

Mid Term Review of
“Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management”
GCP /GAM/031/GFF
GEF ID: 5406

Management Response

FAO-Gambia

May 2020

Management response to the Mid-Term Review of “Community-Based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project”

1. Management welcomes the Mid-Term Review of the GEF funded “Community-Based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project”. The MTR provides a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency on project performance, execution as well as operation. Besides, it has formulated useful recommendations to improve the future delivery, impact and likelihood of sustainability of project results, based on the findings. The report captures well the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the consultants which encompasses amongst others, data collection, analysis and discussion of evidence collected during the review within the MTR team to identify key findings and conclusions that answer the MTR issues and questions, and formulate recommendations in line with the findings and conclusions.
2. Management appreciates the report’s findings and recommendations moving forward to achieving the project’s goals and objectives, which highlight the successes, weaknesses, and challenges encountered since inception and proposes ways forward.
3. Progress registered under the various components of the project are well captured and analyzed and Management agrees with most of the recommended actions. Under **Component 1** (Strengthening policy and institutional capacity for sustainable dryland forest management), stakeholders capacities have been strengthened on sustainable dryland forest management including forest fire management. Strategic policy documents (National Forestry Strategy and a National Forestry Action Plan) have also been developed to enhance dryland forest management in the country with emphasis on participatory forest management. Regional multi-stakeholders Sustainable Land Management (SLM) forums have also been created to facilitate coordination and monitoring of natural resources projects and programmes at regional levels. Under **Component 2** (Community-based sustainable dryland forest management and rehabilitation), work has been started to raise awareness on community forest management and to support community forestry communities to move towards ensuring tenure transfer over their forests and to co-manage other forests with government through a Joint Forest Management venture. To build more diversified resilience communities, efforts have been made in creating forest Enterprise Development Plans (EDPs) for forest groups mainly focusing on beekeeping for production of honey. Improved metallic cook stoves have been distributed to women in numerous households and capacity building conducted for mostly women on the construction of clay ovens to reduce the pressure of firewood collection on the forest as well as drudgery on women. Under **Component 3** (Project monitoring and evaluation and information dissemination), efforts are on the way to collecting and managing and dissemination of project best practices.
4. Management’s responses and planned actions on the 15 recommendations are described below.
5. The first recommendation is accepted. The PCU will strengthen its dialogue with the AACC and the EbA projects as well as the CPCU of MECCNAR to enhance collaboration and partnership. In particular on: Forest Enterprise Development, Value addition, Nursery management, forest fire management and rangeland management respectively.

6. The second recommendation has three sub-recommendations two of which are accepted, and one partially accepted.
 - The PCU through the Department of Forestry will update the implementation status of all the CFs and JFPs targeted by the project in line with the first sub-recommendation.
 - PCU and M&E will attempt to clarify the confusion on the inter-relationship between the existing project indicators and targets under Outcome 2.2 and Output 2.2.2 and present them to the next PSC for endorsement as per the second sub-recommendation.
 - As the restoration targets are clear (100 ha for enrichment planting and 500 ha for agroforestry), the project will continue to pursue these objectives while continuing on bushfire management awareness campaigns and promotion of the Fire Award Scheme.
7. The third recommendation is accepted. As recommended, PCU will ensure that an overall work plan for the remainder of the project (including any project extension period) is developed
8. The fourth recommendation has four sub-recommendations three of which are accepted and one rejected. With regards the main recommendation, PC and PSC will consider this in its next meeting.
 - As per the capacity building of the Fire and Rescue Service to participate in forest fire prevention / management, the activity is already captured under component 1, Outcome 1.1 and Output 1.1.1 of the project and implementation of the activity had started and will be pursued.
 - As regard carrying out an assessment of alternative fuel options to charcoal since the 2018 Forest Act prohibits charcoal production anywhere in the country, the process to recruit a consultant for a charcoal value chain assessment is currently ongoing.
 - The recommendation regarding supporting farmer to farmer exchange visits among the communities targeted by the project to share lessons learned / best practices, PCU will work closely with the Department of Forestry (DoF) and other IPs to identify potential sites to visit and farmers to be involved.
 - As per coordinating with FAO to create TCP to support a new 10-year National Forest Assessment, that would allow the project to measure whether it is increasing forest cover and which among other things would allow them to measure whether the dryland forest project is actually contributing to increase in forest cover, this is not part of the mandates of the project, hence the decision will be left entirely with the Department of Forestry and FAO.
9. The fifth recommendation and all its sub-recommendations are accepted.
 - As per the recommendation for a 12-month No-Cost-Extension for the project in order to achieve most of its primary goals and objectives, FAOGM will liaise with the GEF-Coordination Unit at HQ on the modalities for a No Cost Extension as soon as possible.
 - Regarding the sub-recommendation “As part of the process to get the extension, FAO Gambia should ensure that the project will have sufficient Project Management Cost (PMC) funds to cover the additional year; should confirm that project partners (especially the IPs) and target communities will be willing to continue for an additional year; and should assess whether additional co-financing needs to be secured”, The PSC already had

a meeting and has unanimously agreed for a 12-month no-cost extension of the project and the IPs have BOTH expressed willingness to continue in case of an extension. FAOGM will now assess the remaining funds to ensure that the project will have sufficient PMC to cover the additional year.

10. The sixth recommendation is accepted. Based on the recommendation, a stakeholders meeting including representatives of all the Implementing Partners (IPs) will be organized to develop an exit strategy that will help in scaling up project results and ensuring sustainability of the results.
11. The seventh recommendation is partially accepted. As per the recommendation, FAO will continue to discuss with project managers and RAF on the possibility of hiring of an international Procurement Expert to reduce the challenge encountered by projects. However, there is no guaranty that an international procurement expert will be hired before project closure.
12. The eighth recommendation is partially accepted. The recommendation will however, be considered in line with the FAO's financial reporting system and procedures in FPMIS.
13. The ninth recommendation is partially accepted. The funds for the support of the enterprises were lumped under the contract budget line, which is enough to provide material support for all the enterprise groups. However, FAO will further look at this budget line to reconfirm that the funds needed for procurement of materials to all the forest enterprise groups are enough.
14. The tenth recommendation and its subsequent sub-recommendations are all accepted.
 - On the development by FAO-Gambia of more streamlined and efficient processes for disbursement of funds to Implementing Partners (IPs) and procurement, both of which have the potential to greatly improve project delivery, PCU in collaboration with Finance / Operations will continue to improve on the ongoing efforts to enhance disbursement of funds to IPs and on procurement through proper planning and communication
 - Likewise, on FAO Gambia establish procedures to ensure that persons trained by the project in constructing equipment to facilitate dryland forest management (e.g. beehives, clay ovens, tree guards) are considered as possible suppliers / contractors for providing such materials for use by the project, FAO has planned to engage the newly formed forest enterprise groups to construct their own beehives this year (2020) on a cash-for-work basis. The project will provide them with all the materials needed for the construction of the hives and they will be given cash incentives for the construction
15. The eleventh recommendation is accepted.
 - Regarding tracking the contributions (in terms of labour that constitutes in-kind co-financing) of the participating communities, PCU agrees with the recommendation and will take up the matter with DoF and the other implementing partners as well as the participating communities for its consideration.
 - As per the clarification by the project's Finance / Operations Officer about the correct co-financing figures for each project partner (as the figures used in the PIRs and in various

places in the approved project documents are not consistent), FAO will look into the matter and to try and harmonize the co-financing figures accordingly.

16. The twelfth recommendation is accepted. Infact the PSC has already agreed during its first meeting in 2020 that the PSC should now meet three times per year.
17. The thirteenth recommendation is accepted. As per the recommendation, the PCU with support from the PSC will continue to engage relevant national agencies such as the Ministry of Agriculture and its Department of Livestock Services (DLS) as well as the Ministries of Lands and Rural Administration and that of Energy for their increase participation in the implementation of the project.
18. The fourteenth recommendation is accepted. As recommended: - Knowledge management and visibility will become one of the key priorities for the PCU and the FAO communications unit for the rest of the project period. Hence, PCU will work with the FAO Communications Unit to recruit a communications officer who will lead project activities for knowledge management and communications as per the recommendation. PCU with support of the FAO communications Unit will extend its strategic engagements to the communications unit of the National Environment Agency (NEA) for collaboration and partnership.
19. The fifteenth recommendation is accepted. On the area of monitoring, the project has been working with FAO M&E team in the past. This collaboration will be taken further by supporting the M&E team to strengthen the project monitoring system (finalize the draft M&E plan) and making sure that the plan includes “timing triggers” on project activities in order to accelerate the pace of dissemination and adoption of good practices.
20. The sixteenth recommendation contains two sub-recommendations one of which is accepted, and one partially accepted.
 - Management agrees that each of the forums / committees supported by the project has at least one female and one youth member who is responsible for presenting the concerns of women and young people. Infact, all the forums and committees supported by the project already have female and youth members who represent female and youth interests in these structures. The PCU in collaboration the IPs will continue to advocate for this and to insist on female and youth representation in all the forums and committees supported by the project.
 - As per the sub-recommendation that under Output 2.2.4: At least 50% of those who directly participate in and receive income from one or more of the forest enterprises supported by the project are women, the matter will be further explored with the participating communities based on what is agreed in their Enterprise Development Plans (EDPs).

21. Conclusion

Management is committed to use this MTR as an important management tool. All the recommendations are encouraging and if implemented could enhance project delivery and the ultimate achievement of the

project objectives. Hence, every effort will be made to further enhance project delivery to meet project's set goals and objectives.

Table 1: Management response matrix

Management response to the (Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Community-based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management project)					Date 10 May 2020
Evaluation recommendation (a)	Management response (b) Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection (c)	Responsible unit (d)	Timeframe (e)	Further funding required (Y or N) (f)
Recommendation 1: Improve coordination with other on-going and relevant projects.					
Improve coordination with other on-going and relevant projects. The PCU team and FAOGM should jointly identify areas of commonality and/or overlap between the CBSDFM project and the AACC project, as well as the GCF EBA project, and then explore opportunities to coordinate strategies, activities and/or funding among the three projects. They should also seek to engage the CPCU within MECCNAR, which can facilitate coordination and inter-project harmonization.	Accepted	The PCU will strengthen its dialogue with the AACC and the EbA projects as well as the CPCU of MECCNAR to enhance collaboration and partnership. In particular on: Forest Enterprise Development, Value addition, nursery management, forest fire management and rangeland management respectively.	PCU, CPCU of MECCNAR	2020 - 2021	No
Recommendation 2: The PCU team should revise some project activities, indicators and targets and present them to the PSC for approval at its next meeting.					
:-The project team should clarify the project's progress to date on the legal / management status of community forests, and it should develop a template that clearly tracks the location and size (in ha.) of	Accepted	The PCU through the Department of Forestry will update the implementation status of all the CFs and JFPs targeted by the project in line with recommendation.	PCU, DoF	December 2020	No

targeted community forests; their status at project start and mid-term (in terms of whether they have not been identified, are at start-up stage, are at PCMFA stage, or are at CFMA stage, and including the status of different steps such as mapping, demarcation, signed agreements, developed management plans, management plans under implementation, etc.					
:- In addition, the existing project indicators and targets related to the total area of dryland forest sustainably managed by local communities under Outcome 2.2, and for the area of increased forest cover (through tree planting / assisted natural regeneration / agroforestry) under Output 2.2.2, are confusing, and their inter-relationship needs to be clarified. For the areas of increased forest cover, additional clarity is needed of the project's targets for tree planting, assisted natural regeneration, and agroforestry planting and how they may inter-relate spatially.	Accepted	PCU and M&E will attempt to clarify the confusion on the inter-relationship between the existing project indicators and targets under Outcome 2.2 and Output 2.2.2 and present them to a PSC meeting for endorsement.	PCU, M&E	September, 2020	No
: - In addition, as recommended by the PSC, the project team should clarify if it intends to reallocate funds or otherwise focus more attention and	Partially accepted	As the restoration targets are clear (100 ha for enrichment planting and 500 ha for agroforestry), the project will continue to pursue these objectives while continuing	PCU, DoF	2020 - 2021	No

resources on fire management instead of forest restoration, as they may be more likely to maximize forest cover and health in the targeted regions. If the project proposes to make such a change, it should present a revised workplan, budget and general strategy for how it will do so to the PSC.		on bushfire management awareness campaigns and promotion of the Fire Award Scheme.			
Recommendation 3: The PCU team should also develop an overall workplan for the remainder of the project (including any project extension period).					
The PCU team should also develop an overall workplan for the remainder of the project (including any project extension period).	Accepted	The PCU will ensure that an overall work plan for the remainder of the project (including any project extension period) is developed.	PCU, Admin and Operations	End of 2020	
Recommendation 4: FAO, DoF, the Project Coordinator, and the Project Steering Committee should clarify and agree on the process and steps for proposing and approving changes to project activities in a coherent and timely manner.					
:- Building the capacity of the Fire and Rescue Service to participate in forest fire prevention / management)	Accepted	Recommendation 4 is well noted. PC and PSC will consider this in its next meeting. About the sub-recommendation, this activity is already captured under component 1, Outcome 1.1 and Output 1.1.1 of the project whose implementation had started and will be pursued.	PC, PSC PCU, DoF	September, 2020	No
: - Carrying out an assessment of alternative fuel options to charcoal the 2018 Forest Act prohibits charcoal production anywhere in the country	Accepted	Recruitment of a consultant is currently ongoing for a charcoal value chain assessment	PCU	July, 2020	No
: - Supporting farmer to farmer exchange visits among the communities targeted by the	Accepted	PCU will work closely with the IPs to identify potential sites to visit and famers to be involved.	PCU & IPs	January, 2021	No

project to share lessons learned / best practices					
: - Coordinating with FAO to create a TCP to support a new 10-year National Forest Assessment that would allow the project to measure whether it is increasing forest cover, which among other things would allow them to measure whether the dryland forest project is actually contributing to an increase in forest cover (this would require the DoF to a) ensure they have support from national stakeholders; and then b) submit a formal letter to the FAO sub-regional forestry officer in Dakar)	Rejected	This is not part of the mandates of the project, hence the decision will be left entirely with the Department of Forestry and FAO			Yes
Recommendation 5: The project should be granted a 12 month No Cost Extension in order to achieve most of its primary goals and objectives.					
: - The project should be granted a 12 month No Cost Extension in order to achieve most of its primary goals and objectives	Accepted	FAOGM will liaise with the GEF-Coordination Unit at HQ on the modalities for a No Cost Extension	FAOGM, PCU	2020	No
: - As part of the process to get the extension, FAO Gambia should ensure that the project will have sufficient Project Management Cost (PMC) funds to cover the additional year; should confirm that project partners (especially the IPs) and target communities will be willing to continue for an additional year; and should assess whether additional co-financing needs to be secured.	Accepted	All the IPs have already expressed willingness to continue in case of an extension FAO will now assess the remaining funds to ensure that that the project will have sufficient PMC to cover the additional year	IPs FAO Finance/Operations	February, 2020 December, 2020	No

: - The project team should also initiate discussions with the Project Steering Committee members to gauge their support for an extension (the PSC will eventually have to formally approve any project extension, as will FAO HQ)	Accepted	The PSC already had a meeting and has unanimously agreed for a one-year no-cost extension of the project	PSC	Februray 2020	No
Recommendation 6: The project team, in partnership with the IPs and stakeholder groups such as the Regional SLM Forums, should produce in the next 12 months a project exit strategy.					
: - The project team, in partnership with the IPs and stakeholder groups such as the Regional SLM Forums should produce in the next 12 months a project exit strategy. The exit strategy should include plans for the sustainability and replication of key project outcomes; identify training, equipment, infrastructure, and other inputs that need to be provided during the second half of project implementation; and propose specific ideas for the transfer of roles and responsibilities from the project team and FAO CO to relevant partners.	Accepted	Based on the recommendation, a stakeholders meeting including representatives of all the Implementing Partners will be organized to develop an exit strategy that will help scale up project results and ensure sustainability of these results.	PCU & IPs	December, 2020	
Recommendation 7: FAOGM should improve its capacity to manage procurement and contracting through the hiring or appointment of a Procurement Expert to support the CBSDFM and other projects.					
FAOGM should improve its capacity to manage procurement and contracting through the hiring or appointment of a Procurement Expert to	Partially Accepted	As per the recommendation, FAO will continue to discuss with project managers and RAF on the possibility of hiring of Procurement Expert to reduce the challenge encountered by projects. However, there is no	FAO, PCs	2020	No

support the CBSDFM and other projects.		guaranty that an international procurement expert would be hired before project closure.			
Recommendation 8: FAOGM and the PCU need to improve the tracking of project spending and use that information to improve project delivery					
The project's Finance /Operations Officer should develop and use improved templates to track spending and facilitate budget planning, including a budget template that shows, for each FAO budget line, the original budget vs. revised budget vs. actual spending to date, along with explanations for variances, so that the project coordinator, PMC and FAO understand where significant changes in spending have taken place and why they are justified. This will also allow the project coordinator to better assess the amount of funds remaining for specific project outputs.	Partially Accepted	To be considered in line with the FAO's financial reporting system and procedures in IFMIS.	Finance/Operations officer	2020	No
Recommendation 9: The Project Coordinator should strengthen budget planning to facilitate the allocation of funds to priority activities for the remainder of the project					
At present, project stakeholders wish to allocate additional funds to certain activities (e.g. materials and equipment to support implementation of Enterprise Development Plans), but there is little clarity as to whether project funds are available for these activities. The project coordinator needs to undertake a process to estimate the costs of such	Partially accepted	The funds for the support of the enterprises were lumped under the contract budget line, which is enough to provide material support for all the enterprise groups. However, the budget line will be revisited to reconfirm that the funds needed for procurement of materials to the forest enterprise groups are enough.	PCU, Finance/opérations	2020	No

activities, assess how much project budget might be available, and based on that, come up with a target # of communities / persons that can be supported.					
Recommendation 10: FAOGM needs to take the lead in improving project financial management processes.					
: - FAO Gambia should develop more streamlined and efficient processes for disbursement of funds to Implementing Partners (IPs) and procurement, both of which have the potential to greatly improve project delivery	Accepted	Finance/Operations will continue to improve on the ongoing efforts to enhance disbursement of funds to IPs and on procurement through proper planning and communication.	Admin/opérations, PCU	2020 - 2021	No.
: - FAO Gambia should also establish procedures to ensure that persons trained by the project in constructing equipment to facilitate dryland forest management (e.g. beehives, clay ovens, tree guards) are considered as possible suppliers / contractors for providing such materials for use by the project. For disbursement of funds to IPs, FAO Gambia should work to strengthen communication among project implementing partners in order to avoid delays between the end of one LOA and the beginning of another.	Accepted	There are plans to engage newly formed forest enterprise groups to construct their own beehives this year (2020) on a cash-for-work basis. The project will provide them with all the materials needed for the construction of the hives and they will be given cash incentives for the construction.	FAO	2020	No
Recommendation 11: The project should begin to track the contributions (in terms of labour that constitutes in-kind co-financing) of the participating communities.					
: - The project should begin to track the contributions (in terms of labour that constitutes in-	Accepted	The matter will be taken up with DoF and the other Implementing Partners as well as the	PCU, IPs, CFCs and JFPM Committees	2020 - 2021	No

kind co-financing) of the participating communities.		participating communities for consideration			
: - The project's Finance / Operations Officer should also clarify the correct co-financing figures for each project partner (the figures used in the PIRs and in various places in the approved project documents are not consistent).	Accepted	The Finance and Operations Officer will work with the PCU to try and harmonize the co-financing figures as recommended.	Finance and Operations, PCU	2020	No
Recommendation 12: The Project Steering Committee should meet at least twice / year for the remainder of the project.					
: - The Project Steering Committee should meet at least twice / year for the remainder of the project.	Accepted	The PSC has already agreed during its first meeting in 2020 that the PSC will now meet three times per year.	PCU, MECCNAR	2020	No
Recommendation 13: The project team, with support from the Project Steering Committee, should work to increase the participation of relevant national agencies in the project's implementation, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), the Ministry of Energy (MoE), and the Ministry of Lands and Rural Administration (MoLRA)					
The project team, with support from the Project Steering Committee, should work to increase the participation of relevant national agencies in the project's implementation, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), the Ministry of Energy (MoE), and the Ministry of Lands and Rural Administration (MoLRA)	Accepted	The PCU with support from the PSC will continue to engage relevant national agencies such as the Ministry of Agriculture and its Department of Livestock Services (DLS) as well as the Ministries of Lands and Rural Administration and that of Energy for their increased participation in the implementation of the project.	PCU, PSC	2020 - 2021	No
Recommendation 14: FAOGM should quickly contract a short-term expert to design and lead project activities for Knowledge Management and Communications.					
: - In addition and at the same time, they should assess other opportunities to improve project delivery in this area, including 1) considering the	Accepted	Knowledge management and visibility will become one of the key priorities for the PCU for the rest of the project period. Hence, PCU will work with the FAO	PCU, Communications Unit	2020 - 2021	No

possibility of hiring a project communications officer, which could be the contracted short-term expert (this decision should be based in part on how effective this has been for the communications officer for the AACC project)		Communications Unit to recruit a communications officer who will lead project activities for knowledge management and communications as per the recommendation.			
: - Make better use of FAO Gambia's existing communications team	Accepted	The PCU has started engaging the FAO communication team on project visibility such as News Magazine, Press Releases etc. This will be pursued and strengthened. PCU with support of the FAO communications Unit will extend its strategic engagements to the communications unit of the National Environment Agency (NEA) for collaboration and partnership.	PCU, FAO Communications Unit	2020 - 2021	No
Recommendation 15: FAOGM should support the recently hired Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (shared with the AACC project) to ensure the rapid development of the project M&E plan.					

FAOGM should support the recently hired Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (shared with the AACC project) to ensure the rapid development of the project M&E plan. Among other priorities, the M&E plan should include a template or mechanism that includes "timing triggers" to show when key activities are falling behind (including for example, when the project or its partners fail to distribute equipment such as motorcycles and firefighting materials in a timely manner).	Accepted	On the area of monitoring, the project has been working with the FAO M&E team in the past. This collaboration will be taken further by supporting the M&E team to strengthen the project monitoring system (finalize the draft M&E plan) and making sure that the plan includes "timing triggers" on project activities in order to accelerate the pace of dissemination and adoption of good practices.	FAOGM, PCU, M&E team	2020 - 2021	No.
Recommendation 16: The project should add one or both of the following gender-disaggregated indicators to the project's Results Framework:					
: - Under the Project Objective: Each of the forums / committees supported by the project has at least one female and one youth member who is responsible for presenting the concerns of women and young people	Accepted	All the forums and committees supported by the project already have female and youth members who represent female and youth interests in these structures. However, the PCU will continue to advocate for this and to insist on female and youth representation in all the forums and committees supported by the project as recommended.	PCU, IPs	2020 - 2021	No
: - Under Output 2.2.4: At least 50% of those who directly participate in and receive income from one or more of the forest enterprises supported by the project are women	Partially Accepted	This matter will be further explored with the participating communities based on the Enterprise Development Plans (EDPs).	PCU, CFCs, JFPM Committees, IPs	2020 - 2021	No