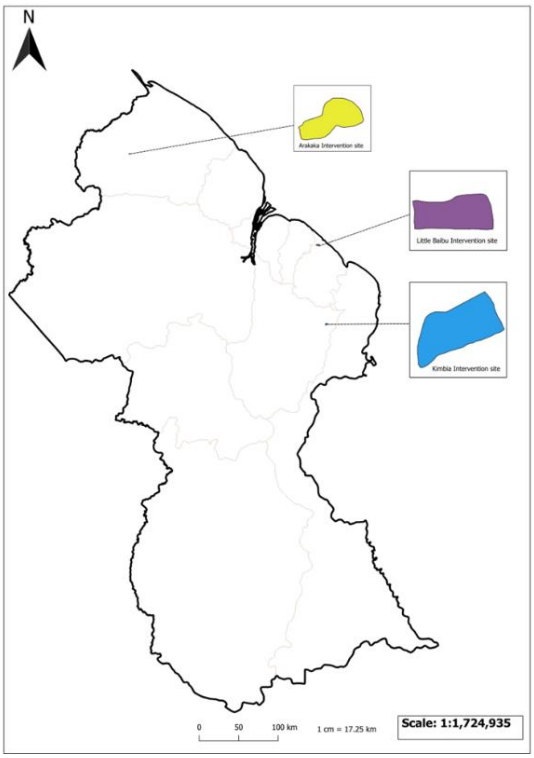
Source and copyright: SIRDI.

Figure 3: Location of the project sites in Grenada and Carriacou island



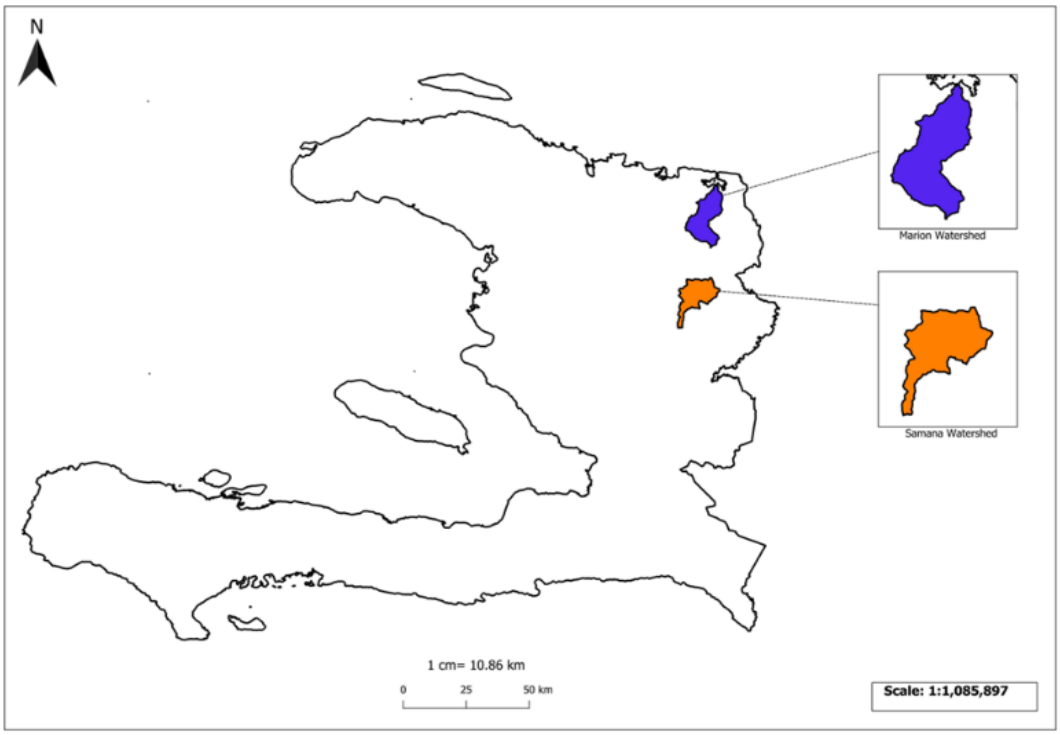
Source and copyright: Government of Grenada.

Figures 4-5: Location of the project sites in Guyana



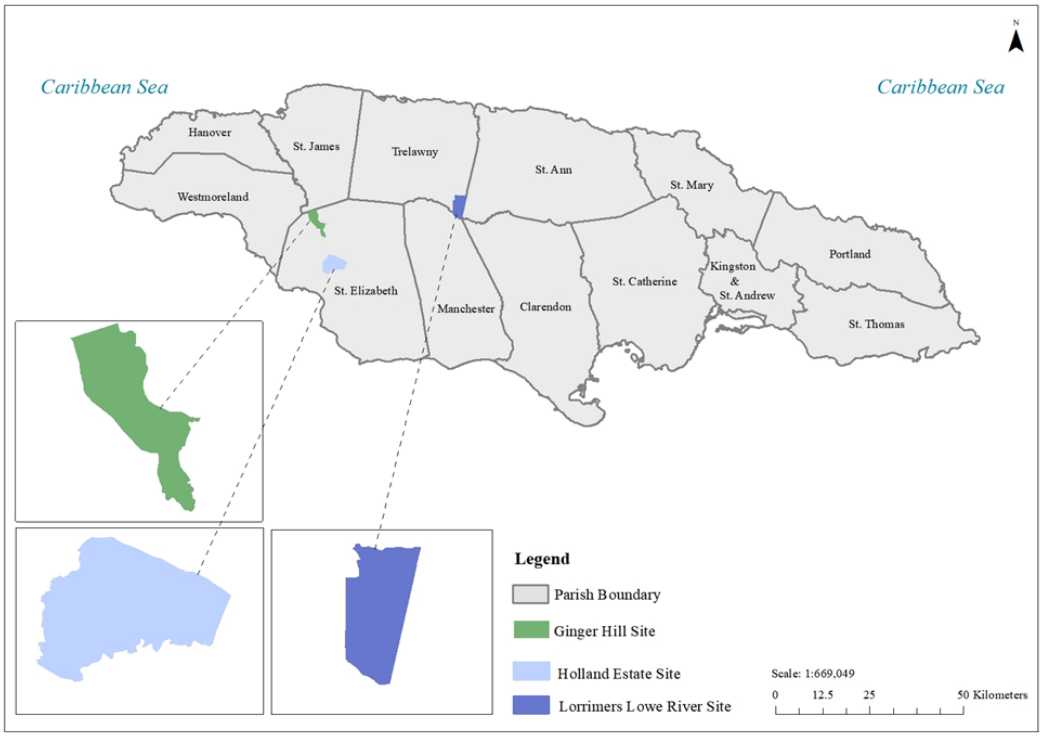
Source and copyright: NAREI, Guyana

Figure 5: Location of the project sites in Haiti



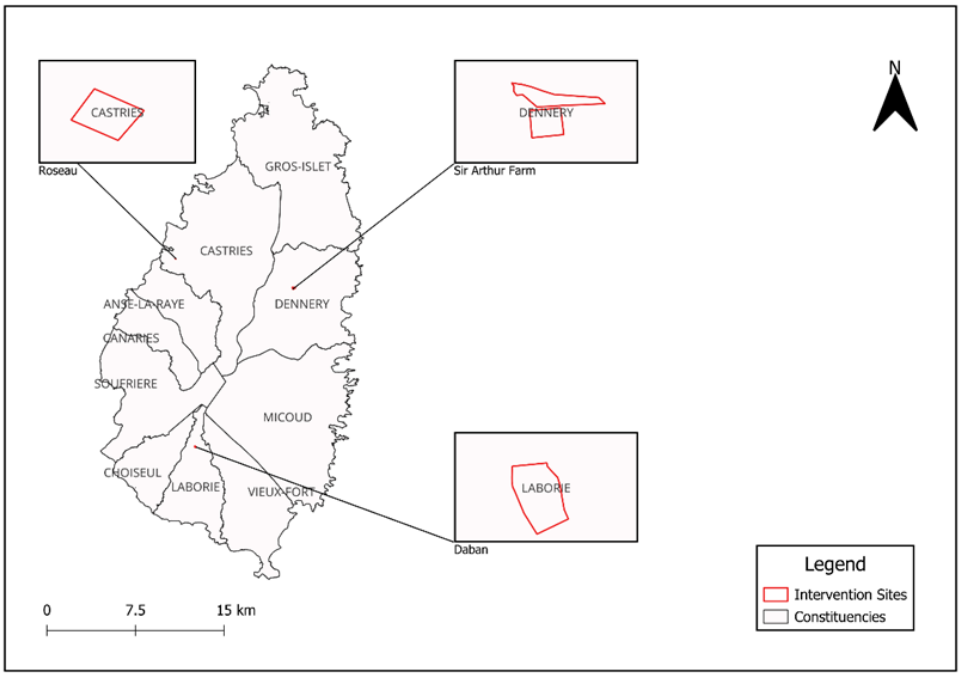
Source and copyright: Government of Haiti.

Figure 6: Location of the project sites in Jamaica



Source and copywrite: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, Jamaica.
Note: Ginger Hill and Lowe River are government sites designed to benefit from SOILCARE I inputs.

Figure 7: Location of the project sites in St. Lucia



Source and copyright: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Rural Development, St Lucia.
Note: the original site at Choiseul was changed to Darban in 2024.

3. Theory of change

65 The Theory of Change (ToC) included in the Prodoc was subject to a review by the MTR team during the inception phase and presented in the Inception Report, cleared by FAO on 09/12/2024. In the field and synthesis phases the ToC was revised again following feedback from stakeholders and the changes to the project's intervention sites confirmed in mid-2024. The second revised version of the ToC can be found in Appendix 8b together with a copy of the original ToC in Appendix 8a.

66 The results of the participatory analysis of the ToC are summarised as follows:

- Overall, there is consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that the barriers presented in the ToC remain the same as those in the Prodoc;
- The responses (in terms of expected outputs) have been fine-tuned to reflect more clearly the main actions the project has been implementing, or which are foreseen to be implemented in 2025. This includes the latest data on the 25 pilot sites that have been selected for C2-C4 following the Drivers, Pressures, Statues, Impacts and Responses (DPSIR) framework analysis conducted in 2023 and validated by all seven participating countries in 2024.
- The ToC should retain the specification of the immediate and final expected outcomes of the project as proposed in the first revised version, but be more specific so that they relate only to the eight participating countries and clarify the achievements expected by the end of the project and the longer-term final outcomes expected from all five components together with an indicative timeline of when they are expected to be achieved in the period 2025 to 2030.
- The inclusion of risks, assumptions, and cross-cutting objectives (gender, environmental and social safeguards) is accepted and should cross-cut the whole of ToC and that regular review of the project's gender focus, risk management and application of results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should support learning and guide decision-making to deliver effective results (outcomes) in line with the Prodoc.

67 The ToC will be subject to a final review prior to submission of the final MTR report to ensure the ToC has fully implemented a participatory approach throughout the MTR process.

4 Key findings from the MTR questions

4.1 Relevance

MTR question 1 – *Is the project relevant and coherent?*

Finding 1. The project's outcomes and objectives remain highly relevant to all participating countries at the regional and national level; although in Haiti, this is only possible in the Northern region due to the current unstable political and security situation in other areas in the country. Commitments to achieving outcomes under C1 and C5 enjoy the highest political backing through CARICOM's Council on Trade and Economic Development (COTED) for Agriculture and Environment and are seen as prerequisites to achieving outcomes 2 to 4.

Finding 2: The project aligns strongly with (i) GEF-7 Focal Areas, in particular those linked to biodiversity conservation, combatting the effects of climate change and sustainable land management; (ii) FAO's Strategic Objectives, (iii) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which not only includes SDG 15.3, but also targets under SDGs 2, 12, 13, 14 and 17. Meanwhile, complementarity with other relevant interventions funded by GEF and FAO is mixed. On the one hand there is evidence the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub established in PISLM will be integrated into the global project funded by GEF, "*SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub*" managed by UNEP. Similarly, promotion of partnerships is evident through the creation of the Caribbean Soil Support Group (CSSG), the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARSOLAN) and the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS) to link up with the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN). However, coherence with other GEF-funded projects and FAO's Technical Cooperation Programmes in the Caribbean was limited by the lack of a suitable coordination platform between FAO-SLC and PISLM.

4.1.1 Strategic relevance of the project's objectives and expected outcomes (components 1-5)

68 The project's strategic relevance remains high at all levels. At the sub-national and national levels, the project's interface with government, farmers and land managers directly supports the transition to more sustainable and resilient SLM/SSM and climate smart agriculture (CSA). The **project's strategic relevance is highly satisfactory** for the following reasons:

- **At the sub-regional level**: it directly supports the PISLM to strengthen its strategic partnership with all the member states of CARICOM on combatting land degradation in the Caribbean to achieve LDN by 2030. To this end the project directly supports all eight participating countries achieve their national pledges to UNCCD, in particular in relation to meeting the targets established under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.3. More details on this can be found in sub-section 4.1.3. In addition, the project supports biodiversity conservation and adaptive management under C2-C4, thus contributing directly to advancing the Global Biodiversity Framework 2022-2030 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). Similarly, the project's aim to capture around 5 million tonnes equivalent of carbon (tCO2eq)

compared to the business as usual (BAU) scenario of 143 MtCO2eq., together with specific measures to advance adaptation to climate change (ACC) to build resilient communities fully supports the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) of each country under the Paris Agreement (2015) of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC). In summary the project contributes directly to targets set under three UN Conventions.

- **At the national level:** the project directly supports the seven participating countries under C2-C4 achieve their common goal of improving food security and nutrition, which is a central theme in their respective national Vision/Horizon Plans. Moreover, the project's support on mainstreaming SLM, SSM and CSA in regional policy frameworks (Outcome 5.3), will be binding in each country. Consequently, national policy frameworks mentioned in the Prodoc (pp 27-28), will have to be reformed to align with regional legislation adopted. However, targets set in the Results Matrix compared to the following national indicators taken from the UNCCD website on land degradation baselines (2015)[6] and the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Process (LDN-TSP) completed by 2022 to establish voluntary pledges on LDN by 2030[7] indicate **there are some errors in the project's design** that would benefit from review by the PSC:
  - **Barbados**: Not reported to UNCCD. However, Barbados has pledged to rehabilitate 8,757 ha of degraded land by 2030 (baseline), especially in and around the National Park, croplands and grassland. The project target of 6,500 ha is equivalent to 74.2% of this pledge is to be covered by SOILCARE I, which the MTR team considers is very ambitious.
  - **Belize**: 182,580 ha of land area was reported as degraded in 2015 (baseline) and 171,326 ha in 2019. The project's commitment to rehabilitate and improve a total of 8,000 ha represents 0.044% of the baseline is to be covered by SOILCARE I.
  - **Grenada**: No data reported to UNCCD. However, Grenada has pledged to restore and improve 1,983 ha of degraded land by 2030, especially degraded croplands. The target in the Prodoc is to cover 7,000 ha, which represents 353% more than the country's baseline, indicating the project's target is overstated, especially when considering the country has pledged to rehabilitate and improve 1,983 ha by 2030.
  - **Guyana**: 3,822,167 ha (17.78%) of land area was reported degraded in 2015 (baseline) and 3,415,857 ha (15.9%) in 2019. The project's commitment to restore 8,000 ha represents 0.0021% of the baseline degraded area.
  - **Haiti**: 1,484,933 ha (53.9%) of total land area was reported degraded in 2015 (baseline), and 633,880 ha (23%) in 2019. The project's target to rehabilitate and improve 12,000 ha represents 0.008% of the baseline degraded area. In the light of the current political instability in Haiti, the project's target should relate to the total degraded area in the two watersheds selected, as well as its national contribution.

[6] UNCCD (2020). Proportion of degraded land over total land area 2015-2019.

[7] UNCCD (2024). Grenada: National voluntary LDN targets.

- **Jamaica**: 57,378 ha (5.22%) of total land area was reported degraded in 2015 (baseline) and 84,748 ha of land in 2019. Jamaica has pledged to restore and improve 63,116 ha by 2030 (baseline plus 10%). The project's target of rehabilitating and improving 7,000 ha under C4 represents 12.2% of the baseline total and 11.1% of the country's pledge to UNCCD by 2030.
- **Saint Lucia**: 210 ha were reported degraded in 2015 equivalent to 0.34% of the country's land area (baseline) and 524 ha (0.85%) in 2019. The project's target of 6,500 ha represents 10.5% of the country's total land area, which indicates an error in the target set in the Prodoc.

69 Other caveats identified affecting relevance also relate the design weaknesses (see more on this in subsection 4.5.1) and a lack of adequate planning in the inception phase between November 2021 and June 2022. In summary they are: (i) the project did not foresee the establishment of national coordination mechanisms to support the upscaling of achievements and good practices identified in the 25 pilot sites selected for C2-C4 (see figures 1-7). In the vast majority of participating CSIDS the outputs and outcomes foreseen are very ambitious and do not appear to have taken into account the risk analysis in the Prodoc, or the general lack of capacity, resources and logistical means in all participating countries to deliver them in just four years of operations; (ii) the amount of GEF funds and time committed to achieve expected outcomes appears is relatively small compared to the outputs to be delivered under C1-C5, especially as the soil data and maps are supposed to inform decisions on the responses to be adopted under C2-C4; (iii) activities under C4 aim to support the improvement of livelihoods and their diversification with the support of the private sector. However, the project lacks adequate inclusion of stakeholders from government and private institutions to provide guidance on enterprise development and finance of LDN.

4.1.2. Alignment with GEF strategic priorities

70 The MTR team found the project's main outputs and outcomes remain fully aligned with the following strategic priorities of GEF-7:[8]

- **Land Degradation (LD):** advance LDN with a view to maintaining and improving ecosystem services, land productivity, food security, and to increase the resilience of the land and the populations dependent on it. As such the project continues to align strongly with the following Focal Areas for LD: (i) enhance on-the-ground implementation of LDN, and (ii) create an enabling environment to support LDN implementation globally.
- **Climate Change (CC):** LD should support the achievement of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement. To this end GEF-funded projects should be encouraged to promote synergies across its focal areas to support adaptation to climate variability and change to foster innovative project designs, technology transfer, and ability to attract private sector co-financing.
- **Biodiversity (BD):** LD should directly support efforts to reduce the direct drivers of biodiversity loss through synergies with projects associated with other multilateral environmental agreements.

[8] GEF (2020), Overview of GEF-7 Global Context and Strategic Priorities.

4.1.3. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, FAO's Strategic Objectives and Country Programming Frameworks 2013-2017 and 2018-2022.

71 The Prodoc includes an analysis of the project's support to achieving the targets under SDG-15.3. However, the MTR team found the project also directly supports all eight participating countries contributes achieve the following SDGs and targets, which confirm direct linkages with goals under the United National Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). They are:

- SDG 2 (Zero hunger), Target 2.4: *By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, help maintain ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and progressively improve land and soil quality*.
- SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), Target 12.2: *By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources*, and Target 12.8: *By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature*.
- SDG 13 (Climate Action), in particular Target 13.5: *Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries* and Target 13.b: *Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities*.
- SDG 14 (Life below Water), notably Targets 14.1, *Reduce marine pollution, in particular from land-based activities;* Target 14.2, *protect and restore ecosystems, in particular coastal ecosystems;* Target 14.5 *conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas.*
- SDG 15 (Life on Land), in addition to Target 15.3 (UNCCD), the project also supports meeting Target 15.5: *Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent extinction of threatened species.*
- SDG 17 (global partnerships), in particular Target 17.6: *Knowledge sharing and cooperation for access to science, technology and innovation* and Target 17.G *Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development.*

72 The SOILCARE I project also remains aligned with **FAO's Strategic Objective 2** (SO-2) to increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner and fully supports FAO's commitment to achieving Outcome 2.1: *Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that increase and improve agricultural sector production in a sustainable manner.*

73 Similarly, the project aligns with FAO's Regional Strategic Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean" (2020–2030). More specifically it aligns with its commitments to addressing food security and nutrition, adaptation to climate change, promotion of sustainable agricultural systems and support to sustainable land management.

4.1.4 Complementarity with existing interventions being implemented by UN agencies, or funded by international donors and non-government organisations

74 The Prodoc provides details of where synergies with other GEF and non-GEF-funded projects should be established under outcome 5.3: *Building synergies and strengthening cooperation between SOILCARE Phase 1*. The MTR team found, however, that the project's level of coherence with other projects has been mixed to date. On the one hand, a formal synergy has been established with the project "Demonstration of a Caribbean Mechanism Toward Establishment of a SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub" (GEF ID. 10992), which started in January 2024 (implemented by UNEP) and which will integrate SOILCARE's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub in 2025. Similarly, in Jamaica a synergy has been established with the project, "Soil Fertility Mapping" funded by the Government of Jamaica and a grant from Kingdom of Morrocco (INRA) facilitating coordination on GIS database development, soil analysis and data use to guide decision-making on agricultural policy. New training foreseen under this project in 2025 will aim to carry out four field trials on crop selection according to soil fertility and its nutrient regime (involving sweet potato, turmeric, watermelon and kidney beans). Also in Jamaica, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining is committed to establishing complementarity with the, "JENESYS Jamaica soil regeneration project" in areas such as training and sharing of best practices with the pilot sites selected under C4. Finally, in Guyana, the development of the soil laboratory in the National Agricultural Research and Extension institute (NAREI) is being coordinated with the Sustainable Agricultural Development Programme (SADP), funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IAD).

75 Also significant is the project's commitment to developing sub-regional partnerships between CSIDS. One of the most significant is the development of the Caribbean Soil Support Group (CSSG) in 2024, which brings together a wide range of stakeholders engaged in SLM/SSM from regional institutions including CARICOM/COTED, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), and UWI, from national government institutions, academia, civil society organisations, farmer organisations and the private sector. Likewise, the creation of the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARSOLAN) brings soil scientists together from the Caribbean to establish standard operating procedures (SOP) and quality assurance in all soil laboratories in the Caribbean. Moreover, CARSOLAN facilitates the development of wider partnerships with the Latin America network of soil laboratories (LATSOLAN), the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and the Global Soil Partnership (GSP). Also significant is the creation of the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS), which will partner with the Regional Soil Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean (SISLAC) to strengthen the Global Soil Information System (GLOSIS).

76 On the other hand, coherence with other relevant GEF-funded projects, or with FAO's own programmes, notably its Technical Cooperation Programmes operating in CSIDS and which are promoting adaptation to climate change with farmer associations was not evident. Indeed, the MTR team did not identify adequate coordination platforms are in place between FAO-SLC and PISLM to identify projects and areas of cooperation where synergies could be explored.

4.2 Effectiveness

MTR question 2 – *To what extent has the project delivered on its outputs, outcomes and objectives?*

Finding 3*:* The project's effectiveness has been satisfactory under C1. The project has delivered some important outputs that confirm the project is likely to fulfil outcome 1 before the project's closure in November 2025. However, it is unlikely the project can achieve its main objectives before the project's closure.

Finding 4: Progress in responding to land degradation through SLM/SSM actions under C2, development of CSA under C3, and support to the development of sustainable and resilient livelihoods have all experienced significant delays due to a lack of resources in the participating ministries where some staff stated they lack capacity and the logistical means to provide the level of support expected. This has not been aided by the general lack of a land policy framework to work within to support the planning of the SLM/SSM actions. In addition, stakeholders from the public and private sectors are not represented to guide business development and finance to achieve the outputs and outcomes foreseen under C4.

4.2.1 Achievement of project outputs and expected outcomes under components 1 – 5

77 The results matrix in Appendix 5 provides a summary of progress to 31 December 2024. All findings have been triangulated with a combination of primary and secondary data obtained in the field and synthesis phases. The MTR's main findings on progress to achieving the outputs and outcomes expected under C1-C5 in the Prodoc are provided in the following paragraphs.

78 **Level of achievement of Outcome 1:** *Caribbean countries use soil data to make informed decisions and contribute to regional and global soil and climate knowledge systems.* **The project is making satisfactory progress on achieving this outcome, but is behind schedule. Later than planned soil sampling, analysis and mapping in Belize, Guyana and Jamaica means planned outputs will not be completed in these countries until mid-2025. Consequently, there will be very little time for these countries to take informed decisions on the soil information developed prior to the project's closure in November 2025. In Haiti, the problems of political instability and insecurity means the outcome is no longer realistic and needs to refocus on completing soil data and maps for the Northern region only where security is stable**.

79 Triangulated evidence confirms the project has experienced delays of over 12 months in achieving this outcome due to five main factors:

- Customs controls in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) resulted in delays of around six months before a clearance mechanism was put in place to manage the importation of soil samples from CSIDS.
- Slow procurement and distribution of soil laboratory equipment and materials for all eight participating countries has set back the modernisation of national soil laboratories to 2025, signifying delays of up to 12 months in completing this output.
- The subregion has experienced several high impact weather and climatic events since 2022. Most recent, has been Hurricane Beryl in July 2024, which severely affected the project sites in Grenada and St. Lucia.
- The rise in insecurity, violence and political unrest has forced the project to refocus on applying locally-led initiatives with local communities who maintain control of the Samana and Marion watersheds.
- All participating countries face internal capacity and resource challenges, given the project's dependency on government staff leading the project's implementation in their respective countries. These challenges were not adequately identified during the project's design phase and demonstrate the difficulties PISLM faces in fulfilling its duties as an IGO in the subregion.

80 Despite these challenges the MTR team is satisfied that the regional approach applied to developing new land and soil databases in all eight participating countries has been fully justified to achieve outcome 1. This is demonstrated by the progress achieved in delivering the following strategic outputs to 31/12/2024:

81 **Output 1.1.1**: *Caribbean Soil Support Group for SSM/SLM established and collaborating, with the Latin American and Caribbean Soil Partnership (ASLAC)*: ten of the CARICOM Member States have appointed their focal points for the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) and the establishment of the abovementioned CSSG as an organ of PISLM to provide technical support and guidance on promoting SLM, SSM and CSA in the subregion. Progress to date includes the nomination of the CSSG Chair, the holding of quarterly meetings to guide the production of the Action Plan for the CSSG to be launched in 2025 and reaching agreement with the Latin America and Caribbean Soil Partnership (ASLAC) that the CSSG Chair is recognised officially as the Vice-Chair of ASLAC for the Caribbean sub-region. The CSSG has also contributed to strengthening relations between PISLM and CARICOM's autonomous institution CARDI.

82 **Output 1.1.2:** *National soil data including soil organic carbon reviewed and updated supported by integrated field sampling, laboratory analysis and remote sensing in support of local, national and regional planning and international reporting. Digital soil sampling strategy has been implemented*. This output has progressed at different levels among the eight participating countries with four countries (A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia) in the process of finalising their national soil databases and maps and three (Belize, Guyana and Jamaica) still engaged in the soil sampling phase. For Haiti an alternative approach is needed due to the current political situation and high levels of insecurity make it impossible to carry out a national soil mapping exercise. Overall, the MTR team identified the following main achievements:

- All eight countries established their national soil data inventory (Step 1 in the Prodoc);
- Seven countries have successfully identified the sampling sites required to generate the country-specific soil information to be integrated into the global soil database known as GLOSIS (Step 2).

- Soil sampling and ground truthing has been completed in six countries (Step 3), although in in the case of Belize the soil samples have not yet been sent to UWI in T&T for analysis. Meanwhile, in Guyana the national soil sampling exercise has been reprogrammed to start in early 2025, while in Haiti no sampling has been possible due to the reasons cited above. In this case interviewees suggested the exercise may need to be downsized to cover the Northern region of the country where soil sampling is possible. As a result, PISLM and FAO need to identify a suitable solution, such as a regional sampling strategy instead. A key finding from Step 3 is that first round of soil sampling held in St. Lucia had to be repeated, but this served as a test case for effective quality assurance to be applied in the sampling process. Moreover, it is understood that Barbados used the test case to plan more effectively and efficiently its sampling approach. For example, human resource needs were identified according to the number of sampling points and tablets were used to record all the sampling data collected, thus saving time and avoiding errors in data collection. Stakeholders in Guyana are interested to apply a similar approach, given nine soil sampling teams have been identified to complete the national sampling exercise. Interestingly, PISLM and UWI have plans to film this approach in Guyana to support stakeholders in Haiti and other CARICOM countries conduct similar exercises.
- Analysis of disturbed and undisturbed samples from four countries (A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia) has been completed with training inputs provided by GSP/FAO to support UWI's own soil analytical capacity and networking (Step 4). The MTR team understands the soil information produced has not revealed any major errors when compared to historical data compiled in most cases over 50 years ago. Moreover, soil information now includes data on soil bulk density for the first time, which all stakeholders consider important to assess the state of soil compaction on organic carbon storage and to improve forecasting on flooding and drought risks.
- New soil maps are in the process of finalisation with FAO support for A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia and will be available for uploading into the CARSIS within PISLM in early 2025. The soil map layers being produced cover, (a) soil organic carbon, which will facilitate assessment on overall soil quality and capacity to sustain ecosystem services; (b) land cover and land cover change to detect changes in land degradation, vegetation, habitat fragmentation, and land conversion rates in line with the needs of the Global Mechanism of UNCCD; (c) land productivity changes based on remote sensing of the net differentiated vegetation index (NVDI).

83 The implementation of these five steps have revealed two important caveats that were not addressed adequately in the project's design phase. First, the above steps have demonstrated the high level of dependency there is in the subregion on external expertise from FAO to oversee the completion of the national soil mapping exercises. Second, in the light of this dependency more effort should have been given to providing grants for interns and soil mapping specialists from the project's scholarship programme.

84 **Output 1.1.3**: *Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARSOLAN) established based on the strengthening of national soil laboratories under the standards of GLOSOLAN*: all participating

countries, plus the other seven Member States of CARICOM have nominated a focal point from their national soil laboratories to establish CARSOLAN. The training of members of CARSOLAN has included the participation of selected focal points to participate in a Latin American Network of Soil Laboratories (LATSOLAN) workshop on quality control measures for soil laboratories and training on spectrophotometry to assess nitrogen and phosphorus levels in soils. This also facilitated the nomination of the CARSOLAN acting Chair (from Guyana) for the LATSOLAN Steering Committee. Despite these developments and the holding of quarterly meetings, the terms of reference (ToR) on how CARSOLAN should operate in the subregion the project was unable to secure a quorum in December 2024 to adopt the ToR.

85 The SOP training has been conducted by UWI's soil science team based at St. Augustine Campus, based on a Letter of Agreement (LoA) signed with PISLM. The MTR team had the opportunity to participate in the training session on the application of SOP held on 09/12/2024 (see figures 8 and 9). Initial feedback indicates training was delayed because UWI did not have adequate capacity to conduct the training as planned. However, support from the GSP has helped rectify this issue and the vast majority of participants stated high levels of satisfaction with the training provided so far, because it has enabled soil scientists from the participating countries to come together to learn and apply: (i) techniques to develop more accurate soil measurements (see figure 8); (ii) procedures on how soil samples should be collected; (iii) improved methods to interpret the results of physical and chemical analysis associated with soil fertility and nutrient management, which has traditionally only focused on only identifying chemical input needs; (iv) how to apply quality assurance in their laboratories; (v) how to identify a standardised protocol to achieve internationally recognised soil laboratory certification (see figure 9).

Figures 8 and 9: Training of soil scientists at UWI with support from GLOSOLAN.

Source: MTR, 2024.

Figures 10 and 11: Development of a state-of-the-art soil laboratory in NAREI, Guyana.

Source: MTR, 2024.

86 Finally, as part of the project's support to CARSOLAN, the procurement of modern equipment and materials has taken place to support the modernisation of all eight participating soil laboratories. Despite delays in the procurement process, due primarily to bureaucracy and distribution challenges of suppliers, the sub-regional approach has ensured that all participating countries receive the equipment and materials they need to conduct soil analysis, in conformity with new internationally recognised SOP. Moreover, as stated in subsection 4.1.4, the modernisation of the soil laboratory in Guyana in coordination with the SADP project funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is leading to the establishment of a state-of-the-art soil laboratory in the subregion that will serve as an important reference point for PISLM and members of CARSOLAN (see figures 10 an d11).

87 **Output 1.1.4**. *Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS) established and integrated with Regional and Global Soil Information Systems (SISLAC and GLOSIS) and digital mapping capacity built*. The MTR team was informed that the design of the CARSIS has been completed in December 2024, based on an Excel database that will be managed by PISLM. However, CARICOM countries will have to meet in early 2025 to agree on the design and the access protocols to be applied. This appears to be a major sticking point, given each country has different data security laws, or lacks adequate legislation on their use. In addition, the long-term funding of CARSIS still needs to be clarified and agreed upon.

88 **Level of achievement of Outcome 2**: *Land and soil degraded areas in Haiti, Guyana, St. Lucia; Grenada and Barbados are rehabilitated, ecosystem services restored, and sustainable livelihoods built*. **Overall, the project has made moderately unsatisfactory progress on achieving this outcome. Despite progress on completing preparatory activities to identify the 7 pilot sites prioritised for the implementation of SLM/SSM measures, no actual activities have taken place in the five participating countries to date, indicating it will be highly unlikely the project can achieve this outcome in the time remaining**. This assertion is justified from the following findings on outputs 2.1. to 2.4.

89 **Output 2.1.1** *Participatory strategies for rehabilitation and restoration and Intervention plans available and implemented based on the hot and bright spots identified in the land degradation assessment*. Progress in delivering this output largely centres on the production and validation of Drivers, Pressures, Statues, Impacts and Responses (DPSIR) reports which were prepared to assess the drivers-pressures-status-impact-responses in the 25 highly degraded pilot sites considered "hotspots" by the seven countries participating in C2 to C4. The DPSIR framework analysis started in St. Lucia in 2023 and was applied in a highly participatory manner involving national and local stakeholders as well as farmer groups. In total a total of eight degraded pilot sites were identified for SLM/SSM interventions under C2 (see figures 1-7). A summary of the proposed actions (responses) for these sites are provided as follows:

- **Barbados**: (i) Sedge Pond: agroforestry, soil rehabilitation and introduction of drip irrigation are considered priority responses; (ii) Greenland Over Hill: rehabilitation of agro-forestry practices, expansion of rainwater harvesting and storage (RWHS) and composting; (iii)

Coggins Estate: soil rehabilitation, introduction of agro-forestry practices, expansion of RWHS, development of composting and integrated pest management).

- **Grenada**: (i) Les Avocat (see figure 12): river channel management to improve water quality and quantity, clearing of bamboo invasive species and replacement with indigenous agro-forestry, sale of bamboo to the construction industry and artisanal groups; (ii) Bellevue South in Carriacou Island (see figure 13), where gully plugging, backfilling and check dams, irrigation ponds, reforestation and agroforestry).
- **Guyana:** Arakaka (Region 1), where soil reclamation, and introduction of a land use policy to control mining and logging are recommended.
- **Haiti**: Samana River watershed, where responses include reafforestation, establishment of plant nurseries, agroforestry, beekeeping and poultry farming to support alternative livelihoods, integrate poultry litter in composting
- **St. Lucia**: Darban where CSA, agroforestry and timber management are proposed.

Figures 12-13: images of land degradation at Les Avocat and Bellevue South, Grenada

Source: MTR (2024).

90 Interviews with selected stakeholders in all five countries confirm the proposed responses fully meet their expectations. Indeed, in the case of Grenada stakeholders confirmed that the importance of restoring Les Avocat site has grown significantly since the devastation caused by Hurricane Beryl in July 2024, citing major difficulties in maintaining water quality that is used by thousands of residents in parts of the capital, St. Georges. Nonetheless, although the DPSIR process produced concept notes, and an outline of the workflow and budget required at each of the sites, the MTR team found the elaboration of detailed site plans and targets for the SLM/SSM/CSA activities under C2-C4 had not been completed by 31/12/2024. Triangulated evidence indicates the project is facing two challenges in this regard. First, there are capacity, funding and logistical constraints in each country to oversee the adoption and implementation of these site plans. Second, PISLM does not have the staff needed at the country level to oversee and guide this process in a timely and comprehensive manner with the national project steering committee members.

91 **Output 2.1.2:** *Community propagation centres established and/or upgraded to Facilitate the Provision of Plant Materials and Soil Amendments*. Currently, no community-based propagation centres have been established, or rehabilitated to date. This is primarily due to the lack of site plans in place clarifying where they should be located, the type and number of plants to be produced and details on how they will be maintained (including water supply). For example, at Les Avocats, the indications from stakeholders are that the propagation centres should produce

a mix of plants that include native trees, shrubs and grasses that are low water absorbing and have high root growth. This example, also confirms that the propagation centres should focus heavily on native varieties on the grounds they are better adapted to growing back after hurricanes that introduced exotic varieties. In a second example, the vast majority of stakeholders emphasised the need for propagation centres to be designed in accordance with the needs of CSIDS. They cited the need for shade nets, structures that can be dismantled quickly in advance of a hurricane and development of secure seed banks managed at the family, or community level.

92 **Output 2.1.3.** *Integrated landscape management (ILM), including analog forest and agroforestry systems implemented in target areas in the participating states*. The absence of site plans made it difficult to determine how far land rehabilitation interventions are incorporating analog forest approaches to recover biodiversity and ecosystem services, or whether agro-forestry measures are designed to increase biodiversity. However, in general, the MTR team found **insufficient attention has been given to recognising, valuing and integrating local knowledge and technologies,** especially of elders and IPs who are conserving native and adapted varieties of plants that have culinary, medicinal, cultural, cosmetic, etc. uses, which are essential to supporting the development of alternative livelihoods foreseen under C4. For example, in Jamaica, the MTR team was informed elders are major knowledge holders of a wide variety of sweet potatoes and adapted varieties of cassava, while in A&B black pineapple was mentioned.

93 **Output 2.1.4:** *Cost-Benefit Analysis (goods and ecosystem services) of the restoration strategies are conducted, documented and shared as a basis for scaling out to other locations in participating States and to other SIDS*. This output is foreseen in the final stages of the project when data are available on the restoration process. However, an important finding from the interview process in the countries visited is that some important tools developed by FAO have not been promoted to date. For example, stakeholders were not aware of FAO's EX-ACT tool (Environmental externalities Accounting Tool) to track the outcomes of SLM/SSM (and CSA) on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Similarly, an introduction to the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) adopted by FAO in many GEF-funded projects has not been conducted to assess its use by GIS experts to support the DPSIR approach (especially on responses).

94 **Level of achievement of Outcome 3:** *Soil productivity restored through climate smart agriculture model farms established on selected landscapes in Guyana, St. Lucia, Haiti, Grenada, and Barbados and applied regionally*. **The project has made moderately unsatisfactory progress on achieving this outcome. Despite progress on completing preparatory activities to identify the 6 pilot sites prioritised for climate smart agriculture (CSA), no actual activities have taken place in the five participating countries to 31/12/2024. It is therefore highly unlikely the project can achieve this outcome in the time remaining**. This assertion is justified from the following findings on outputs 3.1. to 3.4.

95 **Output 3.1**: *Climate change implications assessed and validated at the farm and landscape levels and the results used and promoted to support climate resilient and viable/ productive farming systems and value chain integration at the regional level.* Through the DPSIR framework analysis mentioned under outcome 2 above, the six pilot sites prioritised for CSA were reviewed with the

support of a climate change risk assessment and a Land Capability Analysis (on slopes, soil depth, limiting factors in the soils, etc.). The following provides a summary of the indicative responses identified for the six pilot sites by country:

- **Barbados**: Nature Fun Ranch where responses include rehabilitation of paddocks with viable grass species, a plant nursery, increasing water harvesting and storage capacity.
- **Grenada**: (i) Chambord (see figure 12) focusing on land and soil reclamation, composting, organic mulching, swale terracing and grass strips to improve water retention, rainwater harvesting and storage, repair nursery greenhouse to improve productive capacity; (ii) Dumfries-Carriacou promoting land and soil reclamation, compositing, swale terracing, wind breaks, agroforestry, intercropping with resilient crop species and construct and repair wells, training in CSA, plant nursery development and post harvesting techniques.
- **Guyana**: Little Baibu-Region 5 (see figure 13), where responses include mangrove restoration in coastal areas, improve water management for drainage and saltwater intrusion and CSA farm establishment.

Figures 14-15: images of sites selected for CSA model farms in Grenada and Guyana

Source: MTR (2024)

- **Haiti**: Rio Marrion watershed where reforestation, establish plant nursery, climate smart agriculture, organic mulching, composting are recommended.
- **St. Lucia**: Sir Arthur Lewis College-Dennery, proposing conversion of banana farms to alternative cropping systems introducing cocoa, flowers and mushrooms to develop alternative livelihoods, compositing, residue management, graded ditches, channels, waterways to drain and convey water, improve monitoring and law enforcement of Development and Control Authority, as well as modification in the land use and the Physical Planning Act to recognise CSA as a land use sub-category for agriculture.

96 The MTR team identified consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that support on the development of CSA is of high interest at all levels given the growing unpredictability of weather systems and seasonal rainfall, which is drastically affecting yields. Moreover, in the case of Grenada stakeholders confirmed the CSA initiative represents a timely response to the effects of Hurricane Beryl and floods soon after. Similarly in Guyana farmers confirmed the need to manage saltwater creep, tree wind breaks and appropriate technology such as shade needs for producing seedlings and crops. Nevertheless, a consolidated report for C3 covering all five participating countries, or the production of site plans for the model farms have not yet been concluded by the recipient countries together with a procurement plan to install the infrastructure and equipment required

in each model farm. Capacity and logistical constraints appear to be the main reasons behind the delays in each country, although this could not be substantiated in Barbados.

97 **Output 3.2**: *Climate resilience measures integrated into model farms and the information gathered used to form the basis of the regional guidelines which will guide farmers in transitioning to climate smart agriculture production at the regional level.* Progress under this output has mainly focussed on the application of the abovementioned climate risk assessment conducted by a CSA expert recruited by PISLM in 2024 and land capability mapping exercises for each site with inputs provided by FAO. In the case of Haiti these exercises were facilitated by remote workshops. The MTR team understands an introduction to the CSAC tool has also been presented and has generally been well received. For example, during the filed mission the Ministry of Agriculture in Jamaica officially agreed to embrace the CSAC tool.[9] However, although the tool is highly useful in assessing compliance with CSA criteria, **the application does not provide information on how to gain compliance when required**. In general farmers interviewed stated that they would like to have this feature developed in the tool, but also expressed the need for extension services to be able to support them to apply the recommendations provided through the CSAC. In addition, farmers indicated that engagement in the development of CSA farms must fulfil the following prerequisites first: (i) an agreement to guarantee the provision of adequate water resources to develop the CSA; (ii) the provision of appropriate technology that reduces their vulnerability to extreme weather and climatic events; (iii) the ability to draw lessons and identify good practices through site visits to farms (rather than through workshops).

98 In the light of the current delays in implementing the CSA model farms, progress on the drafting of new regional guidelines to guide their development has been slower than planned. Currently, draft guidelines have been prepared in early 2025, but they have not been adopted yet. Moreover, the MTR team found **no concrete evidence to indicate that they will promote CSA as a direct measure to support the implementation of each participating country's National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)** in line with the NDCs and which would encourage the establishment of more coordination between UNCCD and UNFCCC. Finally, the MTR team found that the proposed financing of CSA based on CSAC compliance has not been determined. Although it is understood that the outcome 5.4 is designed to address this by establishing the LDN Funding Mechanism in Dominica, the means to accessing the fund at the farm level has not been clarified.

99 **Output 3.3:** *Climate Smart Agricultural-baseline and marketing strategy designed and applied, and legal agreements established as a basis for scaling out successes, under a gender approach*. The MTR team found no evidence to indicate the project has conducted the baseline and marketing studies required to support and guide the development of the six CSA model farms to be piloted under C3. In particular, the MTR team found that the general lack of representation of enterprise development and agribusiness promotion in the PSC represents a gap in addressing and guiding the delivery of this output. In particular, the project should be taking into account CARICOM's

[9] The Gleaner (2024). Caribbean farmers to embrace innovative Climate-Smart Agriculture Compliance. Available at: https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20241209/caribbean-farmers-embrace-innovative-climate-smart-agriculture-compliance

own assessments on strengthening the agriculture sector[10] and, in addition, identify niche markets for Caribbean food products, especially with tourist and food retail sectors within each CSIDS.

100 **Output 3.4**: *Baselines, indicators and methods for the implementation of climate smart model farmland and landscapes established using the High Nature Value Index (HNVI)*. The MTR team understands that the baselines, indicators and targets for the planned CSA activities will be identified and adopted by the participating Ministries of Agriculture in 2025, where they will become part of the monitoring mandate of their extension services. However, this has been delayed, because the site plans for the CSA interventions had not been completed and adopted to 31/12/2024. In Grenada and St. Lucia this is explained by the dramatic effects of Hurricane Beryl (see figure 12) and floods later in the year. In Guyana and Haiti this is explained by the slower than planned completion of the soil sampling analysis and political instability, respectively.

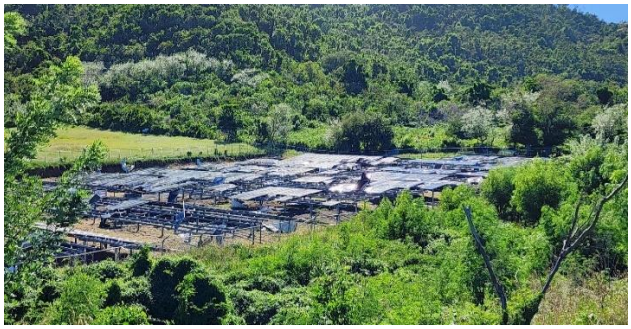
101 **Level of achievement of Outcome 4**: *Food production systems and alternative livelihood options implemented with innovative technologies and private sector support are more resilient and adapted to climate change in Belize, St. Lucia, Carriacou-Grenada, Jamaica and Barbados*. **Progress on achieving this outcome is well behind schedule and it is highly unlikely it can be achieved in the time remaining.** This is substantiated from the following findings on outputs 4.1-4.4.

102 **Output 4.1.** *Land use, food and livelihood systems assessed as a basis for identifying alternative options and innovations and setting a baseline for monitoring as a basis for developing resilient food production systems and alternative livelihood options:* the DPSIR exercise assessed the eleven pilot sites prioritised in seven countries for this output in the abovementioned countries and provided the indicative responses as follows to develop livelihood systems and their diversification:

- **Barbados**: (i) Misty Woods Farm where it was recommended composting, vegetation cover, rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, dam upgrade, and farm management; (ii) Mystic Valley recommending the installation of drip irrigation, RWHS, composting and improvements in crop rotation; (iii) Codrington College where improvements in greenhouse and organic farming techniques are proposed.
- **Belize**: (i) Patchakan (within the sugarcane belt) where the responses include crop diversification, conversion of sugar cane plots into fruit orchards and agroforestry, development of composting and green manure application; (ii) Libertad (within the sugarcane belt) recommending improvements in field management, reduction of sugar cane production to build up soil aggregation with organic compost and manure, and promotion of forage development for livestock farming.
- **Grenada:** Limlair-Carriacou recommending paddock rehabilitation, RWHS, introduction of improved forage species, introduction of drought resistant grass species, pasture management, live fencing, rotational grazing, composting, training in soil testing and livestock management. The responses also recommend the development of grazing within the solar farm at the site, but this proposal now seems no longer feasible given the effects of Hurricane Beryl (see figures 14 and 15).

[10] CTA and ECDPM (2009). "Strengthening Agricultural Trade Strategies: Towards a Caribbean Agenda". Available at: https://caricom.org/documents/9839-strengthening_agricultural_trade_strategies_final_report.pdf

Figures 16-17: images of the effects of Hurricane Beryl at Limlair site, Grenada-Carriacou



Source: MTR (2024)

Figures 18-19: Uncontrolled grazing and yam monoculture at Holland Estate and Lowe River, Jamaica

Source: MTR (2024)

- **Guyana**: Kimbia in Region 10 (reforestation, agroforestry, introduce a land use policy, improve water management for drainage, crop and livestock production, organic mulching and composting)
- **Jamaica**: (i) Holland Estate in St. Elizabeth Parish, where soil fertility improvements through composting, mulching, residue management, conservation agriculture, RWH tanks and wells, changes in farm management (especially on farm intensity levels), greenhouse development and controlled access grazing are proposed. The MTR found controlled access grazing is particularly urgent (see figure 18); (ii) Ginger Hill in St. Elizabeth Parish, recommending vegetation cover, mixed cropping, intercropping, relay cropping, contour bunds, terraces, bamboo check dams, change in management, waste management, and composting; (iii) Lowe River-Trelawny where vegetation cover, mixed cropping, intercropping, soil fertility management, contour bunds and banks, terraces, bamboo check dams, change in management and cropping intensity, waste management, and compositing are recommended. The MTR visited this site where trials are already in place to reduce soil acidity for yam production, which was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture with funding from Morocco. However, the MTR team found there is a need to reduce monocultural production of yams (see figure 17), which is alluded to in the DPSIR report.

- **St. Lucia**: Roseau where soil reclamation practices, organic mulching, grass strips and bio-pores, bamboo gully to check erosion, drip irrigation, rehabilitation of water storage tank to 60,000-gallon capacity, waste management, composting, plant nursery, and training on seedling preparation are proposed.
- **Haiti**: Rio Marrion watershed where reforestation, establish plant nursery, climate smart agriculture, organic mulching, composting are recommended.

103 **Output 4.2:** *Financial options for enhancing SSM and SLM including opportunities for private sector collaboration for potential financing identified.* This output has not been delivered to 31/12/2024. However, the CSA expert confirmed analysis is ongoing on mobilising blended financing instruments from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to de-risk and catalyse public and private finance to build sustainable livelihoods associated with the project's activities under C4 and which promote the principles of climate justice. Direct access to readiness grants will support farmers' transition to sustainable and resilient livelihoods in the agriculture sector, or alternative livelihoods foreseen in the Prodoc. However, as previously mentioned, the PSC lacks guidance from government representatives responsible for agri-business and alternative livelihood development. Moreover, **PISLM does not currently have a full-time specialist on business and finance to oversee the mobilisation of funds foreseen** from the GCF, the LDN Fund and the private sector in general (through public-private partnerships) to deliver and sustain this output well beyond the project.

104 **Output 4.3** Promotion of innovations in agriculture systems, considering a gender approach. The project has proceeded to install the Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility for New Adaptation Technologies (RAC-NAT) on the 25-acre (10 ha) site allocated by UWI in T&T. The remote interview conducted with staff at the Facility confirmed that the site is operational, although only three acres are currently under research involving the organic production of local varieties of hot chilli peppers. Unfortunately, disease has forced the use of chemical inputs, but the facility aims to enhance its technical capacity by linking up with regional research centres such as the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (known as CATIE), based in Costa Rica. Areas of research in the pipeline include: (i) application of training in CSAC; (ii) in-situ conservation of drought resistant varieties of sweet potato and other staple crops; (iii) non-traditional crops such as local varieties of ginger, cocoa and apples; (iv) assessing the nutrition content of crops at UWI's Department of Food Production; (v) provision of inputs to the project on the mainstreaming of SLM/SSM, CSA in regional legislation. The MTR team found the RAC-NAT Facility is fully dependent on funding from SOILCARE I, and has not leveraged any resources from the SCCF as foreseen in the Prodoc to date. As a result, this provides further evidence on the **need for a qualified business consultant** to assess funding options, including the identification of services to generate internal revenue opportunities and mobilise private sector investment.

105 **Level of achievement of Outcome 5.1**: *Regional institutional capacity development and training programme established*. **Progress on achieving this outcome is moderately satisfactory given the quality of the training has been well received, but generally later than planned. It is likely, however, that this outcome will be achieved in the time remaining.** This is substantiated by the following findings:

106 **Output 5.1.** *Capacity Development of Stakeholders Strengthened:* the MTR team are satisfied that the training provided under C1 is in line with the needs and aspirations of soil scientists and lab technicians. As mentioned under outcome 1, participants in the training courses provided to date stated they are happy with the quality and structure of the training, the support provided by GSP (which included the provision of lab coats, glasses and bags), the opportunity to develop their fieldwork, data management and networking skills with soil scientists and technicians from other CSIDS and develop initiatives such as the CSSG and CARSOLAN. Moreover, in the case of the latter the project funded senior representatives of CARSOLAN to participate in LATOSOLAN meetings and workshops in Chile and other countries in the region. In addition, the project has launched its scholarship programme to support the development of new soil scientists in Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana and St. Lucia. The MTR found that this activity is highly popular and that more support should be given to encourage youths to enter the profession. Indeed, the MTR team found a major gap remains in encouraging youths to enter related disciplines, such as land use planning and the economic valuation of ecosystem services. Specialised training on HNVI and CSAC has also taken place in three countries since late 2023 based on the application of the training of trainers' methodology. However, training of agricultural extension officers and farmers in the field has not started to 31/12/2024. This is mainly due to the delays in developing the abovementioned site plans for the 25 pilot sites selected for C2-C4. Consequently, there is no data on how far the training is covering the 1,000 farmers foreseen in the Prodoc, of which at least 400 farmers should be women. Main stakeholders informed the MTR that the training courses are planned to start in early 2025.

107 **Level of achievement of Outcome 5.2**: *Knowledge management, technical assistance and communication on SLM and SSM strengthened and enhanced*. **The project is making moderately satisfactory progress on establishing a LDN and SLM Knowledge Hub for the Caribbean subregion and its integration into a global SIDS-SIDS Knowledge Transfer Hub funded by another GEF-funded project. It is likely that the project will deliver this outcome by the end of 2025**. This is substantiated following analysis of the following outputs.

108 **Outputs 5.2.1 and 5.2.2:** *Caribbean LDN and SLM Knowledge Hub established* and *regional cooperation in SLM/SSM encouraged and facilitated.* PISLM confirmed the design of the Knowledge Hub, also referred to online as PISLM's Knowledge Base has been completed and tested in 2024. The PISLM confirms it will be officially launched in early 2025 following a final review by FAO and adopted by the COTED. The aim of the hub is to centralise all land and soil information produced in the Caribbean subregion, starting with the eight participating countries in SOILCARE I, to support all interested parties in the sub-region and globally achieve the SDG 15.3 targets by 2030. To this end, the project has agreed with the global project "SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub", implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to integrate it Knowledge Base, which will be known as the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH). As stated under section 4.1.4, this represents an important complementary initiative to help: (i) avoid the duplication of knowledge products produced on LDN and SLM/SSM in the subregion; (ii) support the newly created Sustainable Soil and Land Management Framework Agreement

Group (SSLMFG) of PISLM provide advice on policy development aiming at mainstreaming and upscaling SLM/SSM and CSA through the SOILCARE initiative at the regional and national level in the Caribbean subregion; (iii) the CSSG provide informed advice on good practices, lessons learned on LDN as well as develop a South-South platform with institutions such as ASLAC to produce joint publications, such as the Land-Soil Outlook 2030 report for the Americas region.

109 **Level of achievement of Outcome 5.3**: *Climate resilient SLM and Regional LDN Strategy mainstreamed/ integrated into Caribbean Community Regional Policy Frameworks and Decision-Making Processes and in National Level Planning Processes.* **The MTR team did not identify any concrete evidence to confirm that this outcome will be achieved by end of 2025.** This is confirmed from the following analysis on outputs 5.3.1-5.3.3.

110 **Output 5.3.1:** *enhancement of Policy Dialogue between the PISLM/SOILCARE and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and integration of SLM and SSM in Regional Policy Instruments*. Policy dialogue between PISL and CARICOM has been enhanced by the decision of CARICOM's COTED to officially recognise PISLM as an IGO. Interviews with both parties confirm this has already facilitated the convening of meetings between the two parties in 2024, in which dialogue on the mainstreaming of SLM/SSM and CSA into regional policies for agriculture and the environment has been initiated. However, the general lack of representation of business interests and the private sector in the PISLM and PSC of SOILCARE I indicates that mainstreaming in other relevant sector policies linked to the development of the restoration economy still needs to be addressed.

111 **Output 5.3.2**: *A Sub-regional Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) Framework Agreement Contributing to LDN and Strengthening Regional Efforts to Address Climate Change Established.* As mentioned under subsection 4.1.4, the creation of the CSSG in 2024 has facilitated the strengthening of partnerships between PISLM and other important subregional institutions, including CARDI, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) and the Environment and Agricultural Directorate of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Similarly, at the regional level, PISLM has established dialogue with CATIE and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), among others. Moreover, these developments have also enabled PISLM to start the process of being recognised as a partner in the platforms that these institutions currently operate linked to SLM/SSM and CSA. The proposed recruitment of the SSM-SLM-CSA specialist in PISLM had not been concluded to 31/12/2024 due to the need to reach agreement on the funding of this expert from the SCCF.

112 **Output 5.3.3**. *Building Synergies and Strengthening Cooperation between SOILCARE Phase 1 and the SIDS Island Programme on Chemicals*. The MTR team did not identify any formal synergy has been established yet with the SIDS Island Programme on Chemicals through which the project could apply FAO's Codes of Conduct for the sustainable use of fertilisers (2019) and pesticide management (2013). This was primarily due to implementation delays and the fact PISLM has limited human resources to coordinate closely with this project. The MTR team understands that the lessons learned from this programme were published in 2024, but do not appear to have been shared by FAO-SLC with PISLM to date.

113 **Level of achievement of Outcome 5.4**: *Promotion of Investment and Financing in SLM and SSM with Private and Public Sector Partners and Others.* **Although the COMICOM/COTED has agreed**

to PISLM's proposal to establish the LDN Transformation Financial Mechanism in the Commonwealth of Dominica, the creation of the enabling environment to access the mechanism to provide incentives and support to develop CSA and regenerative agricultural development to reduce degradation has not been identified and approved. It is, therefore, highly unlikely this outcome will be achieved under SOILCARE I and the general agreement is that this outcome is better suited to SOILCARE II when lessons will have been learned from SOILCARE I. This is justified following analysis of the following output 5.4.1.

114 **Output 5.4.1:** a feasibility study was completed in 2024 and proposed the creation of the LDN Transformation Financial Mechanism (LDN Fund) in Dominica, given another GEF-funded LDN project specifically in Dominica had already laid the foundations for a LDN Fund to be established on the island. The operationalisation of the fund requires further study to determine whether the creation of a Regional Bond proposed in the Prodoc, and which should be funded through voluntary contributions from participating countries, the private sector, and institutions such as the RAC-NAT (through the sale of research services) is the most feasible way to capitalise the fund. Indeed, the MTR team's own experience from other GEF-funded projects promoting restoration activities is that measures such as an environmental levy on all tourist, mining and industrial activities in the subregion, together with the development of innovative income generating streams associated with the development of CSAC certified products may be more effective and sustainable.

115 **Level of achievement of Outcome 5.5**: *A Gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework in support of project implementation.* **The project has successfully registered sex-disaggregated participation rates in all its studies, training and capacity development exercises completed to 31/12/2024**. However, a more robust M&E system that measures the project's impact on the empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups, including IPs, was not evident and this is likely to restrict learning on whether or not the project's activities may have negative impact on the internal power structures of men in relation to vulnerable groups such as women, youths, elders and IPs, among others.

116 **Output 5.5.1:** *Monitoring and Evaluation Process for the Project executed in accordance with GEF Guidelines.* The introduction of sex-disaggregated participation rates has helped assess the degree to which women are gaining access to training, information and resources (38.9%), but the MTR team does not consider this constitutes a gender-sensitive M&E framework. For example, the MTR team was unable to determine the project's impact to date on: (i) women's empowerment, especially in assuming leadership and decision-making roles in the main activities implemented under C1-C5, or on voicing their own specific needs when participating in training, the application of SLM/SSM, CSA; (ii) participation rates of other vulnerable groups such as youths (aged 16-25) and elders who are important knowledge holders on phone applications, digital commerce and networking, or on the sustainable use of local biodiversity (including agro-biodiversity), seeds, and pest management respectively; (iii) the rights and specific needs and aspirations of IPs, to ensure the project activities are not only gender-sensitive, but also sensitive to IPs and their specific rights.

4.2.3 Overall progress on achieving the project's objective.

117 The project has successfully implemented the preliminary activities that are needed before SLM/SSM and CSA activities can be rolled at the country level to achieve outcomes 2-4. However, it is evident that the project's design is extremely far reaching and highly ambitious for a subregion where the PISLM has a small number of paid staff on its payroll (five full-time staff based in Guyana), no staff in each of the seven participating CSIDS, and faces significant logistical challenges in moving around these CSIDS. For example, Belize has no direct flights to any of the other CSIDS, resulting in need to fly through the USA to participate in project trainings and events. In addition, each of the eight participating countries have different needs and aspirations.

118 In addition, the project has also had to resolve key issues that should have been fully addressed in the design phase. For example, the Prodoc makes no mention of the need to develop an agreement with the Customs and Excise Board in T&T to allow soil imports into the country. Similarly, the procurement of soil laboratory equipment in the Caribbean not only has to face bureaucratic hurdles, but also distribution challenges, which result in additional transactions to resolve. The MTR team found there were also capacity gaps in UWI (on soil analysis), which were discovered after the LoA was concluded, and which required additional inputs from the project to rectify. As a result, the project has delivered some important results, especially under C1, but it is not likely to achieve its objectives in the time remaining.

4.3 Efficiency

MTR question 3 – *To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost-effectively?*

Finding 5*:* The project's capacity to convert its resources into expected outputs and outcomes has been moderately unsatisfactory, except under C1 and C5. Physical progress is estimated to average 47 percent to 31/12/2024, while total expenditure of GEF funds was USD 3,939,630 to 30/09/2024, equivalent to 48.3% of GEF funds allocated in the Prodoc. However, direct beneficiaries only total 583 people (227 women) which is well down on the total number foreseen in the Prodoc, and considering the project has completed 36 of the 48 months of operations planned. As a result, the project has spent on average USD 6,757 per direct beneficiary, which is high after three years of implementation compared to other GEF-funded projects promoting SLM/SSA and CSA.

Finding 6*:* Total expenditure of in-kind co-finance provided to 30/06/2024 was USD 11,880,000, which is equivalent to 44.5 per cent of total co-finance allocated in the Prodoc. This confirms that for every one US Dollar of GEF funds, the project is leveraging on average USD 2.91 from co-finance, which is moderately satisfactory for a GEF-funded project but also indicates the mobilisation of co-finance remains challenging. In terms of the added-value of cofinance provided so far, there is some evidence that it has been greatest in supporting the

realisation of the DPSIR framework analysis given a large number of stakeholders interviewed confirmed it had made them far more aware of the purpose of LDN.

4.3.1 Timeliness of activities

119 In line with findings in subsection 4.2.1 the project's implementation has been set back by a number of delays, which amount to more than 12 months in total. These delays are also detailed in Section 3 of the latest PIR-2 to 30/06/2024, that suggests the project's design did not place enough emphasis on establishing the readiness criteria to be fulfilled both prior to the endorsement of the project design by the GEF Secretariat and during the project's inception phase. Indeed, no specific mention is given in the Prodoc to both an inception phase to finalise PISLM's readiness to implement the project, and an exit strategy to clarify important sustainability issues.

120 Under these circumstances, the MTR team estimates that **the project's physical progress stands at around 47 per cent of planned activities to 31/12/2024, which is lower than planned considering 75 per cent of the project's implementation period has been realised to the end of 2024.** This has been triangulated as far as possible by reviewing the breakdown of estimated physical progress by component in the latest PIR-2 to 30/06/2024 and cross-checking this via interviews and site observations conducted in the field phase. A summary of this assessment by component/expected outcome is provided in the Results Matrix in Appendix 5. The main findings are listed as follows:

121 **Component 1: 70 per cent completed**. The MTR team concurs with PISLM's estimate in the PIR-2 that physical progress was around 60 per cent and that capacity development and updating of soil laboratories has progressed in the second half of 2024 albeit slightly slower than planned. This has been aided by the fact PISLM has managed to address some important capacity gaps with the support of FAO (especially on soil mapping).

122 **Component 2: 40 per cent completed**. The MTR team concurs with PISLM's estimate that overall physical progress under this component was around 40 per cent to 30/06/2024. However, progress on planning and starting the SLM/SSM actions identified through the DPSIR process has not materialised and as a result no tangible change in physical progress under this component is evident. The lack of clarity in the project design that all sites must have a dedicated implementation plan supported by baseline indicators and targets has not aided this situation.

123 **Component 3: 40 per cent completed**. The MTR team again concurs with the PISLM's estimate of 40 per cent physical progress under this component to 30/06/2024. As with component 2 the MTR team was unable to identify any significant change in physical progress under this component in the second half of 2024, nor witnessed site plans have been designed and adopted to implement the activities and outputs under this component. In addition, activities under this component are not yet able to draw on learning from the Land and Soil Knowledge Base (LSKB).

124 **Component 4: 30 per cent completed**. The MTR team did not concur with the 40 per cent progress rate provided in PIR-2 to 30/06/2024 on the grounds that no preliminary marketing

studies or business planning have been conducted so far to provide guidance on the types of products and livelihoods that are economically, socially and environmentally feasible and which will meet local needs and aspirations (of men and women). Again, the project design has aided this situation by overlooking the representation of representatives from the public and private sector that are needed to guide such processes.

125 **Component 5: 60 per cent completed**. Implementation progress is behind plan but some important milestones have been completed that have raised the profile of PISLM and its capacity to stimulate the mainstreaming of SLM/SSM and CSA in regional and national legislation. However, progress in delivering such mainstreaming in CARICOM policies for agriculture and the environment, or establishment of the LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism in Dominica still have to be achieved in the remaining eleven months of operations.

4.3.2 GEF funding and co-finance

Table 3. Summary of accumulated GEF expenditure in USD (to 31/12/2024)

Component	23/11/2021-30/06/2025 Plan	24/11/2021-30/06/2022 Actual	01/07/2022-30/06/2023 Actual	01/07/2023-30/06/2024 Actual	01/07/2024-31/12/2024 Actual	Total Balance
Components 1-5	8,155,205	1,146,819	2,535,960	3,436,329	3,939,630	4,215,575
PMU	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	**8,155,205**	**1,146,819**	**2,535,960**	**3,436,329**	**3,939,630**	**4,215,575**

Source: PISLM/FAO (2024); n/a not available in the PIR.

126 Table 3 shows that the total accumulated expenditure of GEF funding to 31/12/2024[11] was USD 3,939,630, or **48.3 per cent of the GEF grant**. This is in line with the estimate of 47 per cent physical implementation rate calculated above, but also lower than planned when considering the project has concluded 75 per cent of its planned implementation to 31/12/2024. In terms of PISLM's financial management capacity, the MTR team found no evidence of non-compliance with GEF/FAO rules and procedures. However, it is evident that the PIR reports do not provide a breakdown of expenditure at the component level, nor include an update on total accumulated expenditure provided in Box 2 of this report, or a section for comments on financial management, specific training needs from FAO and the inputs required to cover any administrative capacity gaps that may apply. From the MTR team's findings, annual work planning and progress reporting still need to engage more proactively the PSC members in key areas, such as the need to reallocate GEF funds between components.

127 Turning to in-kind contributions from co-funding partners, the MTR team found that **PISLM and the country focal points had not received adequate training from FAO-SLC to calculate cofinance contributions** in conformity with GEF requirements. This was evident in the PIRs where total co-finance figures were not updated between PIR-1 and PIR-2. As a result of the preliminary

[11] Figures to 31/12/2024 were made available to the MTR on 31/03/2024.

findings of the present MTR, PISLM confirmed it received more training on this in January-February 2025, resulting in the communication of new data on co-funding levels achieved to 31/12/2024. These figures are summarised in Table 4, which confirms a total of USD 11,480,000 (44.5%) has been received in the form of in-kind contributions compared to the total of USD 25,797,816 endorsed by the GEF Secretariat on 23/09/2021 (see Box 2). A breakdown of cofinance by co-funding partner is provided in Appendix 6.

Table 4. Summary of accumulated co-finance expenditure in USD (to 31/12/2024)

Source	23/11/2021-30/06/2025 Plan	24/11/2021-30/06/2022 Actual	01/07/2022-30/06/2023 Actual	01/07/2023-31/12/2024 Actual	Balance at (31/12/2024)
All co-funding	25,797,816	n/a	1,725,551	11,480,000	14,317,816
FAO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	**25,797,816**	**n/a**	**1,725,551**	**11,480,000**	**14,317,816**

Source: PISLM/FAO (2024); n/a not available because a PIR was not submitted for the period 24/11/2021-30/06/2022.

128 Overall, **the current state of co-finance to 31/12/2024 is considered moderately unsatisfactory** considering the project has completed 75 per cent of its planned implementation. Moreover, confirmation of total in-kind contributions was not provided to the MTR team until end of March 2025.

4.3.3 Cost-effectiveness of the project

129 The MTR team has conducted a rapid review of the cost-effectiveness, taking into account a large number of activities have not yet started under C2-C4. A comparison of overall physical progress against total accumulated expenditure shows it has cost USD 3.94 million of GEF funds (48.3%) to 31/12/2024) to: (i) achieve an estimated physical advance of 47 percent; (ii) leverage USD 2.91 of co-finance for each US Dollar spent from GEF funds; (iii) provide training and capacity development to 583 beneficiaries (see Table 6), which averages USD 6,757.5/beneficiary. Under these circumstances, the project is not delivering satisfactory levels of cost-effectiveness. Weaknesses in the project design, that includes a high level of dependency on PISLM delivering a large number of outputs and ambitious outcomes in eight countries and a budget of USD 8.15 million covering only 48 months, have contributed to this situation.

130 The MTR team questions the cost-effectiveness of the OPIM modality in this type of project where the executing agency has very limited human and financial resources to implement a project covering eight CSIDS and where the logistical demands to conduct capacity development and training are very challenging and costly. The MTR team identified **the following areas where the project's cost-effectiveness could be improved**:

- The establishment of closer relations between PISLM and FAO-SLC to ensure the former receives the training inputs, technical support and quality assurance needed to carry out its administrative and financial duties in a timely and comprehensive manner. Areas where training gaps were identified include co-finance accounting, application of LoAs, procurement of equipment and services, recruitment of technical assistance, effective monitoring and evaluation integrating gender/IP empowerment indicators, and on-demand technical advice and support as and when required by PISLM.
- The project's implementation mechanism needs to be more decentralised so that PISLM has a representative (an SLM/CSA specialist) in each participating country, rather than a PA who has limited powers to oversee in-country tasks of planning, implementing and monitoring of SOILCARE I initiatives. In Haiti, the representative would need to be based in the region.
- The PSC requires public and private representatives who can guide business-related activities dedicated to developing the restoration economy in each participating country under C4.
- Establish formal synergies with other GEF-funded and other relevant donor projects where cost-sharing opportunities could be developed, such as sharing of good practices, training, marketing, enterprise development, joint communications and publications, etc.

4.4 Sustainability

MTR question 4 – *What is the likelihood that the project results can be sustained after the end of the project?*

Finding 7*:* The prospects of sustaining outcomes 1 and 5 are likely given all outputs are designed to be embedded in permanent institutions, legislation and CARICOM/COTED agreements. Greater attention to fully integrating risk management to ensure these achievements continue and multiply is needed, especially to mitigate capacity gaps, resource limitations and logistical challenges.

Finding 8: The prospects of sustaining results under C2-C4 are unknown at this stage, but the indications are that they will struggle to be sustained without clear exit strategies and sustainability plans in place before the project is closed.

4.4.1 Risks to achieving outcomes 1-5

131 The MTR team conducted a risk assessment in conformity with GEF's latest risk rating table (2024), which is provided in Table 5 below. **The overall risk rating established in this table is "moderate", which correlates with the "moderate" rating in the PIR-2 (2023-2024).** It is noted, however, that the risk categories in Table 5 have evolved and changed from the risk categories applied in the Prodoc, the PIRs and the 2020 Guidelines for MTRs of GEF-funded projects and programmes that employ FAO as its implementing agency. This made it more challenging for the MTR team to conduct the risk assessment, especially as the project is operating in eight countries in the

Caribbean where the risk levels differ in each country and can range from very low in one country to very high in another (such as Haiti).

132 The risk assessments conducted in the Prodoc and PIR appear to be conducted largely as an isolated exercise, rather than a cross-cutting one designed to support the project's effectiveness and sustainability. As such, **the project lacks an effective risk management strategy** to guide the PSC and PISLM take informed decisions on the project's planning, implementation and monitoring. This is substantiated by the assessment of the risk categories listed in Table 5 in the following paragraphs.

Table 5: Risk ratings for the risk categories defined by the GEF Secretariat (2024)

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	High	Extreme events (hurricanes) are evident each year since 2021
Environment and Social	Moderate	Risks are low in seven CSIDS but high and volatile in Haiti
Political and Governance	Moderate	Political stability, governance structures are good except in Haiti
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Moderate	Institutional capacity and land policy gaps persist in all CSIDS
Technological	Low	CSIDS/PISLM recognise the need for appropriate technology
Financial and Business Model	Substantial	Funding of some key activities has not been defined yet
EXECUTION		
Capacity for Implementation	Moderate	More capacity in GIS, mapping, agribusiness is needed
Fiduciary	Moderate	Risks of transparency remain in Haiti
Stakeholder	Low	Stakeholder engagement at all levels is satisfactory
OTHER		
Other	Low	Risks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic have receded
Overall Risk Rating	**Moderate**	**Residual risks remain in some key areas even after mitigation**

Source: GEF/FAO (2024) based on a risk rating scale of: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low.

133 **Climate risks: "high"**. The Prodoc and PIRs have rated the susceptibility of participating countries to natural disasters caused by extreme weather and climatic events as "moderate" but rate the risks of climate variability and change as "moderate to high". The MTR team found the separation of these risks is confusing and would benefit from one entry, given climate variability relates to abnormal weather and climatic events that often result in a disaster. For this reason, the MTR team confirms that these risks should be considered as one external risk and reclassified as a "high" risk. Moreover, this is justified from the data collected in Grenada and reference to UNOCHA's report

in July 2024, which stated, "*Hurricane Beryl is among the worst storms to hit both countries [Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines] since records began in 1851*."[12]

134 **Environmental and social risks: "moderate".** These risks are assessed under Environmental and Social Safeguard's (ESS) checklist assessed under subsection 4.6.1. In terms of environmental risks, the MTR team found these risks are generally not likely to affect the sustainability of the project's results, given the project's outcomes intend to improve environmental conditions and enhance natural resource management and protection. However, the risks of social unrest represent a substantial risk to sustaining the project's actions and achievements in Haiti, while in some SIDS cultural attitudes to change were found to be limited and likely to affect the sustainability of some actions in the participating countries. For example, in Jamaica the problem of cattle grazing within agricultural plots in the Holland Estate pilot site remains a serious problem. Despite the allocation of land for rotational grazing, effective livestock management remains elusive (see figure 16). Moreover, this example demonstrates the linkages between social risks the lack of adequate land tenure and land use frameworks in the subregion. For example, these issues were raised by stakeholders interviewed in Grenada (especially Carriacou) and St. Lucia. Second, the effects of Hurricane Beryl in Grenada have demonstrated that in the aftermath of a natural disaster social attitudes switch to immediate needs such as roof/building repairs and reestablishing access to basic services. As a result, in such cases the promotion of SLM/SSM/CSA may need to be repackaged as a "build back better" initiative centred on recovering food security, sovereignty and nutrition. In summary, both examples, demonstrate the need for more effective risk management on socio-cultural dynamics.

135 **Political and governance risks: "moderate".** The MTR team found political support for the project is high in all eight countries. This was demonstrated by their support for SOILCARE II and a formal request for SOILCARE III made at the UNCCD's COP16 held in Saudi Arabia in December 2024. As a result, there is high level of probability that the integration of LDN into the regional policy framework of CARICOM (especially in the agriculture and environmental sectors) will be achieved to support the long-term sustainability of SLM/SSM/CSA initiatives. In Haiti the risk rating remains high, in line with the risk rating number 8 in the PIR-2. Despite the triangulation of evidence confirming the mitigation measures of working heavily through local expertise and organisations, the MTR team found the FAO's Country Office is unable to provide the oversight foreseen in PIR-2 due to the highly volatile situation in the country. Reference to the latest news from the UN also confirms, "*Haiti is faced with a multifaceted crisis including rising gang violence, political instability, the displacement of over 700,000 people as well as widespread hunger*."[13]

136 **Institutional and policy risks: "moderate"**. This risk was not reviewed in the Prodoc, or in the PIRs. This is an important shortcoming in the project design, because the project depends heavily on the institutional support of all participating countries, especially the seven CSIDS participating in C2-C4. The MTR team found all the institutions directly engaged in the project's implementation of activities under C2-C4 face institutional challenges to provide the level of support expected

[12] UNOCHA (2024). Regional Overview and Planned Response: Hurricane Beryl, July - December 2024 (Issued July 2024). Available at: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/grenada/regional-overview-and-planned-response-hurricane-beryl-july-december-2024-issued-9-july-2024#:~:text=Hurricane%20Beryl%20hit%20Saint%20Vincent,receive%20rains%20caused%20by%20Beryl.

[13] UN News (27/12/2024). Peace and Security in Haiti.

from them to identify, plan and implement the 25 pilot projects selected. An important example concerns the agricultural and forestry extension services who have been targeted for training to guide the implementation of the project's activities in these pilot sites. In several cases, they confirmed they face significant resource and logistical constraints to provide the services required to both plan and implement the SLM/SSM/CSA actions suggested in the DPSIR reports and which will take many years to consolidate. In addition, the lack of adequate guidance on business-related activities foreseen under C4, represents an important gap that is likely to affect the sustainability of the CSAC approach promoted by the project.

137 In relation to risk 4 in PIR-2 (on the slow pace of consideration by CARICOM/COTED [Environment]), the MTR team identified inter-institutional coordination at the national level is generally low. This is mainly due to the presence of strong sector-based planning and thinking in the participating countries. Moreover, the project's design relies heavily on the support of ministries responsible for agriculture and environment, which in theory should link project's strategic relevance with the UNFCCC and CBD. However, in practice this is not the case because each Convention has its own platform. Under these circumstances, **the project design has overlooked the importance of establishing an integrated sustainable development approach to SLM/SSM/CSA that engages the Focal Points for UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD to adopt coordinated approaches and funding to develop the restoration economy** as a viable strategy to improve livelihoods, adaptive management and ecosystem services.

138 **Technological risks: "low"**. The MTR team found the vast majority of stakeholders are aware that the technology to be applied under C2-C4 must be adapted to the needs of CSIDs. For example, there is a strong understanding that the introduction of greenhouses should be replaced by collapsable structures that use shade nets rather than glass or plastic sheeting. Similarly, the DPSIR reports promote the introduction of drip-irrigation, low-cost soil protection measures and nature-based solutions to advancing SLM/SSM/CSA. One major caveat is the general lack of attention given to recovering, conserving and sustainably using autochthonous technologies, such as local varieties of sweet potato, trees and grasses.

139 **Financial risks: "substantial"**. There is no assessment of this risk in the Prodoc and PIR-2 beyond the mitigation of costs and financial transactions (Risk 7). However, the MTR team found this risk is substantial for several reasons. For example, as cited in subsection 4.3.2 PISLM and participating countries are in need of further training to manage GEF funding and co-finance calculations. Similarly, main stakeholders in several countries expressed concerns about the lack of funds to implement the SLM/SSM/CSA initiatives, indicating an issue that will require analysis in the design of SOILCARE II. Also, some stakeholders agreed that more needs to be done to identify the sustainability plan for SLM/SSM/CSA from the start of their implementation. As such, the MTR found there is a need to also identify two things. First, identify the use of other funds from GEF according to their System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR). Second, identify potential income streams from the co-benefits generated through the restoration and CSAC initiatives. For example, payments for ecosystem services (PES) from the tourism, agriculture, water and industrial sectors that depend on SLM/SSM is not evident, nor a total economic valuation (TEV) study to demonstrate the strategic value to ecosystem services to the economies of the

participating countries. In summary, the MTR team believes that **PISLM is in need of such studies to develop the LSKB and to support its advocacy campaigns** in areas such as the development of voluntary carbon trading and other PES opportunities.

140 **Capacity for implementation risks: "moderate"**. In line with the institutional risks the MTR team identified some capacity gaps at both PISLM and partner country levels that have increased dependency on FAO's own expertise. These include, among others, the general lack of advanced GIS skills to support high resolution soil mapping, risk assessment, economic valuation of natural assets, and mobilisation of financial resources from public and private sources to fund LDN. In addition, at the local level the capacity of extension officers to promote SLM/SSM/CSA at the pilot sites also requires strengthening.

141 **Fiduciary risks**: **"low-moderate".** This is not reviewed in the Prodoc/PIRs. However, as previous described in this report, the MTR team did observe the application of the OPIM modality is highly unpopular among some key stakeholders. Despite the signing of the OPA on 26/11/2021, in which the roles of PISLM and FAO are described and provisions such as "Record Keeping" (Art. XI) are spelt out, the MTR team found relations between PISLM and FAO are in need of improving to clarify roles and tasks of each. Moreover, the results of spot checks and audit reports have not aided this situation. For example, an analysis of the audit report published in April 2024, but referring to 01/11/2021 to 31/10/2022 highlighted five issue ratings of which three were rated "high" (on financial control and cash management). This situation indicates FAO and PISLM need to maintain closer relations and the former provide more support on book-keeping tasks within PISLM and at the country level where the MTR team found the level of support and engagement of FAO country offices is low, except in Guyana where lessons can be learned on how FAO can engage more proactively in supporting operations.

142 **Stakeholder risks: "low"**. The MTR team did not identify concrete evidence to indicate stakeholders are not committed or are likely to be unwilling to participate in and develop the LDN process. However, in cases of force majeure, such as in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, it is evident that priorities switch to meeting basic needs at the expense of project action. Consequently, the abovementioned adaptation of SLM/SSM/CSA to "build-back-better" principles should be applied by the project.

143 **Health-related risks linked to the Covid-19 pandemic: "low".** The rating in PIR-2 for this risk has been maintained as "moderate-high". The MTR team found no evidence to justify the maintenance of this risk rating at this level and, instead, should be downgraded to "low". Nevertheless, the MTR Team does recognise that the pandemic did affect operations in the inception phase of the project between 2021 and mid-2022 (see more on this in the subsection 4.5 below).

4.4.2 Evidence of replication or catalysis of project results

144 The MTR team found no evidence of replication of SOILCARE activities at this stage, except under C1, where staff interviewed from the national soil laboratories participating in SOILCARE I stated they are replicating the SOP and best practices promoted through the project's training of trainers approach. This situation is primarily because the SLM/SSM/CSA activities have not started in the field. However, one area that appears to be highly important to local stakeholders interviewed,

concerns the expansion of nature-based solutions using locally sourced inputs. In Haiti this appears to be crucial to the sustainability of SLM/SSM given the problems of access to resources and new technologies promoted through initiatives such as the RAC-NAT facility in T&T. In addition, nature-based solutions are likely to strengthen local governance over these resources in the interests of delivering higher levels of cost-effectiveness.

145 In the case of CSA, the general observation of local stakeholders interviewed is that the installation of essential rural infrastructure is a prerequisite to sustaining and encouraging the replication of successful CSA practices. For example, access to water resources and feeder roads are considered important prerequisites to sustaining any improvement in livelihoods of the participating communities involved. In addition, the project design has largely overlooked the importance of introducing incentives to support the sustainability of CSA. For example, some stakeholders interviewed stated the quickest and fastest way to engage youths in CSA would be to launch competitions whereby each pilot site that successfully installs a sustainable CSA receives a financial prize for specific purposes, such as improving housing conditions, or fund education/training needs.

4.5 Factors affecting performance

MTR question 5 – *What are the main factors affecting the project from reaching its results?*

Finding 9*:* The project's design has some shortcomings that are affecting performance. The most significant are: (i) the project design has underestimated important capacity, logistical and financial issues that needed time to be fully addressed. To expect the delivery of sustainable and resilient SLM/SSM and CSA actions in CSIDS in just four years is unrealistic and unreasonable considering PISLM has just six full-time staff members and lacks a regional presence; (ii) the lack of inter-institutional platforms in the seven participating countries to promote integrated sustainable development through SLM/SSM/CSA, in particular the engagement of ministries and the private sector responsible for agribusiness development, tourism, land-use planning, and education and culture; (iii) the breakdown in close collaboration between PISLM and FAO-SLC due to the application of the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) which enables FAO to project itself as the leader on land and soils in the subregion, based on its control over the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and the Global Soil Information system (GLOSIS).

Finding 10: The general lack of mobilising co-finance foreseen in the Prodoc between 2021 and 2025 has affected performance and demonstrated the need for a workshop to reassess whether the co-financing allocations are realistic and will be made available in the time remaining. To date the PISLM and FAO have not adequately addressed this issue.

Finding 11*:* The M&E plan and system is largely shaped by the reporting formats provided in the PIR. As a result, the reporting is primarily target driven, which restricts learning on the transformational changes needed to deliver the ToC. In general, the M&E plan is not geared to

monitoring transformational changes, such as changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) to determine the prospects of sustainability and potential impact of the project to 2030. This situation also restricts informed decision-making on project planning and implementation, as well as informing the project's communication strategy and advocacy for LDN.

4.5.1 Project design and readiness

146 The project's vertical intervention logic was found to have a satisfactory causal logic between objectives and main outcomes for C1-C5, but the intervention logic **did not apply adequate risk management to address gaps in capacity, major logistical challenges, differing political priorities and considerable financial constraints in PISLM and the participating countries**. Consequently, the project's horizontal logic set out a series of baselines and targets that are too ambitious and not realistic for a project of just 48 months, a relatively small budget (USD 8.1 million) and an executing agency that had just three permanent staff in 2021, and which currently has six staff (see more on this in subsection 4.5.2). A large number of stakeholders interviewed confirmed this situation has been an important contributory factor behind the low levels of performance under C2-C4 and questions about how the outcome targets of 15,000 ha of degraded lands (C2), 20,000 ha of CSA farm models (C3) and 20,000 ha of adapted food production systems (C4) were calculated (see more on this under subsection 4.5.7 below.

147 In addition, the risk assessment during **the project design phase did not adequately take into account the fact scientific evidence indicates that the intensity of abnormal weather and climatic events are growing in the Caribbean area**. As previously mentioned under point 4.4.1 the project's intervention sites are vulnerable to extreme weather and climatic events. For example, since 2022 to end of 2024, participating countries have been hit by Hurricane Lisa in 2022 (Belize), Hurricane Franklin in 2023 (Haiti), Hurricane Beryl in 2024 (Grenada, St. Lucia and Jamaica) and Hurricane Rafeal also in late 2024 (Jamaica). More importantly, the project has no resources to respond to these events should they affect the project's intervention areas, which has been the case in Grenada (see figure 16). This has contributed to delaying the project's implementation, as well as raising concerns among stakeholders that they did not have the resources and logistics to oversee the implementation of the pilot sites according to the targets set, especially at sites where there are complex land tenure and land use issues.

148 Finally, as previously stated under subsection 4.4.1, the project design promotes income generation under C3 and C4, but has overlooked the need for business and financial guidance both at the PSC level and within PISLM. Similarly, education and awareness raising on the benefits of SLM/SSM/CSA to the local economy and social development has not been adequately addressed.

4.5.2 Quality of project execution and management arrangements (including assessment of risks)

149 The Prodoc establishes the project's execution is to be managed by the PISLM acting as executing agency of the project and responsible for the day-to-day management of the project's planning and implementation, supported by a SOILCARE regional project management unit (PMU). The

Prodoc provides a list of roles and responsibilities of the PISLM (p.90). They include overseeing the project's execution in accordance with the project's result's framework and budget, supporting regional and national entities to deliver the project's expected outcomes and objectives, liaison with project stakeholders at the regional, national and local levels, ensure the quality of all outputs and reports meet GEF/FAO standards and fulfilment of all reporting requirements of GEF/FAO, among others.

150 Overall, the quality of the project's execution and project management has been mixed, but there is evidence the trend is improving over time and as experience grows and more staff are recruited. Indeed, two new full-time staff were recruited in 2022 - the Chief Technical Officer (CTO) and the Information Technology Specialist, and a sixth member of staff, an administrative assistant, was recruited in 2024. In addition, consultants have been recruited to support the PM deliver important technical outputs, such as a regional land expert (RLE) to coordinate the production of the DPSIR reports for all eight countries, and a climate change adaptation consultant, responsible for assessing climatic risks in all eight participating countries and provide guidance on the development of climate smart agriculture, based on the application of the CSAC compliance tool.

151 At the political level, the project's execution was found to be performing well, especially since the formal designation of PISLM as an IGO in 2024. For example, PISLM has established good working relations with all the UNCCD FPs and other members of the PSC, as well as with the members of the CARICOM/COTED (responsible for agriculture and environment). Similarly, at the technical level, PISLM has established a strong working relationship with the members of the SSLMFG acting as its main advisory committee, as well as with the members of the CSSG and CARSOLAN.

152 Contrastingly, triangulated evidence confirms that the quality of deliverables has been affected by insufficient technical oversight and quality assurance. For example, in the PIRs the reporting on cofinance (see subsection 4.3.2), risk management and environmental and social safeguards (see subsection 4.6.1) require more training and guidance from FAO-SLC. Similarly, the latest versions of the DPSIR reports produced in mid-2024 were found to have some errors, such as references to maps and annexes that appear to relate to other participating countries. With reference to subsection 4.3.3, it the MTR team found PISLM's relations with FAO have become mixed. In high-level technical matters, such as support on GIS and mapping of national soil maps, relations were found to be satisfactory, but on administrative matters they are strained, especially with FAO-SLC. One of the main causes is the application of the Operational Partner Agreement (OPA) signed with FAO-SLC. The general feeling among main stakeholders is that **the application of the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) retains FAO's control over PISLM and, therefore, the project, enabling FAO to promote itself as the lead agency in the subregion on land and soils.** This situation has affected performance and should be resolved in order to enhance the project's ownership in the subregion.

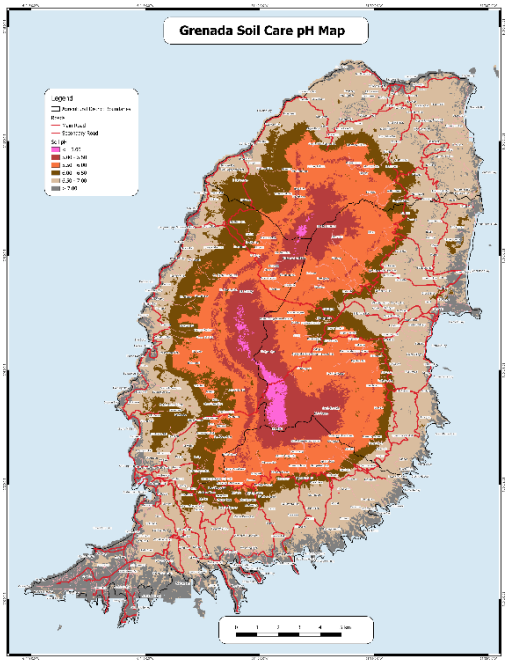
153 In terms of the quality of the guidance and oversight of PSC in the subregion, the MTR team found no evidence to indicate that it has performed poorly or affected performance. However, some stakeholders mentioned **the PSC only meets once per annum with most members meeting remotely. In addition, the short duration of the meetings restricts adequate time to carry out in-depth discussion on key aspects relating to the project's implementation and**

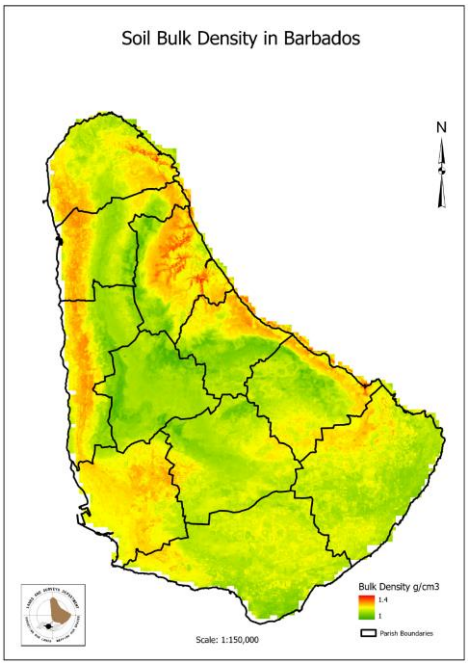
performance. As such it has not addressed some of the gaps and causes of implementation delays in a comprehensive manner. For example, the lack of representatives from institutions specialised in supporting the business, education, planning and other needs of the project is an area the MTR team identified as likely to affect performance, especially as C4 has been prioritised for the largest number of pilot sites (11 in total). In a second example, the SLM/SSM pilot sites that are located in coastal areas (see figure 13), were found to focus on land restoration measures, rather than coastal restoration, which should engage other actors such as the fisheries subsector. The rehabilitation of mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs are considered by the MTR team as important nature-based solutions that reduce coastal erosion, support disaster risk reduction and support the rehabilitation of marine biodiversity and fish stocks.

4.5.3 Project oversight by FAO as the GEF Agency and national partners

154 Project oversight provided by FAO has been mixed. On the one hand, stakeholders interviewed have stated that FAO's support in developing technical capacity in areas such as the training of trainer's approach to apply standard operating procedures (SOP) by national soil laboratories in all eight participating countries, or on GIS analysis and the production of high-resolution national soil maps, has been crucial. Reference to figures 18-19 provide examples of FAO's support to PISLM and participating countries in the production of these maps, which are designed to support informed decision-making on the Caribbean's transition to LDN and green growth to 2030.

Figures 20-21: Examples of high-resolution soil maps produced in Grenada and Barbados





Source and copyright: PISLM/FAO and Governments of Grenada and Barbados (2025)

155 On the other hand, the quality of FAO's oversight of the project's administration, reporting and monitoring needs to be developed further. Currently, the application of the OPA has soured relations and communications, in particular the realisation of spot checks by consultants who have

little or no knowledge of the Caribbean subregion. This situation has not been resolved to date and has resulted in FAO providing lower levels of quality assurance than expected, which in turn has ramped up transaction costs. This situation has not been aided by FAO-SLC's in November 2021 to establish a Task Force for the project in which there were no members from the Caribbean. Stakeholders from the subregion complained to FAO-SLC that more should be done to include expertise from the Caribbean in this Task Force. This is considered important to improve understanding within FAO-SLC of the opportunities and challenges that the subregion faces, as well as to improve the institutional memory of the SOILCARE initiative in the subregion.

156 In response, FAO-SLC made changes to the Task Force in 2024 by introducing a female expert from the subregion as Climate Finance Specialist. In addition, it replaced the Lead Technical Officer (LTO). These changes appear to have helped rekindle communications, but tensions remain due to the realisation of a second spot check conducted by a consultant who was not from the subregion, nor spoke good English. Moreover, the spot check was highly critical of PISLM, but apparently did not provide adequate evidence to substantiate the claim.

157 In summary, FAO-SLC is not conducting adequate levels of oversight and in-person meetings with PISLM and this needs to be rectified by, for example, a workshop or retreat in Guyana or Barbados to find an amicable solution on the roles and tasks of both parties, the training and resource gaps to be resolved and the strategy to be applied to implement the recommendations of this report, which should include a review of the targets for outcomes 2-4, among others.

4.5.4 Financial management and co-financing

158 The MTR team found some evidence that indicates that financial management of GEF funds has experienced bureaucratic hurdles that have contributed to implementation delays. A notable example concerns the first disbursement of GEF funds. This was reported to have arrived later than planned in December 2021, causing a delay in the recruitment of staff for the PMU and a later than planned start for the inception workshop in 2022. Another example, concerns the lack of adequate levels of quality assurance on how GEF funds should be managed and reported, resulting in the latest audit report flagging five areas of financial management to be addressed. In response, PISLM has recruited an administrative assistant in 2024. Consequently, PISLM now has six members of staff, which means it has two staff members specifically responsible for managing all financial and administrative matters. The MTR team understands that this action has enabled PISLM to improve its financial management capacity, although this would have to be substantiated in the next audit of the project.

159 The management of co-financing, in particular how each country should calculate their in-kind contributions to the project, has also experienced considerable delays. The MTR team found FAO-SLC could have done more to address this situation following submission of the latest PIR-2 report in 2024, given updated figures were not submitted. However, FAO-SLC did address this in the first quarter of 2025 following a new round of training sessions designed to improve book-keeping of all co-finance contributions from the eight participating countries. According to the updated figures on co-finance contributions provided to the MTR team in March 2025 (see Table 4) the

current state of in-kind contributions has improved and now stands at 44.5 per cent to 31/12/2024, compared to planned co-finance contributions agreed in the Prodoc. Under these circumstances, the MTR team is confident the PISLM/PMU staff are in better position to address the shortfall in co-finance in 2025, in particular the need to intensify activities and delivery of planned outputs under C2-C4. In general, stakeholders feel that a redistribution of GEF funds will also be required to support the intensification of planned activities under these components, in particular the completion of the site plans needed before SLM/SSM/CSA activities identified in the DPSIR reports can start implementation.

160 In summary, the MTR found there is a need for FAO-SLC to provide clearer guidelines on how in-kind co-financing should be recorded and oversee their implementation, aided by bi-annual meetings instead of annual ones. In addition, any challenges in receiving co-finance should be monitored and reported accordingly in the risk section of all future PIRs.

4.5.5 Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement

161 The MTR team found that the partnerships established by the project have generally supported the project's implementation and contributed to the achievements reported under C1 (see subsection 4.2.1). This has been facilitated by the fact PISLM is a partnership that has supported the establishment of the SSLMFG, CSSG, CARLOSAN, Youth and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) networks, among others.

162 Stakeholder engagement at the corporate and national levels appears to be satisfactory with no evidence to indicate stakeholder commitment has been lower than planned to support the project's implementation. In all countries where site visits were conducted, excluding Barbados[14], the MTR team found local stakeholder engagement is committed to applying SLM/SSM/CSA, but that this will depend on certain perquisites being met beforehand. For example, in Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Lucia, the provision of reliable and clean water resources is a major perquisite to engagement in project activities under C2-C4. In another example, the MTR found there is a need to address land conflicts and identify local knowledge before operations start at some sites in Belize, Jamaica, Grenada and Guyana.

163 In the specific case of Haiti, the level of stakeholder engagement is difficult to determine without a field visit. However, remote interviews indicate that despite the highly challenging insecurity in the country, local farmer associations are fully committed to leading the implementation of project activities through their own governance structures. Likewise in Guyana and other countries engaging the participation of IPs, the MTR team understands they are fully committed to implementing the activities foreseen under C2 and C3. The degree to which FPIC has been applied could not, however, be assessed without a field visit to the IP site, which was not feasible in the time available.

164 Partnerships with academic institutions were found to be satisfactory and a contributory factor in implementing the project's activities under C1, especially through the LoA with the soil laboratory at the University of the West Indies in T&T and with the Sugar Industry Research and Development

[14] The MTR team made several requests to interview the UNCCD Focal Point and conduct site visits to the Barbados National Park, but did not obtain a response, or authorisation for the field visits to the pilot sites.

Institute (SIRDI) in Belize. The level of engagement of other universities from the subregion was difficult to assess at this point in time. However, some stakeholders indicated more should be done to engage universities within the participating countries to support research and development of the restoration economy, especially in countries such as Belize, Jamaica and Guyana.

165 Finally, partnerships and engagement of the private sector in the project has been unsatisfactory to date. The lack of a business guidance from the PSC and PISLM/PMU has contributed to this factor, as well as insufficient marketing analysis to determine which products have potential to generate income and advance the restoration economy at the sites under C3 and C4. In addition, despite the fact that GEF is supporting the development of public-private partnerships (PPP) to establish regenerative agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean [15] no synergies or information exchanges are evident. Moreover, in Jamaica PPPs have been successful in developing regenerative agriculture through the Jamaica Agribusiness Agency (agro-forestry with breadfruit), and through the Kee Farms network[16] but again no communications are evident. Finally, the GEF-funded project "Strengthening the Resilience of Agricultural Lands and Forests in Dominica in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria" also has supported PPPs with farmers in landscapes around the Morene Trois Piton National Park, but lessons learned from this initiative do not appear to have been reviewed by the project to date.

4.5.6 Communication, visibility, knowledge management and knowledge products

166 The MTR team found the project's communication strategy has been embedded into the PISLM's infrastructure to support PISLM promote SLM/SSM in the subregion within the context of the 25x25 initiative, as well as to facilitate the uploading of knowledge products (communications, videos, publications, etc.) into the development of the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH) and PISLM's website, which includes a YouTube website to access videos on PISLM's work, attendance at the UNCCD COPs and on project activities. This includes the uploading of short videos where participants in project activities can provide feedback on the outcomes of the training they have received. For example, the short video posted by a soil scientist from St. Lucia[17] was found by the MTR team to be a **particularly powerful tool to support learning, promote inclusiveness and communicate the project's impact on soil science in participating countries in the LSKH, as well as support informed decision-making on project's actions under C2-C4**.

167 At the country level, PISLM relies heavily on its Project Assistants (PAs) and the UNCCD FPs to coordinate project activities and raise awareness on the project's activities foreseen in each participating country. This has been supported by the application of social media platforms such as Mailchimp to enable stakeholders and local community leaders to provide their feedback on

[15] GEF (2021). Available at: https://www.thegef.org/news/regenerative-agriculture-offers-fresh-solutions-latin-america-and-caribbean

[16] OPEC Fund for International Development (2024). Available at: https://opecfund.org/news/pioneering-regenerative-farming-for-ocean-health-and-economic-empowerment?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[17] PISLM YouTube website. Available at: Sarah Felicien- Lab Tech Trainee-Testimonial

the project's activities at the country level. The MTR team understands this represents good practice that could be used maintain regular feedback on the quality and timeliness of the project's activities, especially under C2-C4, to support learning, capture local knowledge and attitudes and address gaps and input needs.

168 The low budget allocated to communications has encouraged the adoption of a communication strategy that primarily focuses on reporting on project operations and events, rather than an opportunity to stimulate learning, innovation, and advocacy for investment in the restoration economy and supported by policy influencing plans (PIPs). Taking this into account, and the fact that the project is operating in eight participating countries, the MTR team considers that the project design has underestimated the need for an effective communication strategy that emphasises the strategic importance of establishing a restoration economy that supports both green and blue growth.

4.5.7 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), including M&E design, implementation and budget

169 The PMU is applying its M&E in accordance with the Prodoc (Results Matrix) and the reporting format provided in the PIR. The MTR team found no evidence that the M&E plan has had either a positive or negative effect on the project's performance, because its main function is to report on progress on achieving targets to GEF/FAO. However, the MTR team identified design faults in this approach. First, it encourages a fragmented approach to monitoring SLM/SSM/CSA, all of which should be mutually reinforcing and directed at improving ecosystem services and improvements in livelihoods.

170 Second, the indicators do not fully align with the LDN pledges of each country to the UNCCD, and which have been summarised in subsection 4.1.1. Furthermore, because the project directly supports the NDCs and GBF of CBD, indicators could also have been developed to show the project's intended contribution to these agreements. For example, the project includes an indicator on assessing the reduction of GHG, but this does not relate to the NDCs. In the case of the GBF, the project is promoting the application of HNVI, which should be linked to reporting on the pledges of each country to the GBF.

171 Third, the outcome targets highlighted under subsection 4.5.1, which amount to 55,000 ha of SLM/SSM/CSA actions are not realistic. Moreover, there is a lack of qualitative indicators in the M&E plan to support learning not only progress in achieving targets, but also: (i) how far the drivers, barriers and risks to LDN are being addressed and (ii) what is changing in terms of capacity, knowledge, attitudes, practices, etc. in the 25 pilot sites; (iii) where resources should be concentrated to optimise the project's results and added value. Moreover, the MTR team found that this approach could be supported through social media, such as the Mailchimp application mentioned under subsection 4.5.6 above.

172 Finally, there is a lack of gender-specific and IP indicators beyond participation rates, which would provide information on the level of empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups through the project: actions. More on this can be found in subsection 4.6.2 below.

4.6 Cross-cutting priorities

MTR question 6 - *To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?*

Finding 12*:* The ESS checklist is not reviewed in the PIRs, and it appears FAO-SLC needs to provide training on its application. For example, question 3 in the Prodoc (in particular relating to the provision of seeds/planting material for cultivation) was triggered and, therefore, needs responses to be provided in the PIR, even if the implementation of actions under C3 and C4 have been delayed to 2025.

MTR question 7: *To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project?*

Finding 13*:* The MTR Team found monitoring only records male and female participation rates in the project's main activities. In this regard the 38.9 per cent participation rate is considered satisfactory. However, it was unclear whether the total number of participants to 31/12/2024 (583 people, of which 227 are women) has included any double counting of participants in more than one training exercise or activity. In terms of women's participation numbers, it is evident that they are low (9.5% of the end target) after three years of operations. Moreover, although the Prodoc provides a gender mainstreaming action plan that addresses the needs of women and other vulnerable groups, (youths aged 15-25 years old and indigenous peoples), there is little evidence to indicate this is being applied effectively, in part because there is no specific monitoring and reporting on equality and their empowerment through the project.

4.6.1 Environmental and social standards

173 The overall ESS Risk classification is "low" for the SOILCARE I project in the Prodoc and PIRs. According to the screening checklist in the Prodoc, only question 3 (Q3) under Safeguard 3 was triggered on the grounds that it is foreseen to do one or more of the following: (i) introduce crops and varieties previously not grown; (ii) provide seeds/planting material for cultivation; (iii) involve the importing or transfer of seeds and or planting material for cultivation or research and development; (iv) supply or use modern biotechnologies or their products in crop production; (v) establish or manage planted forests. However, no mitigation measures have been provided in the Prodoc or PIRs.

174 The MTR team also found grounds that Safeguard 2 (interventions in protected areas) should have been triggered. This is because the following two sub-questions apply to the SOILCARE I project. First, Q2.1 because the project will include implementation in a protected area or its buffer zone, notably in the Barbados National Park and in the Annandale and Grand Etang Forest reserves (Les Avocat site in Grenada). Second, Q2.5 because the project aims to use traditional knowledge on

genetic resources from IPs and local farmers where local varieties are known to be resilient and have high nutritional and economic value.

175 Reference to the PIRs confirms no new ESS have been identified (including Q2.1 and Q2.5). Consequently, there is no assessment of the ESS in the PIRs and PPRs. This is explained by the lack of implementation of actions under C2-C4 and partly on a lack of coherence between the ESS applied in the Prodoc and what is applied in the PIRs. For example, the PIRs include a new safeguard, the Grievance Redress Mechanism, which is applied by PISLM. According to the latest PIR no complaints have been reported, but the MTR team found that FAO-SLC should provide training the application of this mechanism as well as on ESS reporting and effective application in the project's planning and implementation to ensure this does not have to be repeated in SOILCARE II.

4.6.2 Gender and social inclusion focus

176 The safeguard questions on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) and IPs were not triggered in the Prodoc. However, one of the proposed intervention sites in Guyana covers exclusively IPs. However, this has not been adequately addressed in the PIRs. The section in the Prodoc on GEWE confirms that the Charter of Civil Society for the Caribbean Community has been used to guide the integration of GEWE and social inclusion in the project's main actions. To this end the Prodoc recommends the competent authorities for GEWE, Youth Affairs and IPs should be represented in the national advisory groups (NAGs) for the project to ensure PISLM respects their specific needs to ensure the benefits resulting from the project's activities impact equally on women, youths and IPs. In support of this approach, the Prodoc (outcome 5.1) requires the application of the "forty-percent-rule", whereby at least forty percent of the training and financial resources provided (from the SCCF) will benefit women. In addition, GEWE is expected in the development of the CSA activities (C2) and to be reported in all knowledge management activities.

177 Despite listing the main issues faced by women and providing a corresponding gender action plan, the MTR team found the application of this plan was delayed until the recruitment of a gender specialist consultant in 2024. As a result, the focus of the project to date has been to record sex-disaggregated participation rates for women and men. Table 6 shows that the current participation rate of women averages 38.9 per cent to 31/12/2024. This is satisfactory when considering the target in the Prodoc is 40 per cent.

178 The total participation of 227 women in the project's main activities to 31/12/2024 is considered low (9.5%) when compared to the target of 2,398 women planned in the Prodoc and considering the project has completed three years of implementation. In terms of the training provided under C1, women (and male) participants interviewed stated they were happy with the content and quality of the training provided concerning the soil sampling and analysis exercises. However, some of the women who participated in the GIS training provided by FAO stated that the application of the R Studio software was too complex and not adequately tailored to their availability and programming capacity needs. As a result, a number of female participants have had to drop out of the training sessions and be replaced by other women or men available.

Table 6. Summary of men and women's participation by component to 31 December 2024

Component	Male participants (target)	Female participants (target)	Male participants (actual)	Female participants (actual)	Percentage female participation
Component 1	n/a	n/a	101	61	**37.0%**
Component 2	1,250	475	0	0	0
Component 3	1,800	750	0	0	0
Component 4	1,800	750	0	0	0
Component 5	632	423	252	166	**39.7%**
Total/Average	**5,482**	**2,398**	**353**	**227**	**38.9%**

Source: PISLM

179 The delayed start of developing the site plans for the pilot sites selected under C2-C4 has made it difficult for the MTR team to collect data on the projected number of women participants compared to men. For example, in Belize the total number of participants foreseen under C4 (includes establishment of propagation centres foreseen under C2) is 367 people, of which 144 are women. In the event these numbers materialise, the participation rate of women would be 39.2 per cent. However, there is currently no concrete information in any of the participating countries under C4 on whether a gender-based value chain analysis will take place to help determine how many women are likely to adopt decision-making roles, as well as highlight their specific training needs and access levels to land, funding and business-related services.

180 The MTR team found the project's approach to IPs has been to at least one pilot site dedicated specifically to their needs (Arakaka, Guyana). However, the MTR team was unable to determine how far Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has influenced the decision-making on the selection of the site, or concerning the SLM/SSM measures selected in the DPSIR report for Guyana. For example, a specific assessment of IPs and forest dependent communities in Arakaka region has not taken place to fully capture their specific needs and aspirations. Under these circumstances the MTR team is moderately unsatisfied with the current level of monitoring and reporting on this issue, through which learning on their needs, capacities and knowledge could be formed to guide decision-making on the SLM/SSM approaches and on the specific needs of indigenous women who will participate in the project.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

181 The MTR team's findings indicate the project's **overall risk rating is "moderate"**. The MTR team found the risk ratings provided under three risk categories needed changing, especially on the rise in risk associated with climate variability and change (and disasters) which should be re-classified to high, while the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has receded and should be ranked as low risk in the latest PIR-2. In addition, other risks, not assessed in the PIRs, have contributed to causing significant delays in the project's implementation, which indicate very clearly that the project is not on track to achieve its planned outcomes and objectives by the end of operations in November 2024. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the main conclusions of the MTR process by evaluation criteria and questions in the ToR.

182 **Conclusion on question 1 - *Is the project relevant and coherent?* (Conc. 1):** The project's relevance at all levels and coherence with other projects is satisfactory. Outcomes and objectives remain consistent with the policies and priorities of the executing agency, participating government institutions and GEF's focal areas and objectives. The project has also established a formal synergy with the GEF-funded SIDS-SIDS project. Two main shortcomings affecting relevance and coherence are: first, the risk that local stakeholders have not seen any mobilisation of activities on the ground under C2-C4, which may lead them to question the relevance of the pilot projects if they do not start to deliver results soon, and second, the project design and implementation have not effectively demonstrated the socio-economic value of restoring and conserving ecosystem services. Consequently, important information is not feeding into policy dialogue to inform decision-makers at the subregional, national and pilot site levels with regards to (i) SLM/SSM/CSA representing the best way forward in the transition to LDN, and (ii) that this transition is not an end itself (to meet UNCCD targets), but a means to delivering greener, more inclusive and resilient development that supports pledges to the UNCCD, NDCs and to targets under the CBD's Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

183 **Conclusion on question 2 - *To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?* (Conc. 2):** The project is not on track to meet its objectives by its end of duty (closure) date on 23/11/2025. Project effectiveness has been mixed, with satisfactory advances under C1 and C5 that indicate the majority of outcomes foreseen under these two components are likely to be achieved before the project's closure on 23/11/2025. Meanwhile, progress under C2-C4 has been slower than planned, resulting in the lack of operations in all 25 pilot sites selected. The general lack of progress in the seven participating countries on designing site plans and activities for these sites is evident and suggests more needs to be done to strengthen the national platforms and PISLM expertise to resolve these problems in 2025. However, even if these platforms are strengthened, more time will be required to implement the project's proposed responses to land degradation at all 25 pilot sites.

184 **Conclusion on question 3 - *To what extent is the project being implemented efficiently and cost effectively [and] to what extent is the pledged co-financing being delivered?* (Conc. 3):**

the project's capacity to convert its resources into expected outputs and outcomes has been slower than planned. Implementation delays have been a principal cause behind the slower than planned physical progress, expenditure of GEF funds and co-finance mobilisation to 31/12/2024. The MTR team concludes these are important signs that the project's design has not paid adequate attention to the capacity requirements and the human and financial resources needed to fulfil the implementation of the project as proposed in the Prodoc. This includes the lack of effective risk management and adequate communication channels between PISLM and FAO-SLC to address these inefficiencies in a comprehensive and timely manner in the interests of optimising the project's cost-effectiveness in 2025.

185 **Conclusion on question 4 - *What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project?* (Conc. 4)**: the sustainability of outputs and the expected outcome under C1 is likely where they are embedded in PISLM, or in the participating authorities at the national level who have reiterated their support to continuing SOILCARE in a second phase and, potentially, in a third phase (proposed at the COP16 in December 2024). Meanwhile, the sustainability of outputs and outcomes achieved under C2-C4 is unlikely unless adequate sources of funding are in place and the targets applied under C2-C4 are realistic and supported by a clear and comprehensive exit strategy. Under C5 the main concerns are the lack of clarity on the future funding of the LSKN and the mobilisation of funds to kick-start the LDN Transformation Financial Mechanism (SCCF) in 2025 to fund CSA development under C3 and C4. Under these circumstances, the MTR team concludes the project has not applied effective risk management to ensure the expected outputs and outcomes under C2-C4 are congruent with the capacity, resources and logistical constraints that PISLM and the participating CSIDS currently face to implement the project. Moreover, the lack of up-to-date land policies and legislation in the subregion to guide land-use planning, address land tenure conflicts, and secure private and civil society engagement in the development of the restoration economy, represent significant barriers that need to be removed before SLM/SSM/CSA can be sustained and alternative livelihoods developed.

186 **Conclusion on question 5.1 - *To what extent are implementing and executing agencies effectively discharging their roles and responsibilities?* (Conc. 5.1):** several factors are affecting the project's performance. As stated in the previous conclusion, firstly the project's design has some shortcomings that result in an over-ambitious list of outputs and targets to be fulfilled in just four years of operations. Second, the national soil maps are progressing well, but it appears they are being conducted largely in isolation of each other by FAO, rather than through dedicated trained staff in PISLM, which restricts learning and ownership. Third, information exchanges through the knowledge hub have been delayed. This has restricted learning and identification of good practices that could and should be integrated into the pilot sites to support the development of agroforestry and other agricultural practices supporting SLM/SSM and CSA, which also open up opportunities to develop non-timber forestry products (NTFPs). Currently, there is no mention of the promotion of the "restoration economy" in the Prodoc, or PIRs. Fourth, the project's M&E does not include qualitative indicators to support analysis on the project's contribution to delivering transformational changes under C1-C5, especially in terms of

knowledge, attitudes, practices (KAP), although the short videos of soil scientists could be used to support analysis of such changes through a more effective communication strategy.

187 **Conclusion on question 5.2 - *To what extent and how have multi-sector stakeholders at different levels been involved in project design and implementation?* (Conc. 5.2)**: Stakeholders at the subregional level, including PISLM, confirm they were involved in the project's design and, in some cases, continue to participate in the project's planning and implementation. However, staff rotation within the eight participating countries has resulted in changes of representatives in the PSC. Given the PSC only meets once a year and that the M&E plan is not geared to developing adequate learning and communications on the project's performance, the MTR team concludes more guidance and oversight of the project's operations is required by the PSC and FAO-SLC. This has been compounded by insufficient levels of communication and collaboration between PISLM and FAO-SLC, in particular the Task Force it has established for the project.

188 **Conclusion on question 5.3 - *How is the project assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences?* (Conc. 5.3)**: The project's capacity to promote learning, innovation and advocacy campaigns to encourage legislative reforms that support the mainstreaming of SLM/SSM/CSA has been moderately unsatisfactory so far. This has not been aided by the relatively late recruitment of the communications officer in 2023 and delays in the launching of the LSKH, which is now foreseen in 2025.

189 **Conclusion on question 5.4 - *Is the project's M&E system adequate, practical, and sufficient?* (Conc. 5.4):** In line with conclusion 1, the M&E system applied only serves to report on operational progress and the degree to which targets set in the Results Matrix are being achieved. M&E reporting is therefore designed to inform the GEF Secretariat on progress and achievements in a standard format (PIRs). Under these circumstances, the MTR team concludes that the M&E system is not adequately aligned to the specific needs and interests in the subregion, in particular that the LDN process in the Caribbean needs to be coordinated with activities conducted under the UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD/GFB. In addition, the absence of qualitative indicators will restrict learning on the results, good practices and lessons learned in each country.

190 **Conclusion on question 5.5 - *Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan?* (Conc. 5.5)**: the M&E plan is applied in conformity with the reporting format in the PIRs, and FAO's six-monthly PPRs. The reporting on the project's implementation progress cover both the annual and six-monthly periods covered between November 2021 and June 2024. The quality of the monitoring system has generally been let down by (i) the lack of clear indicators for some outcomes, in particular the number of beneficiaries planned under C1 (see Table 6) and the project's contribution to meeting national voluntary pledges on LDN to UNCCD by 2030 as described in subsection 4.1.1 where there are some errors in the Prodoc (on targets in Grenada and St. Lucia that do not tally with their own pledges and land degradation figures submitted to UNCCD); (iii) unrealistic targets set under C2-C4 considering the lack of capacity and resources of extension staff; (iv) the absence qualitative indicators to support learning on changes in capacity, knowledge, attitudes and practices at the national and local levels; (v) the general lack of application of the gender equality action plan foreseen in the Prodoc and FPIC in the project M&E (see also conclusion 6.1).

191 **Conclusion of question 6.1 - *To what extent are gender equality and empowerment and other equity issues mainstreamed in the project, both in design and implementation (including M&E)?* (Conc. 6.1):** the project is not fully applying GEWE in line with the action plan provided in the Prodoc. Instead, it has mainly concentrated on securing the forty-percent-rule, with current participation rates of women standing at 39 per cent. This is likely to continue when the application of project actions under C2-C4 start in 2025. Under these circumstances, the MTR concludes the project's M&E system is only able to track participation rates, rather than track women and other vulnerable group's level of satisfaction with the training and capacity building provided by the project through which their specific needs can be addressed and acted upon.

192 **Conclusion on question 6.2 - *To what extent have environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?* (Conc. 6.2):** the Prodoc has not applied the ESS checklist correctly, in particular omitting responses to question 3, which was triggered, but also omitting the triggering of question 2 concerning interventions in protected areas, which is the case in Barbados and Grenada. This has not been picked up and addressed in the PIRs, in part because the PIRs do not apply the same ESS checklist format. Instead, the ESS section applies a different format and has included a new safeguard (the Grievance Redress Mechanism), for which there is no evidence of training, or guidelines, provided by FAO-SLC to date. As a result, the MTR team identified very little evidence to conclude the mechanism is being applied in accordance with UN rules and procedures. As such, it is unclear how far the project is able to protect all stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups, from unfair practices and/or treatment.

6.2. Recommendations

193 **Recommendation 1 (R1) in response to all Conclusions - to FAO and PISLM**: **it is recommended PISLM and FAO-SLC meet as soon as possible to resolve the lack of trust and insufficient communication that currently exists between the two parties. The agreement reached should be integrated into the abovementioned workplan proposed between PISLM and FAO's Project Task Force for the project.**

Suggestions on how to implement R1:

- The meeting should take the form of a workshop through which PISLM and FAO-SLC meet to cover a mutually accepted agenda that covers the OPIM/OPA, LoAs, procurement, reporting and M&E.
- FAO-SLC should ensure that regular contact is maintained with PISLM through a combination of weekly meeting and at least one meeting per annum in-person in one or more of the implementing countries (outside of Barbados).
- FAO-SLC should ensure the FAO country offices operating in the region engage more actively one of the office staff in supporting the project's implementation, stimulate synergies and/or

information exchange on FAO's TCP active in the participating countries and provide support in areas such as quality assurance when requested by the Task Force.

194 **Recommendation 2 (R2) in response to Conclusion 1 - to PISLM, FAO, PSC and the SSMFG: To enhance the project's relevance and coherence, it is recommended that greater emphasis is given to calculating the socio-economic value and benefits of ecosystem restoration and conservation of the project sites. These data should be validated and used to support the design of a regional policy influencing plan (PIP) designed to encourage decision-makers to fully integrate SLM/SSM/CSA in relevant regional, national and sector legislation in support of the development and upscaling of the restoration economy (covering agriculture, environment, business and finance and education sectors, among others).**

Suggestions on how to implement R2:

- FAO should draw on other GEF-funded projects that have successfully adopted similar approaches, such as under The Restoration Initiative (TRI), and discuss with PISLM the options for developing capacity on, for example, (i) Total Economic Value (TEV) studies, (ii) cost-benefit analysis (CBA), designed to integrate the economic assessment of land use into public and private sector decision-making, based on the land degradation initiative (LDN); (iii) FAO's global assessment of land degradation and improvement (GLADA).
- Hold an extra-official meeting of the PSC to discuss the planning and implementation of the recommendation.
- PISLM recruits a consultant to oversee capacity development and application of at least one of these methods as a precursor to developing a policy influencing plan supporting the strategic relevance of mainstreaming of SLM/SSM/CSA in the subregion's legislative framework to promote the transition to greener and bluer economies and greater coordination between FPs for UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD.

195 **Recommendation 3 (R3) in response to Conclusions 2 and 4 - to PISLM, FAO, the PSC, the SSMFG and CSSG: considering the large amount of delays in the project's implementation and in the interests of achieving the project's outcomes and objective the project should have a no-cost extension of up to 24 months. The actual length of the extension should be determined following the application of the following suggestions.**

Suggestions on how to implement R3:

- The recruitment of a technical officer (discussed with PISLM during the field mission), should have ToR that focus on supporting the PM oversee the identification, adoption and implementation of the site implementation plans for all 25 site plans proposed under C2-C4. A key part of the ToR should focus on the selection of targets by the national steering committee members that are realistic and achievable in the no-cost extension period selected by the regional project steering committee members.
- The results of the TEV, CBA or GLADA should be used to clarify the purpose and goal of the pilot sites. In addition, effective risk management, a tentative exit strategy and

sustainability plan proposal should all be included in the site implementation plan. In Haiti, this should be based on non-state actors engaged in community-based bottom-up approaches to sustaining SLM/SSM/CSA.

- Conduct a tender to select a consultancy that can conduct the marketing studies required to support the planning and implementation of alternative economic development activities foreseen in each of the participating countries under C4. In this way the project can determine the products and services that can generate a sustainable income and promote the development of the restoration economy at the 11 pilot sites selected. In the event no products or services are considered viable, main stakeholders should agree to switch the pilot site to C3, or remove the pilot site in order to concentrate resources in the other pilot sites.
- Following completion of these two exercises, main stakeholders should conduct a revision of the baselines and targets established in the Results Matrix (RM) under C2-C4. New, baselines and realistic and achievable targets should be agreed and integrated into the RM and the extension period required, confirmed, agreed and adopted by the PSC.
- The FAO's Project Task Force should integrate a specialist on risk management to oversee training, monitoring and reporting applies an effective risk management strategy that recognises it is a cross-cutting issue throughout the project's planning and implementation, rather than an independent exercise.

196 **Recommendation 4 (R4) in response to Conclusions 2, 5.4 and 5.5 to PISLM, FAO, the PSC, and the SSMFG and CSSG: the project should strengthen the Project Steering Committee and the national platforms established in each country for SOILCARE I.**

Suggestions on how to implement R4:

- It is strongly recommended that the PSC includes the following representatives to guide the successful implementation of activities under C2-C4: (i) up to three regional representatives specialised in the development of agribusinesses associated with the development of the green (and blue) economy, preferably with first-hand experience on regenerative farming practices that emphasise soil health and development; (ii) one regional representative specialised in mobilising finance and access to international funds supporting LDN-related actions; (iii) one specialist on environmental education and advocacy.
- It is strongly recommended that the PSC meets twice yearly and assigns adequate time and resources to ensure all key points are dealt with in a comprehensive manner.
- It is strongly recommended that the national platforms for SOILCARE I are expanded to include: (i) the national FP for UNCCC/NDCs; (ii) the national FP for CBD/GBF; (iii) a senior representative from the public and private sectors responsible for business development and finance, preferably sustainable agribusiness development; (vi) a senior national representative responsible for land policy (where relevant); (v) a senior representative responsible for environmental education.

- It is recommended the national platforms become permanent national committees for UNCCD-UNFCCC-CBD, to support coordinated approaches to LDN, adaptation to climate change and recovery of biodiversity in the extension period and into SOILCARE II.

197 **Recommendation 5 (R5) in response to Conc. 5.3 on systematisation of results, lessons and good practices - to PISLM, FAO and the PSC: to enhance the project's capacity to promote learning, innovation, and advocacy for regional and national legislative reforms, it is recommended the project launches the Knowledge Hub without further delays and the communication officer should support the development of the advocacy campaigns needed to support the implementation of the project.**

Suggestions on how to implement R5:

- FAO-SLC should provide guidance from one of its communications officers on how to develop an effective communication strategy that builds on the results of R1-R4. This could be done during the workshop proposed under R1, or separately.
- It is recommended the Knowledge Hub is officially called the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub of the Caribbean (LSKH-C).
- All main stakeholders should assess and agree on the funding of the operation and maintenance of the LSKH-C as well as cover adequate levels of quality assurance.
- The access protocols to the LSKH-C should be clarified as soon as possible.

198 **Recommendation 6 (R6) in response to Conclusions 5.4 and 5.5 - to PISLM, FAO and PSC: it is recommended that the M&E plan and system: (i) provide a more comprehensive understanding of the project's impact and (ii) support meaningful learning.**

Suggestions on how to implement R6:

- To enhance the M&E system's effectiveness, it is recommended that the system is revised to include impact indicators on the project's contributions to: (i) LDN/UNCCD, NDCs/UNFCCC, the GBF/CBD, and relevant SDG targets under SDG 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17; (ii) regional and national legislative changes (in policies, strategies and plans); (iii) qualitative changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices of stakeholders and partners (end beneficiaries) that include vulnerable groups such as women, youth, elders, and the disabled, at the local level.

199 **Recommendation 7 (R7) in response to Conclusion 6.1 - to PISLM, FAO and PSC: it is recommended the project should go beyond meeting the 40 percent rule concerning women's participation and focus more on ensuring that the training and capacity-building activities meet the specific needs of women and other vulnerable groups. The M&E system should be expanded to track the level of satisfaction among these groups, whether their needs are being effectively addressed, and whether there is a reduction in their vulnerability leading to more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.**

Suggestions on how to implement R7:

- The PISLM and FAO-SLC should include in the agenda of the workshop proposed under Recommendation 1, or separately if preferred, how to improve bi-annual follow-up of GEWE and IP participation and empowerment using indicators that are currently adopted and applied in the Caribbean by CARICOM.
- FAO-HQ should ensure greater coherence on the GEWE format applied in the Prodoc is the same in the PIRs (or vice versa) to avoid confusion and to support learning.

200 **Recommendation 8 (R8) in response to Conclusion 6.2 - to PISLM and FAO: the project should ensure that the ESS checklist is properly applied in line with the Prodoc to ensure responses are provided on questions 2 and 3. In addition, FAO-SLC should provide training and guidelines on the application of the ESS and the Grievance Redress Mechanism to ensure that the latter is applied in accordance with UN rules and procedures.**

Suggestions on how to implement R8:

- The PISLM and FAO-SLC should discuss how to improve annual follow-up of the ESS as part of the agenda in the workshop proposed under Recommendation 1.
- The FAO-HQ should ensure greater coherence on the ESS format applied in the Prodoc is the same in the PIRs (or vice versa) to avoid confusion and to support learning.

7. Lessons learned

201 In accordance with the latest MTR Guidelines Addendum on new GEF requirements on Lessons Learned, the MTR team have identified the following:

202 **Lesson learned 1 – on project design (for FAO/GEF):** poor project design that is disconnected from local capacity and resources leads to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. This highlights the urgent need for more realistic planning, greater local involvement and resource alignment to ensure successful, and sustainable outcomes that are guided by a sound exit strategy and sustainability plan agreed with main partners.

203 **Lesson 2 – on soil mapping (for PISLM, FAO/GEF and soil scientists in CSIDS):** devoting time and resources to good ground truthing, based on soil sampling that is representative of the area selected and recorded on tablets is good practice because it saves time (i.e. repeating the sampling process), reduces the scope for errors and facilitates validation.

204 **Lesson 3 – on soil health versus fertility (for PISLM, FAO/GEF and soil scientists in CSIDS)**: promoting soil health, rather than just soil fertility, leads to long-term sustainability of SLM/SSM/CSA because it encompasses the physical structure, chemical content, organic matter, and biodiversity that are crucial to improving resilience to biotic and abiotic stresses. Focusing solely on fertility overlooks, therefore, critical ecosystem functions that are crucial to sustaining healthy, balanced and thriving ecosystems.

205 **Lesson 4 – on nature-based solutions (for PISLM and FAO/GEF):** the proposed application of nature-based solutions (including assisted natural regeneration) in the DPSIR reports that have

not fully recognised, values and incorporated local knowledge and technologies are likely to miss important underlying socio-cultural and economic issues that could affect resilience and the sustainability of results. For example, Figure 15 shows how Guyanese farmers use coconut trees for shade to produce avocado seedlings and chillies.

206 **Lesson 4 - on projects that promote economic development outcomes such as under C4 (for the PSC, PISLM and FAO/GEF):** projects that do not engage business and finance expertise from the public and private sector at both the design and implementation phases are likely to lack adequate marketing strategies, business and financial planning, and management skills to grow agribusiness initiatives. This oversight is likely to hinder the project's sustainability, and leave farmers vulnerable to financial challenges and low growth potential.

207 **Lesson 5 – on co-financing (for GEF/FAO):** assigning co-finance figures that are unrealistic and/or difficult to measure to satisfy GEF requirements for funding can give a false impression that partners are not cooperating adequately. This can undermine trust and the project's effectiveness and its good intentions to advance the LDN process.

208 **Lesson 6 – on gender equality (for the PSC, PISLM, FAO/GEF):** projects that only track women's participation rates does not constitute an effective gender-focused approach, because it overlooks the quality of their involvement and the hidden power dynamics on decision-making that usually restrict rural women's long-term empowerment. This can affect the project's effectiveness, the sustainability of its outcomes and its long-term impact.

209 **Lesson 7 – on risk management (for the PSC, PISLM and FAO/GEF)**: the application of incoherent and approaches to risk management in the Prodoc, the PIRs and MTRs can cause confusion, reemphasises risk management as a separate administrative exercise, and result in poor choices on the allocation of resources. This can result in increasing the project's vulnerability to risk rather than developing it as a cross-cutting exercise designed to enhance the project's performance and impact.

210 **Lesson 9 – on monitoring and evaluation (for the PSC PISLM and FAO/GEF):** Results Matrices that are primarily target driven only restricts learning, whereas the inclusion of qualitative indicators on knowledge, attitudes and practices encourages the application of participatory surveys and peer-to-peer reviews to determine whether progress on the achievement of targets is delivering, or not, transformational changes that are crucial to sustaining project outcomes.

211 **Lesson 10 – on the OPIM modality (for FAO)**: the application of the OPIM modality without adequate clarification of the roles of FAO and partners, effective coordination (through the project task force) and the realisation of adequate levels of capacity-building (of the executing agency), risks projecting FAO as, *de facto,* the lead agency. This can lead to a breakdown in trust and fragmented efforts that can diminish the project's effectiveness, sustainability and impact.

8. Appendices

.Appendix 1. MTR work schedule, including field missions and reporting

Date	Hour	Action (including persons interviewed)	Realised Yes/No (with comments)
Inception Phase			
Tuesday, 12/11/2024	15h00-16h30	Kick-off meeting with FAO MTR coordinators Emilia Bretan, Neila Bobb Prescott, Danielle Lewis Clarke and introduction to Gina Young (MTR national consultant).	Yes
Wednesday, 13/11/2024	11h30 - 13h00	Remote meeting with PISLM Project Manager, Trevor Thompson, and Chief Technical Officer (CTO), Lakeram Singh.	Yes
Friday, 15/11/2024	12h00 – 13h15	Remote meeting with the Executive Officer of PISLM, Calvin James.	Yes
Tuesday, 19/11/2024	13h00 – 14h00	Remote interview with FAO's GEF Technical Officer (GTO), Hernan Gonzalez (FAO-HQ).	Yes
Thursday, 21/11/2024	11h00 – 12h30	Remote interview with Maria Ferro Vázquez LTO / Global Soil Partnership (GSP) tools, guidance, training, and backstopping for SOILCARE.	Yes
Monday, 25/11/2024	11h00 – 12h00	Preliminary interview with Neila Bobb Prescott, member of the project Task Force and FAO focal point for SOILCARE I.	Yes
	12h00 – 13h00	Remote interview with the Project Budget Holder, Dr Renata Clarke.	Yes
	13h00 – 13h30	Remote meeting with Danielle Lewis Clarke, Portfolio Support Specialist, on logistical matters	Yes
Tuesday, 26/11/2024	11h00 – 12h00	Coordination with the Project Manager, Trevor Thompson, on the work agenda and stakeholder analysis.	Yes
Filed Phase			
Saturday, 30/11/2024	**10h40 – 15h20**	**Travel from London LHR, UK, to Atlanta, USA** (Warren)	Yes
Sunday, 01/12/2024	**18h07 – 21h09**	**Travel from Atlanta, USA, to Kingston, Jamaica** (Warren)	Yes
Monday, 02/12/2024	10h00 - 11h00	Remote briefing with FAO Security for the whole field mission	No (FAO is operating virtually from Jm)

	11h30 - 12h45	Remote interview with Karieta Malone and Anthony Kellmann, GEF finance, monitoring and OPIM matters	Yes
	13h00 – 14h00	Coordination with the LDNS, Gina Young.	Yes
	16h30 – 19h00	In-person meeting with Trevor Thompson, SOILCARE I Project Manager on the work agenda, logistics and project results.	Yes
Tuesday, 03/12/2024	10h00 – 11h30	Participation in the presentation on the status of SOILCARE I project by Mr. Trevor Thompson, Project Manager and Mr. Steve Maximay, Consultant responsible for Component 4 of the the project. Participants: Mr. Courtney Cole - Chief Technical Director, Special Projects Ms. Joan Brown Morrison - Senior Director, Agricultural land Management Division Ms. Pamella McKenzie - Technical Manager, Soil Health, Plant Tissue and Water Laboratory Ms. Dahlia Fletcher - Manager, Agriculture Mapping (GIS) Ms. Gillian Brown, Training Manager, Rural Agric. Development Authority (RADA) Mr. Owen Scarlett, Agro-economist, Agro-Investment Corporation of MOAFM. Mr. Patrick Watson, National Focal Point for UNCCD in the Ministry of Local Gov and Community Development (MLGCD) and national Project Assistant for SOILCARE.	Yes
	13h30 – 14h45	Focal Group meeting with members from the Agricultural Land Management Division (ALMD) of MOAFM (components 1 & 4): Dr. Shaquille Stone, Soil scientist (sampling coordinator). Ms. Joan Brown Morrison - Senior Director, Agricultural land Management Division. Ms. Pamella McKenzie - Technical manager, soil health, plant tissue and water laboratory. Ms. Dahlia Fletcher - Manager, agriculture mapping (GIS).	Yes
	15h00 – 16h00	Visit to the ALMD Soil laboratory (component 1) with: Ms. Pamella McKenzie - Technical Manager, Soil Health, Plant Tissue and Water Laboratory	Yes
Wednesday, 04/12/2024	08h00 – 10h30	Travel to Lowe River, Trelawny Parish with Dr. Stone from the Ministry of Agriculture	Yes

	10h30 – 12h00	Site visit and interview with farmers participating in field demonstrations to develop sustainable and resilient yam production (component 4)	Yes
	14h00 – 15h00	Travel to Holland Estate in St. Elizabeth Parish to interview Mr. Howard Baldie (AGRO-INVEST), the Holland Agro Park site manager on the soil sampling exercises and challenges to develop the climate smart agricultural compliance (CSAC) methodology with farmers	Yes
	16h00 - 18h30	Return to hotel in Kingston with Ministry of Agriculture.	Yes
Thursday, 05/12/2024	09h00 – 10h00	Ms. Jhannel Tomilson, FAO National Correspondent and Ms. Stacy Rose (assistant).	No (not available)
	11h30 – 11h30	Ms. Masha Henry Martin, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government & Community Development. Mr. Patrick Watson, National Focal Point for UNCCD and PA for SOILCARE	Yes (PS not available, but remote interview with Mr. Watson rescheduled to 13/12/2024)
	14h55 – 20h20	**Travel from Kingston Jamaica to Barbados** (Warren)	Yes
Friday, 06/12/2024	08h30 – 08h45	Courtesy call with Dr Renata Clarke, Sub-regional Coordinator.	Yes
	09h00 - 10h00	Meeting with Neila Bobb-Prescott, FAO focal point for FAO's Task Force for SOILCARE I	Yes
	10h00 – 11h00	Coordination of logistics with FAO-SLC	Yes
	11h00 – 12h30	In-person meeting with Mr. Melvin Medina Navarro (LTO) and Dr. Anne Derochers, Plant production and protection specialist.	Yes
	12h45 – 13h45	Finalization of interview with Ms. Neila Bobb-Prescott (focus on needs for SOILCARE II and latest from UNCCD's COP16).	Yes
	12h00 – 13h00	Virtual interview with Steven Devonish, Director of the Natural Heritage Department, Min. of Environment and Natural Beautification, UNCCD, focal point for SOILCARE I and Chair of the PSC.	No In Saudi Arabia for the COP16 (attempted to reschedule to 19 Dec.)
	13h00 – 13h15	Coordination with Sherry Allsopp, Project Assistant for PISLM-Barbados	Yes

	14h00 – 17h00	Focal group meeting with Mr. stakeholders from the Natural Heritage Department field visit to the intervention sites in the Barbados National Park and selected private farms (components 2-4).	No (attempted to rechedule to 19 Dec.)
Saturday, 07/12/2024	09h00 – 17h00	Prepare and submit final version of the IR including full update of the MTR work plan and sending out of e-mails	Yes
	14h00 – 16h00	Document analysis and coordination with the Project manager and stakeholders	Yes
Sunday, 08/12/2024	09h00 – 12h00	Document analysis and consolidation of notes	Yes
	18h10 - 19h10	**Travel from Barbados to Trinidad & Tobago** (Warren)	Yes
	21h00 – 22h00	Meeting coordinatiojn in the hotel with Mr. Trevor Thompson, PM, PISLM	Yes
Monday, 09/12/2024	08h00 – 08h30	Proceed to UWI St. Augustine camus for the the Regional workshop on standard operating procedures for soil labs in the eight participating countries (component 1)	Yes
	09h00 – 12h30	Attend as an observer the Regional Soil Laboratory workshop on standard operating procedures. Conduct random on the spot interviews with participants (component 1)	Yes
	13h30 – 16h30	Attend the soil laboratory soil analysis training session. Interview with Mr. Filippo Benedetti, soil scientist at FAO-HQ, responsible for the implementation of the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) under component 1.	Yes
		Interview with: Ms. Tricianna Maheraj, Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility (RAC) on New Adaptation Technologies in the Caribbean (component 3)	Yes Rescheduled to17/12/2024
		Remote interview with: Ms. Janelle Joe, FAO Correspondent in MoA T&T janelle.joe@fao.org	No (no experience on SOILCARE)
	18h30 – 20h00	Interview with: Dr Gaius Eudoxie, senior lecturer of Soil Science UWI, St Augustine and lead on the implementation of Component 1.	Yes
Tuesday, 10/12/2024	**07h30 – 08h10**	**Travel to Grenada** (Warren)	Yes
	09h30 – 09h45	Coordination with Ms. Kenisha Canning, PA for PISLM/SOILCARE I in Grenada.	Yes

	10h00 - 10h30	Interview with Mr. Isaac Bhagwan, Permanent Secretary of MoA Mr. David Hopkin, Policy Development Officer Ms. Gail Ann Bernard, Senior Administrative officer in MoA	Yes
		Interview with Joseph Noel, UNCCD FP in the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives (MoA) and PSC member (joseph.noel@moa.gov.gd)	No In Saudi Arabia for the COP16
	10h30 - 11h30	Focal group meeting with project stakeholders from MoA: Mr. Anthony Jeramiah, Chief Forestry Officer; Ms. Celia Edwards, Irrigation Specialist, Land Use Division Mr. Leon Williams, U.A.V Technician, Land Use Division Mr. Kenton Fletcher, Land Use and GIS Specialist, LUD Ms. Jonelle McDonald, Land Use and GIS Specialist, Mr. Steve Maximay, PISLM consultant for promotion of CSAC and marketing (Component 4)	Yes
	11h30 - 17h30	Field visit with the MoA to Chambourd intervention site in St Andrew where a model farm is planned to build resilience and apply CSAC methodology from January 2025 (Components 3 and 4). Interview with: Mr. Terence Benjamin, President of the Chambourd Farmer's Association.	Yes
Wednesday, 11/12/2024	09h00 – 10h30	**Travel by boat to Carriacou** with MoA to see sites slected for components 2 and 3: Ms. Allison Haynes, Focal Point for GSP and SOILCARE I and Ms. Canning, PA of PISLM in MoA.	Yes
	11h00 - 11h45	Courtesey visit and focal group meeting with Mr. Javon Williams, Permanent Secretary for Carriacou Island, Mr. Leanwall Perrot (new PS in January 2025) and Mr. Benson Patrice, Senior Agriculture Officer and focal point for the project in Carriacou.	Yes
	12h45 - 14h45	Site visit to the climate smart model farm planned at Limlair livestock facility and interview with the farm manager, Mr. Acarlijuan Fleary.	Yes
	15h00 - 16h00	Site visit to Belmont, a critically degraded area selected for SLM/SSM.	Yes

	17h00 - 18h30	**Travel from Carriacou to St. Georges by ferry boat**	Yes
Thursday, 12/12/2024	08h00 - 09h30	Interview with Mr. Steve Maximay, PISLM consultant for promotion of CSAC and marketing under component 4	Yes
	10h00 – 11h00	Focal group meeting with the CSSG focal points in Belize, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago.	Yes
	11h30 - 13h30	Site visit to the degraded forest site at Les Avocats where SLM actions are planned and interview with the Water Treatment Plant Operator, Mr. Jarry Simon.	Yes
	16h45 – 19h00	**Travel from Grenada to Castries, St. Lucia** - via Barbados (Warren)	Yes
Friday, 13/12/2024	08h30 – 09h45	Remote interviews with stakeholders in **Antigua & Barbuda**: Dr. Linroy Christian, senior soil sceintist and focal point for the project in the MoA. Also, chairs the Caribbean Soils Support Group (CSSG). Ms. Norma Bradford, Crop research specialist in MoA. Mr. Matthew, agronomist in MoA.	Yes
		Remote interview with Ms. Oraine Nurse, Focal point for UNCCD in the Dept. of Environment, Antigua and Barbuda	No At the COP16 in Saudia Arabia
	10h00 - 10h15	Coordination of work agenda in Saint Lucia with Ms. Elomina Adonis, PA-PISLM in Saint Lucia.	Yes
	10h300 - 10h45	Coordination of work agenda in Guyana with Ms. Sarah Roberts at PISLM main office	Yes
	11h00 – 12h30	Online interview with Mr. Patrick Watson, UNCCD Focal Point in Jamaica, Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD)	Yes
	15h30 - 17h00	Continuation of online interview with Mr. Steve Maximay on progress under Component 4	Yes
Saturday, 14/12/2024	10h30 - 12h00	Remote meetings with stakeholders in **Haiti:** Mr. Constatin Joseph PA for PISLM in Haiti and Mr. Eder Audate Focal Point in the Ministry of Agriculture	Yes
	12h00 - 13h30	Online coordination meeting with Mr. Trevor Thompson, PM for the SOILCARE I project.	Yes
	14h00 - 14h15	Rescheduling of the Saint Lucia work agenda with Mr. Kwasi Goddard, PSG Focal Point and member of the CSSG in the MoA.	Yes

	14h30 - 16h00	Consolidation of field notes from the Evaluation Matrix and coordination with Ms. Gina Young on her contract and proposed field work in Belize.	Yes
Sunday, 15/12/2024	10h00 – 13h00	Review of the work agenda, send e-mails and start preparation of draft PPT presentation of preliminary findings for the debriefing on 19 or 20/12/2024	Yes
	17h00 - 18h30	Final adjustments to the work agenda in Saint Lucia with Ms. Elomina Adonis and Mr Kwasi Goddard, MoA	Yes
Monday, 16/12/2024	09h00 - 10h30	Focal group meeting with the National Diagnostic Facility: Mr. Kwesi Goddard, Soil scientist, MoA, GSP Focal Point and member of the CSSG in MoA Mr. Gregory Michel, Soil Laboratory Technician, MoA Mr. Rody Stanislas, Food Technologist, MoA Ms. Sarah Felicien, Laboratory Assistant, MoA Ms. Tonisa Ottley, Laboratory Assistant, MoA Ms. Hannah Romain, Chief Plant Research Officer, MoA (excused on sick leave)	Yes
	10h45 - 11h45	Interview with: Mr. Alwin Donerlly, UNCCD Focal Point, and PSC Member, Division of Forest and Land Resources Development Ms. Elomina Adonis, Forest Officer and PA PISLM.	Yes
	11h45 - 12h15	Travel with the MoA to the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College Agriculture in Dennery	Yes
	12h30 - 14h00	Focal group meeting with stakeholders at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in Dennery (supporting component 3). Ms. Catherine McCann, Senior Lecturer Mr. Stephen Romain, Lecturer Mr. St. George James, College Farm Manager	Yes
	12h30 - 13h30	Travel with the MoA to Focal group meeting with stakeholders at the Roseau demonstration farm promoting innovations in agriculture and livestock production (CSAC) and mobilization of private sector finance (component 4).	No Insufficient time
	14h00-14h30	Travel to UVF airport, Vieux Fort.	Yes
	16h10 – 17h50	**Travel from UVF, St. Lucia to Guyana** (Warren)	Yes

Tuesday, 17/12/2024	**09h00 - 10h00**	Online interview with Ms. Tricianna Maheraj, Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility (RAC) on New Adaptation Technologies in the Caribbean (component 3)	Yes
	10h00 - 11h00	Online interview with: Ms. Mina Booker, Communications Specialist for the SOILCARE I Project (based in Grenada) Mr. Trevor Thompson, Project Manager of SOILCARE I	Yes
	12h00-13h30	Interview with: Mr. Calvin James, Executive Director of PISLM Mr. Lakeram Singh, Chief Technician Officer of PISLM	Yes
	14h00 - 14h45	Focal group meeting with Lands and Surveys Commission: Ms. Andrea Mohammed, Head of Land Policy, Planning and Projects Division Mr. Asib Mohammed, Senior Projects Officer, the Land Policy, Planning and Projects Division Mr. Omali Dare, recipient of a project grant to carry out a doctorate Mr Roland Ausitn, Senior Land Use Planner and PA for PISLM	Yes
	15h15 - 16h15	Visit to the Soil Laboratory to review capacity and arrival of project-funded equipment	Yes
	16h15 - 17h30	Focal group meeting with stakeholders at the National Agricultural Research & Extension Institute (NAREI): Mr. David Fredericks, senior soil scientist of NAREI and GSP Focal Point Ms. Tracy Persaud, Reseach Scientist, NAREI Mr. Isaiah Willis, Assistant Research Scientist at NAREI.	Yes
	18h30 - 21h00	Online interview (continued) with: Mr Calvin James, Executive Director of PISLM	Yes
Wednesday, 18/12/2024	09h00 - 14h00	Focal group meeting with stakeholders and partners at the project site for a model farm in Region 5 Mahaica-Berbice: Mr. Jagatnarine Udai, farmer. Mr. Anur Mohammed, Extensionist, MoA/NAREI Mr. Emmanuel Klass, Extensionist, MoA/NAREI	Yes
	14h15 - 15h15	Interview with: Mr. Shaun Baugh, Head of the Agriculture Department, CARICOM	Yes

	16h30 - 18h30	Online interview with Dr Francis and the technical team on DPSIR and soil data collection and mapping	Yes
	20h00	Prepare PPT presentation of preliminary findings	Yes
Thursday, 19/12/2024	**08h35 – 10h00**	**Travel from Guyana to Barbados** (Warren & Gina)	Yes
	12h00 – 13h00	Interview with: Mr. Steven Devonish, Director of the Natural Heritage Department, Min. of Environment and Natural Beautification, UNCCD Focal Point and Chair of the PSC.	No No response to rescheduling request
	13h45 - 14h45	Interview with: Mr. Michael James, GSP focal point, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Security.	No No response to rescheduling request
	15h00 - 16h00	Focal group meetings with stakeholders from Ministry of Agriculturw and and partners (end beneficiaries) at intervention sites in/adjacent to the National Park	No No response to rescheduling request
	11h30 – 12h45	Present preliminary findings to FAO-SLC, FAO-R, PISLM	Yes Rescheduled to 05/02/2025
	17h40 – 05h50	**Travel from Barbados to London Heathrow** (Warren)	Yes
Wednesday, 08/01/2025	09h00 - 10h15	Interview with: Mr. Enrique Monize, Commissioner of the Lands and Surveys and Commission, UNCCD Focal Point, and PSC member.	Yes Rescheduled from 18/12/2024
Rescheduled interviews and field visits in Belize (LDN Specialist)			
Monday, 13/01/2025	14h00 - 15h30	Coordination with Roseli Lisbey, PA for PISLM in Belize, based in the Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining.	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 13/01/2025
Thursday, 16/01/2025	08h00 - 09h00	Interview with Mr. Luis Hernandez, Global Soil Partnership Focal Point, soil scientist and researcher in MAG Mr. Fred Roches, Corozal District Coordinator for MAG	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 16/01/2025
	14h00 - 15h00	Ms. Michelle Alvarez, UNCCD Focal Point and PSC member in the Ministry of Natural Resources.	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 16/01/2025
Friday, 17/01/2025	07h30 - 09h45	Travel to the pilot site at Corozal	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 17/01/2025

	10h00 - 11h00	Focal group meeting with: Ms. Leticia Westby Extension coordinator/interim director of the Sugar and Industry Development Board (SIRDI) and Mr. Elbert Cowo, extension officer at SIRDI	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 17/01/2025
	11h30 - 13h00	Site visit to the sugar plantation at Corozal	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 17/01/2025
	14h00 - 16h30	Return to Belmopan	Yes Rescheduled from 2024 to 17/01/2025
Monday, 21/01/2025	09h00 - 10h00	Interview with National Correspondent for FAO in Belize, Mr. Armando Aban.	No Not aware of project
Wednesday, 05/02/2025	09:00-10:00	Present summary of draft report findings to FAO-SLC, FAO-R, PISLM	Yes Rescheduled to 19/02/2025

Appendix 2. List of stakeholders prioritised for interview

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
1. Active stakeholders with direct responsibility for the project, e.g. FAO, executing partners						
FAO-HQ (GEF Coordination Unit)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Emilia Brentan Position: Oversight and technical backstopping of the MTR	The GEF Coordination Unit has overall responsibility for providing oversight, technical backstopping, supervision of project implementation and external evaluations to ensure that the project is being carried out in accordance with GEF/FAO guidelines and the provisions in the Prodoc.	1	**Throughout the MTR**		**1**
FAO-HQ (GCU)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Rafael Milla Position: Funding Liaison Officer (FLO)	FLO reviews and approves project budget, financial reports, including budget revisions. FLO also participates in the mid-term reviews, final evaluations, and the development of corrective actions in the project from the operational and financial aspects.	1	**Throughout the MTR** (include a remote interview in the Inception Phase)	**1**	
FAO-HQ (GCU)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Hernan Gonzalez	GTO quality assures the design (including results frameworks/logframes), reviews and approves project implementation reports from the programming perspective; GTO	1	**Throughout the MTR** (include a remote interview in the Inception Phase)	**1**	

[18] Include the names of relevant individuals, if known, and be as specific as possible.

[19] 1 = essential; 2 = desirable; 3 = complementary, if time and resources allow.

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
	Position: GEF Technical Officer (GTO)	also participates in the mid-term reviews, final evaluations, and the development of corrective actions in the project implementation strategy.				
FAO-HQ (GCU)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Maria Ferro Vázquez Position: Coordinator of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP)	GSP is hosted by FAO and is engaged in supporting the project improve soil governance and guarantee productive soils continue to sustain food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and sustainable development in the project's participating countries.	1	**Throughout the MTR** (include a remote interview in the Inception Phase)		**1**
FAO-SLC (Barbados)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Melvin Medina Navarro Position: Lead Technical Officer (LTO)	LTO is responsible for leading technical advice and backstopping to the project, follow-up of implementation and monitoring and certifying the technical quality of the project management unit adheres to OPIM rules and procedures.	1	**Throughout the MTR** (include a remote interview in the Inception Phase)		**1**
FAO-SLC (Barbados)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Neila Bobb-Prescott Position: FAO focal point for the SOILCARE project	Member and main focal point of the FAO-SLC Task Force for the SOILCARE I Project. Responsible for overseeing planning, implementation and backstopping needs of the project. Coordinates the MTR with GCU in FAO-HQ. Engaged in the identification of SOILCARE II project.	1	**Throughout the MTR** (include a remote interview in the Inception Phase)		**1**
FAO-SLC (Barbados)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Dr Renata Clarke Position: Budget Holder (BH)	Responsible for timely operational, administrative and financial management of GEF funding to projects implemented by FAO in the region.	1	**Throughout the MTR** (include a remote interview in the Inception Phase)		**1**

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
FAO-SLC (Barbados)	Implementing agency for GEF Name: Karieta Malone & Athony Kellmann Position: GEF finance and monitoring and OPIM procedures	Responsible for controlling all GEF disbursements and budgeting of the SOILCARE project.	1	**Inception phase** Remote interview	**1**	**1**
Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM)	Executing Agency (PISLM) Name: Calvin James Position: Executive Director	PISLM, established in 2004, has since 2015 been responsible for achieving SDG 15.3 - LDN by 2030 – and has was officially recognised as a regional intergovernmental agency for SLM/LDN in 2020. The Executive Director of PSILM has been engaged in the design of SOILCARE I and was nominated by all participating CARICOM countries to be its executing agency from 24/11/2021. The Executive Director liaises directly with UNCCD's focal points established in the governments of all Members of CARICOM participating in the SOILCARE I project.	1	**Throughout the MTR**	**1**	
PSILM (Guyana)	Executing Agency (PISLM) Name: Trevor Thompson Position: Project Manager	Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the project's implementation, including implementation of the annual work plans and budgets approved by the PSC.	1	**Throughout the MTR** In-person interviews	**1**	
PISLM (Guyana)	Executing Agency (PISLM) Name: Lakeram Singh Position: Chief Technical Officer	Responsible for overseeing all technical aspects of the project are implemented in line with the provisions in the Prodoc.	1	**Throughout the MTR** Interview in-person	**1**	

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
PISLM (St. Vincent)	Executing Agency (PISLM) Name: Ronen Francis Position: Technical expert – Components 2-4	Employed as the project's Land Management Consultant (LMC) to carry out the DPSIR framework analysis in all seven participating countries in C2-C4 and support the mainstreaming of SLM/SSM and implementation of SLM/SSM actions foreseen under components 2-4.	1	**Field phase** Remote interview (based in St. Vincent)	**1**	
PISLM (Grenada)	Executing Agency (PISLM) Name: Steve Maximay Position: Technical expert for C4	Employed as the project's climate smart agriculture consultant (CSAC) responsible for the development of model farms under C4	1	**Field phase** In-person interview	**1**	
PISLM (Grenada)	Executing Agency (PISLM) Name: Ms. Mina Booker, Position: Communications specialist for the project	Responsible for coordinating all communication materials produced by the project and supports their integration into the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub.	1	**Field phase** In-person or remote interview		**1**
2. Active stakeholders with authority to take decisions on the project, e.g. members of the PSC						
Department of Environment (Antigua and Barbuda)	Name: Oraine Nurse Position: Member of the PSC	Has coordinated the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field phase** Remote interview		**1**
Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission	Name: Enrique Monize Position: Member of the PSC	Has coordinated the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field phase** Interview in-person / remote	**1**	
Ministry of Natural Resources (Belize)	Name: Michele Alvarez Position: Member of the PSC	Have coordinated, the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and	1	**Field phase**		**1**

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
		the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.		Interview in-person		
Ministry of Environment and National Beautification (Barbados)	Name: Steve Devonish Position: Chair of the PSC	Have coordinated, the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field phase** Interview in-person	**1**	
Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Forestry (Grenada)	Name: Joseph Noel Position: Member of the PSC	Have coordinated, the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field phase** Interview in-person	**1**	
Ministry of the Environment (Haiti)	Name: Eder Audate Position: Member of the PSC	Have coordinated, the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field phase** Remote interview	**1**	
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (St. Lucia)	Name: Alwin Dornelly Position: Member of the PSC	Have coordinated, the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field phase** Interview in-person	**1**	
Ministry of Local Government & Community Development (Jamaica)	Name: Patrick Watson Position: Member of the PSC	Have coordinated, the launch of the project in the country, the national soil surveys and the visit by the international consultants to the intervention sites.	1	**Field Phase** Interview in-person/remote	**1**	
University of the West Indies (St Augustine T&T)	Name: Gaius Eudoxie Position: Member of the PSC	Has responsibility for implementing **Component 1** and ensuring that Component 1 is implemented in an effective and efficient manner.	1	**Field phase** Interview in-person	**1**	

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its Organs (e.g. the Conference of the Heads of Government, COTED)	Name: Shaun Baugh Position: Head of Agriculture Development Directorate	Decision-making body of CARICOM. Assesses the outputs of the project and agrees to their integration into the various Policy Frameworks of CARICOM including the regional policy framework for the implementation of project outputs linked to mainstreaming of SLM/SSM.	1	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person	**1**	
Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs (A&B)	Name: Dr. Linroy Christian Position: Senior soil scientist, FP for the project. Chairs of the Caribbean Soils Support Group (CSSG)	Responsible for coordinating all activities foreseen under C1 in A&B.	1	**Field Phase** Remote interview	**1**	
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining (Jamaica)	Name: Pamella McKenzie Position: Technical Manager, Soil Health, Plant Tissue and Water Laboratory	Responsible for coordinating all activities foreseen under C1 in Jamaica and providing inputs for relevant activities under C2-C5	1	**Field Phase** In-person interview		**1**
Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives (Grenada)	Name: Erwin Henry and Allison Haynes Position: Head of the Soil Laboratory and Project/GSP FP	Responsible for coordinating all activities foreseen under C1 in Grenada and providing inputs for relevant activities under C2-C5	1	**Field Phase** In-person interview	**1**	**1**
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Rural Development, Diagnostic Facility (St. Lucia)	Name: Kwesi Goddard, Position: Soil scientist, GSP Focal Point and member of the CSSG.	Responsible for coordinating all activities foreseen under C1 in St. Lucia and providing inputs for relevant activities under C2-C5	1	**Field Phase** In-person interview	**1**	

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
National Agriculture Extension and Research Institute (Guyana)	Name: David Fredericks Position: Head of Research, Soil Management and Farm Mechanisation Dept. (NAREI)	Responsible for coordinating all activities foreseen under C1 in Guyana and providing inputs for relevant activities under C2-C5	1	**Field Phase** Interview in-person	**1**	
Ministry of Agriculture, Food security and Enterprise (Belize)	Name: Luis Hernandez Position: Soil scientist and researcher in the Ministry.	Responsible for coordinating all activities foreseen under C1 in Belize and providing inputs for relevant activities under C2-C5.	1	**Field Phase** Interview in-person / remote	**1**	
4. Stakeholders at grassroots level who benefit directly or indirectly from the intervention (gender disaggregated where possible)						
Indigenous Peoples and their Organisations	Name: Position: Member of the National Inter-Agency Advisory Group	Ensures that the Executing Agency involves Indigenous Peoples, especially the youth in the various components of the project.	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person		
Caribbean Youth Environment Network (Barbados)	Name: Reginald Burke Position: Member of the National Inter-Agency Advisory Group	Ensures that the Executing Agency involves youth in the various components of the project, specifically, **Component 3** which involves attracting youth involvement in agriculture	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person	**1**	
Women's Organisation	Name: Position: Member of the National Inter-Agency Advisory Group	Ensures that the Executing Agency works with communities and organizations, as may be necessary, to ensure gender equity in participation of women in project activities and to help ensure that the socioeconomic benefits resulting from	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person		

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
		project activities impact equally on the lives of woman.				
Civil Society and Other Major Groups, (e.g. Foundation for Research Innovation Enterprise Entrepreneurship Training and Development in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States).	Name: Position: Training provider	Provision of training, particularly in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States participating Member States as well as providing back stopping to the National Project Units in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Member States as a means of strengthening national capacity.	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person		
University of Guyana	Name: Position: Research and training; member of the Sub-regional SSLMFG.	Provides technical and scientific support to their respective Government in implementing its national project activities as well as assist with the delivery of the training aspects of the project	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person		
Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI), Belize.	Name: Letizia Westby Position: Extension coordinator and interim director of SIRDI	Provides technical and scientific support to their respective Government in implementing its national project activities as well as assist with the delivery of the training aspects of the project		**Field phase** Interview in-person		**1**
Farmer organizations in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia (components 2-3)	Names: Positions:	End partner/beneficiary participating in actions under **Components 2 & 3** of the project, and on the best delivery mechanisms for those approaches.	3	**Field Phase**		
Farmer organizations participating in actions under component 4 in Barbados, Belize, Grenada,	Names: Positions:	End partner/beneficiary responsible for implementing sustainable agricultural approaches promoted by the project under **Component 4**, and on the best delivery mechanisms for those approaches.	3	**Field Phase**		

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)[18]	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)[19]	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?	Male	Female
Jamaica and St. Lucia (component 4)						
Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies (RAC-NAT), Trinidad.	Name: Tricianna Maharaj Position: Project Liaison Officer	Focal point for the development of the Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility established in Trinidad with support from the project.	2	**Field Phase**		**1**
6. Other interest groups that are not participating directly in the intervention, e.g. UN/other agencies working in the area, CSOs, etc.						
Other relevant GEF-funded projects implemented by FAO and other UN agencies in the region/globally	Name: Position:	Projects where synergies have developed, or have the potential to be developed with the SOILCARE I – in particular the SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub" (managed by UNEP).	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person		
Other relevant donor-funded projects implemented in the region/globally	Name: Position:	Projects where potential synergies with the SOILCARE I project could enhance performance and impact in the Caribbean, in particular the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund - Caribbean Hotspot Project, managed by Conservation International	2	**Field Phase** Interview remote/in-person		

Appendix 3. MTR evaluation matrix (questions for selected stakeholders)

UNEG/GEF Criteria	Questions and sub questions	Indicators and judgement criteria	Sources of information/ methods of enquiry
1. RELEVANCE: *Is the project relevant and coherent?*			
1.1 Alignment & ownership at national level	**1. (PSC members, PISLM/PMU and national stakeholders):** *Are project objectives and expected outcomes (results) still congruent with relevant country priorities policies, strategies and plans, legal and regulatory framework, other programmes?*	Level of project alignment to relevant regional, national/sector and cross-cutting policies and plans **Judgement criteria:** 1.1.1 Desk review/stakeholders confirm the Prodoc still conforms with current relevant policies, strategies and plans 1.1.2 national governments support reforms (legal, regulatory, institutional) to integrate SLM/SSM, development of sustainable and resilient agriculture/alternative with a gender focus).	1) Prodoc 2) National Development policies/plans 3) NDCs (on adaptation) 4) National sector policies, strategies and plans 5) National statistics on soils, land, NR (where available) 7) ToC 8) Responses to interviews online/in the field
1.2 Alignment and ownership at sub-national level	**2. (PSC members, PISLM/PMU and national stakeholders)**: *Does the project continue to respond to local needs of participating countries at the sub-national (parish/county) and local community levels in the project intervention areas?*	Level of alignment with sub-national policy framework, regulations, and current needs of targeted local communities. **Judgement criteria:** 1.2.1 Desk review/stakeholders confirm local policy and planning framework supports SLM/SSM, climate smart farming/alternative livelihoods. 1.2.2 Local stakeholders confirm needs assessments continue to align with their priorities.	1) Prodoc 2) Local strategies and plans. 3) Needs assessments 4) Sub-national statistics on soils, carbon sinks, biodiversity, markets, etc. 5) Responses to interviews online/in the field.

1.3 Alignment with GEF/FAO priorities	**3. (FAO):** *Are there any areas where the project is no longer aligned to GEF and FAO priorities and objectives?*	Level of alignment with GEF-7 and FAO priorities and objectives **Judgement criteria:** 1.3.1 Level of alignment with GEF-7 focal areas in the Prodoc; 1.3.2 Level of alignment with FAO's Strategic Objective 2 (SO2): Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable; 1.3.3 Level of alignment with Regional/Country Prog. Frameworks (CPF). 1.3.4 Level of alignment with GEF/FAO cross-cutting priorities on Gender, human rights and FPIC Note: check evidence GEF Focal areas are tracked in M&E system and plan (link to 6.5)	1) Prodoc 2) Strategic documents of GEF7 and FAO (Our Priorities - Strategic Objectives), FAO's Regional Planning Framework for CARICOM countries and CPFs. 3) PIR/PPRs 4) M&E reports 5) Responses to interviews online/in-person
1.4 Alignment with wider international goals and targets	**4. (FAO):** *Does the project remain relevant to selected SDG/UNCCD targets for SLM/SSM, sustainable agriculture, NDCs, CBD post Aichi Targets, etc.?*	Level of alignment with indicators and targets linked to relevant SDGs, UNCCD, post Aichi Targets, NDCs **Judgement criteria:** 1.4.1 Evidence of alignment and monitoring of relevant targets under SDGs 1 (poverty), 5 (gender), 13 (climate change), 15 (life on land) and 17 (Partnerships); 1.4.2 Evidence of alignment with/monitoring of relevant post Aichi Targets linked to T5 (loss of forest habitats at least halved, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced), T14 (ecosystems restored taking into account needs of women) and T15 (ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks enhanced); 1.4.3 Evidence of alignment with/monitoring of specific targets in the NDCs linked to adaptation targets; 1.4.4. Evidence of alignment with/monitoring of national pledges to relevant initiatives on reducing carbon emissions (for example, REDD+ Readiness to determine carbon inventories)	1) Prodoc 2) Progress reports 3) M&E reports 4) Responses to interviews online/in-person
2. EFFECTIVENESS: *To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?*			

2.1 Component 1 - soil information and database development at national and regional levels	**5. (PSC members, PISLM/PMU, national stakeholders)**: *To what extent has the project delivered planned outputs/targets to meet* ***Outcome 1*** *- Caribbean countries use soil data to make informed decisions and contribute to regional and global soil and climate knowledge systems?* *Identify any key lessons learned and best practices*	Level of achievement of outcome 1.1: **Judgement criteria:** 1.1.1 Progress on establishing the Caribbean Soil Support Group and collaboration with ASLAC; 1.1.2. Progress on national soil data and soil organic carbon database development at UWI (T&T) – quality of training on soil sampling, soil analysis/lab development, and soil maps produced (showing soil organic carbon, land cover change, land use/productivity, etc.) to support development planning decisions. 1.1.3. Progress on establishing the Caribbean Soil Lab. Network between national soil laboratories based on GLOSOLAN standards. 1.1.4 Degree of satisfaction/ownership of stakeholders in the Caribbean Soil Info System within UWI (St Augustine & Mona) 1.1.5 Capacity of stakeholders to estimate carbon sequestration in soils (tCO2eq) in support of NDCs.	1) ToC 2) Prodoc 3) Progress reports (PIR/PPR) 3) GAP analysis and other relevant project assessments 4) National policy, strategy and planning documents, legal documents, regulations 5) Interviews with main stakeholders in UWI, other participating academic centres

2.2 Component 2 - rehabilitation of land and soil degraded areas - Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia	**6. (Sub-national stakeholders/communities) + triangulation in the field:** *To what extent has the project delivered planned outputs/targets to meet* ***Outcome 2*** *- Land and soil degraded areas in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia are rehabilitated, ecosystem services restored, and sustainable livelihoods built?* *Identify any key lessons learned and best practices*	No of hectares under SLM/SSM management plans in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia against planned targets in Prodoc (to 30/11/2024): **Judgement criteria:** 2.2.1 Number/quality of SLM/SSM intervention/management plans identified and adopted for the projects sites (hotspots); 2.2.2 No of SLM/SSM plans with public and private funding and human resources secured to implement them 2.2.3 No of community propagation centres established/upgraded and confirmed to be delivering benefits by local participants. 2.2.4 Progress in restoring soils/landscapes/ecosystem services in (i) Barbados (2,000 ha in the National Park); (ii) Grenada (2,000 ha of degraded forest landscapes in mainland and Carriacou sites); (iii) Guyana (4,000 ha of degraded agricultural lands); (iv) Haiti (5,000 of degraded forest landscapes); (v) St. Lucia (2,000 ha of degraded agricultural lands); 2.2.5 Local partners/beneficiaries are satisfied with SLM/SSM actions realised under the management plans in the intervention sites in terms of improving their livelihoods (human, socio-cultural, environmental, physical and economic capital) 2.2.6 No of people confirming the project has instilled changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices 2.2.7 No. of CBAs realised and being used to support (i) economic analysis of SLM/SSM, such as total economic value (TEV); scaling-up of SLM/SSM with new resources.	1) Progress reports (PIR/PPR) 2) Forestry plans and regulations; 3) Technical documents 4) Procurement documents 4) Interviews with stakeholders 5) Site visits

2.3 Component 3 - Resilience building through climate smart agriculture and drought risk management - Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, and St. Lucia	**7. (To national stakeholders) + triangulation in the field:** *To what extent has the project delivered planned outputs to meet **Outcome 3** - Soil productivity restored through climate smart agriculture model farms established on selected landscapes in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, and St. Lucia, and applied regionally?* *Identify any key lessons learned and best practices*	No. of hectares under SLM/SSM in the target sites and people directly benefitting from the restoration of soils/lands/ecosystem services. **Judgement criteria:** 2.3.1 No. of stakeholders trained and benefitting from the demonstration model farms supporting SLM/SSM against the targets of 2,150 direct local partners/beneficiaries and: (i) Barbados: 2,000 ha restored in the National Park; (ii) Grenada: 2,000 ha of degraded forest landscapes restored in mainland and Carriacou island sites; (iii) Guyana: 4,000 ha of degraded agricultural lands rehabilitated; (iv) Haiti: 5,000 ha of degraded forest landscapes rehabilitated; (v) St. Lucia: 2,000 ha of degraded agricultural lands rehabilitated; 2.3.2 No. of farmer associations who are satisfied the model farms are promoting eco-friendly farming and how it is measured (using the High Nature Value Index - HNVI) to enhance sustainability, adaptation and resilience to climate variability and change; 2.3.3 Quality of the regional guidelines prepared to guide farmers in the up-scaling of climate-smart agriculture in CARICOM. 2.3.4 Quality of climate smart agricultural-baseline and marketing strategy with a gender focus produced and legal agreements in place to support its implementation.	1) Progress reports (PIR/PPR) 2) Prodoc Results Matrix 3) Capacity assessment reports and capacity development plans 4) SLM/SSM consultant reports 5) Assessments, studies and reviews conducted on NTFPs 6) NTFP project proposals 7) Training evaluation sheets 8) Interviews with stakeholders and end beneficiaries.

2.4 Component 4 - Enhancement of food systems and alternative livelihoods - Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica and St. Lucia	**8. (FAO and national and sub-national stakeholders) + triangulation in the field:** *To what extent has the project delivered planned outputs to meet* ***Outcome 4*** *- Food production systems and alternative livelihood options implemented with innovative technologies and private sector support are more resilient and adapted to climate change in Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica and St. Lucia?* *Identify any key lessons learned and best practices*	No. of people trained to apply sustainable food and livestock production systems with linkages to public-private partnerships **Judgement criteria:** 2.4.1 No./quality of alternative livelihood systems identified and applied in the degraded farm sites targeted in Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica and St. Lucia. 2.4.2 No. of financial options identified to up-scale SLM/SSM and promote the restoration economy through public-private partnerships. 2.4.3 No. of public-private partnerships established to develop the restoration economy (agricultural products, NTFPs, ecotourism etc.). 2.4.4 Degree to which the Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building (RAC) Facility on new agricultural adaptation technologies has been established in the UWI/St. Augustine campus and is being used to support the development of the restoration economy through public-private partnerships.	1) Progress reports (PIR/PPR) 2) Monitoring reports and data 3) Project and PISLM communications and documents 4) Internal M&E reports on results 5) Interviews with stakeholders
2.5 Component 5 (inputs) – Training, knowledge management, mainstreaming of the LDN strategy, investment and finance of SLM/SSM and M&E	**9. (FAO and national and sub-national stakeholders) + triangulation in the field:** *To what extent has the project delivered planned outputs to meet* ***Outcome 5.1-5.5*** *–* *5.1: Regional institutional capacity development and training programme applied.* *Expected outcomes* *5.2: Knowledge management, technical assistance and communication on SLM and SSM strengthened.* *5.3: Climate resilient SLM and regional LDN strategy mainstreamed in Caribbean Community regional policy framework, decision-making processes and national planning processes.*	No. of people trained to operate and maintain the knowledge management system and communication strategy of SOILCARE I **Judgement criteria:** 2.5.1 Degree to which the Regional Climate Resilient Soils and Sustainable Land Management Needs Assessment and Learning Plan has been established and applied. 2.5.1 Degree to which the regional capacity enhancement programme is successfully mainstreaming SLM/SSM/LDN in national and regional policy and legislative frameworks (includes key sectors such as agriculture, land-use planning and economic and finance); 2.5.3 No. of stakeholders (government staff, extensionists, scientists, farmers, etc. who are satisfied with the training on identifying and assessing land degradation drivers, status, trends, impact, etc. and its application under components 2-4; 2.5.4 Progress in adopting and applying an effective knowledge management system and communication strategy and plan to	1) Progress reports (PIR/PPR) 2) Monitoring reports and data 3) Project and PISLM communications and documents 4) Internal M&E reports on results 5) Interviews with stakeholders

	5.4: New investment and financing in SLM and SSM with private and public sector partners secured. *Expected outcome* *5.5: A gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework established and guiding project planning and implementation.* *Identify any key lessons learned and best practices*	support informed decision-making on SLM/SSM in SOILCARE I as well as other interventions supporting landscape restoration in the region. 2.5.5 Degree to which the Caribbean LDN and SLM Knowledge Hub has been developed (based on a feasibility study) and is facilitating (I) soil data collection under component 1; (ii) cross-fertilisation of knowledge to support components 2-4; (iii) information sharing within CARICOM and with ASLAC and other global actors committed to LDN; (iv) the Task Force responsible for producing the Caribbean soil/land Outlook to 2023 publication; (v) progress in recognising, valuing and mapping local knowledge and practices that support LDN; 2.5.6 Degree to which the LDN SIDS-SIDS Cooperation Mechanism is in place to facilitate the movement of technical personnel between the participating countries and South-South cooperation. 2.5.7 Degree to which the Sub-regional SSM Framework Agreement has been completed and adopted to promote LDN and strengthening regional efforts to address Climate Change. 2.5.8. No. of synergies established with other programmes, such as the SIDS Island Programme on Chemicals (sustainable use of pesticides). 2.5.9 Progress on establishing the Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformation Funding mechanism established and resources mobilised for climate resilient SSM/SLM 2.5.10 Progress on establishing/using the Gender Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to support implementation of the project.	
3. EFFICIENCY: To what extent is the project being implemented efficiently and cost effectively [and] to what extent is the pledged co-financing being delivered?			

3.1 - Efficiency of project implementation	**10. (To FAO national partners and county governments):** *To what extent has the project been implemented in a timely manner in relation to plan?* *PMU: please provide estimates of the level of physical implementation for each component (broken down by main outputs) to 28 February 2022 using the tables provided by the MTR*	Physical implementation achieved against plan to 30/11/2024 **Judgement criteria:** 3.1.1 PSC is providing guidance and oversight in a timely manner as planned? 3.1.2 PISLM as the executing agency is demonstrating that the Operational Partner's Implementation Modality (OPIM) is able to deliver results as planned and enhance project ownership as foreseen in the Prodoc/annual work plans 3.1.3 Level of physical progress achieved in relation to total expenditure to 30/11/2024 (how far are external factors/risks affecting efficiency?).	1) Progress and annual reports; 2) Technical reports 3) Follow-up interviews (if required) with PMU staff and PSC members, government officials, etc.
3.2 – Co-finance	**11. (To co-financing partners):** *To what extent has co-finance pledged in the Prodoc been delivered to support the project's implementation?* *PISLM: please provide estimated level of in-kind and cash contributions to the project + provide details of any agreements/synergies established with other GEF-funded, or other donor-funded projects supporting SLM/SSM, sustainable and adapted agriculture in CARICOM at regional and/or country levels.*	Co-finance spent against planned budget in the Prodoc (USD 25.8 million) to 30/11/2024 **Judgement criteria:** 3.2.1 Level of expenditure provided in-kind and in cash from the participating countries/entities. 3.2.2 Degree to which the co-finance agreed in the Prodoc was realistic considering the capacity and limited human and financial resources of SIDS to provide co-finance. 3.2.3 Level to which physical progress has been affected by lack of cofinance.	1) Progress and annual reports; 2) Financial budgets and expenditure reports 3) Official agreements with participating governments 4) Interviews with PMU and other stakeholders 5) Official documents and reports from partners on the co-funding they have provided on an annual basis (June-May).
3.3 – Cost effectiveness (including any synergies to enhance efficiency)	**12. (To PISLM/PMU, national stakeholders):** *To what extent is the project delivering a satisfactory level of cost-effectiveness?* *PISLM: please provide to 31/10/2024 the number of direct partners/beneficiaries by components 1-4, cost per hectare to apply SLM/SSM, sustainable and resilient agricultural systems, etc. under components 2-4 compared to total expenditure to 31/10/2024)?*	Expenditure per/direct beneficiary/partner, and per/ha of lands under SLM/SSM actions to 28/02/2022. **Judgement criteria:** 3.3.1 Assessment of average cost to apply SLM/SSM against total number of direct beneficiaries to 30/11/2024 3.3.2 Assessment of average cost per hectare to apply SLM/SSM actions; 3.3.3 No. of joint initiatives/synergies delivering cost-effectiveness in applying SLM/SSM/NTFPs (through sharing of training costs, joint publications, etc.)	1) Progress and annual reports; 2) Financial budgets and expenditure reports 3) Official agreements between PMU and local partners (LOAs) 4) Interviews with main stakeholders and end beneficiaries

4. SUSTAINABILITY: What is the likelihood that the project results will be useful or persist after the end of the project?			
4.1 – risks to sustaining project actions and results	**13. (To FAO, PSC members and national/sub-national stakeholders):** *What are the main socio-political, financial, institutional and governance, and environmental and health risks to sustaining the project's main actions and results (under components 1-5) will be sustained after the project has ended on 24/11/2025?*	Risk management is fully integrated and applied effectively in SLM/SSM plans and actions **Judgement criteria** 4.1.1 Evidence that main partners have introduced policy, legal and institutional framework to support, maintain, up-scale SLM/SSM actions, and develop alternative livelihoods; 4.1.2 Evidence the Caribbean Soil Support Group and Caribbean Research and Development Institute (CARDI) are active in pushing the SLM/SSM agenda forward to support its continuation, maintenance and upscaling. 4.1.3 Evidence networks/groups promoted by the project are able to self-finance operations. 4.1.4) Evidence UWI, other universities have established long-term research capacity and programmes on soils 4.1.5 Evidence of public-private partnerships in place to continue to apply/expand SLM/SSM, develop NTFPs and bio-enterprises 4.1.6 Evidence effective law enforcement (especially LUP) is in place to deter illegal activities that may harm the LDN process 4.1.7 Lessons learned on risk management have been integrated into SLM/SSM planning and monitoring	1) Progress reports 2) Monitoring and annual reports 3) Technical reports 4) interviews with PMU and key stakeholders at national and sub-national levels
4.2 – potential to replicate/scale up LR in STP	**15. (To FAO, PSC members, PISLM/PMU and national/sub-national stakeholders):** *How far is SLM/SSM, SFM/SLM, PES and development of NTFPs being replicated inside/outside of the project intervention sites (in particular through partnerships involving national/local authorities, follow-on farmers and the private sector) and are there any important lessons and good practices are supporting the replication process?*	Level of replication of project actions and good practices inside/outside the project sites. **Judgement criteria:** 4.2.1 Data provides evidence that SLM/SSM practices are expanding; 4.2.2. Interviews and site visits indicate follow-on farmers, private enterprises, etc. are investing in new SLM/SSM practices and/or developing climate-smart NTFPs	1) Prodoc 2) Work plans and progress/annual reports; 3) Project's Exit strategy 4) Government departments monitoring and reporting on SLM/SSM/SFM in the target areas and beyond. 4) Interviews with stakeholders/end partners
5. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE: To what extent are implementing and executing agencies effectively discharging their roles and responsibilities?			

5.1. Quality of the execution agency's capacity to manage the project's planning and implementation	**16. (To FAO and PSC members):** *To what extent is the executing agency (PISLM) effectively discharging its role and responsibilities in managing and administering the project? To what extent has the capacity of the executing agency improved for management??*	No of areas where the implementing mechanism is unable to deliver results as planned and secure their continuation/upscaling **Judgement criteria:** 5.1.1 Degree to which the executing agency demonstrates leadership, capacity and ownership to steer the project's execution 5.1.2 Level to which PSC has the multi-sector representation needed to guide, oversee and take decisions at the multi-sector level needed to achieve objectives 5.1.3 Degree to which PMU within PISLM has the resources to operate effectively, apply results-based monitoring and manage external risks 5.1.4 Degree to which the private-public-community partnerships established have the resources able to deliver results as planned	1) Prodoc/logical framework 2) ToC 3) Progress reports 4) Interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders, and follow-up interviews with end beneficiaries
5.2 – Capacity of the EA and IA to adapt to changing conditions and manage risks	**17. (To FAO and PSC members):** *To what extent is the executing agency's project management being able to adapt to changing conditions to ensure effective delivery? How well have risks been identified and managed?*	Level of effective risk management applied to reduce delays, budget shortfalls, resource gaps **Judgement criteria:** 5.2.1 Cross-check with JC under 4.1 5.2.2 Degree to which lessons learned and good practices from the project's implementation are being captured, addressed and integrated into project planning, implementation and monitoring. 5.2.3 Degree to which the partnership between PISLM and FAO is responding in a timely manner to deliver planned results on time and to a high standard.	1) Prodoc, 2) Progress reports 3) Finance reports 4) Interviews
5.3 – Quality of implementing agency's support to project implementation	**19. (To national/sub-national stakeholders)** *To what extent is FAO delivering oversight and supervision and backstopping (technical, administrative, and operational), from project identification, formulation, approval, start-up and execution?*	Level of satisfaction of main stakeholders with FAO's technical and administrative support to the project's implementation, monitoring and reporting. **Judgement criteria:** 5.3.1 Degree to which the executing agency is satisfied with its partnership with FAO in terms of its technical and administrative support since the project design, its backstopping support and ability to respond in a timely manner to support the delivery of results. 5.3.2 Degree to which the implementing partner is satisfied PISLM, and its PMU have the capacity to execute the project as planned.	1) PPRs/PIRs 2) Interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders, and follow-up interviews with end beneficiaries

		5.3.3 Degree to which the PSC is satisfied with the quality and timeliness of FAO's support.	
5.4 – Strengths and weaknesses of OPIM	**20. (To FAO and PSC members.** *What are the strengths and challenges of the partnership arrangement, considering that the project is executed under the OPIM modality? How can the partnership improve?*	Level of satisfaction of main stakeholders that the OPIM is an effective modality to deliver results and impact. **Judgement criteria:** 5.4.1 Degree to which the executing agency is satisfied the OPIM is an effective and efficient modality to enhancing project ownership and the sharing of results with FAO. 5.4.2 Degree to which FAO is satisfied the OPIM modality is an appropriate modality to apply in SIDS where resources are very limited. 5.4.3 Degree to which the project's partners (end beneficiaries and their CBOs) are satisfied with the performance of PISLM and FAO in delivering the project's expected outcomes (in particular strengthening sustainable and resilient agricultural systems.	1) Prodoc 2) PPRs/PIRs 3) Interviews with FAO, PISLM, PSC and other relevant stakeholders.
5.2 FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE: To what extent and how have multi-sector stakeholders[20] at different levels been involved in project design and implementation?			
5.2.1 – Stakeholder engagement in the project's design	**20. (To FAO-STP and PSC members):** *How far have stakeholders been involved in the design of the project's intervention logic, management and budget?* **21. (To FAO-STP and PSC members):** *Is the intervention logic clear, coherent and in line with current needs of the country/counties, or are there aspects of the project design that are out of date/unrealistic that have affected/will affect performance and need adjusting?*	No. of areas where stakeholders lack of engagement in the project design has affected implementation and the delivery of results **Judgement criteria:** 6.2.1 Degree to which project's causal logic (results matrix) is coherent, clear and realistic in the current context and timeframe? 6.2.2 The allocation of resources in the Prodoc is sufficient to cover all the actions proposed under components 1-5? 6.2.3 The selection of the project sites and target communities is feasible according to the resources available and logistics (taking full account of the lack of direct flights). 6.2.4 Prodoc is clear on how national and local stakeholders will take over the ownership of project actions and results in the timeframe allocated?	1) Prodoc/RM; 2) ToC 3) Progress reports. 4) Interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders, and follow-up interviews with end beneficiaries

[20] such as government agencies, academia, civil society, women, youth, indigenous populations and local communities, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, people with disabilities and the private sector.

5.2.2 - Stakeholder engagement in project implementation and number of partnerships established	**22. (To FAO, PSC members and main stakeholders at national level)**: *To what extent have the project's main stakeholders (including local partners) played an active role in planning, implementation and monitoring?*	No. of interviewees who perceive the level of their participation in project implementation has been satisfactory or better **Judgement criteria** 6.2.5) Degree to which interviewees (public, private, civil society, vulnerable groups) confirm they are satisfied with their participation in decision-making and monitoring of project implementation (in accordance with needs assessments) 6.2.6 Degree to which the project's partnerships/synergies with other donors have contributed to project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.	1) Prodoc 2) Progress and annual reports 3) Partnership agreements 4) Interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders, and follow-up interviews with end beneficiaries
6.3 FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE: How is the project assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences?			
5.3.1 - Communication and knowledge management	**23. (FAO, National PSC members and main stakeholders at national and sub-national levels)**: *How effective has the project been in assessing, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned and experiences?*	No. of communications on results, lessons learned and good practices, case studies/experiences from NCP- shared at national/regional levels **Judgement criteria:** 6.3.1 Degree to which main stakeholders are using the knowledge management system in place (soil database, maps, case studies on the demonstration farms, technical reports, publications, etc.) to take informed decisions on developing the enabling environment for SLM/SSM/CSA and upscaling SLM/SSM/CSA in each participating country. 6.3.2 No. of knowledge products produced, registered and diffused through the knowledge management system 6.3.3 Degree to which communication strategy and plan is supporting and promoting change on SLM/SSM adoption at the national and county levels 6.3.4 Degree to which communication products are reaching the CARICOM community and international events, conferences, etc.	1) PIRs/PPRs, annual reports 2) Knowledge and communication materials produced by the project at national/regional levels 3) M&E strategy/plan and reports 4) Interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders, and follow-up interviews with end beneficiaries
5.4 FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE: Is the project's M&E system adequate, practical, and sufficient?			

5.4 – Quality of the design of the M&E system	**21. (To FAO, National PSC members and main stakeholders at national and regional levels):** *Is the design of the M&E meeting the expectations of PSC members and other key stakeholders?*	The M&E design facilitates both learning and an assessment of results of the project as foreseen in the Prodoc and in relation to national and international targets and goals on SLM/SSM **Judgement criteria:** 6.4.1 Degree to which the design of the monitoring of the project as per the Result's Matrix has established a Monitoring, Review and Learning (MEL) strategy that will support both learning (on transformation change) as well as the meeting of targets. 6.4.2 Degree to which M&E system design facilitates learning on progress in each participating country to support the PSC establish informed decision-making on SLM/SSM. 6.4.3 Degree to which qualitative data monitoring has been integrated in the M&E design. 6.4.4 degree to which the M&E design is tracking gender and women's specific needs/empowerment as well as data on other vulnerable groups, (e.g. access to training, services, information). 6.4.5 No. of lessons on good practices on SLM/SSM/NTFPs developed into knowledge products and used in communications	1) Prodoc/results framework; 2) Work plans 3) Progress/annual reports 4) M&E reports 5) Questionnaire and follow-up interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders and project's M&E staff.
5.5 FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE: Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan?			
5.5 - Implementation of the M&E plan	**21. (To FAO-STP, National PSC members and main stakeholders at national and sub-national levels)) + triangulation in the field:** *How effective is the monitoring system in delivering information to support the PSC and other key stakeholders take informed decisions on improving performance?*	The M&E system provides data and information on SLM/SSM progress in relation to baseline data available and targets set in the RM as well as in relation to targets under SDG 15.3. **Judgement criteria:** 6.5.1 Degree to which data on SLM/SSM is available and accessible at national and regional levels 6.5.2 Degree to which M&E supports informed decision-making on SLM/SSM (based on application of a Monitoring, Review and Learning (MEL) strategy (using common core indicators); 6.5.3 No. of lessons on good practices on SLM/SSM/NTFPs developed into knowledge products and used in communications.	1) Prodoc/results framework; 2) Work plans 3) Progress/annual reports 4) SNMFP internal M&E reports 5) 6) Questionnaire and follow-up interviews with FAO staff, main stakeholders of SMNFP and project's M&E system
6. Cross-cutting priorities:			

6.1 – Gender equality and women's empowerment	**23. (To FAO and sub-national members):** *To what extent are gender equality and empowerment and other equity issues mainstreamed in the project, both in design and implementation (including M&E)?*	Degree to which GEWE has been integrated into project design, planning and implementation. **Judgement criteria:** 7.1.1 Degree to which the M&E system is tracking participation rates of women, youths and other vulnerable groups, as well as their access to training, specific services they need, resources. 7.1.2 Degree to which women/men participating as direct partners/beneficiaries are satisfied with the project. 7.1.3) No of women and other vulnerable groups (youths, disabled, senior citizens) occupying decision-making positions 7.1.3) Evidence of any unexpected developments on women/other vulnerable groups (e.g. disproportionate workload for women).	1) Prodoc 2) Work plans; 3) Technical, training and workshop reports; 4) M&E reporting 5) FAO/GEF Gender objectives and guidance documents 6) policies, plans and guidelines integrating SLM/SSM/SFM include gender priorities, ESS 7) Group and individual interviews (in particular with women and youths)
6.2 – environmental and social safeguards	**22. (To FAO stakeholders and PMU):** *To what extent are environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?*	Degree to which stakeholders are satisfied SLM/SSM/SFM planning and monitoring are tracking the ESS Checklist. **Judgement criteria:** 7.2.1) Degree to which environmental risks are monitored and risk mitigation measures applied and/or updated in the PIR to support the ecosystem approach to SLM/SSM 7.2.2) Degree to which social-related risks associated with vulnerable groups (families under the poverty line, women, youths, disabled, etc.) are reviewed and appropriate mitigation identified 7.2.3) Degree to which project staff and key stakeholders have been trained in applying gender sensitive skills	1) Prodoc 2) Work plans; 3) Technical, training, workshop reports 4) M&E reporting 5) FAO/GEF Gender objectives and guidance documents 6) policies, plans and guidelines integrating SLM/SSM/SFM include gender priorities, ESS 7) Group and individual interviews (in particular with women and youths)

Appendix 4. List of documents consulted

Documents consulted that are not available on the internet

FAO/PISLM (2021). Project Document GCP/SLC/214/GFF, dated 25 November 2021

FAO/PISLM (2021). Operational Partner's Agreement, dated 26 November 2021

FAO (2022). Neila Bobb-Prescott. Back to office report St. Lucia.

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FAO (2023). Neila Bobb-Prescott. Back to office report Grenada.

FAO (2023 & 2024). Project Task Force Meeting Minutes 3 and 4.

FAO (2024). Audit report for the period 01/11/2021 to 31/10/2022.

PISLM (2023). Project Implementation Report 1, 25-Nov-2021 to 30-Jun-2023

PISLM (2024). Project Implementation Report 2, 01-Jul-2023 to 30-Jun-2024

PISLM (2022). Project Progress Report, 01 Jan-2022 to 30-Jun-2022

PISLM (2023). Project Progress Report, 01-Jul-2022 to 31-Dec-2022

PISLM (2023). Project Progress Report, 01-Jan-2023 to 30-Jun-2023

PISLM (2023). Project Progress Report, 01-Jul-2023 to 31-Dec-2023

PISLM/UWI (2022). Information workshop. Country status on legacy soil data and laboratory capacity.

PISLM (2022). Minutes of the Regional Laboratory Meeting held on 03/10/2022.

PISLM (2022). Minutes of the second regional steering committee meeting in Port of Spain.

PISLM (2024). DPSIR (Drivers-Pressures-state-impact-response) reports for Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Grenada (revised copies, July 2024).

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https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a75d575e-9f7e-45ad-afd9-a2cbfda37ad7/content

FAO (2014). Respecting free, prior and informed consent. Practical guidance for governments, companies, NGOs, indigenous peoples and local communities in relation to land acquisition. Available at:

www.fao.org/3/i3496e/i3496e.pdf

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Appendix 5: Results matrix with MTR ratings & observations (to 31/12/2024)

Development objective (Impact)	**To enhance food security and nutrition, establish sustainable and resilient livelihoods and improve ecosystem functioning in Caribbean SIDS**
Project Objective	**To Strengthen Caribbean SIDS with the necessary tools for adopting policies, measures and reforming legal and institutional frameworks to achieve LDN and climate resilience**

Objective /Outcome (Results Chain)	Indicators	Baseline	Progress rate against target at time of MTR (31/12/2024)	End of project target (24/11/2025)	MTR GEF Rating and justification*
Outcome 1 Caribbean countries use soil data to make informed decisions and contribute to regional and global soil and climate knowledge systems	Increased national and regional capacities for soil analysis through the establishment of the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARLAN)	Limited soil analytical capability exists in some of the participating Member States, considerable strengthening is required to complement the capability, which resides at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine campus (T&T).	CARLOSAN established in PISLM. It's, mandate was approved by CARICOM's COTED (Agriculture) in October 2024. Adoption of Its workplan to oversee SOP are applied in the soil labs of all the Member States did not secure a quorum in Dec. 2024 and has been rescheduled for early 2025. However, the workplan is being applied extra-officially through the trainings provided by UWI's Soil Science Lab. with guidance from FAO. The trainings build on (i) best practices discussed in a workshop in Chile in April 2024 held by the Latin America Soil Laboratory Network (LATOSAN) in which soil scientists from A&B, Barbados and Guyana participated (ii) international best practices	CARLOSAN established and operational with the Soil Science Lab. of UWI, St. Augustine, at its apex.	**SATISFACTORY** 70% progress to end targets. All the main activities planned to achieve outcome 1 are in the process of completion, except in Haiti where it is not politically feasible to apply a national approach under the current problems of insecurity in certain parts of the country. In this specific case a regional approach is required. Four countries – A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia – have advanced the most on delivering outcome 1 and are likely to be in a position to take informed decisions on advancing LDN from the soil data available before the project's planned closure in November 2025. Three countries – Belize, Jamaica and Guyana are likely to complete their sets of national soil

		Soil labs lack adequate equipment and materials to perform soil analysis in conformity with international SOP Participating countries do not have soil information systems that are linked up to regional and global soil information systems (SISLAC and GLOSIS).	discussed in meeting held in T&T in May 2024, involving all 8 countries. Soil lab. equipment and materials have been delivered to all eight participating countries in November/December 2024 and installation expected in first quarter of 2025. Some countries stated the equipment provided lacked the inclusion of machines to facilitate in-depth soil analysis (such as an atomic absorption spectrophotometer). The CARSIS software has been designed by PISLM and will start to integrate four sets of national soil maps for A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia following validation by FAO in early 2025. Soil maps for Belize, Jamaica and Guyana are well behind schedule and not expected to be completed until second quarter of 2025. In Haiti, a national soil map is unlikely to materialise, and a change of tact is urgently required (to cover the Northern region only).	Soil Samples have been collected, analysed and the data stored in the CARSIS under SOP. The CARSIS is operational and links all national soil information systems to the Regional SISLAC and GLOSIS. Enhanced capacities on soil survey and digital soil mapping are available in all 8 participating countries.	maps with FAO's support before the project's closure, but it is unlikely there will be enough time to use to data to take informed decisions on LDN until 2026. Political commitments are in place in all seven countries to deliver this outcome, but a major caveat is the lack of agreement on the **access protocols to the CARSIS, given each participating country stated access to highly sensitive soil data should not be accessible to the public.**

Outcome 2	Indicators	Baseline	Progress rate against target at time of MTR (31/12/2024)	End of project target (24/11/2025)	MTR GEF Rating and justification*
Land and Soil degraded areas in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia are rehabilitated, ecosystem services restored, and sustainable livelihoods built	Number of hectares of degraded lands rehabilitated and ecosystem services restored.	Most of the sites earmarked for rehabilitation are heavily denuded and have been identified through the LDN Target Setting exercise.	DPSIR reports were produced in all seven participating countries participating in C2-C4 following application of five phases: (i) review of LDN target setting to identify land degradation "hot spots" resulting in the selection of 25 intervention pilot sites, some of which replace sites proposed in the Prodoc (in particular in St. Lucia); (ii) participatory qualitative analysis with stakeholders from these sites; (iii) land capability surveys and visual soil analysis based on FAO guidelines; (iv) GIS analysis to identify land use and vegetation health (applying the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index); (v) application of the DPSIR analysis framework to identify the most appropriate responses to address: a) land and soil degradation through SLM/SSM (C2), b) agriculture resilience building in degraded areas where the application of the climate smart agriculture compliance (CSAC) tool confirms they are at high risk from weather and climatic events (C3) and, c) improved food systems and alternative livelihoods through model farms and engagement of the private sector using	15,000 hectares of degraded lands rehabilitated, and ecosystem services restored. 1,250 beneficiaries (475 women) 5 million tonnes of Carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO2eq) captured or avoided Strategies engaging the private in the rehabilitation of degraded lands are in operation.	**MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY** Around 40% progress to targets The DPSIR reports have successfully identified, reviewed and validated 25 pilot sites covering all seven participating countries, based on highly participatory approaches. As such, the DPSIR process has proved it is a viable method to identifying a tailored approach to LDN according to the particular characteristics in each degraded "hot spot" identified. From the DPSIR reports the MTR has identified the following eight (8) pilot sites and tentative actions under C2: (i) **Barbados**: 3 sites at ***Sedge Pond*** (agroforestry, soil rehabilitation and introduction of drip irrigation), ***Greenland Over Hill*** (rehabilitate agro-forestry practices, expand rainwater harvesting and storage and composting) and ***Coggins Estate*** (rehabilitate agro-forestry practices, expand rainwater harvesting and storage to sustain irrigation, composting and integrated pest management); (ii) **Grenada**: ***Les***

			funds from the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) managed by GEF. Soil samples taken from all 25 pilot sites have been analysed and used to support the selection of LDN actions at each site. In addition, soil organic carbon has been assessed in four countries so far to determine how much carbon will be sequestered by the restoration actions foreseen at the pilot sites in A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia. Similar data is expected from Belize, Guyana and Jamaica in 2025. All seven DPSIR reports were approved following completion of validation workshops in all seven participating countries in May 2024. Each country was requested by PISLM to complete the project design and procurement plan for each pilot site and submit them for assessment and funding in the second half of 2024, but none had been finalised and submitted to 31/12/2024.		***Avocat*** (river channel management to improve water quality and quantity, clearing of bamboo invasive species and replacement with indigenous agro-forestry, sale of bamboo to the construction industry and artisanal groups); ***Bellevue South-Carriacou*** (gully plugging, backfilling and check dams, irrigation ponds, reforestation and agroforestry); (iii) **Guyana**: ***Arakaka - Region 1*** (soil reclamation, and introduction of a land use policy to control mining and logging); (iv) **Haiti**: ***Samana River watershed*** (Reafforestation, establishment of plant nursery, agroforestry, beekeeping and poultry farming to support alternative livelihoods, integrate poultry litter in composting); (v) **St. Lucia**: ***Darban*** (CSA, agroforestry, timber management). However, a global report summarising key indicators, baselines and targets to monitor the eight pilot sites in relation to targets in the Prodoc has not been prepared, nor have any project proposals with a procurement plan been submitted to PISLM to date.

Outcome 3	Indicators	Baseline	Progress rate against target at time of MTR (31/12/2024)	End of project target (24/11/2025)	MTR GEF Rating and justification*
Soil productivity restored through climate smart agriculture, model farms established on selected landscapes in Guyana, St. Lucia, Haiti, Grenada, and Barbados and applied regionally	Hectares of arable lands that have adopted SSM/SLM and CSA measures Greenhouse gas emissions avoided/captured from climate smart farms. Number of people that benefit from CSA/Model Farms (i.e. direct beneficiaries and from project upscaling), disaggregated by gender	Land suitability assessment produced (from outputs under C1) Zero captured Zero captured	A climate risk assessment was conducted for each pilot site and discussed in the validation workshops with national and local stakeholders to identify the potential interventions for the pilot sites under C3. The climate risk assessments were subsequently integrated into the final versions of the DPSIR reports. Regional guidelines on applying CSA incorporating the CSA Compliance (CSAC) tool. Two participating countries have adopted the CSAC tool to date (A&B and Jamaica), as well as St. Vincent and the Grenadines.	A total of at least 20,000ha hectares of agricultural lands converted into farms that employ climate resilient and sustainable soil management/farming practices as follows: Barbados: 3,000 ha; Grenada: 3,000 ha Guyana: 4,000 ha Haiti: 7,000 ha St. Lucia: 3,000 0.4 million tCO2eq. captured 1,800 beneficiaries (750 women)	**MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY** 40% progress to end targets. From the DPSIR reports the MTR has identified the following six (6) pilot sites and tentative actions have been selected under C3: (i) **Barbado**s: ***Nature Fun Ranch*** (focusing on rehabilitation of paddocks with viable grass species, a plant nursery, increasing water harvesting and storage capacity); (ii) **Grenada**: ***Chambord*** (land and soil reclamation, composting, organic mulching, swale terracing and grass strips to improve water retention, rainwater harvesting and storage, repair nursery greenhouse to improve productive capacity) and ***Dumfries-Carriacou*** (land and soil reclamation, compositing, swale terracing, wind breaks, agroforestry, intercropping with resilient crop species and construct and repair wells, training in CSA, plant nursery development and post harvesting techniques); (iii) **Guyana**: ***Little Baibu***-Region 5 (mangrove restoration in coastal areas, improve water management for

					drainage and saltwater intrusion, CSA farm establishment); (iv) **Haiti**: ***Rio Marrion watershed*** (reforestation, establish plant nursery, climate smart agriculture, organic mulching, composting); (v) **St. Lucia**: ***Sir Arthur Lewis College-Dennery*** (conversion of banana farms to alternative cropping systems introducing cocoa, flowers and mushrooms to develop alternative livelihoods, compositing, residue management, graded ditches, channels, waterways to drain and convey water, improve monitoring and enforcement of Development and Control Authority, improve land use and Physical Planning Act). However, as with C2, there is no consolidation report summarising key indicators, baselines and targets to monitor the CSA actions proposed at each of the six sites to compare with targets in the Prodoc. Similarly no project proposals with a procurement plan have been submitted to PISLM to 31/12/2024.

Outcome 4	Indicators	Baseline	Progress rate against target at time of MTR (31/12/2024)	End of project target (24/11/2025)	MTR GEF Rating and justification*
Food production systems and alternative livelihood options implemented with innovative technologies and private sector support are more resilient and adapted to climate change in Belize, St. Lucia, Carriacou Grenada, Jamaica and Barbados	Number of hectares where adapted food production systems and alternative livelihood options are implemented Improvement in on-farm productivity with respect to crops and livestock Percent increase in annual household income from agricultural activity for project beneficiaries Number of people that benefit from improved food production systems (i.e. direct beneficiaries and from project upscaling), disaggregated by gender	No recent Land Capability Assessment exist for the sites identified	A land capability assessment report was prepared for each pilot site (except in Haiti) and discussed in the validation workshops with national and local stakeholders to identify the potential interventions for the pilot sites under C4. The land capability reports were subsequently integrated into the final versions of the DPSIR reports.	20,000 ha adapted land use/food production systems established creating Alternative Livelihood Options using innovative technologies and approaches with private sector support as follows: Barbados: 1,500 ha Belize: 8,000 ha St. Lucia: 1,500 ha Grenada: 2,000 ha Jamaica: 7,000 ha 1,800 beneficiaries (750 women)	**UNSATISFACTORY** 30% progress to end targets (given marketing strategies and financial investment plan have not been realised so far). From the DPSIR reports the MTR has identified the following 11 pilot sites and tentative actions have been selected under C4: (i) **Barbados**: 3 sites at ***Misty Woods Farm*** (composting, vegetation cover, rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, dam upgrade, farm management), ***Mystic Valley*** (install drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting and storage tanks, composting and improve crop rotation methods) and ***Codrington College*** (model farm, greenhouse and organic farming techniques); (ii) **Belize**: ***Patchakan*** (reduce monoculture through crop diversification, conversion of sugar cane plots to fruit orchard and agroforestry, composting and green manure application), ***Libertad*** (field management, reduce land for sugar cane by building up soil aggregation with organic matter and manure,

					promote forage development for livestock farming); (iii) **Grenada: *Limlair-Carriacou*** (paddock rehabilitation, RWH and storage, improved forage species, drought resistant grass species, pasture management, live fencing, rotational grazing, composting, training in livestock management including within solar farm, soil testing); (iv) **Guyana**: ***Kimbia*** in Region 10 (reforestation, agroforestry, introduce a land use policy, improve water management for drainage, crop and livestock production, organic mulching and composting); (v) **Jamaica**: ***Holland Estate-St. Elizabeth*** (soil fertility improvements through composting, mulching, residue management, conservation agriculture, RWH, tanks and wells, change in management/intensity, controlled access grazing, greenhouses); ***Ginger Hill-St. Elizabeth*** (vegetation cover, mixed cropping, intercropping, relay cropping, contour bunds, terraces, bamboo check dams, change in management, waste management, composting); ***Lowe River-Trelawny***

					(vegetation cover, mixed cropping, intercropping, soil fertility management, contour bunds and banks, terraces, bamboo check dams, change in management/intensity, waste management, compositing); (vi) **St. Lucia**: ***Roseau*** (soil reclamation practices, organic mulching, grass strips and bio-pores, bamboo gully to check erosion, drip irrigation, rehabilitation of water storage tank to 60,000 gallon capacity, waste management, composting, plant nursery, training on seedling preparation. As with C2 and C3, there is no consolidation report summarising key indicators, baselines and targets to monitor the actions proposed at each of the 11 sites to compare with targets in the Prodoc. Similarly no project proposals with a procurement plan have been submitted to PISLM to 31/12/2024.
Outcomes 5.1-5.5	**Indicators**	**Baseline**	**Progress rate against target at time of MTR (31/12/2024)**	**End of project target (24/11/2025)**	**MTR GEF Rating and justification***
Outcome 5.1 Regional capacity development and	Percent persons trained in SSM, SLM and CMA methods and techniques from	No scholarship programme exists to promote new soil scientists in CSIDS.	CSIDS Scholarship Programme launched with five (5) scholarships awarded to increase number of soil	Basic regional infrastructure for mainstreaming SLM/SSM in	**MODERATELY SATISFACTORY** Around 60% progress to targets.

training programme established	the participating countries that contribute to the development of components 1 to 4, disaggregated by gender.	Major gaps exist in CSIDS to: (i) integrate climate resilience approaches in SLM/SSM training and application; (ii) access knowledge on information and data on SLM/SSM; (iii) attract investment by the private sector in these areas. Insufficient application of regional climate modelling and projections to guide decision-making on SLM/SSM in CSIDS. Significant capacity gaps exist in CSIDS on SLM/SSM as well as the integration of these concepts in regional policy frameworks.	scientists in the subregion (Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia). Regional Land expert and UWI team have trained extension and forest officers on soil sampling using SOP. FAO/GSP providing on-going training in soil sampling using SOP through global Soil Doctors Programme. High resolution digital soil maps in the process of finalisation and use from 2025 for four countries with support from FAO/GSP (A&B, Barbados, Grenada and St. Lucia). Regional capacity development plan was agreed by all participating countries in 2024 and is ongoing. Training on applying the High Nature Value index (HNVI) and C-SAC tool has taken place in Guyana, A&B and Grenada between 2023-2024 involving extension and agriculture officers, farmers, etc. based on the training of trainers approach. The SSLMFG was officially established in 2024 to be the main technical advisory group to the Executive Committee of PISLM	regional policy framework in place. Knowledge management on SLM/SSM in place. A cadre of stakeholders trained in climate resilience, including in climate modelling and projections for SLM/SSM. Financial capability to implement SLM/ SSM identified. A Regional LDN Strategy has been established and provides a foundation for other interventions on SLM/SSM.	The scholarship programme is running, but only 5 scholarships issued so far and not linked to jobs. Capacity to conduct soil sampling and analysis to international SOP is progressing through the project. Capacity gaps remain in PISLM to develop high quality sets of soil maps with a high resolution indicating still too much dependency on FAO inputs. In addition, capacity to overlay soil maps with land use maps and plans still needs to be addressed to support informed decision-making on sustainable approaches to farming in CSIDS. Progress on developing a Regional LDN Strategy had been slower than planned due to the delays in completing the national soil maps. Linking the LDN Strategy to regional/national land policies also needs to be addressed to support sustainable approaches to LDN. The HNVI and CSAC training of trainers represents a viable approach to collecting baseline data from farmers to assess the sustainability

					and resilience levels of their farms. However, more needs to be done to ensure CSAC also provides solutions to problems identified in the application to establish a clear guidelines with the GSP/FAO that SLM/SSM measures are ultimately designed to: (i) strengthen food security, sovereignty and nutrition; (ii) protect ecosystem services; (iii) obtain certification to develop high value, short and inclusive value chains with key sectors in-country (especially tourism and retail) to establish LDN with a low carbon footprint. The creation of the SSLMFG represents a major development for PISLM, in that it provides the latter with access to technical guidance from a wide range of institutions in the subregion such as CARDI, UWI, IICA, CARICOM/COTED (Agriculture and Environment) and GSP/FAO. The establishment of the regional funding mechanism for SLM/SSM and model farms within PISLM, based on funding from GEF's LDN Facility has been approved by the COTED. However, its formal establishment with FAO's support in Dominica has been delayed to 2025.

Outcome 5.2. SLM/LDN knowledge management, technical assistance and communication in SLM/SSM strengthened and enhanced	Knowledge products/materials produced and disseminated to stakeholders in the region. Social learning platform being used to network, share, collaborate and exchange ideas to solve problems. Indigenous Peoples (IPs) Network established and used by Indigenous Peoples to strengthen Regional Networking	Major gaps exist within CSIDS on (i) access to reliable and accurate information and data on SLM/ SSM, CSA (ii) the movement of technical expertise to address the drivers and impact of land degradation in CSIDS; (iii) specific platforms for IPs.	PISLM Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH) has been designed and approved by the CARICOM/COTED in 2024 to support the development of the wider SIDS-SIDS Knowledge Hub under construction by the GEF-funded project, *Demonstration of a Caribbean Mechanism Toward Establishment of a SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub*. The official launch of the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub has been postponed to early 2025 due to this synergy. Indigenous Peoples Forum has been created and launched in 2024 to promote exchanges between IPs in CSIDS. The Caribbean Youth Environment Network completed a Youth in Agriculture workshop in Barbados in 2024 for 17 youths (11 females) from seven participating countries (participants from Haiti did not materialise).	LDN and SLM Knowledge Hub operating throughout the subregion; Caribbean SLM/LDN SIDS-SIDS Coop. Mechanism in place and supporting the identification and transfer of specific expertise across the region to advance LDN. IPs and Youths have their own platforms to exchange information and conduct training exercises on LDN topics.	**MODERATELY SATISFACTORY** 65% progress to meeting targets. Progress in designing the LSKH and engaging IPs and youths in the LDN process is evident, but their capacity to stimulate regular and constructive information exchanges, trainings on LDN topics and drive forward transformational changes at all levels is unclear as they are not yet operational, or have only undergone preliminary activities. Overall, the MTR identified insufficient evidence to confirm that these initiatives will be able to fund themselves without one or more dedicated funding sources in place before project closure. This funding is also needed to secure new state-of-the-art initiatives such as the development of IP and youth "influencers" to promote the take up and up-scaling of SLM/SSM, CSA.

Outcome 5.3. Climate Resilient SLM and Regional LDN Strategy integrated into Caribbean Community regional policy frameworks, decision making processes and national Level planning processes	Number of Caribbean Community Regional Policy Frameworks, reviewed, amended and approved.	Currently SSM and SLM are not sufficiently well integrated into the Caribbean Community Policy Frameworks	In 2024 the CARICOM/ COTED (Agriculture) agreed PISLM should implement a new governance framework to become an IGO. Ministers agreed that PISLM can now play a leading role in accelerating commitments to combatting land degradation and desertification in the subregion through SLM/SSM practices.	The results of SOILCARE I are integrated into the various CARICOM policy instruments, and adopted by organs responsible for the Caribbean Community Agricultural Policy, the Draft Community Environment and Natural Resources Policy Framework and mainstreaming of adaptation. In addition, the establishment of a sub-regional SSM framework agreement contributing to LDN;	**MODERATELY SATISFACTORY** 50% progress to targets Despite important progress on upgrading PISLM to an IGO, and establishing the SSLMFG to provide technical guidance to PISLM, the MTR did not identify progress on establishing an integrated policy reform plan at the regional level (which will become binding at the national level) designed to coordinate the delivery of targets under UNCCD (25x25), that also support the Paris Agreement (NDCs on adaptation) and the CBD (Global Biodiversity Framework) is not evident, and should be a priority for 2025.
Outcome 5.4. Promotion of Investment and financing in SLM/SSM and climate resilience with Private and Public Sector	The Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism is established and funded.	Currently no such mechanism exists to facilitate investment and financing for SLM, SSM and Climate Resilience with private and public sector entities.	The CARICOM/COTED adopted the recommendations of the feasibility report presented in April 2024 and agreed the headquarters for the Fund will be established in the Commonwealth of Dominica. FAO and PISLM have not determined how the fund should operate,	The Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism is established, and resources mobilised for climate-resilient SSM/SLM.	**MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY** 40% progress to targets The project has obtained political agreement on the creation of the CSIDS LDN Transformative Fund in Dominica, but a study to identify how the Fund should work has not been realised to date in which key issues

		Private and public investment mobilised which mainstreams climate adaptation considerations.			will need to be considered, in particular the Fund's ability to assess: (i) the overall environmental benefits of a project proposal including how sustainable these benefits will be in relation to reducing poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation; (ii) the financial viability of the project including strategies to manage risk, deliver a return on investment (ROI) and repayment capacity; (iii) socio-cultural and economic impact of the project on improving livelihoods, creating jobs and developing the local economy; (iv) the project's contribution to enhancing local good governance over land resources; (v) establishing a Fund that adheres to international SOP (transparency, accounting, monitoring, reporting and law enforcement capacities).
Outcome 5.5 An effective gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework in support of project	Project monitoring system supports project delivery while following a results-based management approach	Currently no such modality for undertaking an effective gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework for climate resilient SSM and	A Gender sensitive M&E framework for the project has been established since 2024. Gender mainstreaming in all activities is reported to be in place. Total number of beneficiaries of training and capacity development is 471 of which 202 are females.	An effective gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework in support of project implementation	**MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY** 75% progress (implementation progress to December 2024). The project's M&E includes monitoring of sex-disaggregated data on participation rates in its training and capacity development activities.

implementation established		SLM exists in Caribbean SIDS.			However, there is no specific M&E on the participation of other vulnerable groups (youths, elders, disabled, IPs, Overall, key aspects of the gender strategy are missing, namely: (i) the specific needs of women in C1 and in the 25 pilot sites (C2-C4) and in the policy development on LDN in the subregion (C5); (ii) assessment of gender roles in the pilot sites in particular on land management practices, division of tasks, decision-making dynamics); (iii) potential impact of SLM/SSM CSA on securing equitable access to resources, or not; (iv) the level of engagement of women in decision-making roles; (v) impact of project actions on women's empowerment and internal dynamics (in particular if actions reduce/enhance gender-based violence).

Source: PM; *Achievement ratings: HS: highly satisfactory; S: satisfactory; MS: moderately satisfactory; MU: moderately unsatisfactory; U: Unsatisfactory; HU: highly unsatisfactory.

** Physical progress not requested due to the intangible nature of the outputs foreseen (e.g. linked to knowledge development and communication).

Indicator assessment key

HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU

Appendix 6. Co-financing table to 31 December 2024 (in USD)

Sources of Co-financing[21]	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing[22]	Amount Confirmed at CEO endorsement / approval	Amount Materialized at Midterm (30/06/2023)[23]	Amount Materialized at 31 Dec 2024
Recipient Country Government	Antigua and Barbuda	In-kind	800,000	309,316	660,000
Recipient Country Government	Barbados	In-kind	722,600	0	550,000
Recipient Country Government	Belize	In-kind	442,600	0	250,000
Recipient Country Government	Grenada	In-kind	5,000,000	450,000	3,100,000
Recipient Country Government	Guyana	In-kind	2,968,204	731,319	1,700,000
Recipient Country Government	Haiti	In-kind	5,100,000	0	2,600,000
Recipient Country Government	Jamaica	In-kind	800,000	0	350,000
Recipient Country Government	St. Lucia	In-kind	987,100	234,916	470,000
Private sector/Academia	UWI	In-kind	4,520,000	740,000	2,320,000
GEF Implementing Agency	FAO	In-kind	1,657,312	0	800,000
EF Agency	FAO	Grant	300,000	n/a	n/a
Inter-government Body/CSO	PISLM	In-kind	1,500,000	650,000	1,000,000
TOTAL			**25,797,816**	**3,115,551**	**13,800,000.00**

[21]Sources of Co-financing may include: GEF Agency, Donor Agency, Recipient Country Government, Private Sector, Civil Society Organization, Beneficiaries, Other.

[22]Grant, Loan, Equity Investment, Guarantee, In-Kind, Public Investment, Other (please refer to the *Guidelines on co-financing* for definitions

https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF_FI_GN_01_Cofinancing_Guidelines_2018.pdf

[23] The MTR team was unable to obtain the mid-term figures to 30/11/2023. Instead, in-kind contributions reported in PIR2 to 30/06/2023 have been inserted. Missing data from UWI and PISLM were provided to the MTR team to complete the co-financing table to 30/06/2023. In-kind contributions that were not available to 30/06/2023 are marked zero, but were calculated to 31/12/2024 following additional training in 2025.

Appendix 7. GEF evaluation criteria rating table and rating scheme

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating[24]	Summary comments[25]
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Strategic relevance was confirmed to be high at both CARICOM and at national government levels, where the project is directly supporting government pledges to UNCCD and SDG 15.3. Particularly significant is the selection of intervention sites in the Northern part of Haiti where security is stable, and farmer groups maintain control of local resources. At the local level, baseline data has been collected through the DPSIR framework analysis in all seven participating countries. Stakeholders and farmers interviewed reconfirmed the promotion of SLM/SSM and model farms is highly relevant, although in some cases refurbishing of technology must be adapted to Caribbean conditions and needs, and the provision of water resources is considered by farmers as a prerequisite to participation in the development of model farms (especially in Grenada). Caveats identified are, first, the project's expected outputs and outcomes for components 2 to 4 are very ambitious when compared to the resources and time assigned in the project document. Second, the absence of robust land policies and/or legislation in all participating countries represents a major gap in the enabling environment to combat key drivers of land degradation and upscale good practices identified through SOILCARE I. Third, raising capacity on the physical and chemical analysis of soils in CARICOM countries is highly relevant, but does not include analysis of soil biodiversity which is crucial to plant growth, fixing carbon and nitrogen, decomposing organic matter and controlling pathogens, among others.
A1.1. Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The project is fully consistent with the following Focal Areas of GEF-7: Land Degradation (LD), Climate Change (CC), which includes the achievement of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and Biodiversity (BD) by supporting efforts to reduce biodiversity loss.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	The project directly supports the achievement of SDG 15.3, but also contributes indirectly to meeting targets under other SDGs, in particular, SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action) and 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (global partnerships). As such, the project also has direct linkages to UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD/GFB. Relevance of the project at the regional and sub-regional level has been enhanced by the official endorsement of PISLM as an inter-governmental organisation

[24] See rating scheme at the end of the document.

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

		(IGO), in particular strengthening the case for coordinating policies on SLM/SSM through CARICOM/COTED from 2024. At the national level, the project directly supports the pledges of all participating governments to UNCCD as well as other relevant legislation, such as their national adaptation plans. End beneficiaries interviewed also confirm that the project responds to their needs and aspirations. This includes indigenous peoples who have been specifically selected to participate in the project in countries such as Guyana where progress on LDN is crucial to safeguarding their livelihoods well-being and cultural identity.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	MS	PISLM is responsible for coordinating all projects supporting SLM, especially since CARICOM's endorsement of the Sustainable Land and Soil Management Framework Group (SSLMFG) in 2024. PISLM also has established complementarity with the following: (i) the Caribbean Soil Support Group (CSSG), which was established by the project to operate at the sub-regional level; (ii) the Latin American and Caribbean Soil Alliance (ASLAC) where the project has supported the inclusion of the CSSG Chair in the alliance; (iii) the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) managed globally by FAO, which has supported capacity building of institutions such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC); (iv) the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CARSOLAN), established by the SOILCARE I project to form part of Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN); (v) the Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development institute (CARDI); (vi) The Caribbean Youth Environment Network. In addition, synergies with ministries responsible for agriculture and environment are evident to support the development of the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS) within PISLM, or with specific government-led programmes such as sustainable yam production in Jamaica, which is being coordinated with SOILCARE I; (vii) the GEF-funded project "SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub" (managed by UNEP) which will integrate PISLM's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub, once complete (now foreseen under SOILCARE II); (viii) collaboration with ongoing projects in the eight participating countries such as the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP) funded by IFAD in Grenada. However, formal synergies with other GEF-funded projects operating at the national or sub-regional level or with FAO's Global Soil Doctors Programme (under the GSP) that aims to promote farmer-farmer training on SSM and CSA, or FAO's Technical Cooperation programmes in the Caribbean were not evident, but under consideration in the design of SOILCARE II.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	MS	The delivery of planned outcomes has experienced delays under all components. Despite good progress under C1 and C5, it is highly unlikely the project will achieve its objectives in the time

		remaining to November 2025, because planned activities under C2-C4 have not yet started in the seven participating countries concerned (excludes Antigua and Barbuda, which opted out of C2-C4 components). Several external factors have caused these delays including bureaucratic hurdles associated with the first GEF disbursement, tendering of equipment, slow clearance of soil samples through customs in Trinidad, and severe weather events such as hurricanes and floods in 2024, which greatly affected Grenada and parts of St. Lucia and Jamaica.
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	MS	Progress in delivering planned outputs has been mixed. Under C1 the project has delivered the following planned outputs: (i) training and guidance on taking soil samples to develop new national soil maps has been completed in four countries, which includes bulk density assessments for the first time. FAO is validating the soil maps. However, this output has experienced delays in three countries (Belize, Guyana and Haiti); (ii) CARSOLAN has been officially established and is overseeing the upgrading of the soil laboratories in all eight participating countries in accordance with standard operating procedures (SOP). However, delays in the procurement of laboratory equipment means the upgrading process is still ongoing; (iii) training on soil analysis by UWI-St Augustine campus experienced delays in clearing soil samples through customs in Trinidad, meaning the completion of training on applying SOP will not be completed until 2025; (iv) the CARSIS software has been developed within PISLM with technical support and training provided by FAO and is on track to be fully operational in 2025. Outputs under C2-C4 have been limited to preparatory studies required before on the ground actions supporting land rehabilitation (15,000 ha/1,250 households), model farms (20,000 ha / 1,800 households) and adaptation to climate change (20,000 ha /1,800 households) can commence. Main outputs so far include: (i) finalisation and stakeholder validation of the DPSIR reports for all seven participating countries in 2024 (subject to FAO's final endorsement). The DPSIR reports provide guidance on project interventions to be conducted in all 25 pilot sites selected for project support under C2-C4; (ii) climate risk analysis completed at all pilot sites; (iii) land capability assessments completed at all 25 pilot sites; (iv) guidelines on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) validated by stakeholders in 2024; (v) the RAC-NAT facility has been established and is operational in Trinidad promoting and conducting field research on organic production of chilli peppers. Under C5, main outputs include: (i) SOILCARE scholarship programme is operational, and five scholarships have been awarded; (ii) the PISLM's Land and Soil Knowledge Hub has been designed and is expected to be launched in early 2025; (iii) the SLSMFAG was established in 2024; (iv) the secretariat for the Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism is in the process of establishment by PISLM in Dominica.

B1.2 Progress towards outcomes [26] and project objectives		
- Outcome 1	S	The project is on track to provide valuable soil data and maps to support informed decision-making (Outcome 1) in seven participating countries, and in Haiti, although interviews suggest it may be more feasible to concentrate on the Northern part of Haiti due to the problems of security in many areas of Haiti.
- Outcome 2	MU	Rehabilitation of degraded areas in Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia covering 15,000 ha and engaging 1,250 partners (end beneficiaries) is unlikely given none of the activities planned at the intervention sites have started with just 11 months of the project's implementation phase remaining.
- Outcome 3	MU	Increases in soil productivity through CSA covering 20,000 ha and engaging 1,800 households are unlikely to be achieved in the time remaining in any of the five participating countries (Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and St. Lucia) given none of the activities have started so far with just 11 months of the project's implementation phase remaining.
- Outcome 4	U	The achievement of resilient food production systems engaging value chains with the private sector, covering 20,000 ha and 1,800 households (linked to outcome 3) is unlikely given market analysis, access to finance and other planned activities have not yet started to achieve this outcome by November 2025.
- Outcomes 5.1 to 5.5	MS	Regional capacity development, knowledge management and integration of LDN into regional and national policy frameworks (outcomes 5.1-5.3) are moderately likely in the time remaining given these actions have completed their design and testing phase and are ready to be implemented in 2025. Achievement of outcome 5.4 is unlikely in the remaining time in the project, although establishment of the LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism in Dominica has been agreed and its mandate likely to be agreed upon by the COTED before closure in November 2025. Finally, there is insufficient evidence that gender-sensitive monitoring is in place to date (outcome 5.5) given the M&E system only assesses women's participation rates in project activities. Participation rates of other vulnerable groups (youths, elders, disabled, etc.), or on qualitative data such as changes in women's empowerment, or human-rights are not integrated into the M&E system and plan.

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

- Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/ outcomes	MU	Overall progress towards achieving the project's objectives and outcomes is mixed. Achievement of outcome 1.1 is likely and this would represent a major success for SOILCARE I given the challenges SIDS face in establishing access to reliable soil data. Moreover, it is highly likely this achievement will be supported by the achievement of outcomes 5.1-5.3. However, achievement of outcomes 2 to 4 are unlikely, indicating the project's targets under components 2-4 are not realistic in relation to the resources and time allocated and, thus, too ambitious for a project of this nature unless a major extension is granted. In particular, the promotion of alternative livelihoods supported by private sector and civil society engagement.
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	UA	Not rated in MTRs
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency[27]	MS	Overall physical progress has suffered from several delays and is estimated to be around 45 percent to 31/12/2024 while total expenditure of GEF funds stands at USD 3,626,485 to 30/09/2024, equivalent to 68.5% of GEF's budget allocation in the project document. The total number of direct beneficiaries who have participated in capacity development and trainings under all five components to the same date totals 583, indicating the project has spent on average USD 6,220 on each beneficiary, which is high, but is explained by the lack of activities under C2-C4. . The total level of in-kind co-finance stood at USD 11,680,000 at 31/12/2024, equivalent to 44.5% of total planned co-funding.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks affecting sustainability	L	The sustainability of results under C1 is rated "likely" on the grounds the soil laboratories, networks and land and soil information systems are all embedded in PISLM, national government institutions, or UWI's own teaching infrastructure. However, the financial sustainability of the RAC-NAT Facility established in Trinidad has not been addressed to date to support the expansion of CSA. Conversely, sustainability of the 25 pilot actions promoting SLM/SSM and model farms under C2-C4 is rated "unlikely" because: (i) there is insufficient time to apply a sustainability plan for the SLM/SSM and model farms, especially as they have not yet started in the field; (ii) upscaling of SLM/SSM and model farms is unlikely unless adequate land use legislation and law enforcement is in place to support the transition to greener and more sustainable development in the sub-region; (iii) there is a lack of business representation in the project's planning and decision-making to ensure key services and investment from the private sector are adequate to develop the value chains needed to sustain the alternative livelihoods foreseen. Under C5, the sustainability of the LSMFAG, the Land and Soil Knowledge

[27] Includes cost efficiency and timeliness.

		Hub, and mainstreaming of LDN into policy and planning are rated "likely" given they are integrated into PISLM, or part of the national governments' commitments to SDG 15.3. Finally, the sustainability of the Caribbean SIDS LDN Transformative Fund Mechanism is rated "moderately likely" on the grounds the mobilisation of funds will rely heavily on the donor community for many years to come.
D1.1. Likelihood of financial risks affecting sustainability	L	Financial risks are "unlikely" to affect the sustainability of outputs and outcomes under C1 and C5, but are "likely" to affect the consolidation and upscaling of good practices established under C2-C4 for the following reasons: (i) the majority of government stakeholders stated they have resource limitations to support both the implementation and sustainability of SLM/SSM and model farms; (ii) access to co-finance is likely to remain less than planned, especially where it is linked to projects that will end operations in 2025; (iii) insufficient synergies with other projects, especially FAO TC programme which is supporting resilient and sustainable farming in different areas of participating countries. (iv) the opportunities to develop alternative income streams from, for example, carbon trading, is unlikely due to the lack of economies of scale; (v) engagement of the private sector supported by, for example, fiscal incentives to invest in actions supporting LDN and adaptation to climate change.
D1.2. Likelihood of socio-political risks affecting sustainability	MU	Socio-political risks are rated "moderately unlikely" on the grounds all eight participating countries have taken steps at the national level and through the CARICOM/COTED (for Agriculture and Environment) to support the development of PISLM as an IGO and recognise the importance of continuing the LDN process through a second phase of SOILCARE. In Haiti it is moderately likely that the decentralised approach to LDN in the North of the island can be sustained where community-based control of the LDN process is evident, but socio-political instability remains a constant threat that will prevent the expansion of good practices elsewhere in the island.
D1.3. Likelihood of institutional and governance risks affecting sustainability	ML	Institutional risks are "moderately unlikely" to affect the sustainability of outputs and outcomes under C1 and C5, while under C2-C4 they are "moderately likely" be affected by the following gaps: (i) a general lack of staff and adequate equipment (vehicles, computers, mapping software) to promote, sustain and upscale the LDN process; (ii) a lack of decentralised decision-making, especially in larger countries such as Guyana, Jamaica and Belize where central government can take time to take decisions; (iii) a lack of participation of institutions that work with the private sector to identify funding opportunities lined to LDN.

D1.4. Likelihood of environmental risks affecting sustainability	MU	Environmental risks are rated "moderately unlikely". On the one hand, the project's SLM/SSM and model farms are designed to rehabilitate degraded areas that are vulnerable to extreme weather and climatic events. On the other hand, the lack of effective land use planning and enforcement is likely to affect adjacent lands and maintain their vulnerability to natural disasters and abnormal climatic events.
D2. Likelihood of catalysis and replication	ML	The establishment of new national soil maps are "moderately likely" to support the replication of LDN where it leads to tangible economic benefits that, at the same time, catalyse improvements in human, social, physical and environmental capital. CSA, agro-forestry and forestry actions are considered the most viable to catalyse change and enhance local governance over the sustainable use of natural resources. However, replication is unlikely where the following barriers are not resolved: (i) land conflicts and rights (especially where indigenous peoples are concerned); (ii) policies, subsidies and/or regulations that favour unsustainable practices, over sustainable alternatives are in operation; (iii) lack of access to information, education, extension services and finance to sustain soil health, biodiversity, in-situ seed banks to respond to disasters and severe climatic events.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness[28]	MS	The project's design has the following shortcomings that have affected performance and not been adequately addressed by the PSC: (i) the lack of adequate training by FAO-SLC in the inception phase covering accounting of GEF funding and co-finance, the development of an effective results-based monitoring system, progress reporting requirements and communication strategy; (ii) insufficient resources allocated to oversee coordinated implementation of the project at the national level, given the majority of participating SIDS have very limited resources; (iii) the project's design lacks an integrated approach that promotes the participation of some key government institutions, especially those linked to planning, finance and private enterprise development; (iv) the selection of three components (C2-C4) encourages a fragmented approach rather than an integrated one that supports South-South dialogue and cooperation; (v) the targets under C2-C4 are over-ambitious in a sub-region where government institutions have limited capacity and resources.
E2. Quality of project implementation	MS	The quality of the project's implementation under C1 and C5 has been satisfactory, with important achievements in place such as the creation of SLSMFAG, CARSOLAN, the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub and CARSIS, which will provide access to high resolution soil maps for the first time. However, the slow procurement of soil laboratory equipment has delayed the

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

		upgrading process to 2025, and contributed to delays of some key activities linked to C2-C4, such as the finalisation of the DPSIR reports. The quality of implementation of the SLM/SSM and model farms foreseen under C2-C4 cannot be determined at this stage. Key findings from the preparatory work completed for C2-C4 are that the following activities have been understated, or not adequately addressed : (i) integration of native varieties of trees, plants and grasses into SLM/SSM plans; (ii) development of robust rainwater harvesting and water resources management techniques to reduce the effects of prolonged dry seasons; (iii) capturing and integrating local knowledge and innovation into the plans for model farms, (such as innovative inter-cropping techniques); (iv) using trees as wind breaks, fodder and fruit provides; (iv) the review of the existing farm sites in order to allow for the relocation of specific activities to more appropriate locations (rather than focusing on upgrading/rehabilitating existing infrastructure in the same locations); (v) marketing studies to support the development of phased production of different adapted crops that support effective rotation methods and generate regular income; (vi) effective communication on the role improved soil quality plays in improving nutrition, rather than focusing primarily on food security; (vii) the need for SLM/SSM and model farm promoter networks at the local level to upscale good practices in and around the intervention sites.
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, CTA, etc.)	MS	The quality of FAO's technical support has been moderately satisfactory. On the one hand its ability to provide high quality technical services in areas such as soil mapping, promotion of the Soil Doctors Programme and training on SOP in the soil laboratories has been satisfactory. On the other, the MTR found relations between the FAO-SLC Task Force for SOILCARE I and PISLM have become highly strained and risk a breakdown in trust. Key factors attributed to this are: (i) the application of the OPIM as a control mechanism rather than a means to developing a robust and long-term partnership between FAO and PISLM. In particular several stakeholders complained the OPIM's requirement for spot checks has resulted in FAO sending experts who speak poor English and who are not from, or familiar with, the Caribbean subregion; (ii) insufficient communication and field visits by the BH, LTO and CTA to the project to enhance understanding on, and find solutions to, the main challenges affecting implementation, including capacity, logistical and financial challenges to implement the project in eight countries all of which have their own specific political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental needs and aspirations.
E2.1 Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc.)	S	The vast majority of stakeholders confirmed satisfaction with the level of engagement, support and guidance provided by the PSC, which meets online to deliberate on annual work plans, progress reporting, policy reviews on the enabling environment and

		delivery of outputs and planned outcomes. Nevertheless, stakeholders recognise the need to apply a more integrated approach that secures the participation of staff from departments responsible for business development, planning, and finance, as well as from the private sector (and from civil society). Working groups were generally found to be providing positive support to the delivery of outputs.
E3. Quality of project execution	S	The quality of the project's execution by PISLM is satisfactory. Its role in the subregion has grown following its IGO status. In particular, CARICOM countries now recognise PISLM as one of the lead agencies in achieving the 25x25 initiative (2014-2025), which aims to restore 25% of degraded lands in the Caribbean by end of 2025. As such, SOILCARE I, has facilitated PISLM's role in bringing governments, civil society and local communities together to discuss and agree on the policy reforms, technical support, and capacity building required to achieve the 25x25 targets, ensuring land restoration contributes to environmental, economic, and social resilience in the subregion. However, PISLM lacks capacity in some key technical areas (such as on GIS and soil mapping) and faces complex logistical challenges due to its centralisation in Guyana and needs to improve its relations with FAO, which is also recognised as a key player in the 25x25 initiative. In particular, the MTR found PISLM and FAO need to meet to agree on clarifying each other's role in the subregion, given PISLM represents a new opportunity in the subregion to achieve the overlapping goals and targets of UNCCD, UNFCCC (NDC's national adaptation plans and targets) and CBD (Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes the restoration of 30% of degraded ecosystems).
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU and executing partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	MS	The quality of the PMU to oversee the project's day-to-day implementation has been satisfactory but relies heavily on national project assistants (PA) to organise project implementation in each participating country. As nominated government staff, the PAs have limited authority, capacity and logistical support to convene high-level meetings, carry out regular field visits, or oversee procurement and training requirements. This situation has resulted in a several national consultations to validate the project sites identified in the project document, which took time to complete and which resulted in some changes in project sites by the national project steering committees on the grounds that they no longer met the SLM/SSM/CSA requirements of SOILCARE I. This has contributed to slower than planned implementation and revealed some technical and administrative gaps in the PMU, in areas such as the application of results-based M&E that supports learning (currently limited to table filling on implementation progress), on procurement and enterprise development (including marketing and financing) to support the development of the restoration economy and CSA.

E4. Financial management and co-financing	MU	The MTR team confirms financial management of GEF funds and co-financing is carried out in accordance with FAO rules and regulations. However, submission of GEF expenditure and co-funding contributions has not been completed in a timely manner. In the case of GEF funds, this situation was been exacerbated the shortage of US Dollars in Guyana in the final quarter of 2024, which delayed calculations on total expenditure of GEF funds to 31/12/2024. In addition, FAO-SLC had to provide additional training to PISLM/PMU staff on calculating co-funding contributions from all eight participating countries in the first quarter of 2025. This has resulted in the provision of new figures on total in-kind co-finance to the MTR team at the time of writing (end March 2025). Overall, this confirms the need for FAO-SLC to provide more guidance material and participate in bi-annual meetings to ensure the current shortfall in co-finance is addressed in the subregion.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Overall, the MTR found emphasis on establishing partnerships and stakeholder engagement has been satisfactory. For example, several partnerships have been established between PISLM and soil scientists, technical groups and networks of stakeholders under C1 and C5 (see section A1.3). Moreover, in some cases these partnerships directly link into regional and global partnerships, such as CARSOLAN-GLOSOLAN, or CARSIS- GLOSIS. Stakeholder engagement during the selection process of the 25 pilot sites has been satisfactory. This has been aided by the large number of validation consultations that have taken place under the DPSIR framework analysis conducted in all eight participating countries. However, at the country level, partnerships designed to engage national focal points for UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD have not yet materialised to support the project adopt a more integrated approach to LDN.
E6. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products	S	The project is in the process of finalising the design of the Land and Soil Knowledge Hub (LSKH) which is designed to be the cornerstone of the project's communication strategy. Selected technical documents and maps, videos, images, flyers, and other communications on project activities will be transferred from PISLM's server to the LSKH in early 2025. The project's knowledge products will form an integral part of the LSKH's wider role of acting as a hub for knowledge products produced by all the regional projects executed by PISLM. As a result, stakeholders from different projects will have access to each other's knowledge products to support learning and promote the adoption and upscaling of good practices supporting the LDN process. The main caveat identified is the absence of a phone application to enhance local access to guidance materials on applying LDN actions such as, among others: (i) a step by step guides on implementing SLM/SSM, and/or a model farm, (ii) the benefits of

		paying for services such as soil analysis and marketing to support decision-making on the selection of the most environmentally appropriate and economically sustainable and resilient cropping/inter-cropping system; (iii) conduct simple book keeping using phone apps/internet technologies to calculate turnover, gross and net profits, forecasting, budgeting and cashflow management; (iv) marketing and marketing strategies; (v) innovation to keep adapting, manage shocks and record upload good practices that can be shared to support the upscaling of the LDN process.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MS	The quality of the M&E system is satisfactory from the point of view of tracking the implementation of outputs to meet targets set in the Prodoc. However, this approach is considered to be at most moderately satisfactory given there is no tracking of qualitative indicators and risks to promote learning on the knowledge, attitudes and practices that are/are not taking place at all levels of government and within civil-society.
E7.1 M&E design	MS	The M&E system is designed to respond to the reporting needs of the PIRs and PPRs. Consequently, its role in tracking national pledges and commitments to UNCCD, UNFCCC/NDCs and CBD has been largely overlooked.
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	MS	The implementation of the M&E plan has been applied in conformity with FAO's requirements. However, it has been moderately unsatisfactory when considering it has not been subject to a review since it was launched in late 2021. Although no major difficulties in implementing the M&E plan were identified, it is evident M&E remains primarily a project tool rather than a PISLM tool that, for example, seeks out ways to engage civil society and the private sector in driving the LDN process forwards.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	MS	Overall, several factors are at play that have affected the project's performance and scope, that have not been adequately addressed to optimise the added value of GEF's support.
F. CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	The project is mainly concentrating on measuring women's participation rates in the project's main activities. Although the overall participation rate of women compared to men is moderately satisfactory at 38.9% (227 women out of a total of 583 participants), this does not constitute a gender strategy. In particular there is a need for additional monitoring of other vulnerable groups (youths aged 15-25 years old, elders, the disabled). In addition, there is no monitoring of the number of women and other vulnerable groups who have assumed decision-making roles.
F2. Human rights issues	MU	The MTR found little evidence the project is applying a rights-based approach to the LDN process, nor the rights of indigenous peoples in countries such as Guyana. Moreover, the MTR found

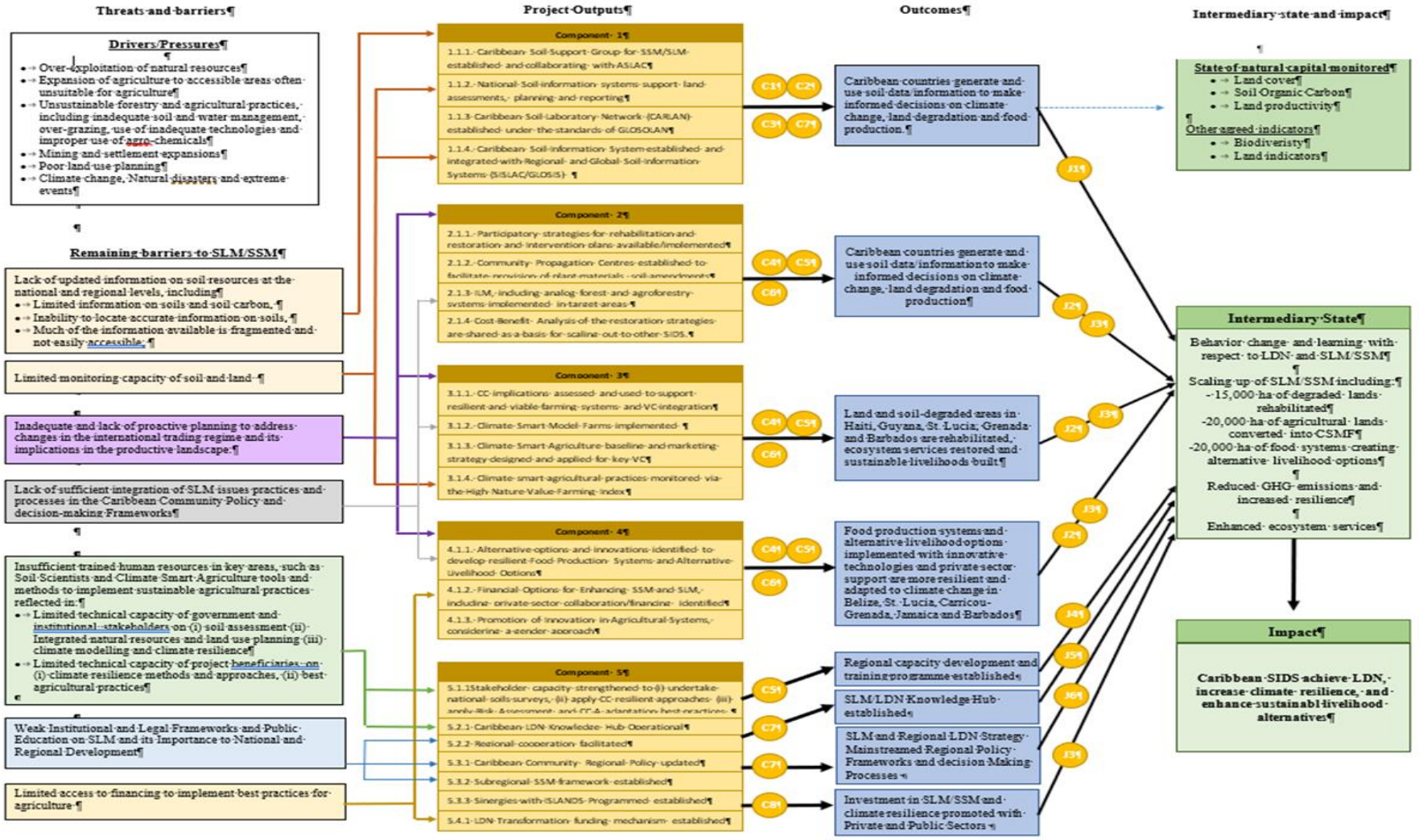
		no clear-cut information on how far the application of free, informed and informed consent (FPIC) is applied when relevant in countries such as Guyana and Belize.
F2. Environmental and social safeguards (ESS)	U	There is no concrete evidence the project has been adequately trained by FAO-SLC to effectively apply the ESS checklist when completing the PIRs. This is especially the case with respect to question 3 in the Prodoc, which was triggered on the grounds the project would: (i) introduce crops and varieties previously not grown; (ii) provide seeds/planting material for cultivation; (iii) involve the importing or transfer of seeds and or planting material for cultivation or research and development; (iv) supply or use modern biotechnologies or their products in crop production; (v) establish or manage planted forests. Despite the lack of implementation of actions under C2-C4 PISLM should update FAO-SLC on how far the measures proposed will be mitigated during implementation.
Overall project rating	**MS**	

Ratings: Highly satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately satisfactory (MS), Moderately unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U) Highly unsatisfactory (HU) Unable to assess (UA). Additional ratings for Section E: Likely (L), Moderately likely (ML), Moderately unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U)

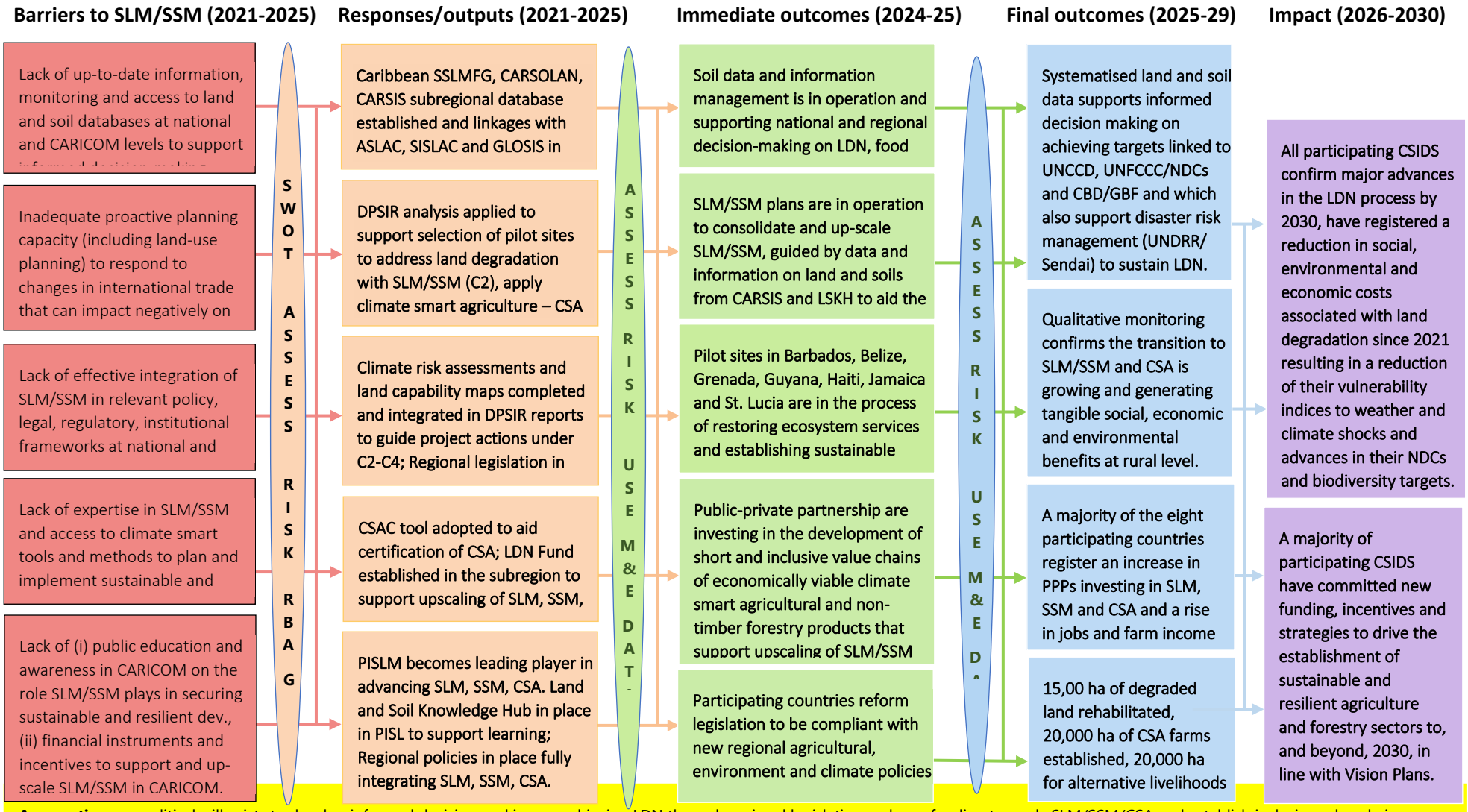
Ratings: Highly satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately satisfactory (MS), Moderately unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U) Highly unsatisfactory (HU) Unable to assess (UA). Additional ratings for Section E: Likely (L),

Appendix 8 Theory of change for SOILCARE I

Appendix 8a Theory of change for SOILCARE I (November 2021)



Appendix 8b. Revised Theory of Change for SOILCARE I (January 2025)



Assumptions: → political will exists to develop informed decision-making on achieving LDN through regional legislation and new funding to apply SLM/SSM/CSA and establish inclusive value chains.
Risks: → risk management is applied effectively and in a timely manner to address/mitigate barriers, human and ecological insecurity, bureaucracy, funding and resource gaps and political instability.
Cross-cutting priorities: → gender equity and women's empowerment, human rights/indigenous peoples-based approaches, application of social and environmental safeguards; good governance.