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Mid-Term Review of the UNEP/GEF Project

Transforming agricultural systems and strengthening local economies in high biodiversity areas of India through sustainable landscape management and public-private finance

GEF Project ID: 10204 UNEP SMA ID: 95093

2022 – 2028



**UNEP Ecosystems Division / Biodiversity and Land Branch /
GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit**

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This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Mid-Term Review, which is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's mid-point. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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Transforming agricultural systems and strengthening local economies in high biodiversity areas of India through sustainable landscape management and public-private finance
UNEP SMA ID: 95093

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The reviewer would like to thank the project team, and in particular Dr. Madhuri Nada, for their contribution and collaboration throughout the review process. Sincere appreciation is also expressed to the Project Steering Committee who took time to provide comments to the draft report. The reviewer is also grateful for the contributions and feedback provided by the UNEP Task Manager (Kavita Sharma and Allyson Tinney Rivera) and Fund Management Officer (Ruth Irungu and Arshad Hussain).

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalization of the project, formulation of a next phase and continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT'S BIOGRAPHY

Elinor Bajraktari is an experienced public policy professional with over 20 years of diverse international experience. He has an extensive background in program management and evaluations, impact studies, policy assessments, program design and formulation, results-based management, data analysis, and reporting. His experience spans over 50 countries in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and North America. He has worked for several governments and international organizations like UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF, UNDESA, UNCDF, etc. The consultant holds a master's degree in public administration in International Development from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English

Review Type: Mid-Term Review

Brief Description: This report is a Mid-Term Review of the UNEP project: "Transforming Agricultural Systems and Strengthening Local Economies in High Biodiversity Areas of India through Sustainable Landscape Management and Public-Private Finance" (The Sabal Project), implemented between January 2022 and June 2028. The project's overall goal was to reduce land degradation and conserve biodiversity in agricultural landscapes in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by promoting sustainable agricultural production, supply chains and public-private finance across India's Eastern and Western Ghats biodiversity hotspots. The project applies two parallel sustainable agriculture approaches: Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) in Andhra Pradesh and Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard (RASAS) in Karnataka, while introducing innovative landscape governance mechanisms through Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies. With USD 3.08 million in GEF funding, the project targets over 765,000 farmers across 1 million hectares. The review sought to assess project performance to-date and to provide formative insights to support the remainder of the project's implementation, evaluating progress against seven criteria and identifying corrective actions needed to achieve intended outcomes and long-term sustainability.

Key words: Sustainable agriculture, landscape management, biodiversity conservation, land degradation neutrality, community natural farming, Rainforest Alliance certification, multi-stakeholder governance, agroecology, India, Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats, gender equality, private sector engagement, blended finance.

Primary data collection period: June 2025

Field mission: Site visits covered 8 of 10 project micro-landscapes across Andhra Pradesh (D. Gonduru, M. Nittaputtu, Pinakota) and Karnataka (Titimathi, Suntikoppa, Maldare, Aravathoklu, Gonikoppa).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

II. THE PROJECT 5

A. Context 5
B. Summary of Project Design Strengths and Weaknesses 6
C. Results Framework 7
D. Project Implementation Structure and Partners 9
E. Stakeholders 11
F. Changes in Design during Implementation 11
G. Project Financing 12

III. REVIEW METHODS 15

A. Data Collection 15
a. Data Analysis 17
b. Limitations and Mitigation Strategies 17
c. Ethical Considerations 17

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW 18

V. REVIEW FINDINGS 2

A. Strategic Relevance 2
a. Effectiveness 4
b. Financial Management 14
c. Efficiency 16
d. Monitoring and Reporting 17
e. Exit Strategy & Sustainability 19
f. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues 21

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 26

A. Conclusions 26
a. Lessons Learned 29
b. Recommendations 29

ANNEX I. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW 33

ANNEX II. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED 41

ANNEX III. REVIEW ITINERARY 43

ANNEX IV. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS 46

ANNEX V. PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATON STRUCTURE 47

ANNEX VI. PROPOSED CHANGES TO RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND TOC 50

ANNEX VII. SAFEGUARDS ASSESSMENT TOOL 55

ANNEX VIII. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER 61

ANNEX IX. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (FOR GEF FUNDED PROJECTS) 63

ANNEX X. GEF RISKS TO ACHIEVING PROJECT OUTCOMES (FOR GEF FUNDED PROJECTS) 74

ANNEX XI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS 76

ANNEX XII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT 80

ANNEX XIII. PICTURES FROM THE PROJECT 81

ANNEX XIV. PROJECT SITES AND LOCATIONS OF MTR VISITS 83

ANNEX XV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW 84

List of Tables

TABLE 1: GEF PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE 2
TABLE 2: SUMMARY PROJECT RATINGS 2
TABLE 3: SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 4
TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF PROJECT'S LATEST APPROVED RESULTS FRAMEWORK 8
TABLE 5: BUDGET EXECUTION BY COMPONENT (RAINFOREST ALLIANCE [RA] COMPONENT) 12
TABLE 6: CO-FINANCING TABLE 14
TABLE 7: REVIEW RESPONDENTS AND FIELD VISITS 16
TABLE 8: JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION OF RESULTS STATEMENTS 19
TABLE 9: JUSTIFICATION FOR REFORMULATION / EXPANSION OF DRIVERS AND ASSUMPTIONS 20
TABLE 10: PROGRESS TOWARDS PROJECT OUTCOMES 7
TABLE 11: LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT 12
TABLE 12: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 14
TABLE 13: PROJECT PERFORMANCE RATINGS 27
TABLE 15: PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW 33

List of Figures

FIGURE 1: PROJECT'S ORGANIGRAM AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS 10
FIGURE 2: FPO MEETING IN ANDHRA PRADESH DURING THE MTR 82

LIST OF ACRONYMS

APCNF – Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming
BAIF – BAIF Development Research Foundation
CNF – Community Natural Farming
CRP – Community Resource Person
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
DWMA – District Water Management Agency
FCRA – Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (India)
FES – Foundation for Ecological Security
FPO – Farmer Producer Organization
GEF – Global Environment Facility
HCVF – High Conservation Value Forest
HS – Highly Satisfactory (rating)
L – Likely (rating)
LDN – Land Degradation Neutrality
MEL – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIS – Management Information System
ML – Moderately Likely (rating)
MoAFW – Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (India)
MoEFCC – Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (India)
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
MS – Moderately Satisfactory (rating)
MSLMB – Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Body
MTR – Mid Term Review
MU – Moderately Unlikely (rating)
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
PCA – Project Cooperation Agreement
PIR – Project Implementation Report
PMP – Project Management Platform
PMU – Project Management Unit
PoW – Programme of Work
PxD – Precision Development (digital agriculture advisory service)
RA-SAS – Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard
RySS – Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (State agency for APCNF, Andhra Pradesh)
SABAL – Strengthening Agriculture Biodiversity in All Landscapes
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
SERP – Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (Andhra Pradesh)
SHG – Self-Help Group
SLM – Sustainable Land Management
SLMP – Sustainable Landscape Management Plan
TCC – Technical Coordination Committee
ToC – Theory of Change
U – Unsatisfactory (rating)
UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme
URVI – Unified Real-time Validation Interface (RySS MIS platform)
WASSAN – Watershed Support Services and Activities Network

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1: GEF Project Identification Table

<table>
<tr><td>GEF Project ID/SMA ID[1]:</td><td colspan="3">10204 / 95093</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Type of GEF Project:</td><td>Child: N</td><td>Global Coordinating Project:</td><td>N</td></tr>
<tr><td>If yes, provide GEF Programme[2] ID:</td><td>Medium-Size Project or Full-Size Project:</td><td>FSP</td></tr>
<tr><td>UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):</td><td>Ecosystems Division / Biodiversity and Land Branch / GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit</td><td>Executing Agency: (indicate if internally executed):</td><td>Rainforest Alliance Inc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sources of Funding (Co-finance):</td><td colspan="2">Country[3](ies):
India</td><td>Institution[4] Name/Type: Project executing organizations are: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare (MoAFW) - Central Government - national nodal agency); Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) - Central Government; State government of Andhra Pradesh; State government of Karnataka; Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) - Government-affiliated Implementing Entity; Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) – CSO; Watershed Support Services; Humane Society International – CSO / Executing Agency; BAIF Development Research Foundation - CSO; Precision Development - CSO; and Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) – CSO / technical Partner.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Relevant SDG(s):</td><td colspan="3">Link to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
• Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
• Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
Link to relevant SDG Targets:
• 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
• 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">• 15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world
• 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts</td></tr>
<tr><td>MTS (at approval):</td><td colspan="3">UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2022-2025</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Programme of Work (POW) Direct Outcome(s) number/reference[5] (applicable for projects approved from 2022):

OR

POW Output(s) number/reference[5] (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)</td><td>POW Direct Outcome:

2.10: Sustainable value chains are adopted, product comparability is enhanced and circularity is maximized.

2.12: Food systems Support biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

Indicators:

Nature: (iii) Number of countries and national, regional and subnational authorities and entities that incorporate, with UNEP support, biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches into development and sectoral plans, policies and processes for the sustainable management and/or restoration of terrestrial, freshwater and marine areas
Nature: (iv) Increase in territory of land- and seascapes that is under improved ecosystem conservation and restoration</td><td rowspan="2">MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference[5] (applicable for projects approved from 2022):

OR

POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference[5] (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):</td><td>MTS 2025 Outcome:
2A: An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established.

2B: Sustainable management of nature is adopted and implemented in development frameworks.</td></tr>
<tr><td>POW Output:</td><td>POW Expected Accomplishment: Nature: iii Enhanced ecosystem stability; iv Integration of sustainable management of biodiversity, land,</td></tr>
</table>

			water, and ocean in cross-sectoral decision-making frameworks
Sub-programme:	Nature action subprogramme	Programme Coordination Project (if relevant):	*Mainstreaming Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Across Sectors and Systems*
UNEP approval date:	22 April 2022	GEF approval date:	28 May 2021
GEF Operational Programme/Cycle # (e.g. GEF-7):	GEF-7	GEF Strategic Priority (e.g. BD4):	LD 1-1, LD 1-4, BD 1-1
Focal Area(s):	Multi-focal Areas (BD/LD)		
Expected start date[6]:	28 May 2021	Actual start date:[7]	9 May 2022
Planned completion date[6]:	31 March 2027	Actual operational completion date:	N/A
Planned project budget at approval:	GEF grant allocation: USD 6,266,883		
	Expected co-financing: *Cash: USD 67,000,000* *In-kind: USD 1,590,000*		
	Total planned budget: *USD 74,856,883*		
Actual expenditures reported (cash only):	GEF grant expenditures reported as of *30 June 2025: USD 1,945,360*		
	Actual co-financing as of June 2025: USD 41,220,918		
	Total actual expenditures reported as of of 30 June 2025: ***USD 43,166,278***		
No. of formal project revisions:	N/A	Date of last approved project revision:	N/A
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	5: 24-08-2021 06-07-2022 09-06-2023 18-03-2024 20-11-2024	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	20 November 2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation[8] *(required or not required):*	UNEP requirement: Y GEF requirement: Y	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation actual date:	N/A
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	30 September 2027	Terminal Evaluation actual date:	N/A
Coverage - Country(ies):	India	Coverage - Region(s):	Asia Pacific
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

1. The Sabal Project — "Transforming Agricultural Systems and Strengthening Local Economies in High Biodiversity Areas of India through Sustainable Landscape Management and Public-Private Finance" — operates in the Eastern and Western Ghats with GEF financing of USD 6.27 million (2022–2027). Implemented by UNEP and IUCN as co-implementing agencies and executed by Rainforest Alliance and Foundation for Ecological Security, the project addresses the environmental and socio-economic pressures caused by decades of unsustainable intensification that have replaced traditional, diverse farming systems with chemical-dependent monocultures. Its goal is to reduce land degradation and conserve biodiversity in the agricultural landscapes of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by promoting sustainable production systems, supply chains, and public–private finance.

This Review

2. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) assesses the project's progress toward intended outcomes, identifies implementation challenges, and recommends corrective measures. Conducted at the project's midpoint, it evaluates performance against seven review criteria using a six-point rating scale. The MTR employed field visits in eight micro-landscapes, interviews with 261 stakeholders, focus group discussions, and document reviews. Findings were analysed through triangulated evidence and a reconstructed Theory of Change to assess causal pathways and test assumptions driving the transition from outputs to outcomes and impact.

Key Findings

3. The project has made strong advances in farmer capacity building and agroecological transformation, with 449,090 farmers adopting sustainable practices across 395,510 hectares—surpassing the mid-term target of 375,000. This progress is driven by integration with Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) and Andhra Pradesh's Community Natural Farming (APCNF) programme, the world's largest agroecology initiative. Gender integration is a notable success: women represent over 96% of participating farmers, and more than 15,000 women Community Resource Persons lead field-level extension. A functional MEL system is in place, cost–benefit analyses show positive returns for half of participating farmers, and knowledge outputs already exceed end-of-project targets. Conservation gains include 3,100 hectares of High Conservation Value Forest under protection and participatory land-use planning initiated across multiple micro-landscapes.

4. Institutional and market components lag significantly, threatening long-term sustainability. Only one of eight planned Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies (MSLMBs) is operational, delaying governance structures and Sustainable Landscape Management Plans. Design-stage gaps and lengthy government approvals have constrained progress. Private-sector engagement remains limited, with no sourcing contracts, no investment proposals, and only USD 54,240 mobilized against a USD 1 million mid-term finance target. Market linkages are weak, and Farmer Producer Organizations report no sales growth or responsible-sourcing commitments. Implementation disparities persist—Andhra Pradesh shows stronger institutional convergence than Karnataka, where state buy-in is limited. Financial sustainability is uncertain due to weak integration with public schemes (e.g., MGNREGS) and state budgets. While safeguards are applied, grievance systems and inclusion of vulnerable groups beyond women need reinforcement. Without timely corrective action, these

institutional and market gaps risk compressing critical deliverables into the final phase and limiting post-2028 sustainability.

5. Overall Project Performance Rating: Moderately Satisfactory (MS). The project has built a solid foundation through farmer adoption and technical capacity, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, but sustained transformation depends on accelerating institutional formation, securing private sector commitments, and establishing financing mechanisms for the post-project period. The likelihood of achieving long-term impact is assessed as Moderately Likely, contingent upon addressing institutional gaps and market engagement constraints in the remaining project period.

Table 2: Summary project ratings

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	S
Effectiveness	MS
Financial Management	S
Efficiency	MS
Monitoring and Reporting	MS
Sustainability	ML
Factors Affecting Performance	MS
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-point	**MS**

Conclusions

6. The project's overall performance is rated Moderately Satisfactory. It has made tangible progress toward its objectives, notably in farmer capacity building and agricultural transformation, with 449,090 farmers adopting sustainable practices across 395,510 hectares in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Strong partnerships with Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) and integration with Andhra Pradesh's Community Natural Farming (APCNF) programme have anchored large-scale agroecological adoption. Gender integration is exemplary, with women constituting over 96% of participating farmers, supported by a functional Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system and visible conservation gains, including protection of over 3,100 hectares of High Conservation Value Forest.

7. The project's strengths lie in training delivery, gender-responsive implementation, and knowledge dissemination, which has already surpassed end-of-project targets. However, institutional formation and market components remain weak. Only one of eight Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies (MSLMBs) has been established, private-sector engagement and blended finance mobilization (USD 54,240 vs. USD 1 million target) are limited, and Karnataka lags behind Andhra Pradesh in institutional convergence. Safeguard documentation and inclusion of vulnerable groups beyond women also require strengthening.

8. With regards to the key strategic questions presented in the MTR's TORs, the review concluded the following:

    - Evidence of contribution to sustainable production, supply chains, and public-private finance is strongest on-farm and nascent downstream, while one evidence-based policy proposal has been delivered to align incentives. Supply-chain and finance signals remain preliminary.

- Evidence of increased capacity and awareness is substantive and system-wide, with women comprising 96% of adopters of agri-tech. Overall, the project has contributed to raising stakeholder understanding of sustainable production, value-chain requirements, and financing options in both states.

Lessons Learned

9. Lesson 1: Embedding interventions within existing government programmes from the outset enhances sustainability and scale. Integration with Andhra Pradesh's APCNF programme secured political support, institutional ownership, and resource convergence, while slower progress in Karnataka highlights the need for early institutional anchoring.
10. Lesson 2: Early establishment and legal endorsement of governance structures are vital for sustained landscape outcomes. Delayed formation of MSLMBs has constrained coordination and resource mobilization, underscoring the importance of timely institutionalization and policy backing.
11. Lesson 3: Gender progress at the farm level must translate into governance and market systems. High women participation has not yet resulted in equitable representation or structural inclusion, risking that gender progress remains programmatic rather than institutionalized.

Recommendations

12. Recommendation 1**:** *Clarify institutional structures* - Define and formalize the "landscape" concept in both states, accelerate the institutionalization of Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies (MSLMBs) within recognized governance systems, and build their capacity for landscape planning, resource management, and cross-sector coordination.
13. Recommendation 2. *Strengthen private sector engagement* - Develop a structured roadmap linking Farmer Producer Organizations and micro-landscapes to concrete sourcing and investment opportunities. This should include targeted buyer roundtables, piloting of alternative certification schemes, and design of blended finance instruments with financial intermediaries.
14. Recommendation 3. *Develop a sustainability financing roadmap* - Establish a comprehensive financing strategy that embeds project approaches into state and district budgets, sets up revolving funds for community-based organizations, leverages convergence with public schemes such as MGNREGS and Forest Department programmes, and mobilizes blended finance through partnerships with financial institutions and CSR initiatives.
15. Recommendation 4. *Strengthen national ownership and institutional engagement* - Enhance collaboration with state and federal institutions to secure policy convergence and ownership. In Karnataka, strengthen partnerships with line departments to operationalize MSLMBs and integrate Sustainable Landscape Management Plans. At the federal level, engage systematically with MoEFCC and MoAFW to embed project learnings and policy recommendations into national frameworks on land degradation neutrality, agroecology, and biodiversity conservation.
16. Recommendation 5. *Develop an exit strategy* - Prepare a time-bound exit strategy detailing institutional commitments, public scheme convergence, and financing pathways for key interventions. The strategy should outline how MSLMBs will be sustained through formal mandates and budgets, and how project approaches and

revolving funds will be embedded in state and district planning processes beyond GEF funding.

17. Recommendation 6. *Strengthen financial management and safeguards* - Adopt an integrated annual financial plan with projected expenditures per component, establish interoperable data systems linking the Project Management Platform with partner MIS, and integrate predictive analytics within the MEL framework to identify underperformance early. Reinforce social safeguards by introducing formal grievance mechanisms, risk monitoring for Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities, and disaggregated indicators to track inclusion beyond gender.

Table 3: Summary Recommendation Implementation Plan

Rec Number	Approved (Yes/No/ Partially)	Responsible Officer/Unit	Mechanism for Implementation
1	Pending	Rainforest Alliance, State Departments of Agriculture/Rural Development/Environment, UNEP, National Executing Agencies	Formalize landscape concept and spatial demarcation; accelerate MSLMB formation through embedding in existing governance structures; provide capacity-building for landscape-level planning and coordination
2	Pending	Rainforest Alliance (market systems lead), BAIF (Karnataka), RySS (Andhra Pradesh), Coffee Board	Develop structured roadmap linking Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) to sourcing commitments; organize targeted buyer roundtables; pilot alternative certification schemes; design blended finance instruments with financial intermediaries
3	Pending	Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, State Governments, Financial Institutions	Embed project approaches in state/district budgets; establish revolving funds for community organizations; operationalize convergence with MGNREGS and Forest Department programmes; leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnerships
4	Pending	Rainforest Alliance, RySS, Foundation for Ecological Security, BAIF, UNEP, Federal Line Departments	Build formal partnerships with state line departments in Karnataka; systematic engagement with MoEFCC and MoAFW; establish interdepartmental coordination mechanisms and documented commitments
5	Pending	Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, State Governments, Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change	Develop time-bound strategy integrating institutional commitments; establish convergence mechanisms with public schemes; create dedicated financing pathways and resource mobilization plan
6	Pending	Rainforest Alliance, BAIF, RySS, UNEP	Establish integrated annualized financial planning; develop interoperable data management protocol; integrate predictive analytics and milestone alerts; establish formal grievance mechanisms and disaggregated social inclusion indicators

II. THE PROJECT

A. Context

Intervention context

18. The Sabal Project – "Transforming Agricultural Systems and Strengthening Local Economies in High Biodiversity Areas of India through Sustainable Landscape Management and Public-Private Finance" – takes its name from the Hindi word "Sabal", meaning strong or empowered, reflecting its aim to build resilient farming systems and communities while conserving biodiversity. It was designed to address the challenges of environmental degradation and socio-economic vulnerability in India's Eastern and Western Ghats (shown in Annex XIV of this report), the country's most ecologically valuable agricultural landscapes.[9]

19. These biodiversity hotspots, home to endemic flora and fauna, face major threats from decades of unsustainable agricultural intensification that has replaced traditional diverse cropping systems with chemical-dependent monocultures. The crisis stems from institutional fragmentation, combined with limited access to climate-resilient technologies and weak local-level governance. This systemic breakdown has left smallholder farmers, who are the majority of agricultural producers in these states, increasingly vulnerable to climate variability, while at the same time driving the destruction of critical ecosystems.[10] [11]

20. The consequences are severe and interconnected. They create a vicious cycle of environmental and human challenges. Environmentally, continued soil erosion and fertility loss are degrading productive capacity, while deforestation and habitat fragmentation threaten endemic species and disrupt essential ecosystem services like water regulation and carbon sequestration.[12] For rural communities, these environmental changes translate into declining agricultural productivity, increased production costs, and heightened climate vulnerability, with economic stress further exacerbated by COVID-19 aftereffects, inflation, and labor scarcity.[13] Marginalized groups, particularly women, tribal communities, and landless farmers, face disproportionate impacts, while having minimal voice in solutions, perpetuating cycles of poverty and environmental degradation that threaten both the long-term sustainability of these globally significant landscapes and the well-being of millions of rural inhabitants dependent on them for their livelihoods.[14]

21. The Sabal project covers two distinct landscapes - the Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh (3.7 million ha) and the Western Ghats in Karnataka (0.9 million ha). It applies two parallel sustainable agriculture approaches: Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) led by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) in Andhra Pradesh, and Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard (RASAS) in Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh's approach is deeply embedded in existing government-backed community structures, whereas Karnataka's approach relies on market-led certification systems for coffee and pepper.

Institutional context

22. The Sabal project is implemented by UNEP and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as co-implementing agencies, with Rainforest Alliance as the lead of the Project Management Unit (PMU). UNEP's component is led by its Ecosystems Division, specifically managed through the Nature for Climate Branch and supported regionally by UNEP's Asia and the Pacific Office. This work falls under UNEP's 2022–2025 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and contributes directly to the Food Systems and Land Use sub-programme. The project received GEF CEO endorsement in May 2021. The Project

Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed in April 22 by UNEP and May 2022 by Rainforest Alliance Inc, the designated Executing Agency. The project was officially launched in May 2022 with expected technical closure in March 2027, for a total duration of 58 months.

23. The Sabal project is a single-phase intervention, with no segmented implementation cycles or phases. However, its design allows for adaptive management and potential scaling under future GEF programming cycles. At the time of this MTR, the project was in its third year of implementation. The total budget of the project is USD 74,856,883, comprising USD 6,266,883 in GEF financing and USD 68,590,000 in expected co-financing from state governments, Rainforest Alliance, and private sector actors.

B. Summary of Project Design Strengths and Weaknesses

24. The design was grounded in a comprehensive problem analysis, which included a results framework with generally measurable and specific indicators. At the heart of the project is a "*dual-level intervention logic*", which includes farm-level sustainable agriculture practices through APCNF[15] and RASAS,[16] combined with a landscape-scale governance approach through the Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies (MSLMBs).[17] At the time of the design, this combination was seen as well-suited to address systemic drivers of land degradation and biodiversity loss through localized action. This design introduces two key institutional innovations for India - the landscape/micro-landscape[18] and the MSLMB concepts. Both are introduced for the first time based on the experience of Rainforest Alliance in other countries.[19]

25. The Sabal project leverages existing institutions for anchoring its activities, especially in key innovations such as the MSLMBs, while at the same time incorporating cross-cutting elements like gender equity and stakeholder engagement plans. The design's forward-thinking approach is evident in its use of the LandScale assessment framework and strategic partnerships with private sector players, positioning the project for sustainability and scale-up beyond the implementation period.

26. However, the project's design includes several challenges that have affected the project's implementation.

- First, the design is quite ambitious to the point of seeming optimistic in its target-setting, particularly in area-based GEF core indicators (e.g., hundreds of thousands of hectares under sustainable management or certification within five years).

- While the governance model seems adequate on paper, the large number of actors with overlapping mandates has created complexity in coordination (see section D of this report for a summary of the institutional structure of the Sabal project). While this arrangement enables broad expertise and an extensive footprint at the community level in the two states in question, it also increases coordination complexities, transaction costs, lengthens decision-making processes, and requires sustained effort to maintain alignment across actors, which sometimes contributes to delays (as will be seen further in this report).

- At the design stage, neither the landscape approach nor the concept of MSLMBs was sufficiently clarified in terms of definition, scope, or operational logic. Their purpose, composition, and processes were introduced largely as global models, without adequate contextualization to India's decentralized governance structures. This left the PMU struggling during implementation to translate broad ideas into workable mechanisms. In practice, the PMU had to experiment with adaptations, drawing on the Rainforest Alliance's experience in other countries while searching for compatible

local institutional anchors. The effort to embed MSLMB-like functions within existing bodies such as Village Organizations in Andhra Pradesh and Gram Panchayats[20] in Karnataka has been difficult and has contributed to delays, uneven progress across sites, and uncertainties around governance roles. Yet, this adaptive approach also demonstrates a notable strength: instead of creating parallel institutions, the PMU has sought to root innovations within established local structures, enhancing prospects for legitimacy, ownership, and long-term sustainability once the project support ends.

- Also, the design also did not account appropriately for all the time needed to establish MSLMBs, secure partner compliance, and achieve institutional buy-in. Establishment timelines for MSLMBs were underestimated, and the design did not sufficiently incorporate risk mitigation for delays in multi-stakeholder consensus-building.

- The reliance on specifically named implementing partners in the Project Document created vulnerabilities, when it turned out that several of them lacked Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) certification,[21] forcing unplanned partner replacements and delaying implementation, particularly in Karnataka.

- Methodological clarity at the outset was limited for some project indicators, particularly in defining what constitutes "measurable practices" or "improved management" in the context of biodiversity, and how on-farm and off-farm areas should be delineated. This lack of specificity created varying interpretations among partners and field teams, affecting data comparability across landscapes.

- The different scales of micro-landscapes between Andhra Pradesh (1,000–1,250 ha) and Karnataka (10,000 ha) also challenge aggregation of results and could limit achievement of original area-based targets.

- The design assumed smooth market demand for certification without adequately considering fluctuations in buyer interest, premium pricing, or changes to certification standards that have slowed adoption.

- Also, the project's budget allocation was front-loaded with assumptions of early partner readiness, resulting in low expenditure rates at mid-term, which requires significant reforecasting.

C. Results Framework

27. The project's results were structured to deliver multiple environmental and socioeconomic benefits through four interlinked components aligned with GEF Core Indicators and UNEP priorities. The project's impact-level objective focuses on restoring degraded agricultural land, promoting sustainable land and biodiversity management, and avoiding forest loss across high-biodiversity regions in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Key impact indicators target over 1 million ha under improved management, including 135,000 ha aimed at achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and biodiversity conservation, and 75,000 ha certified under the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard (RA-SAS) standard. At mid-term, significant progress is visible in Community Natural Farming (CNF) adoption and early certification of RA-SAS areas, though some gaps remain in off-farm restoration and biodiversity-linked indicators. At the outcome level, the project is structured to (1) influence state-level policies and convergence; (2) strengthen sustainable agriculture adoption among farmers; (3) establish inclusive landscape governance systems; and (4) mobilize private sector and blended finance. Outcome indicators, such as the number of MSLMBs formally established, hectares under CNF and RA-SAS, and number of farmers adopting sustainable practices, show uneven, but promising progress.

28. The component structure translates the project's Theory of Change (ToC) into operational strategies.

    - Component 1 delivers policy and institutional reforms (e.g. policy briefs, convergence);
    - Component 2 focuses on practice adoption and farmer capacity (e.g. CNF/RA-SAS training, agri-tech piloting);
    - Component 3 aims to unlock market and financial linkages (e.g. responsible sourcing, blended finance); and,
    - Component 4 supports monitoring, evaluation, and learning (e.g., MEL system, cost-benefit analysis).
    - Management components, such as MSLMBs, technical support teams, and coordination units, play a cross-cutting role in enabling delivery across the landscapes.

29. However, delivery has been uneven, with Andhra Pradesh outperforming Karnataka in most indicators due to stronger institutional anchoring (particularly the role of Raithu Sadhikar Sanstha (RySS)[22] and its natural farming programme).[23] Also, some institutional structures, particularly the MSLMBs, have been key to translating farm-level interventions into integrated landscape outcomes. However, delays in the formal recognition and operationalization of these bodies, as well as challenges in raising additional finance and developing value chains, have constrained the achievement of key outcome-level targets (this is explored further in this report).

Table 4: Summary of Project's Latest Approved Results Framework[24]

	Results Statement
Project objective	To reduce land degradation and conserve biodiversity in agricultural landscapes in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by promoting sustainable agricultural production, supply chains and public-private finance.
Impact	• Landscapes under improved biodiversity management (135,000 ha); • Degraded agricultural lands restored (75,000 ha); • Landscapes under sustainable land management (955,000 ha); • Landscapes certified under biodiversity-focused certification systems (75,000 ha); • High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided in 25,000 ha.
Intermediate state	• Improved landscape governance and institutional mechanisms operational in micro-landscapes; • Private and public investments mobilized for scaling sustainable practices; • Strengthened value chains and improved farmer livelihoods; • Improved ecological condition and resilience in production landscapes.
Project Outcomes	• Outcome 1.1: Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and biodiversity conservation in production landscapes are successfully integrated into fiscal and agricultural policy instruments and planning processes implemented by key central and State level government agencies and ministries • Outcome 1.2: Integrated development of productive agriculture and SLM enabled in two States, through multi-stakeholder participatory landscape planning • Outcome 2.1: Land degradation reduced, biodiversity conserved, and increased farmer satisfaction achieved on farms through adoption of sustainable agricultural practices based on CNF and RA-SAS in the project landscapes. • Outcome 2.2: Multi-stakeholder landscape management bodies (MSLMBs) plan and implement off-farm sustainable lands management (SLM) activities that restore degraded land and conserve biodiversity and high conservation value forest (HCVF).

	Results Statement
	• Outcome 3.1: Companies increase their buying of commodities sourced from sustainably managed landscapes. • Outcome 3.2: Private and public institutions make investments to incentivize scaled-up adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and landscape-scale SLM, contributing to LDN, biodiversity conservation and human well-being • Outcome 4.1: Scale-up of project experience is enabled by key decision makers convinced by the evidence-based Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) system of the environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from application of SLM and landscape approaches and of the strategies to achieve that.
Project Outputs	• Output 1.1.1: Proposals developed and advocated to lead Government agencies and key landscape stakeholders to improve policy coordination and better integrate SLM and biodiversity conservation in project landscapes • Output 1.2.1: Micro-landscapes agreed in consultation with representatives from Gram Panchayats and representatives of all key stakeholders, and structures established to enable multi-stakeholder planning and management of SLM at landscape scale. • Output 2.1.1: Capacity building and technology transfer delivered towards successful adoption of CNF and RA-SAS practices by 765,000 farmers and farm workers • Output 2.1.2: Innovations in agri-tech and digital information systems tested for scaling up adoption of sustainable agriculture and directly benefitting 1000 farmers. • Output 2.1.3: Farmer organizations' capacities strengthened in business management and product development to drive adoption of sustainable agriculture by 3,000 farmers on 10,000 ha of farmland • Output 2.2.1: Technical support provided to the MSLMBs to develop a Sustainable Landscape Management Plan in each micro-landscape. • Output 2.2.2: Landscape management bodies guided and mentored to implement their Sustainable Landscape Management Plans (SLMPs) at landscape scale to conserve 25,000 ha of HCVF • Output 2.2.3: Technical support provided to micro-landscapes with potential for scale to develop comprehensive business plans for their effective and sustainable operation and implementation of their SLMPs. • Output 3.1.1: Private sector engaged and incentivized through improved producer organization and increased sustainability of supply to strengthen its commitment to responsible sourcing. • Output 3.2.1: Portfolio of feasible impact investments and financial instruments developed and negotiated with financial services providers, combining investment in SLM at farm and landscape scales. • Output 4.1.1: MEL system implemented to track project progress and measure performance against targeted outputs, outcomes, GEF Core Indicators and GEBs. • Output 4.1.2: Evaluations of cost-benefit undertaken on the economic returns to farmers from adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, as well as environmental benefits on- and off-farm, and improvements in human well-being in the project landscapes • Output 4.1.3: Learnings from project and conditions for scalability prepared and presented to central and State governments and target financial services organizations and companies and disseminated through selected events and publications.

D. Project Implementation Structure and Partners

30. The project's implementation structure is presented in detail in Annex V of this report. At the apex is the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which provides overall strategic oversight and policy-level guidance. PSC ensures that the project aligns with national priorities and facilitates cross-sectoral convergence. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change act as PSC co-chairs, whereas UNEP and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) serve as the co-implementing agencies with overall responsibility for project delivery and report directly to GEF. UNEP has primary supervisory responsibility for the Rainforest Alliance, while IUCN supervises the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES). Under them,

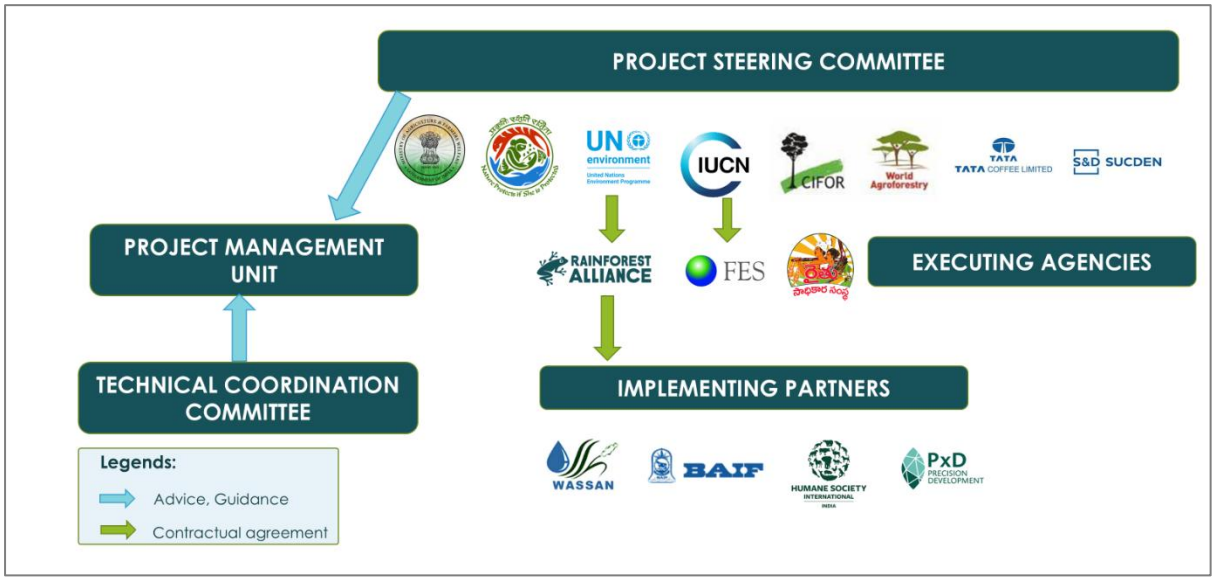
the Executing Agencies are: Rainforest Alliance (RA), as lead executing agency and host of the Project Management Unit (PMU), responsible for Components 2 (Sustainable Agriculture), 3 (Markets), and 4 (Knowledge Management) across both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka; and FES, responsible for leading Component 1 (Policy and Enabling Environment) with a national and state-level focus.

31. Rainforest Alliance has entered into a partnership with RySS, a specialized Government of Andhra Pradesh agency, for the execution of natural farming activities in Andhra Pradesh. In addition, Rainforest Alliance has worked with a network of Implementing Partners which include Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) (primary FCRA-compliant partner implementing natural farming and livelihoods in Andhra Pradesh); BAIF Development Research Foundation (livestock integration and sustainable agriculture extension in Karnataka); Humane Society International India (human–wildlife conflict mitigation and biodiversity conservation); Precision Development (PxD) (enhancement of the Coffee Krishi Tantra digital advisory platform in collaboration with the Coffee Board of India); and Associate Trainer Networks (capacity building for certification adoption). Private sector partners, such as Tata Coffee, Sucden, and Rabobank Foundation, are expected to contribute in different ways, especially with regards to market linkages, particularly for certified coffee and other sustainable commodities.

32. Operational coordination is led by the PMU, which is supported by a Technical Coordination Committee (TCC). The PMU manages day-to-day project implementation, stakeholder coordination, and progress monitoring. TCC provides expert guidance to ensure technical integrity and alignment with the results framework. PMU also consolidates financial and technical reporting from all partners for submission to UNEP and IUCN, and facilitates the integration of technical inputs from specialized consultants, including gender, LDN/HCVF, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) experts.

33. The implementation strategy is characterized by a combination of top-down governance (PSC and PMU) with bottom-up field implementation (executing and implementing partners), arranged through formal agreements and coordinated through multi-level platforms. MSLMBs serve as local governance anchors for landscape-level planning through the Sustainable Landscape Management Plans (SLMP). This structure improves convergence across government, scientific, private sector, and civil society stakeholders.

Figure 1: Project's Organigram and Key Stakeholders



E. Stakeholders

34. At the strategic level, national and international institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, UNEP, IUCN, and GEF, serve as high-influence stakeholders providing technical guidance, policy alignment, and fiduciary oversight. These actors are complemented by private sector partners (e.g., TATA Coffee, Sucden), who represent market-based agents with a vested interest in strengthening sustainable supply chains and securing responsibly sourced commodities. Mid-tier stakeholders include executing and implementing agencies, such as Rainforest Alliance, FES, and RySS. These actors are responsible for delivering project outputs, operationalizing innovation at scale, and facilitating convergence with ongoing government schemes. At the grassroots level, the primary agents are the smallholder farmers and farm workers, particularly women and youth. Local technical partners, such as WASSAN, BAIF, Humane Society International India, and PxD, play a catalytic role in extending services to these communities. The project's participatory approach reinforces the agency of underrepresented groups, supports inclusive governance structures, and aligns capacity-building activities with differentiated needs.

35. The project is designed to take into account gender equity and marginalized communities. The most significant change agents are the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which bridge institutional knowledge with grassroots implementation, and Farmer Producer Organizations that aggregate smallholder capacity for certification and market access. Women have emerged as key agents, comprising over 60% of Community Resource Persons who provide peer-to-peer training and technical support, while Women's Self-Help Groups serve as channels for gender-responsive interventions. The project targets a 50% women beneficiary rate and recognizes women's central role in sustainable agriculture. Scheduled Tribe communities, particularly in Karnataka's forest-adjacent areas, receive particular attention through a range of practical and customized livelihood interventions. However, the MTR revealed greater opportunities for the engagement of people with disabilities, suggesting an area for improved inclusivity.

F. Changes in Design during Implementation

36. Since its inception in May 2022, the Sabal project has undergone some adaptive adjustments. Below is a summary of key events that influenced the project's parameters:

- Q3 2022 –During the inception period, PSC and TCC were constituted with broader state-level representation than initially anticipated, enhancing subnational government ownership, but also delaying inception timelines. Also, some of the local partners originally identified in the Project Document could not be engaged because they lacked the mandatory Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) certification, required for receiving foreign funds in India. This took several months, involving due diligence, negotiations, and onboarding, and in some cases required redefining roles and work plans to fit the capabilities of new partners.

- Q4 2022 – Minor changes were made to the selected micro-landscapes, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, to ensure ecological contiguity and better alignment with existing APCNF clusters. This did not affect the overall geographical scope.

- Q4 2023 –A partial reallocation of Component 3 funds was done to enhance private sector engagement and farmer organization capacity-building, following early challenges in convening CSR actors and securing investment interest.

37. Overall, these adjustments show that the project demonstrated proactive management to the challenges without altering the project's core objectives, result areas, or budget ceiling.

G. Project Financing

38. This project was financed through a GEF grant for USD 6,266,883 for the five-year period (May 2022 – March 2027).[25] The expenditures were organized by project components/outputs and by budget categories (personnel, consultancy, travel, administrative support, etc.). The budget had a strong emphasis on personnel and consultancy inputs, reflecting the project's focus on technical assistance, field-level facilitation, and coordination, rather than capital-intensive infrastructure.

39. The table below (Table 5) shows the project's expenditures for each year only for the Rainforest Alliance component of the project, based on data provided by the PMU. No integrated data for the whole project was available. As can be seen from the table, the budget presentation used by the project is problematic, as it allocates the entire budget amount to the overall 2022–2025 implementation period and then retrospectively reports expenditures by year. This method does not reflect how the project actually planned its financial resources on an annual basis, nor does it allow for assessing whether delivery rates align with yearly targets or workplans. Instead, the table merely shows cumulative spending against the total allocation up to the MTR point. Thus, while it provides an indication of delivery progress, it does not allow for an effective assessment of financial planning, sequencing of activities, or resource alignment with annual operational priorities.

40. Viewed in this light, the figures demonstrate that the project has delivered 37% of its overall budget ($2,292,204 disbursed of $6,266,883, of which $1,945,360 has reported expenditures) by the MTR stage (as of 30 June 2025). This suggests moderate progress in financial execution, though performance varies considerably across components. Component 1 is underperforming, with only 14% delivery to date despite being the largest allocation ($943,469). This is a structural concern, as it shows bottlenecks in activity implementation. Components 2, 3 and 4 show progress, reflecting a pattern of adequate implementation, but also some gaps (as discussed further in this report) that may affect outcome achievement if not addressed. These figures indicate that substantial work remains in the second half of the project to ensure full realization of planned activities.

41. A notable trend in the table is the systematic overspending of Project Management Costs (PMC), which reached 139% of the allocated budget by the MTR point. This was evident across all years (169% in Year 1, 125% in Year 2, and 118% in Year 3). This suggests that the resources required for management, coordination, and reporting were underestimated during the design, and may have diverted funds from substantive components.

Table 5: Budget Execution by Component (Rainforest Alliance [RA] Component)[26]

No.	Component	Budgeted (as per Project Doc)	Delivered	Delivery Rate
Year-1 (2022-2023)				
1	Component 1	$326,492	$50,364	15%
2	Component 2	$280,622	$228,756	82%
3	Component 3	$49,939	$29,468	59%
4	Component 4	$297,840	$121,017	41%
5	PMC	$38,125	$64,431	169%
6	**Total**	**$993,017**	**$494,037**	50%
Year-2 (2023-2024)				

No.	Component	Budgeted (as per Project Doc)	Delivered	Delivery Rate
1	Component 1	$352,923	$40,648	12%
2	Component 2	$443,522	$335,918	76%
3	Component 3	$133,131	$72,406	54%
4	Component 4	$246,055	$127,394	52%
5	PMC	$32,445	$40,460	125%
6	**Total**	**$1,208,076**	**$616,826**	51%
Year-3 (2024-2025)				
1	Component 1	$264,054	$37,884	14%
2	Component 2	$414,306	$512,961	124%
3	Component 3	$223,634	$101,696	45%
4	Component 4	$190,189	$142,831	75%
5	PMC	$33,181	$39,126	118%
6	**Total**	**$1,125,365**	**$834,496**	74%
ALL YEARS				
1	Component 1	$822,561	$128,896	14%
2	Component 2	$ 3,376,340	$1,077,636	95%
3	Component 3	$ 890,847	$203,570	50%
4	Component 4	$878,712	$391,242	53%
5	PMC	$ 298,423	$144,016	139%
6	**Total**	**$6,266,883**	**$1,945,360**	58%

42. The table below shows the co-financing mobilized by the Sabal project. UNEP's own financing was delivered as planned, with the mid-term amount of $50,000 provided. This provides the backbone of secured institutional support. The project also secured in-kind support from the Rainforest Alliance valued at US$1.4 million, fully realized at MTR. However, the actual amount disbursed at the time of the review was only US$336,000. A smaller but notable contribution of US$90,000 from IUCN was also fully realized, further diversifying the partnership base. The largest portion of co-financing comes from third-party contributions, notably from RySS, at US$67 million. This figure shows the leveraging effect of the project in mobilizing substantial domestic co-financing. But, it also raises a key issue: such very large co-financing amounts, though formally reported, consist of existing government-funded activities, with planned expenditures rather than new, additional resources mobilized specifically for the Sabal project. This suggests that the headline figure of co-financing may overstate the additionality of resources directly attributable to this GEF intervention.

43. When looking at overall totals, the project planned US$ 68,590,000 in co-financing. However, at the time of the MTR, there were discrepancies in the reported amounts which made it difficult to determine overall achievement. UNEP has received confirmed reports of $41,220,918 reflecting a healthy 60% realization rate at mid-term. However, the disbursements reported by project partners totaled US$137,795 million (see Table 6 below), almost twice the planned total. This figure is largely explained by RySS's reporting, which indicates expenditures far beyond the original planned contribution. While this shows significant alignment and national resource commitment, it underscores again the need to carefully interpret what counts as co-financing, distinguishing between pre-existing public programmes and resources directly mobilized through the project. In recognition of these discrepancies, the project team has been working with RySS to confirm and recalculate its co-financing contributions to ensure complete and correct

information is reported. While this was unavailable at the time of this MTR, it will be completed before end of Q4 2025.

44. To address the financial challenges identified, the MTR recommends establishing an annualized financial planning and reporting system aligned with annual workplans, enabling real-time tracking of expenditures by component. A budget reforecasting exercise should rebalance allocations, particularly increasing resources for Component 1 and containing overspending on Project Management Costs. The PMU should integrate financial data across all partners into a single reporting dashboard and reclassify co-financing figures to distinguish actual mobilized resources from pre-existing government spending. Regular quarterly financial reviews with UNEP and Rainforest Alliance finance teams are advised to ensure corrective actions, compliance, and delivery-focused budget execution.

Table 6: Co-financing Table

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US$1,000)		Government (US$1,000)		Other* (US$1,000)		Total (US$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
– Grants (UNEP)	100	50					100	50	50
– Loans									
– Credits									
– Equity investments									
– In-kind support (Rainforest Alliance)					1,400	336	1,400	336	336
– Other									
– Third-Party Co-Financing- RySS					67,000	137,219	67,000	137,219	137,219
– Third-Party Co-Financing-IUCN					190	190	190	190	190
Totals	**100**	**50**	**-**	**-**	**68,590**	**137,795**	**68,590**	**137,795**	137,795

III. REVIEW METHODS

45. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[27] and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual,[28] this Mid-Term Review (MTR) was undertaken approximately half-way through the project's implementation to assess whether the project was on-track, identify problems and challenges, and suggest needed corrective actions. The main target audiences of this MTR were the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India;[29] state-level government agencies in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, including RySS and other relevant line departments; the Global Environment Facility (GEF); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Part of the target audience for this MTR were also marginalized groups, especially women-headed households, tribal communities, and persons with disabilities.

A. Data Collection

Primary data sources

46. The data collection process for this MTR relied on a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to capture both the breadth and depth of implementation performance, stakeholder perspectives, and on-the-ground results. Data were collected through a combination of key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), structured observation, document review, and site visits across the two project states (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka). In total, the MTR process engaged 261 individual stakeholders, comprising 6 representatives from the implementing agencies (UNEP and IUCN), 16 from the executing agencies (Rainforest Alliance and Foundation for Ecological Security, including PMU members), 150 direct beneficiaries (Natural Farming [NF] farmers, Farmer Producer Organization [FPO] members, MSLMB members, Associate Trainer Networks [ATNs], and Biodiversity Management Committee [BMC] members), and 60 indirect beneficiaries (household members, community leaders, Village Organization/Self-Help Group representatives). The MTR also engaged 21 individuals from project implementing/executing partner organizations (receiving project funds, including RySS, WASSAN, BAIF, Humane Society International India, Precision Development) and 8 from collaborating/contributing partners not receiving project funds (Coffee Board of India, Gram Panchayats, private sector entities such as Tata Coffee).

47. Selection criteria for respondents ensured representation across the full range of stakeholder categories, functional roles, and geographic locations. Implementing and executing agency representatives were drawn from those with decision-making authority or deep technical knowledge of Components 1 - 4. Direct beneficiaries were purposively sampled to reflect gender balance, livelihood types (coffee, cashew, multi-cropping), and engagement in different project activities (e.g., NF adoption, certification, biodiversity conservation). Indirect beneficiaries included household members and community leaders associated with project participants.

48. Sites visited covered 8 of the 10 project micro-landscapes (80% site coverage) across the Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh (D. Gonduru, M. Nittaputtu, Pinakota, others) and the Western Ghats in Karnataka (Titimathi, Suntikoppa, Maldare, Aravathoklu, Gonikoppa). The location of these sites in shown in the maps in Annex XIV of this report.

Table 7: Review Respondents and Field Visits

Stakeholders - Individuals			A. Total number involved (M/F)	B. Number contacted (M/F)	Sample size (% B/A)[30]	C. Total number responded Total (M/F)	Response rate (% C/B)[31]
Project Team	**Project Team** (with management responsibilities e.g. Project Management Unit)	Implementing agencies	10 (5M / 5F)	10 (5M / 5F)	100%	10 (5M / 5F)	100%
		Executing agencies	16 (10M / 6F)	16 (10M / 6F)	100%	16 (10M / 6F)	100%
Beneficiaries	**Direct Beneficiaries:**[32] (e.g. duty bearers, gatekeepers, training participants, etc.)		600 (200M / 100F)	150 (90M / 60F)	25%	150 (90M / 60F)	100%
	Indirect Beneficiaries:[33] (e.g. household members, civil society representatives, group members, etc.)		6,000 (35M / 25F)	60 (35M / 25F)	1%	60 (35M / 25F)	100%
Stakeholders - Entities			**A. Total number involved**	**B. Number contacted**	**Sample size (% B/A)[34]**	**C. Total number responded**	**Response rate (% C/B)[35]**
Partners	**Project implementing/ executing partners** (receiving project funds)		21 (16M / 5F)	21 (16M / 5F)	100%	21 (16M / 5F)	100%
	Project collaborating/ contributing partners[36] (not receiving project fund)		10 (8M / 2F)	8 (6M / 2F)	80%	8 (6M / 2F)	80%
Field Visits	**Region / country / locality**[37]		**A. Total number sites**	**B. Number sites visited**	**Sample Size (%B/A)[38]**		
	Asia and the Pacific		10	8	80%		

Strategies for inclusivity

49. Response rates were maximized through targeted outreach, inclusive engagement design, and flexible scheduling, ensuring full coverage of project teams, partners, and beneficiaries, including marginalised groups such as tribal farmers, women in SHGs/VOs, and smallholders in remote areas. Local implementing partner staff facilitated identification and mobilisation, meetings were timed around agricultural schedules, and separate or small-group discussions were used to encourage open dialogue, with translation into local languages where needed. Indirect beneficiaries, including household members and community leaders, were engaged to capture broader community impacts, while divergent views were sought by including respondents from slower-performing areas and prompting discussion of both achievements and gaps.

Secondary data sources

50. Secondary data comprised project documents and supporting materials provided by the project team, as well as additional documentation collected directly from partners and during field activities. Core reference materials included the approved UN Environment Project Document with appendices, the revised results framework, theory of change, approved workplan, and the logical framework. Monitoring data and implementation

evidence were drawn from regular reporting instruments such as PIRs, and templates for progress, co-finance, and final reporting, alongside budget and expenditure statements.

a. Data Analysis

51. Data collected for the MTR were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach that integrated quantitative scoring with qualitative coding and thematic analysis. Quantitative data from project monitoring systems and partner records were tabulated and compared against targets to assess progress. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were transcribed and summarized, then coded to identify recurring themes. Thematic analysis was combined with contribution analysis to assess the plausibility of the project's influence on observed changes. Findings were triangulated across data sources, respondent categories, and sites to validate the evidence.

b. Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

52. The MTR faced some limitations, which were mitigated through targeted actions. First of all, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAFW) were not responsive to this MTR. Multiple attempts were made by the project team to arrange interviews with these two crucial institutions, but no meetings materialized. As a mitigating measure, the reviewer dedicated greater efforts towards the review of documents, especially the notes of Project Steering Committee meetings where the views of these two ministries were captured. Also, a survey with the broader group of project beneficiaries at the community level was envisaged, but after several discussions with project staff and stakeholders, it became apparent that an online survey would not work for community members living in remote locations with limited access to connectivity. In response, the reviewer recalibrated the KIIs to capture a broader range of beneficiaries and views. Furthermore, there was a risk of imbalanced representation between more accessible and remote communities, as well as between high-performing and slower-progress areas. This was addressed by purposely including sites and respondents from underperforming micro-landscapes and less-engaged beneficiary groups. Gaps in documentation, particularly for early-stage and delayed outputs, were mitigated through triangulation with partner records, field observations, and stakeholder testimony.

c. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the MTR process and during the compilation of the report, efforts were made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalized groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information gathered after prior informed consent from people, all discussions remained anonymous, and all information was collected according to the UN 'Standards of Conduct'.

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

53. The project's Theory of Change (ToC), illustrated graphically in Figure 2, generally provides a clear and well-sequenced intervention logic that links identified threats and barriers to targeted outputs, direct outcomes, medium-term outcomes, intermediate states, and ultimately impact-level results. The causal pathway begins with the outputs, which were designed to strengthen the enabling environment, build institutional and community capacity, demonstrate sustainable land management (SLM) practices, engage markets and financial actors, and establish a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system. These outputs include policy advocacy and proposals for integration of SLM into agricultural planning; establishment and training of MSLMBs; farmer training in Community-managed Natural Farming (CNF) and Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard (RA-SAS) practices; scaling innovations in agri-tech; private sector engagement for responsible sourcing; development of financial instruments for smallholder adoption of SLM; and generation and dissemination of evidence to support replication. The causal pathways were well-defined: a) Policy integration and multi-stakeholder governance (Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2) create an enabling environment; b) Sustainable farm practices and off-farm land management (Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2) directly improve productivity, biodiversity, and land condition; c) Market and financial incentives (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2) strengthen adoption and replication; and the MEL-driven learning agenda (Outcome 4.1) supports scaling and policy uptake.

54. These outputs drive direct outcomes through the combined effects of governance, production, and market transformation. First, fiscal and agricultural policies and planning processes integrate SLM and biodiversity conservation, supported by political buy-in and openness of government actors (Outcome 1.1). Second, integrated planning enables productive agriculture and SLM at landscape scale across two states (Outcome 1.2), contingent on stakeholder willingness and state-level support. At the production level, land degradation is reduced and biodiversity conserved through adoption of CNF and RA-SAS practices by farmers (Outcome 2.1), assuming climate and pest pressures do not undermine adoption. MSLMBs restore degraded land and conserve High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) through planned off-farm SLM interventions (Outcome 2.2). In parallel, companies increase sourcing from sustainably managed landscapes (Outcome 3.1), and public and private institutions invest in scaling adoption (Outcome 3.2), contingent on production meeting quality and volume standards and on financial products being accessible to smallholders. The MEL system (Outcome 4.1) generates credible evidence of environmental, socio-economic, and biodiversity benefits, enabling replication and influencing decision-makers at national and sub-national levels.

55. These direct outcomes contribute to medium-term outcomes. Progress along the pathway is driven by continued institutional commitment, market and investor incentives, and farmer engagement, with the key assumption that the enabling policy and market environment will be maintained or strengthened over time. The intermediate states involve significant integration of off-farm and on-farm land use planning for biodiversity and watershed restoration; HCVF under improved protection; large-scale restoration of degraded off-farm land; and conservation of on-farm biodiversity. Governments publicly recognise project landscapes as models for locally managed SLM, catalysing further replication. These conditions lead to the long-term impact: 100,000 ha of landscapes under improved management for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and biodiversity conservation, including 25,000 ha of HCVF, and 1,150,000 ha under sustainable land management, with 75,000 ha certified under RA-SAS. This benefits 770,000 farmers and other landscape residents through higher household incomes, improved health, and enhanced ecosystem services.

56. The ToC is underpinned by several outcome-level assumptions, which show both the strength and the potential weakness of the model. Some of the assumptions, such as sustained political support for Community Natural Farming (CNF) in Andhra Pradesh, stakeholder willingness to engage in multi-stakeholder bodies, and farmer perception of benefits, are reasonable, but dependent on external socio-political and economic conditions. Climate-related risks, market reliability, and the responsiveness of financial institutions represent potential pressure points that, if not actively managed, could constrain the transition from direct to medium-term outcomes. The ToC accounts for these by embedding market engagement, financial product innovation, and institutional advocacy into its results framework, though the sustainability of these mechanisms post-project will depend on maintaining stakeholder incentives and institutional commitments.

57. The MTR suggests a few changes to the project's Results Framework, as summarized in the table below. These changes have been discussed with the project team and stakeholders, and have resulted from these discussions. They primarily address feasibility, measurability, and alignment with the project's actual sphere of influence. While the long-term impact and intermediate states remain unchanged, adjustments to the indicators will be useful to reflect implementation realities. The project's ToC has been adjusted accordingly and presented in Annex V as the "Reconstructed Theory of Change", which integrates the reformulated human rights, gender equality, and marginalised group inclusion driver into the causal pathways from outputs to outcomes to intermediate states to impact.

Table 8: Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements

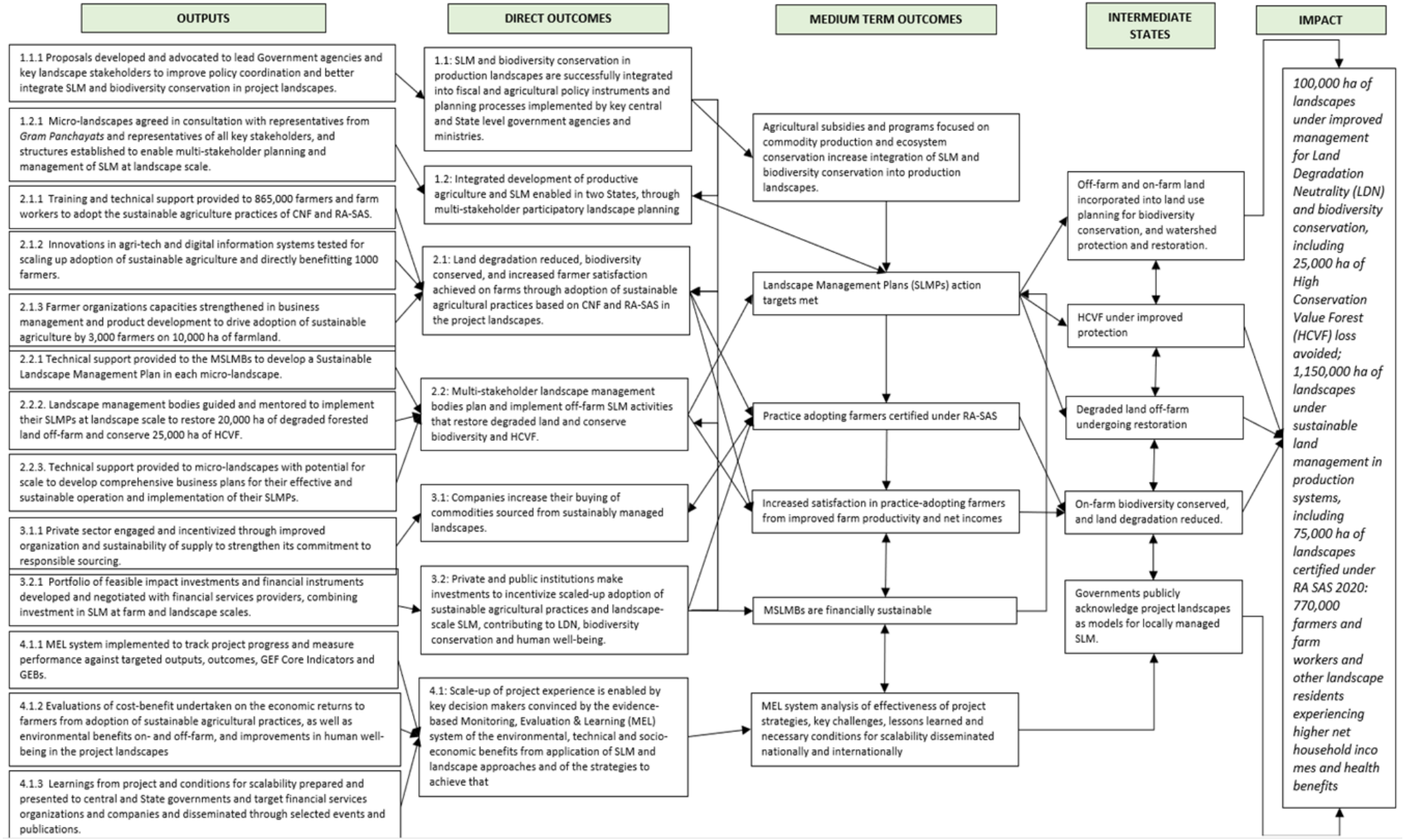
Formulation in original project document(s) – *insert source/date*	Formulation for reconstructed ToC at MTR	Justification for reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
100,000 ha of landscapes under improved management for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and biodiversity conservation, including 25,000 ha of HCVF loss avoided; 1,150,000 ha of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems, including 75,000 ha of landscapes certified under RA-SAS 2020; 770,000 farmers, farm workers and other landscape residents experiencing higher net household incomes and health benefits.	Same formulation retained.	Impact-level formulation remains valid and aspirational; no change required as this represents long-term environmental and socio-economic transformation beyond the project timeframe. Measurement will still rely on intermediate and outcome indicators as proxies.
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
Off-farm and on-farm land incorporated into land use planning for biodiversity conservation and watershed protection; HCVF under improved protection; degraded land undergoing restoration; on-farm biodiversity conserved and land degradation reduced; governments publicly acknowledge project landscapes as models for locally managed SLM.	Same formulation retained, but broadened scope for HCVF protection beyond micro-landscapes to the wider project landscapes.	Expanded HCVF scope addresses feasibility constraints (micro-landscapes too small to meet original target). This maintains the intended ecological outcome but aligns with achievable scale within available geography.
PROJECT OUTCOMES		
O1.1–O4.1 as in original ToC (integration of SLM into policies; integrated landscape planning; reduced land degradation; functional MSLMBs; increased responsible sourcing; increased investment; MEL-based scaling).	Same outcomes retained but with adjusted measurement approaches reflected in the indicators below: practice adoption verified through training participation (O1, O2) and certification-readiness (O2, 2.1.3); investment outcome broadened to	Outcomes remain relevant and logically sequenced. Reformulation of indicators focuses on feasible proxies for measurement within project timeframe and capacity, without

	include public/government convergence (O3.2.1).	altering the intended change pathways.
OUTCOME INDICATORS		
O1: 50% RA-SAS adoption verified by surveys and satellite imagery; O2: RA-SAS certified area; O3: area under SLM in production systems; O4: HCVF loss avoided.	O1: RA-SAS adoption proxied by number of farmers trained via ATNs (on-farm) and policy proposals submitted (off-farm); O2 and 2.1.3: farms "certification-ready" under RA-SAS and/or other sustainability standards; O3: corrected aggregation to 955,000 ha target (removed double counting); O4: HCVF-related activities implemented across wider project landscapes, verified through activity records and proposals, no satellite imagery.	Revisions respond to monitoring constraints (difficulty verifying adoption, certification dependent on external market factors, satellite imagery limitations). Adjustments preserve ability to show plausible progress while avoiding unrealistic verification demands.
OUTPUTS		
Original outputs per logframe (training, technical support, innovations, farmer organization strengthening, MSLMB plans, private sector engagement, financing mechanisms, MEL system, economic assessments, knowledge sharing).	Same outputs retained; delivery focus adjusted to strengthen documentation of training and readiness for certification across multiple sustainability standards; broadened engagement in financing outputs to include public/government convergence.	Core outputs remain unchanged as they are still required to achieve outcomes. Adjustments to indicators enhance flexibility to reflect the range of sustainability pathways and financing sources available in the actual implementation context.
OUTPUT INDICATORS		
Examples: number of farmers trained; number of micro-landscape plans developed; number of companies engaged; volume of private investment mobilized.	Farmers trained and certification-readiness documented through multiple standards (RA-SAS, Fairtrade, 4C, NPOP); financing indicator expanded to include public/government convergence alongside private finance.	Output indicator reformulation ensures they capture the full range of implementation achievements, including those outside original narrow definitions (e.g., private finance only).

Table 9: Justification for Reformulation / Expansion of Drivers and Assumptions

Formulation in original project document(s) – *insert source/date*	**Formulation for reconstructed ToC at inception (RTOC)**	**Justification for reformulation**
DRIVERS		
1. Human rights and gender equality[39]		
No explicit driver stated in the original project document (2021 Project Document)	Explicit driver: "Project design and implementation ensure proactive integration of human rights, gender equality, and inclusion of marginalised groups, including those living with disabilities, in all capacity-building, governance, and market linkage activities."	The original project document contained general commitments to inclusivity but did not frame human rights and gender equality as a causal driver for change. This reformulation explicitly recognises these dimensions as active enablers of sustainable agricultural transformation.
ASSUMPTIONS		
2. Human rights and gender equality[40]		
No explicit assumption stated in the original project document (2021 Project Document)	Explicit assumption: "Key stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector partners, and community institutions, will remain committed to upholding human rights, promoting gender equality, and ensuring inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups in decision-making, training, and benefit-sharing."	The assumption is needed to sustain equitable participation and benefit distribution across diverse groups. While not articulated in the original ToC, this condition is critical for long-term adoption of sustainable practices and for avoiding exclusion.

58. Overall, the project's ToC reflects a good systems-thinking approach, with multiple reinforcing feedback loops, such as how improved farmer incomes and satisfaction strengthen adoption, and how credible MEL evidence drives further policy and market engagement. The integration of biodiversity conservation into agricultural landscapes addresses both environmental and livelihood goals. The ToC's clarity in linking each output to a higher-level change, combined with its focus on scaling through evidence-based advocacy, positions the project well for achieving its intended outcomes, provided that adaptive management is maintained to navigate the identified assumptions and contextual risks. Human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion are implicit drivers throughout the ToC. The project design shows a commitment to ensuring equitable participation of women, marginalized communities, and those living with disabilities in decision-making bodies, training, and benefit-sharing mechanisms. By enabling these groups to access market opportunities, participate in landscape governance, and benefit from improved productivity and incomes, the Sabal project not only addresses environmental sustainability, but also contributes to social equity and empowerment.


OUTPUTS
DIRECT OUTCOMES
MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES
INTERMEDIATE STATES
IMPACT
1.1.1 Proposals developed and advocated to lead Government agencies and key landscape stakeholders to improve policy coordination and better integrate SLM and biodiversity conservation in project landscapes.
1.2.1 Micro-landscapes agreed in consultation with representatives from Gram Panchayats and representatives of all key stakeholders, and structures established to enable multi-stakeholder planning and management of SLM at landscape scale.
2.1.1 Training and technical support provided to 865,000 farmers and farm workers to adopt the sustainable agriculture practices of CNF and RA-SAS.
2.1.2 Innovations in agri-tech and digital information systems tested for scaling up adoption of sustainable agriculture and directly benefitting 1000 farmers.
2.1.3 Farmer organizations capacities strengthened in business management and product development to drive adoption of sustainable agriculture by 3,000 farmers on 10,000 ha of farmland.
2.2.1 Technical support provided to the MSLMBs to develop a Sustainable Landscape Management Plan in each micro-landscape.
2.2.2. Landscape management bodies guided and mentored to implement their SLMPs at landscape scale to restore 20,000 ha of degraded forested land off-farm and conserve 25,000 ha of HCVF.
2.2.3. Technical support provided to micro-landscapes with potential for scale to develop comprehensive business plans for their effective and sustainable operation and implementation of their SLMPs.
3.1.1 Private sector engaged and incentivized through improved organization and sustainability of supply to strengthen its commitment to responsible sourcing.
3.2.1 Portfolio of feasible impact investments and financial instruments developed and negotiated with financial services providers, combining investment in SLM at farm and landscape scales.
4.1.1 MEL system implemented to track project progress and measure performance against targeted outputs, outcomes, GEF Core Indicators and GEBs.
4.1.2 Evaluations of cost-benefit undertaken on the economic returns to farmers from adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, as well as environmental benefits on- and off-farm, and improvements in human well-being in the project landscapes
4.1.3 Learnings from project and conditions for scalability prepared and presented to central and State governments and target financial services organizations and companies and disseminated through selected events and publications.
1.1: SLM and biodiversity conservation in production landscapes are successfully integrated into fiscal and agricultural policy instruments and planning processes implemented by key central and State level government agencies and ministries.
1.2: Integrated development of productive agriculture and SLM enabled in two States, through multi-stakeholder participatory landscape planning
2.1: Land degradation reduced, biodiversity conserved, and increased farmer satisfaction achieved on farms through adoption of sustainable agricultural practices based on CNF and RA-SAS in the project landscapes.
2.2: Multi-stakeholder landscape management bodies plan and implement off-farm SLM activities that restore degraded land and conserve biodiversity and HCVF.
3.1: Companies increase their buying of commodities sourced from sustainably managed landscapes.
3.2: Private and public institutions make investments to incentivize scaled-up adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and landscape-scale SLM, contributing to LDN, biodiversity conservation and human well-being.
4.1: Scale-up of project experience is enabled by key decision makers convinced by the evidence-based Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) system of the environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from application of SLM and landscape approaches and of the strategies to achieve that
Agricultural subsidies and programs focused on commodity production and ecosystem conservation increase integration of SLM and biodiversity conservation into production landscapes.
Landscape Management Plans (SLMPs) action targets met
Practice adopting farmers certified under RA-SAS
Increased satisfaction in practice-adopting farmers from improved farm productivity and net incomes
MSLMBs are financially sustainable
MEL system analysis of effectiveness of project strategies, key challenges, lessons learned and necessary conditions for scalability disseminated nationally and internationally
Off-farm and on-farm land incorporated into land use planning for biodiversity conservation, and watershed protection and restoration.
HCVF under improved protection
Degraded land off-farm undergoing restoration
On-farm biodiversity conserved, and land degradation reduced.
Governments publicly acknowledge project landscapes as models for locally managed SLM.
100,000 ha of landscapes under improved management for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and biodiversity conservation, including 25,000 ha of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided; 1,150,000 ha of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems, including 75,000 ha of landscapes certified under RA SAS 2020: 770,000 farmers and farm workers and other landscape residents experiencing higher net household incomes and health benefits

V. REVIEW FINDINGS

59. This chapter presents the key findings of the MTR based on the main review criteria.

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's, Donors' and Countries' (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priorities	Assessment and Evidence of Alignment with Strategic Priorities	Level of alignment
UNEP Priorities	• The project forms part of UNEP's Nature Action portfolio and reflects UNEP's emphasis on integrated landscape management and nature-based solutions. • It also demonstrates UNEP's strategy for agricultural transformation yielding global environmental benefits through multi-stakeholder, multi-sector approach. • The project includes technology transfer through digital advisory services (PxD platform) and capacity building components. • The project could contribute to South-South knowledge exchange given its innovative landscape approach.	Full
Donor Priorities	• Strong alignment with GEF focal areas of Biodiversity and Land Degradation; • Contributes to GEF Core Indicators (area of land restored, area under improved practices); • Nested within GEF's broader Impact Program framework.	Full
Country / Regional / Global Priorities	• Global: Aligns with Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), SDGs 2, 13, 15; India's Bonn Challenge pledge. • National: Supports India's Land Degradation Neutrality commitment (26M ha by 2030); works with MoAFW and MoEFCC. • State: Leverages AP's APCNF program (world's largest agroecology program); aligns with Karnataka's sustainable coffee/spice cultivation and wildlife conservation goals.	Full
Coherence with other interventions	• Complements India's participation in global restoration programs; • Reinforces established state priorities (APCNF in AP); • Builds on existing community institutions (SHGs, farmer federations); • Potential for more effective coordination with ongoing state initiatives on agroforestry, watershed development, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.	Partial

Findings Statements on Strategic Relevance and Complementarity

60. The Sabal project is strategically relevant for India. The geographic focus on the Eastern and Western Ghats, which are globally significant biodiversity hotspots (see the Project Context section of this report for more details), ensures high ecological relevance, and the selection of two contrasting approaches (government-led natural farming in Andhra Pradesh, market-led certification in Karnataka) offers comparative value and the potential for cross-learning.

61. The project's relevance lies not merely in addressing priority issues, but in how it strategically embeds itself within existing policy frameworks and institutional structures to amplify its impact. In Andhra Pradesh, the project's decision to partner with RySS and leverage the world's largest agroecology program (APCNF) demonstrates a sophisticated understanding that relevance is maximized when interventions reinforce rather than

compete with established priorities. Similarly, in Karnataka, the project's alignment with community concerns about human-elephant conflict and sustainable coffee cultivation shows how strategic relevance can be achieved by addressing locally specific challenges within broader environmental objectives.

62. Another key aspect of the project's relevance is its role in bridging the critical "last-mile" gap between policy formulation and ground-level implementation, transforming aspirational commitments into operational reality. Although India has extensive legislation and programs for environmental protection and sustainable agriculture, the project's complementarity lies in its ability to operationalize these policies through existing community institutions like Self-Help Groups and farmer federations.

Rating for Strategic Relevance:	**Satisfactory (S)**

a. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

Project Components	Narrative Assessment of Progress[41]	Sources of Information/Evidence
Component 1: Enabling LDN and biodiversity conservation in priority landscapes through national fiscal and agriculture policies and multi-stakeholder landscape management **Performance against Indicators and Targets** • ***Output 1.1.1*** – Target: 1 proposal by mid-term; Current: 1 proposal developed in Andhra Pradesh and submitted to RySS; Status: On track. • ***Output 1.2.1*** – Target: 5 MSLMB MoUs by mid-term; Current: 1 MSLMB established (D-Gonduru); Status: Behind schedule. **Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery:** Built support from district administrations and Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) for Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Body (MSLMB) formation. There is potential for acceleration once approvals are secured.	Output 1.1.1 – Proposals developed and advocated to improve policy coordination and integration of SLM and biodiversity conservation: The project has met its mid-term target, delivering one substantive policy proposal in Andhra Pradesh based on comprehensive desk research and field surveys. The proposal addresses perverse incentives in agricultural subsidies and is tailored for the Eastern Ghats context. Quality is high, with evidence-based recommendations under expert review. Timeliness is satisfactory for Andhra Pradesh but slow in Karnataka, where policy studies are scheduled for later. Utility is potentially significant for influencing agricultural policy and promoting sustainable practices if endorsed at state level. Output 1.2.1 – Micro-landscapes agreed and MSLMBs established: Progress is limited, with micro-landscapes identified, but only one MSLMB formally established (D-Gonduru). Timeliness is challenging, primarily due to the need for additional government engagement and bureaucratic processes. The quality of consultations has been adequate, generating institutional buy-in, but utility to beneficiaries is currently limited as governance structures remain incomplete. Level of delivery at mid-point: **Partially Delivered**	• Project reports/PIRs • FES documentation on proposals and micro-landscape delineation • Minutes of stakeholder consultations • Interviews with project team and RySS • Field verification of D-Gonduru MSLMB
Component 2: Scaling up sustainable agriculture and SLM to restore degraded land, conserve biodiversity and improve human wellbeing in priority landscapes **Performance against Indicators and Targets** • ***Output 2.1.1*** – Target: 175,000 farmers trained by mid-term; Current: 449,090 trained; Status: Exceeded. • ***Output 2.1.2*** – Target: 0 prototypes tested by mid-term (with full target of 2 by project end); Current: Tools deployed but no prototypes tested; Status: Behind schedule.	Output 2.1.1 – Capacity building and technology transfer to farmers: Performance is good, with 449,090 farmers and farm workers trained, more than double the mid-term target. Activities have included Farmer Field Schools, Training of Trainers (ToT), demonstration plots, and crop-specific eco-intensification initiatives. Timeliness is adequate, quality is high with specialized modules (e.g., RA-SAS standards), and utility is direct and substantial for beneficiaries adopting sustainable practices. Output 2.1.2 – Innovations in agri-tech and digital systems tested: Progress is limited, although the mid-term target is 0. While some tools (geo-coordinate integration, satellite imagery, soil sensors, moisture meters, pH meters)	• Project reports/PIRs • RySS MIS – URVI data & field verification • Rainforest Alliance certification/training records • FPO capacity building records

• ***Output 2.1.3*** – Target: 500 farmers trained by mid-term; Current: 600 trained; Status: Slightly ahead. • ***Output 2.2.1*** – Target: 5 SLMPs developed by mid-term; Current: 1 initiated; Status: Behind schedule. • ***Output 2.2.2*** – Target: 5,000 ha conserved by mid-term; Current: 3,123 ha conserved; Status: On track. • ***Output 2.2.3*** – Target: 1 business plan by mid-term; Current: 0 delivered; Status: Not yet started. **Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery:** Partnership expansion with BAIF and PxD strengthening institutional capacity for scaling; Coffee Board engagement in Karnataka mainstreaming RA-SAS standards.	have been deployed, formal prototype testing is not yet fully underway. Timeliness is challenging due to late onboarding of partners in Karnataka. The quality of deployed tools appears high, and utility potential is strong, but full beneficiary benefits are contingent on validation and scaling. Output 2.1.3 – Strengthening FPO capacity in business management and product development: Slightly ahead of mid-term target, with 600 farmers trained versus 500 planned by mid-term. Activities have included identifying FPOs and delivering targeted capacity building. Timeliness is fair, quality of engagement is adequate, and utility is good, as FPOs are positioned to support market access and sustainable practices. The end-project target is" adoption of sustainable agriculture by 3,000 farmers on 10,000 ha of farmland", which is quite ambitious compared to the mid-term target. No farmland data reported at mid-term by the project. Output 2.2.1 – Technical support to develop SLMPs: Progress is limited, as only three SLMPs have been initiated with stakeholder consultation although the MSLMB concept is formalized in only one micro landscape. Institutional delays have slowed capacity building. Quality of thematic mapping and stakeholder engagement is good where undertaken, but utility is minimal until plans are fully developed and adopted. Output 2.2.2 – Guidance and mentoring to implement SLMPs for HCVF conservation: Satisfactory progress with 3,123 ha of HCVF conserved, close to the 5,000 ha mid-term target. Timeliness is adequate, with active engagement of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC) and sacred grove committees. Quality is good, and utility to local communities and biodiversity conservation objectives is tangible. Total end of project target it 25,000 ha of HCVF, which is quite ambitious compared to the mid-term target. Output 2.2.3 – Business plans for micro-landscapes with scaling potential: Not yet delivered. Activities are scheduled for the second half of the project, pending MSLMB formation. Timeliness is poor at mid-term, with utility to beneficiaries still unrealized. Level of delivery at mid-point: **Partially Delivered**	• Field visits to demonstration plots, HCVF areas • Interviews/FGDs with farmers, FPO members, extension officers

Component 3: Market mechanisms and public-private finance for scaling up sustainable agriculture and landscape-scale SLM **Performance against Indicators and Targets** • ***Output 3.1.1*** – Target: 10 companies engaged by mid-term; Current: 0 contracts signed; Status: Behind schedule. • ***Output 3.2.1*** – Target: 0 proposals by mid-term (with full target of 10 by project end); Current: None developed; Status: N/A. **Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery:** Participation in high-profile coffee/spice sector events raising market awareness. Foundations for later market linkages established.	Output 3.1.1 – Private sector engagement and incentives: No formal contracts signed to date, though multiple engagements with buyers and participation in major industry events have taken place. Timeliness is weak, but relationship-building activities lay the groundwork for market linkages. Quality of engagement is promising, but utility to beneficiaries remains prospective. Output 3.2.1 – Portfolio of impact investments and financial instruments: No investment proposals developed so far, with progress hampered by delays in SLMP and MSLMB formation. Timeliness is challenging, though discussions with financial institutions are underway. Quality of preparatory work is adequate, but utility to beneficiaries is not yet realized. Level of delivery at mid-point: **Not Delivered**	• Project reports/PIRs • RA event participation records • Interviews with RA staff and FPOs • Notes from financial services consultations • Event participation lists and preliminary MoUs
Component 4: Knowledge management and outreach to scale-up sustainable value chains and landscape-scale SLM contributing to LDN, biodiversity conservation and human well-being **Performance against Indicators and Targets** • ***Output 4.1.1*** – Target: MEL system operational by mid-term; Current: System fully implemented; Status: Achieved. • ***Output 4.1.2*** – Target: 4 evaluations completed by mid-term; Current: 2 completed; Status: On track. • ***Output 4.1.3*** – Target: 0 packages by mid-term (with full target of 5 by project end); Current: 5 delivered; Status: Exceeded. **Other information, not related to the indicators, that demonstrates Output delivery:** Knowledge products and outreach have raised Sabal's visibility among policy-makers, private sector, and technical networks; supports post-project sustainability.	Output 4.1.1 – MEL system implementation: Fully achieved with an operational MEL system tracking progress against all project indicators. Timeliness and quality are high, ensuring strong data availability for adaptive management. Utility is high for project management and accountability. Output 4.1.2 – Cost-benefit evaluations: On track with two evaluations completed, focusing on RASAS and APCNF baseline conditions. Timeliness is adequate, quality is strong with use of both in-house and independent evaluators, and utility is high for assessing economic and environmental benefits. Output 4.1.3 – Learning and scalability packages: Exceeded expectations, with five packages disseminated through high-profile events. Timeliness, quality, and utility are all high, with strong potential to influence replication and policy uptake. Level of delivery at mid-point: **Fully Delivered**	• Project MEL system outputs • Cost-benefit evaluation reports (RySS & Institute for Development Studies [IDS] Visakhapatnam) • Event participation records/presentations • Interviews with MEL staff • Publications and feedback from stakeholders

63. By mid-2025, the Sabal project had achieved mixed progress towards its planned outputs, with strong performance in farmer-level capacity building and knowledge management, but slower advancement in institutional formation, market linkages, and policy engagement in some areas. Under Component 1, the project met its mid-term target for policy proposals, delivering one evidence-based framework in Andhra Pradesh for integrating sustainable land management (SLM) and biodiversity conservation into agricultural policy. However, the establishment of MSLMBs is lagging, with only one body formally constituted against a mid-term target of five, showing that the time is needed for extensive consultations and the endorsement of governments, especially at the state and district levels. This institutional gap has been a key bottleneck for several downstream activities. Component 2 has shown strong results in outreach to farmers, with 449,090 farmers and farm workers trained through Farmer Field Schools, training-of-trainers programmes, and eco-intensification initiatives. Capacity building for FPOs is slightly ahead of schedule, while initial conservation outcomes under high conservation value forest (HCVF) protection are on track at 3,123 ha. However, the introduction of agri-tech innovations has yet to reach prototype testing stage, and the development of Sustainable Landscape Management Plan (SLMP) and associated business plans is delayed due to the slow formation of MSLMBs. These delays limit the translation of capacity building into fully operational, landscape-level management systems. Component 3 is behind schedule, with private sector engagement and the development of financial instruments for scaling still at early stages, and no contracts or investment proposals finalized. Component 4 is generally performing well. The monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system is operational, two cost-benefit assessments have been completed, and knowledge products have already exceeded end-of-project dissemination targets, with five learning packages shared at national and international events.

64. Overall, the Sabal project has delivered adequate outputs where institutional dependencies are minimal, but risks compress several governance, market, and finance-related deliverables into the latter part of the project cycle, requiring acceleration and sequencing adjustments to meet end-of-project targets.

Progress Towards Project Outcomes

65. The following table presents a detailed assessment of progress toward each of the project's four expected outcomes, with a focus on implementation status, uptake by beneficiaries, and the enabling conditions required to achieve transformative, landscape-scale change.

Table 10: Progress Towards Project Outcomes[42]

Outcome 1.1: SLM and biodiversity conservation in production landscapes are successfully integrated into fiscal and agricultural policy instruments and planning processes implemented by key central and State level government agencies and ministries. Integration of sustainable land management (SLM) and biodiversity conservation into fiscal and agricultural policy instruments at central and state levels, with establishment of MSLMBs for participatory landscape planning in micro-landscapes.	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Policy briefs provided to government (Target: 0, Progress: 1) • Convergence opportunities with State governments and the project (Target: 2, Progress: 0) • Research reports on fiscal incentives and land degradation (Target: 1, Progress: 1)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Policy briefs on agricultural subsidies, commodity production, and ecosystem conservation. • Written statements from the State Governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh confirming realized convergence opportunities with the project. • Research report documenting the project's findings. • Signed documents describing each landscape and its delineation.

	• Signed documents describing Micro-Landscape Stakeholder Management Bodies (MLSMBs), comprising elected representatives of all demographic groups, including women.
Narrative Assessment:	Progress has been mixed. One policy brief and one research report on fiscal incentives and land degradation have been delivered, showing evidence of technical uptake at the policy level. However, no convergence opportunities with State governments have yet materialized, indicating that institutional alignment and follow-through are lagging. Sustained engagement with state agencies and demonstration of early benefits will be necessary to accelerate uptake.
Level of progress:	**Moderate progress**
Outcome 1.2: Integrated development of productive agriculture and SLM enabled in two States, through multi-stakeholder participatory landscape planning	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Agreements with local governments for MSLMBs (Target: 8, Progress: 9) • MSLMBs established and formally recognized (Target: 8, Progress: 1)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Signed documents describing each micro-landscape, including delineation. • Signed documents establishing Micro-Landscape Management Bodies (MLSMBs) with representation of all demographic groups, including women.
Narrative Assessment:	Nine micro-landscape agreements secured through extensive stakeholder consultations including district officials, Coffee Board, Forest departments, and Large Area Multi-Purpose (LAMP) societies.[43] However, formal MSLMB establishment lagging with only 1 of 10 targets achieved, though groundwork completed for remaining formations. Convergence opportunities identified but implementation by government officials still pending.
Level of Progress:	**Moderate Progress**

Outcome 2.1: Land degradation reduced, biodiversity conserved, and increased farmer satisfaction achieved on farms through adoption of sustainable agricultural practices based on CNF and RA-SAS in the project landscapes Reduction of land degradation, biodiversity conservation, and increased farmer satisfaction achieved through widespread adoption of Community Natural Farming (CNF) and Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard (RA-SAS) practices across project landscapes.	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Farmers applying sustainable practices (Target: 375,000, Progress: 449,090) • Percentage of farmers reporting increased satisfaction (Target: 0%, Progress: 0% - end-of-project assessment) • Hectares under RA-SAS practices (Target: 75,000 ha, Progress: 43,077 ha) • Hectares under CNF practices (Target: 400,000 ha, Progress: 352,433 ha) • Farmers adopting agri-technologies (Target: 500, Progress: 550) • FPOs with strengthened business management (Target: 4, Progress: 5) • Estimated annual GHG emissions reductions (Target: 2,000,000, Progress: 0 -end-of-project assessment)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Sample-based survey of farmers' practices and records of participating farmers, verified by partners' Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems • Survey of farmers on a representative sample of certified farms applying RASAS and CNF • Sample-based survey of farmers' practices, records of participating farmers, and audit reports of certified farms • RySS MEL System • Field technician reports • Project records of capacity evaluations and gender focus • Third-party estimation report

Narrative Assessment:	The adoption of sustainable practices has been strong, with 449,090 farmers engaged, exceeding the target of 375,000, and farmer organizations strengthening beyond expectations. Progress has been made in scaling CNF (352,433 ha against 400,000 ha target) and RA-SAS (43,077 ha against 75,000 ha target), though the latter lags. Farmer satisfaction levels and GHG reduction estimates remain pending as these are scheduled for end-of-project assessment. Overall, the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries is clear, showing farmer engagement, though biodiversity and emissions outcomes are not yet fully measured.
Level of progress:	**Substantial progress**
Outcome 2.2: Multi-stakeholder landscape management bodies (MSLMBs) plan and implement off-farm sustainable lands management (SLM) activities that restore degraded land and conserve biodiversity and high conservation value forest (HCVF)	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Hectares incorporated into SLMPs (Target: 10,000, Progress: 25,300)[44] • People in micro-landscapes represented (Target: 1,000, Progress: 1,240) • Business Plans in micro-landscapes through public-private finance (Target: 1, Progress: 0) • MSLMBs with LandScale-based performance monitoring system (Target: 3, Progress: 0) • New initiatives to reduce human-wildlife conflict (Target: 1, Progress: 1)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Maps of delineated areas in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka project landscapes managed under the corresponding MSLMBs • Government records of villages in micro-landscapes • Micro-landscape business plan, oriented towards investors • LandScale-based performance report, recording change of values of selected indicators • MSLMB reports describing the initiatives implemented to address human-wildlife conflict in Karnataka (Kodagu region micro-landscape)
Narrative Assessment:	Progress is evident in land brought under sustainable management, with 25,300 ha incorporated into SLMPs, surpassing the 10,000 ha target, and representation of 1,240 people, exceeding expectations. Human-wildlife conflict initiatives have been piloted in Kodagu, marking an important step in biodiversity conservation. However, no business plans have yet been finalized and LandScale-based monitoring systems remain absent, highlighting gaps in institutional and financial mechanisms to sustain long-term management. While uptake of planning outputs is visible, the assumptions around effective financing and performance monitoring have yet to materialize, leaving progress uneven across indicators.
Level of progress:	**Moderate Progress**

Outcome 3.1: Companies increase their buying of commodities sourced from sustainably managed landscapes Increased procurement of commodities from sustainably managed landscapes by buying companies, coupled with enhanced private and public investment in sustainable agricultural practices and landscape-scale SLM, contributing to land degradation neutrality, biodiversity conservation and human well-being.	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Buying companies making new commitments to responsible sourcing (Target: 10, Progress: 0) • FPOs reporting sales increases of at least 10% (Target: 3, Progress: 0)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Reports from Markets teams and project records of CNF practices • FPO accounts and baseline information maintained by WASSAN and BAIF
Narrative Assessment:	No measurable progress has been achieved against targets, with no new company commitments to responsible sourcing and no evidence of sales increases among FPOs. While enabling groundwork on CNF practices and FPO engagement has been documented, the assumptions regarding private sector uptake and market pull have not yet materialized. Stronger incentives and structured partnerships with buyers will be critical to translate production gains into market demand and investment flows.

Level of progress:	**No progress**
Outcome 3.2: Private and public institutions make investments to incentivize scaled-up adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and landscape-scale SLM, contributing to LDN, biodiversity conservation and human well-being	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Value invested through private and blended financing mechanisms (Target: $1,000,000, Progress: $54,240) • FPOs accessing loan capital for sustainable practices (Target: 2, Progress: 0)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Report describing sources, amounts (in US$) and destination of private and blended financing funds invested in SLM • FPO Accounts
Narrative Assessment:	Progress on mobilizing finance remains limited. Only USD 54,240 has been secured through private and blended financing, far below the USD 1 million target, and no FPOs have yet accessed loan capital for sustainable practices. While initial investment flows indicate some emerging interest, the assumptions around financial institutions' readiness and FPO capacity to leverage credit have not materialized, constraining scale-up. Stronger engagement of financial actors and enabling mechanisms will be required to bridge this gap.
Level of progress:	**Limited progress**

Outcome 4.1: Scale-up of project experience is enabled by key decision makers convinced by the evidence-based Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) system of the environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits from application of SLM and landscape approaches and of the strategies to achieve that Enhanced scale-up potential of project experience through convincing evidence from high-quality Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) system demonstrating environmental, technical and socio-economic benefits of SLM and landscape approaches, leading to informed decision-making by key stakeholders for replication and program investment.	
Performance Indicators and Targets:	• Implementing Agencies confirm high quality MEL system data (Target: 2reports, Progress: 2 reports) • Participating farmers with positive cost-benefit from sustainable practices (Target: 50%, Progress: 50%) • Project activities leading to improved restoration and conservation (Target: 0, Progress: 0 - end-of-project assessment) • Project results showcased to provoke replication (Target: 10 media products/events, Progress: 10)
Sources of Information /Evidence:	• Annual Project Information Reports (PIRs) submitted to UNEP • Project Management Platform (PMP) platform serving as evidence-based monitoring and decision-making tool • Third-party cost-benefit analysis reports (Sambodhi study) and university research • Field surveys supplemented by high-resolution satellite data and Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) analysis • Project participation records in international/national conferences and media product documentation
Narrative Assessment:	Progress towards scale-up is evident. Two MEL system reports have been delivered and validated by implementing agencies, confirming the quality of evidence generated. Cost-benefit analysis indicates that 50% of participating farmers are already realizing positive returns from sustainable practices, strengthening the case for replication. Ten media products and events have successfully showcased results, building visibility among stakeholders. However, outcome-level evidence on restoration and conservation impacts is still pending, as it will only be captured at the end of the project.
Level of progress:	**Substantial progress**

66. The Sabal project has made progress in agricultural transformation, with 449,090 farmers adopting sustainable practices under the APCNF and RA-SAS systems, exceeding the mid-

term target of 375,000. This adoption includes 395,510 hectares, positioning the project well toward its end target of 1 million hectares. This represents good progress toward the ultimate target of 765,000 farmers and over 1 million hectares. The strong female participation (96% of participating farmers) and effective Community Resource Person network (15,854 CRPs) show that there has been good grassroots engagement. Technology adoption has exceeded expectations, with 550 farmers using advanced agricultural equipment, surpassing the midterm target. The strengthening of FPOs is ongoing, with 19 FPOs identified and capacity-building completed for five in Andhra Pradesh. Policy research and landscape planning show promising, but have also experienced uneven advancement. The project has completed comprehensive policy studies and secured agreements with 9 of 10 total target micro-landscapes through extensive stakeholder consultations involving district officials, forest departments, and local governments. However, the formal establishment of MSLMBs lags, with only 1 of 8 mid-term targets achieved. Also, identified convergence opportunities with state governments remain unimplemented, despite the submission of proposals. The MEL system is functional with adequate reports submitted to implementing agencies, though some assessments are deferred closer to project completion.

67. The project faces challenges in achieving market-oriented outcomes, with zero progress on company commitments to responsible sourcing, FPO sales increases, and loan capital access for sustainable practices. Private and blended financing has reached only $54,240 of the $1 million mid-term target (5.42%), indicating significant shortfalls in leveraging private sector engagement. However, extensive groundwork is being established through 19 identified FPOs, financial institution partnerships with Samunnati and NABKISAN, and participation in major industry events, suggesting potential for accelerated progress in the project's final phases. The cost-benefit analysis showing 50% of farmers with positive outcomes provides a solid foundation for future market engagement and scaling efforts.

Likelihood of Impact

68. The project has made the following impact towards its overarching objective:

- O1 (LDN area under improved management): The project has exceeded its mid-term target (41,931 ha versus 40,000 ha), which shows good performance in landscape delineation and participatory planning. (Rating: Highly Satisfactory)
- O2 (Certified area under RA-SAS): While progress (43,077 ha) is approaching the mid-term target of 55,000 ha, the uptake of certification has been slower than expected due to external market factors, especially high global coffee prices. An additional 19,170 ha are in the pipeline, which may help close the gap. (Rating: Unsatisfactory – U)
- O3 (Sustainable land management in production systems): With 352,433 ha reported against a mid-term target of 475,000 ha, the project’s progress in this area behind the target. RySS’s APCNF has been crucial for this result. (Rating: Moderately Satisfactory – MS)
- O4 (HCVF loss avoided): The achievement of this objective stands at 3,123 ha against a target of 5,000 ha. Work has begun on HCVF 5 and 6 categories, and progress is expected to accelerate with the finalization of SLMPs. (Rating: Moderately Satisfactory – MS)

Table 11: Likelihood of Impact

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Evident or emerging?	Discussion
Drivers to support transition from Outputs to the Project Outcomes	Yes	Overall adequate technical delivery, particularly in farmer outreach, agroecological practice adoption, and training systems, is evident. Institutional platforms (e.g., PMU, MEL systems, CRP network) are functional and support scale-up.
Assumptions for the change process from Outputs to Project Outcomes	Partially	Some key assumptions, such as policy uptake, certification traction, and private sector response, have been realized only partially. Institutional inertia and certification delays have constrained the full realization of results.
Proportion of **Project Outcomes** fully or partially achieved	Partially	Several outcomes related to sustainable land management and farmer behavior change are on track. However, outcomes related to the formation of MSLMBs, blended finance, and sourcing commitments remain challenged.
Drivers to support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	Partially	Community-level behavior change and institutional awareness are emerging, but enabling conditions, such as the establishment and functioning of MSLMBs and the establishment of market linkages, are not operational.
Assumptions for the change process from the Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	Partially	Assumptions related to the project's convergence with public schemes, investment pipeline growth, and functioning monitoring mechanisms are only partially holding true. Institutional capacities remain uneven across the landscapes.
Proportion of **Intermediate States** achieved	Partially	Preliminary conditions such as landscape planning, practice adoption, and initial ecosystem restoration are evident. However, durable systems for landscape governance, finance, and impact monitoring are not yet realized.
Drivers to support transition from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially	There is growing state-level ownership (e.g., RySS, District Water Management Agency [DWMA]), and strong MEL systems are in place. However, financing mechanisms, policy mainstreaming, and long-term institutional sustainability are not yet secured.
Assumptions for the change process from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially	Achieving ecosystem-level change and systemic agricultural transformation depends on scaling MSLMBs, financing SLMPs, and securing long-term convergence, all of which remain in early stages or pending.

69. The likelihood of the project achieving its intended long-term impact (such as reducing land degradation and conserving biodiversity in high-biodiversity agricultural landscapes through sustainable production systems and public-private finance) is rated as moderately likely, based on current progress. The project has demonstrated good performance in scaling sustainable agricultural practices across Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, particularly through the adoption of RySS's APCNF and Rainforest Alliance's RA-SAS. One distinction has to be made clear here in terms of impact. While the project association with RySS's natural farming programme has been crucial for the achievement of results in Andra Pradesh, it is not possible to attribute the work of RySS through a direct line to the Sabal project. RySS's work in this area would have continued anyways, but the Sabal project has provided it with more structure (including institutional aspects such as the MSLMBs and the landscape concept) and indirect financial support. As a result of this work, at the point of this MTR in mid-2025 about 449,000 farmers were already applying sustainable practices, and about 350,000 hectares are under natural farming systems. These figures reflect high-level behavioral

adoption, particularly among women, which lays a robust foundation for ecological transformation. Additionally, foundational work on landscape delineation, SLMPs, and policy analysis is well underway, suggesting that the output-to-outcome transition is already materializing in some landscapes.

70. However, several enabling mechanisms critical for translating outcomes into sustained intermediate states remain partially developed or delayed. MSLMBs, which in this project represent the institutional cornerstone for integrated landscape governance, have only been formally established in one micro-landscape, despite widespread engagement. Also, the project's financial leverage, private sector sourcing commitments, and blended finance instruments are progressing more slowly than anticipated. While technical systems (e.g., PxD advisory tools, MEL frameworks, CRP networks) are functioning well, institutional drivers such as government programme convergence, regulatory uptake of policy recommendations, and post-project financing mechanisms have yet to fully materialize. These constraints reduce the certainty of sustained transformation beyond the project's life unless corrective action is taken in the remaining years. Nevertheless, the Sabal project has significant potential to be catalytic, if it gains visibility in national forums, maintains alignment with India's LDN and agroecology priorities, and especially if it continues to rely on the commitment of key implementing agencies such as RySS. There are some signals of behavioral change, institutional awareness, and ecosystem planning, all of which are necessary preconditions for long-term impact. If the MSLMBs are fully institutionalized and linked to governance systems at the local level, and if ongoing efforts to attract responsible sourcing and blended finance are consolidated, the project is well positioned to achieve its intended impact by 2028 and beyond. Continued adaptive management and targeted investments in institutional capacity, policy alignment, and landscape-level finance will be essential to maximize and sustain impact likelihood.

Findings Statements on Effectiveness*:*

71. Overall, the Sabal project has shown adequate performance in farmer-level capacity building and agricultural transformation, with about 449,000 farmers adopting sustainable practices across about 352,000 hectares in the two states in question, exceeding the set targets. The project has implemented Community Natural Farming and Rainforest Alliance standards, established an adequate monitoring system, and developed evidence-based policy proposals. Knowledge management and outreach activities have also performed well, with learning packages already surpassing end-of-project dissemination goals. However, critical institutional and market-oriented components are behind schedule. Only one MSLMB has been formally established out of eight that were targeted, which creates bottlenecks for downstream activities including the development of business plans and sustainable landscape management plans. Private sector engagement has not delivered any formal contracts or sourcing commitments. These delays in governance structures and market linkages might compress several key deliverables into the project's final phase.

72. The likelihood of achieving long-term impact is assessed as "Moderately Likely", dependent on accelerating institutional formation and strengthening market mechanisms. While the Sabal project has built a good foundation through farmer adoption and technical capacity, sustained transformation depends on further operationalizing the landscape governance bodies, securing private sector commitments, and establishing financing mechanisms for the post-project period. Success will require targeted interventions to bridge the gap between grassroots adoption and the institutional frameworks needed for systemic change.

Rating for Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory (S)
Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact (Use 'Likely' scale): Moderately Likely (ML)

b. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

73. The project's financial management performance at mid-term is assessed as largely compliant with UNEP's policies and procedures, with a generally transparent and well-structured financial reporting system in place. However, the challenges in expenditure distribution across components and the operational bottlenecks outlined throughout this report require further attention and closer alignment with delivery expectations. The project follows UNEP's standard financial management protocols, including quarterly budget forecasts, annual financial reporting, and utilization tracking through the Project Management Platform (PMP). Rainforest Alliance, as the executing partner, in its fiduciary role, maintains control over budgetary disbursements, and consolidates expenditure reports from its own sub-implementing partners. Financial transactions are disbursed in accordance with approved budget lines, with no evidence of misappropriation or major compliance breaches.

Completeness of Financial Information

74. In terms of financial information completeness, the project provided disaggregated data on annual expenditures by component. At the point of this MTR, the project had delivered 27% of its total budget (total expenditure as of 30 June 2025 is $1,708,225 of the total $6,266,883) over three years. The project shows varied expenditure performance, with Component 1 delivering only 14% of the budgeted funds, despite receiving the second-largest budget allocation of $943,469. Component 2 shows 95% delivery, demonstrating that effective implementation is achievable within this project context. Components 3 and 4 show delivery of 50% and 53% respectively, reflecting some technical bottlenecks discussed throughout this report. Project Management Costs consistently exceeded budget across all years, reaching 139% of planned allocation, which suggests significant underestimation of coordination complexity in the original project design.

75. The expenditure data provided by the project (shown previously in Table 5) covers only the Rainforest Alliance component since integrated project-wide financial information was unavailable. The IUCN component of financial information was available, but separately (not integrated with the Rainforest Alliance component) and in a different format. More critically, the project's budget presentation approach is not adequate (as can be seen from Table 5). By allocating the entire budget to the 2022–2025 period and then retrospectively tracking annual expenditures against this total, the approach cannot demonstrate planned annual resource distribution or enable assessment of whether spending aligns with yearly targets and workplans. Instead, the approach only shows expenditure against total allocation up to the MTR point, which provides some indication of delivery progress, but prevents meaningful evaluation of financial planning adequacy, activity sequencing, or alignment between resource deployment and annual operational priorities.

Table 12: Financial Management

Financial management components:	Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's/GEF's policies and procedures:	Satisfactory (S)	No financial irregularities were identified. The project is generally in compliance with UNEP/GEF policies. However, minor delays in Component 3 spending highlight the need for closer coordination between technical and financial planning.

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	Financial procedures follow UNEP/GEF norms. No audit flags or procedural breaches reported.
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.		Yes	First disbursement occurred promptly following project document signature in November 2021, within the required timeline from GEF approval (July 2021).
Were the procurement policies of UNEP and the donor(s) followed? *(where applicable)*		Yes	Procurement handled by Rainforest Alliance and sub-partners in line with approved Source Selection Plans. No compliance issues reported.
2. Completeness of project financial information:		**Satisfactory (MS)**	**Overall, financial documentation is adequate and covers key areas of expenditure, budget tracking, and partner-level disbursement. But better integration of financial information is needed.**
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Provided in project design documentation and included in PIRs; disaggregated by components and partner contributions.
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Minor reallocations (e.g., under Component 3) noted in PIRs; no formal budget revision at the project level.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Project Cooperation Agreement with Rainforest Alliance available; sub-agreements referenced in partner documentation.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Disbursement records were summarized in financial annexes; clear audit trail from UNEP to Rainforest Alliance and from Rainforest Alliance to partners.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Partially	In-kind and cash contributions reported in PIRs; co-financing realization tracked by partner and activity. There is a need for more effective tracking of co-financing by justifying what is additive as a result of the project only, as opposed to what would have occurred anyways (counter-factual).
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Partially	Annual expenditure data available in PIRs and financial summary; disaggregated by component and activity. However, the financial information across the Rainforest Alliance and IUCN is not consolidated/integrated. Also, the two budget structures are not aligned – they follow different formats.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses	Yes	Audit were conducted and reports are available for 2022-2024.
H.	Procure documents, including the approved requisition document and Source Selection Plan	No	Procurement documentation not submitted for MTR; procurement assumed compliant based on financial summaries.
I.	Any other financial information that was required for this project:	No	No additional project-specific financial documentation was identified as missing beyond above-listed items.
Overall rating		**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	**The financial management system is broadly sound, adheres to UNEP/GEF standards, and supports the delivery of project outcomes. Some documentation gaps should be addressed prior to terminal evaluation.**

Findings Statements on Financial Management*:*

76. The project's rate of expenditure is moderately aligned with the project's workplan and implementation schedule, though not fully consistent with output-level delivery in all result areas. The lag in Component 3 disbursements affects key project milestones related to certification, responsible sourcing, and the commercialization of FPOs. Additionally, while financial flows between the lead executing agency and state-level partners are functionally coordinated, there have been delays in operationalizing convergence financing (e.g., under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS))[45] due to

bureaucratic hurdles and inconsistent alignment with state planning cycles. As a result, while financial reporting quality is strong, the main financial management issue affecting the project's delivery is strategic rather than procedural: the need to accelerate expenditures linked to high-impact outputs in market engagement and institutional financing. Strengthening integration between financial planning and adaptive technical delivery, particularly through stronger coordination between financial and programmatic leads, will be essential to ensure that available funds translate into timely and effective results in the project's second half.

Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory (S)
Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Satisfactory (S)
Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

c. Efficiency

77. As of mid-2025, the Sabal project demonstrates moderate to high efficiency in terms of cost-effectiveness and coherence. However, performance has been mixed in terms of timeliness, largely due to sequencing delays in institutional formation, slow policy convergence in Karnataka, and private sector engagement. Efficiency gains have primarily resulted by leveraging existing public systems, local institutions, and digital technologies. However, underutilization of Component 3 funds, limited return on investment in market-facing activities, and delayed formation of MSLMBs are areas that require greater attention and milestone-based oversight.

78. In terms of cost-effectiveness, the project has delivered a substantial volume of technical outputs and adoption outcomes at a relatively low unit cost. For example, over 449,000 farmers have adopted sustainable agricultural practices under APCNF and RA-SAS systems, exceeding the mid-term target by nearly 20%, with limited increase in delivery costs. This is attributable to the project's decision to integrate its activities with the RySS extension architecture in Andhra Pradesh, the use of Community Resource Persons (CRPs), and deployment of PxD's low-cost digital advisory platform, which now serves over 70,000 farmers. Additionally, homestead interventions and eco-enterprise equipment support have demonstrated high return on investment in tribal micro-landscapes. The leveraging of MGNREGS and other public schemes for restoration and agroforestry activities has further reduced direct project expenditure, improving delivery efficiency. However, the underperformance of Component 3, focused on certification, sourcing, and blended finance, has diluted efficiency gains in market-driven outputs, and presents a missed opportunity for private co-financing leverage.

79. From a timeliness perspective, the overall implementation is generally aligned with the project's scheduled six-year duration (2022–2028). However, critical sequencing issues have affected outcome delivery in some components. Key delays include the slow formation of MSLMBs, with only one formally established by mid-2025 despite preparatory work in nine micro-landscapes. This has delayed the full institutionalization of integrated landscape governance and hindered development of SLMPs. Similarly, certification uptake in Karnataka has lagged due to land tenure complexities and high coffee prices, affecting progress toward RA-SAS targets. The slow mobilization of private sector partnerships and blended finance instruments has also delayed progress on outcomes linked to responsible sourcing and financial sustainability. While adaptive re-sequencing, such as reallocating Component 3 funds to strengthen FPO capacity and scaling PxD digital services ahead of schedule, has mitigated some delays, further lags require greater attention and reinforced actions by the project team. Avoiding these will depend on assertive milestone management, tighter

performance monitoring, conditional disbursement scheduling, and a clearer roadmap for institutional and financial deliverables.

80. On coherence and complementarity, the project scores adequately. It has built on existing state programs, and most notably the APCNF platform in Andhra Pradesh, which has reduced the cost and complexity of scaling natural farming practices. In Karnataka, the project works through BAIF and local Gram Panchayats, aligning with government schemes and tribal development initiatives, though state-level convergence is less advanced than in Andhra Pradesh. It has also drawn upon technical partnerships with ICRAF, WASSAN, Coffee Board, and local research institutions for agroforestry, biodiversity monitoring, and SLMPs. Coordination with schemes such as MGNREGS, Department of Horticulture, and DWMA has enabled some convergence opportunities, although most remain unrealized due to procedural delays. The project has actively participated in national and international forums (e.g., World Coffee Conference, Biodiversity Day), thus helping to disseminate information about the model, creating potential for future replication, provided institutional and financial sustainability mechanisms are secured.

Findings Statements on Efficiency*:*

81. The Sabal project has overall demonstrated good cost-effectiveness through the strategic use of existing public systems, community-based delivery models, in-kind contributions from government schemes, and digital platforms, achieving high-volume farmer outreach and practice adoption at relatively low cost. However, delays in the formation of key institutional mechanisms (e.g., MSLMBs), under-execution of Component 3 (market access and finance), limited return on investment in market-facing activities, and lagging progress in certification and private sector engagement have impacted the timeliness and sequencing of results. While project coherence with national policies and complementary initiatives is tangible, state-level convergence in Karnataka remains less advanced than in Andhra Pradesh, and more assertive milestone management, tighter performance monitoring, and disbursement alignment are needed to optimize delivery and avoid downstream delays.

82. Overall, the project has experienced cost-efficiency through measures like institutional leveraging, high-volume delivery in sustainable farming practices, and early scaling of PxD digital advisory services. Yet, it needs to correct course on market access and landscape governance components to avoid extension scenarios. Adaptive re-sequencing has mitigated some delays, but risks remain if policy convergence and private sector commitments are not accelerated. A more integrated approach to sequencing, convergence realization, and targeted financial disbursement will be critical to enhancing implementation efficiency through 2028.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

d. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring of Project Implementation

83. The project's monitoring system is assessed as relevant, but partially effective in supporting the tracking of results and progress toward the project's objectives and milestones. A Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework was established early in the implementation phase, aligned with the GEF results architecture and UNEP's project management standards. The project maintains a basic Project Management Platform (PMP) that tracks milestones, output delivery, and progress against annual workplans.

84. Partners, such as RySS, WASSAN, BAIF, Humane Society International, and PxD, maintain their own internal MIS systems, which feed into consolidated reports prepared by the Project Management Unit (PMU) under Rainforest Alliance's coordination. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, the OB app managed by RySS facilitates real-time tracking of farmer-level data, adoption of natural farming practices, and land area under various sustainable interventions. Rainforest Alliance's certification database supports certification tracking in Karnataka, while PxD's digital platform captures user interaction data for digital advisories. However, integration between the partners' systems and the PMP is incomplete, resulting in occasional data gaps, delays in project indicator reporting, and inconsistencies in the level of detail across partner submissions. These issues are most pronounced for GEF Core Indicators that require geospatial verification and cross-referencing between multiple data sources. Based on the audit reports submitted for this MTR, there is no indication of systemic non-compliance with UNEP or donor reporting policies. This was also the case in financial information.

85. Disaggregation of monitoring data by gender, geography, and farm typology is to some extent evident, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, where over 96% of sustainable agriculture adopters are women, and farmer-level data is categorized by CRP clusters. Indicators such as the number of women farmers adopting agri-technologies, participation in SHGs, and benefit-sharing from eco-enterprises are tracked with gender disaggregation. However, disaggregated data is reported with less consistency for governance indicators (e.g., MSLMB participation), private sector engagement outputs, and some area-based measures, where links between hectares and beneficiary demographics are indirect and require methodological clarification.

86. Monitoring data has been used to inform adaptive management. For example, delayed certification has led to the consideration of alternative credible certification schemes and the reallocation of Component 3 resources toward capacity-building for FPOs and market readiness activities. Similarly, the impacts of the 2023 drought prompted the promotion of alternative cropping models (ATM, A-grade) and extension of training cycles. The project also responded to delays in the establishment of MSLMBs by enhancing district-level stakeholder engagement and shifting emphasis toward the use of Gram Panchayat as platforms for the MSLMB concept. While these course corrections illustrate that monitoring information is being used in decision-making, the process is sometimes more reactive than proactive, with limited early-warning mechanisms to anticipate underperformance before delays materialize. These factors indicate that the MEL system is functional and integrated into decision-making at multiple levels, but requires stronger data integration, more consistent disaggregation, and clearer indicator definitions to support more effectively real-time adaptive management.

Project Reporting

87. The Sabal project has fulfilled its basic reporting obligations to UNEP and the GEF, with three comprehensive PIRs submitted as of mid-2025. These PIRs follow UNEP's prescribed formats and adequately report on the project's results framework, financial execution, risks, and key achievements. The reports include qualitative narratives alongside indicator progress tables. However, the timeliness and completeness of reporting have been inconsistent, particularly for area-based indicators that require integration of data from multiple systems, geospatial validation, and verification by specialized consultants.

88. The project has made efforts to report on gender-disaggregated data, particularly in relation to sustainable agriculture adoption, capacity-building activities, and eco-enterprise participation. However, the inclusion of data and analysis on other vulnerable groups, especially Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities, is less consistent. Although tribal communities are substantively targeted in Kodagu and parts of Andhra Pradesh, data disaggregation for these groups remains limited to qualitative narratives. Similarly, while

project activities emphasize inclusive planning and participatory landscape governance, reporting does not systematically address the inclusion of persons with disabilities or specific accommodations made for their participation. Disaggregation is also inconsistent for governance-related indicators, such as MSLMB membership, and for private sector engagement outputs, where beneficiary profiles are less well defined. This represents an area for improvement to more fully align with UNEP's environmental and social safeguards and inclusive development standards, as well as to strengthen the project's capacity to monitor equitable benefit distribution across different social groups.

Findings Statements on Monitoring and Reporting*:*

89. The Sabal project has established a MEL system which is aligned with UNEP and GEF requirements and is supported by digital tools such as the OB app (managed by RySS), the Rainforest Alliance certification database, and the Project Management Platform (PMP). Partner-maintained MIS systems, including those of WASSAN, BAIF, Humane Society International, and PxD, also contribute to reporting, although integration with the PMP is incomplete. These systems facilitate partial, but not always timely collection and verification of data across both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, with particular delays and gaps for area-based GEF Core Indicators that require geospatial verification and multi-source integration. Monitoring data is reviewed and has informed course corrections in implementation sequencing, resource allocation, and targeting strategies. However, the use of monitoring data remains more reactive than proactive, with limited early-warning mechanisms to anticipate underperformance.

90. On reporting, the project has consistently met its formal obligations to UNEP and the GEF, submitting annual PIRs with detailed quantitative and qualitative progress updates. Reporting is to some extent gender-responsive, with disaggregation of data by gender and attention to women's participation across components. However, reporting on other vulnerable groups, such as Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities, remains limited in depth and consistency. Disaggregation is also inconsistent for governance-related indicators, such as MSLMB participation, and for private sector engagement outputs, where beneficiary profiles are less well defined. While the quality of project-level reporting is generally adequate, greater integration of social inclusion indicators, more consistent disaggregation across all indicator categories, and stronger follow-up on convergence and inclusion commitments would enhance accountability and alignment with UNEP's broader social safeguards framework.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**
Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation:	*Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*
Rating for Project Reporting:	*Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*

e. Exit Strategy & Sustainability

Exit Strategy

91. As of mid-2025, the Sabal project has made notable progress in laying the foundations for sustainability, particularly through its efforts for integration with existing local institutions. However, a formalized and comprehensive exit strategy is not yet fully articulated, and several critical dependencies and risks to long-term sustainability remain. The project's sustainability prospects are closely tied to the functionality and maturity of the MSLMBs and the operationalization of the landscape concept and the SLMPs. All of these are still in formative stages and require further capacity-building and formalized mandates. There is emerging ownership among state-level actors, especially in Andhra Pradesh, where the alignment with the APCNF programme under RySS has institutionalized natural farming within government policy and delivery mechanisms. Similarly, the participation of district authorities, local Gram

Panchayats, and community-based structures (e.g., SHGs and CRPs) reflects a promising level of decentralised engagement. However, in Karnataka, while BAIF's work in tribal landscapes is well-regarded, the institutional commitment of state government counterparts has been less visible, and private sector engagement is largely commodity-specific and market-dependent, with no strongly guaranteed continuity mechanisms. The absence of a clear resource mobilization plan or transition financing strategy further increases the risk that gains in the initiated landscapes may not be sustained after project closure.

Socio-political Sustainability

92. The socio-political sustainability of the project is moderate. In Andhra Pradesh, integration with the state-run APCNF programme has ensured alignment with political priorities and bureaucratic systems, reinforcing long-term government ownership. The project has engaged local governance institutions, such as Gram Panchayats and Self-Help Groups. However, in Karnataka, state-level institutional buy-in remains less consistent, and formal anchoring of MSLMBs into government systems is still incomplete. In both states, the MSLMB concept was not clearly established during project design, and the Project Management Unit has had to improvise its operationalization based on existing institutional structures and local context, slowing progress and limiting early institutionalization. In both states, targeted community members remain not fully aware of the concepts of landscape management and MSLMB, which indicates a need for more dynamic awareness-raising efforts at the community level. Sustaining landscape-level governance and interdepartmental coordination will depend on continued political commitment, policy endorsement, capacity-building for MSLMB members, and the establishment of clear mandates, resourcing arrangements, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that these structures remain functional beyond the life of the project.

Financial Sustainability

93. Project outcomes are also dependent on future funding, particularly those related to value chain development, certification, blended finance, and off-farm restoration. Many market-facing activities, such as certification uptake, commercialization of FPOs, and private sector procurement commitments, have not yet matured to a level that would ensure autonomous continuity. While some progress has been made in mobilizing private sector interest through buyer engagement workshops and early procurement trials, the current level of private co-financing and institutional investment from buyers and financial intermediaries remains low and insufficient to sustain momentum. Similarly, ecosystem restoration activities and SLMP implementation remain tied to anticipated convergence with public schemes such as MGNREGS and Forest Department programmes, as well as potential corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships, which have yet to be fully operationalized. Without securing long-term agreements, embedding financing into state-level agricultural and forestry budgets, or establishing dedicated revolving funds for community-based organisations, the continuity of these components is at risk.

Institutional Sustainability

94. Project sustainability is largely dependent on the durability of institutional frameworks and governance mechanisms, particularly the operationalization and functionality of MSLMBs. These structures were envisioned as platforms for coordinated landscape-level planning, convergence of departmental schemes, and inclusive community representation. However, at the design stage, neither the landscape approach nor the concept of MSLMBs was sufficiently clarified in terms of scope, purpose, composition, or operational modalities. This lack of conceptual clarity has posed a significant challenge during implementation, with the PMU making considerable efforts to adapt global models (drawing on the Rainforest Alliance's experience in other countries) to the specific realities of India's decentralized governance systems. As a result, the PMU has had to improvise by embedding these

innovations within existing local structures, such as Gram Panchayats in Karnataka and Village Organizations in Andhra Pradesh. While this adaptive strategy demonstrates strength by anchoring new governance mechanisms in existing institutions, progress has been uneven, with only one MSLMB formally constituted to date. Similarly, although policy briefs and technical studies have been produced, mechanisms to embed them into durable policy instruments, fiscal incentives, and regulatory frameworks remain underdeveloped. Establishing formal mandates, integrating these structures into state-level planning processes, and securing dedicated budgetary allocations will be essential to ensure their continuity and functionality beyond the project's closure.

Findings Statements on Sustainability*:*

95. The Sabal project has established a strong socio-political foundation for sustainability, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, where alignment with the state's APCNF programme and active engagement of Gram Panchayats and women's groups have fostered government ownership and community participation in sustainable agriculture and landscape governance. This integration has embedded natural farming approaches within state policy frameworks, increasing the likelihood of continuity beyond the project's lifespan. However, financial and institutional sustainability remain at risk due to delayed formalization of MSLMBs, the absence of a clearly defined MSLMB concept at the design stage leading to improvisation during implementation, limited progress in securing blended finance, and weak convergence with public schemes. Private sector engagement and co-financing remain insufficient to sustain value chain activities at scale, and convergence with key public programmes such as MGNREGS and Forest Department schemes has yet to be operationalised in a systematic manner. Without accelerated action to institutionalize governance mechanisms and secure long-term financing channels, key project outcomes may not be sustained beyond project closure.

Rating for Likelihood of Sustainability (use 'Likely' scale):	**Moderately Likely (ML)**
Rating for Socio-political Sustainability:	*Moderately Likely (ML)*
Rating for Financial Sustainability:	*Moderately Unlikely (MU)*
Rating for Institutional Sustainability:	*Moderately Likely (ML)*

f. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

UNEP/Implementing Agency

96. UNEP's role as the Implementing Agency has been generally effective in ensuring compliance with fiduciary and technical oversight requirements. UNEP has provided timely clearance of annual workplans, PIRs, and budget reallocations, and has maintained regular communication with the executing agency, Rainforest Alliance. The Project Management Platform (PMP) has been actively used to track implementation progress. UNEP has also facilitated budgetary flexibility to accommodate adaptive management measures, such as reallocation of resources to address drought impacts and certification delays. However, UNEP's supervisory function could benefit from more proactive follow-up on lagging institutional outputs (e.g., MSLMB formalization) and Component 3 delivery. Given the multidimensional nature of landscape governance, private sector engagement, and market systems development, more sustained technical input on adaptive design, institutional anchoring, and sustainability planning will be essential in the second half of the project.

Partners/Executing Agency

97. Rainforest Alliance, as the executing agency, has performed well in coordinating a complex, multi-partner implementation arrangement across two states. The PMU has maintained regular reporting, convened TCC meetings, and ensured alignment between partners' activities and the results framework. Local-level partners, such as RySS in Andhra Pradesh and BAIF in Karnataka, have delivered key outputs in sustainable agriculture, training, and SLMP preparation. Rainforest Alliance has also demonstrated flexibility in adjusting partner roles where FCRA compliance issues necessitated replacements, ensuring continuity of field operations. However, there are gaps in strategic oversight of Component 3, where delayed certification and private sector engagement suggest the need for a more hands-on facilitation role from Rainforest Alliance. The limited progress in blended finance mobilization and convergence with public schemes further underscores the need for Rainforest Alliance to strengthen its leadership role in market linkage facilitation and financing strategies. Furthermore, the delayed formalization of MSLMBs indicates a need for stronger follow-through by FES, the technical partner responsible for landscape governance, alongside more clearly defined accountability for state-level government engagement in Karnataka, where institutional buy-in required further improvement.

Adaptive Management

98. The Sabal project shows evidence of adaptive management in several areas. In response to external constraints, such as certification market saturation and droughts, activities were re-sequenced, Component 3 funds partially reallocated to strengthen the capacity of FPOs, and digital extension services through PxD scaled earlier than originally planned. Adaptive measures have also included increased emphasis on Gram Panchayat-level engagement in lieu of slow formation of MSLMBs, and the introduction of alternative cropping models in response to climatic stress. The implementation team has used monitoring data to inform operational decisions, including revising SLMP timelines and adjusting agri-tech support models. However, some structural challenges, such as slow policy convergence and delayed MSLMB formation, have not been sufficiently addressed through formal redesign or governance restructuring. There is currently no milestone-based adaptive planning tool or "Adaptive Management Log" to systematically track risks, responses, and lessons learned. The project would benefit from clearer adaptive planning tools, including milestone-based risk flags linked to specific governance, market, and institutional outcomes, and a revised roadmap for institutional sustainability integrated into the project's exit strategy.

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

99. The project has demonstrated good engagement with community-level stakeholders, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, where SHGs, CRPs, and Gram Panchayats have participated in planning, training, and natural farming scale-up. This has been reinforced particularly through integration with RySS's APCNF programme in Andra Pradesh, which has institutionalized natural farming within state policy and delivery systems. In the tribal areas of Karnataka, BAIF has mobilized local cooperatives and eco-enterprise groups, and facilitated initial steps toward the participatory development of SLMPs, although more structured mechanisms for inclusion, particularly in MSLMBs, remain underdeveloped. Cooperation with government agencies has been uneven. While RySS and district authorities in Andhra Pradesh are more closely engaged, line departments in Karnataka have yet to operationalize key convergence opportunities. Institutional engagement in Karnataka has also been hampered by the absence of formalized roles for state-level agencies in the governance of MSLMBs and by slow follow-up on policy convergence commitments. Engagement with private sector actors is at an early stage and lacks formal agreements or long-term sourcing frameworks, and blended finance mobilisation efforts are yet to translate into concrete co-investment deals or buyer commitments. As the project enters its final phase, deeper institutional engagement, especially with state-level departments and buyers, as well as more formalized multi-party agreements, is essential for sustaining momentum

and embedding the project's innovations into public systems. In Karnataka, the project has initiated discussions with the Kodagu University, which seem very promising as the university has expressed interest in working with the project on community development issues and research related all key topics covered by the project.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

100. The Sabal project incorporated a gender analysis during the design phase, with specific attention to the role of women in sustainable agriculture, household nutrition, and community-based governance. The design also acknowledged the importance of targeting tribal communities and other marginalized groups, identifying potential barriers to participation and proposing strategies for engagement. Implementation has reflected a strong gender-responsive approach, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, where over 96% of farmers adopting APCNF practices are women, and more than 15,000 Community Resource Persons (CRPs), a majority of whom are women, have been engaged to lead field-level extension. Women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are active in eco-enterprises and agri-tech adoption, and gender-disaggregated monitoring is embedded in project systems such as URVI and PxD. Adaptive management has reinforced gender outcomes by tailoring training curricula, CRP deployment, and enterprise support to women's time availability, literacy levels, and mobility constraints. However, while gender integration is commendable, broader inclusion of other human rights dimensions, such as those related to Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities, has been inconsistent and largely qualitative in reporting. The project has not yet developed systematic inclusion indicators, tracked consistently disaggregated data for these groups, or put in place targeted accommodations to address structural barriers to participation, though qualitative efforts in tribal areas are evident through BAIF's livelihood support and agroforestry interventions. Furthermore, governance structures such as the MSLMBs have yet to be institutionalized in a way that ensures equitable representation of women, tribal leaders, and other vulnerable groups.

Environmental and Social Safeguards

101. At the design stage, the Sabal project underwent UNEP's screening of environmental and social safeguards and its risk level was categorized as moderate, primarily due to its interventions in ecologically sensitive areas and engagement with vulnerable groups, including Scheduled Tribes. Mitigation measures were embedded in the design through sustainable land management practices, participatory governance structures, and agroecological farming systems aimed at enhancing ecosystem services. During the implementation phase, safeguards have been generally integrated, particularly in the preparation of SLMPs, where participatory processes and environmental risk assessments were used to prioritize restoration, agroforestry, and biodiversity conservation activities. The identification of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF) and mitigation of human-wildlife conflict in Kodagu district, led by HSI, reflects active risk monitoring and responsive design. Biodiversity-friendly farming models, afforestation, and restoration work have been conducted in consultation with local communities, and land use planning has avoided displacement or conversion of natural habitats. Social safeguards have been addressed through strong gender integration in Andhra Pradesh and engagement of tribal communities in Karnataka, although systematic inclusion of persons with disabilities and tracking of benefits to other vulnerable groups remain limited. However, formal safeguard documentation, such as community grievance mechanisms or risk monitoring reports, was not submitted at mid-term, suggesting that compliance remains more operational than procedurally documented. Strengthening structured safeguard reporting, standardizing safeguard indicators within the MEL system, and integrating social risk indicators, particularly for tribal rights, land tenure security, and equitable benefit sharing, will improve alignment with UNEP's safeguard policies and enhance the credibility of sustainability outcomes.

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

102. Country ownership is particularly strong in Andhra Pradesh, where the project aligns closely with the state's flagship APCNF programme and is embedded in the operational systems of RySS, a government-backed agency. Government agencies are involved in planning, training, and monitoring, and there is demonstrated political and bureaucratic backing that has facilitated integration with rural development structures and growing convergence with other schemes such as MGNREGS. Another example are the district-level workshops organized under the leadership of District Collectors. In Karnataka, while BAIF has established operational credibility and community engagement, formal integration with state-level planning processes and anchoring of MSLMBs within government frameworks remains limited. The project has submitted convergence proposals to Forest and Agriculture Departments, but take-up has been slow. The commitment of national counterparts, including the GEF Operational Focal Point and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), has been inconsistent. While central-level engagement has been evident in some aspects, especially through participation in the steering committee, it has been more limited in terms of oversight and policy convergence. Also, engagement with the MTR process by the two central-level institutions was quite limited. Going forward, the Sabal project will benefit from stronger vertical alignment with sectoral ministries at the federal level and departments at the state level. Overall, better interdepartmental coordination mechanisms will be essential to institutionalize landscape governance models and ensure sustained cross-state learning beyond project life.

Communication and Public Awareness

103. The Sabal project has made good use of communication platforms and national events to build awareness of sustainable agriculture and integrated landscape management. It has participated in major national and international forums, including the World Coffee Conference, International Biodiversity Day, and India International Coffee Festival, where it showcased project approaches and tools. A project film was produced early in the implementation period to explain objectives to stakeholders, and awareness materials on human-wildlife conflict have been disseminated widely in schools and Panchayats. While communication efforts have been effective at generating visibility and credibility, outreach could be strengthened by systematically linking communication products to behavior change goals and targeting stakeholders such as private sector buyers, policy-makers, and financial intermediaries. Additionally, developing community-facing materials in local languages and promoting stories of women's leadership and tribal enterprise would help further embed the project's equity and sustainability goals.

Findings Statements on Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues*:*

104. The project demonstrates strong gender responsiveness, with women-led SHGs and CRPs playing key roles in Andhra Pradesh and gender-disaggregated monitoring applied through digital tools such as URVI and PxD. However, inclusion of other vulnerable groups, particularly Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities, remains uneven. While BAIF's work in Karnataka shows some tribal engagement through livelihood and agroforestry initiatives, a broader human rights-based approach beyond gender is still lacking.

105. Environmental and social safeguards have been integrated into key planning processes, including SLMP development and HCVF identification, with evidence of mitigation in human–wildlife conflict areas. Biodiversity-friendly farming, restoration, and participatory land-use planning have been implemented to avoid habitat conversion and enhance ecosystem services. Yet, the absence of documented safeguard tools, such as grievance mechanisms, risk monitoring frameworks, and standardized indicators within the MEL system, limits transparency and full alignment with UNEP safeguard standards.

106. Local ownership is strong in Andhra Pradesh due to alignment with the APCNF programme, integration into RySS systems, and convergence with schemes such as MGNREGS. In contrast, Karnataka shows weaker institutional engagement, with slow adoption of convergence proposals and incomplete MSLMB formalization. While national and district engagement has been constructive, further efforts are needed to institutionalize governance bodies and embed project approaches into state planning frameworks for long-term sustainability.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	
Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision:	*Satisfactory (S)*
Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation:	*Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*
Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:	*Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*
Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards:	*Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*
Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness:	*Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*
Rating for Communication and Public Awareness:	*Satisfactory (S)*

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

107. The Sabal Project is piloting innovative approaches in India, particularly the landscape approach and the MSLMB model, both of which have been applied by Rainforest Alliance in other countries but remain experimental in the Indian context. One of the project's main values lies in testing and adapting these global concepts to India's diverse governance systems and socio-economic realities. This MTR highlights both achievements and constraints to date, while the project's Final Evaluation will ultimately determine the extent to which these approaches can be successfully institutionalised in India and provide lessons for their replication and scaling at national and state levels.

108. Overall, the project has performed at the "Moderately Satisfactory" level. It has demonstrated good performance in farmer outreach and capacity building, with nearly 450,000 farmers adopting sustainable practices across Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by mid-2025, equivalent to almost 60% of the end-of-project target. This achievement was made possible by strategically leveraging existing institutional platforms, particularly RySS and the world's largest agroecology programme (APCNF) in Andhra Pradesh. Through integration with government extension systems, deployment of over 15,000 Community Resource Persons, and the use of low-cost digital advisory tools provided by PxD, the project achieved a high volume of farmer training and adoption at relatively low cost. These efforts were further supported by adequate gender integration, with women accounting for over 96% of adopters, reinforcing the project's social inclusiveness and community legitimacy. In addition, the project has established an operational MEL system, complemented by cost-benefit analyses, knowledge packages, and visibility in national and international forums, which is now enabling the tracking of activities and creates conditions for the project's replication and scale-up in the future. Conservation outcomes are also visible, with more than 3,000 hectares of high conservation value forests protected, participatory land-use planning initiated, and nearly 400,000 hectares brought under natural farming and Rainforest Alliance standards. These achievements show the project's potential to operationalize sustainable land management practices at scale.

109. Despite these strengths, progress in building the institutional and market systems necessary to sustain and scale these results has been slower and uneven. A key challenge has been the formation of the MSLMBs, of which only one has been formally constituted against a target of ten. While preparatory agreements have been secured in nine micro-landscapes, the absence of fully operational MSLMBs has delayed the development of Sustainable Landscape Management Plans and business models, which in turn constrains the project's capacity to institutionalize landscape governance. This shortfall stems from the lack of a clearly defined MSLMB concept at the design stage, requiring the PMU to improvise and adapt to existing local institutions, a process that has proven time-consuming and dependent on protracted government endorsement.

110. Market engagement and financing is also lagging. Although the project has established relationships with buyers, convened FPOs, and facilitated participation in high-profile commodity events, no formal private sector sourcing contracts or impact investment proposals have yet materialized. Only a small fraction of the targeted $5 million in blended finance has been mobilized. These challenges are attributable to delayed institutional groundwork, certification bottlenecks, and unfavorable external market conditions, such as high global coffee prices that reduced farmer incentives to pursue certification. As a result, the benefits of extensive farmer training and capacity building are not yet fully translating into sustained market access and financial sustainability.

111. Furthermore, while the project's financial management is sound and compliant with UNEP/GEF requirements, expenditure under Component 3 remains low, showing slow progress in market-facing activities. Monitoring systems are in place and adaptive management is evident, yet reporting gaps on governance indicators, social inclusion of vulnerable groups beyond women, and safeguards documentation show that not all cross-cutting priorities are being systematically captured.

112. With regards to the key strategic questions presented in the MTR's TOR, the review concluded the following:

- Evidence of contribution to sustainable production, supply chains, and public-private finance is strongest on-farm and nascent downstream. Sustainable production is demonstrated by 449,090 farmers applying CNF/RA-SAS practices across 395,510 ha (352,433 ha CNF; 43,077 ha RA-SAS) and 3,123 ha of HCVF conserved, with SLMPs initiated over 25,300 ha and one evidence-based policy proposal delivered to align incentives. Supply-chain and finance signals remain preliminary.

- Evidence of increased capacity and awareness is substantive and system-wide. The project has trained 449,090 farmers and 600 FPO members, deployed agri-tech with 550 adopters, and built a 15,854-strong Community Resource Person network, with women comprising 96% of adopters. Overall, the project has contributed to raising stakeholder understanding of sustainable production, value-chain requirements, and financing options in both states.

113. Overall, the Sabal project has already achieved some key early results in areas where it could rely on established institutions, community systems, and technical delivery platforms. However, there is a need now to focus on institutionalizing the landscape governance and MSLMBs, securing private sector commitments, and embedding financing mechanisms. Unless accelerated in the remainder of the project's lifetime, these institutional and market gaps may jeopardize critical deliverables into the latter part of the project cycle, limiting the durability of outcomes beyond 2028.

Table 13: Project Performance Ratings

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance		
1. Alignment to UNEP's, donors and country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) strategic priorities	The project is well aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy, the GEF biodiversity and land degradation focal areas, and national/state priorities, particularly through convergence with Andhra Pradesh's APCNF programme. In Karnataka, alignment is relevant but less embedded in state policy frameworks.	**S**
Effectiveness		
1. Availability of outputs	Most planned outputs have been delivered or are on track, particularly in sustainable agriculture, training, and SLMP preparation. Delays are evident in certification, private sector engagement, and MSLMB formation.	**S**
2. Progress towards project outcomes	Progress is strong in Andhra Pradesh due to institutional integration with APCNF, but more limited in Karnataka where institutional buy-in and convergence have been slower. Landscape governance outcomes are at early stages due to delayed MSLMB operationalisation.	**MS**
3. Likelihood of impact	If institutionalisation and financing gaps are addressed, the project has strong potential for transformative impact in sustainable agriculture and landscape governance. Current weaknesses in private sector engagement, institutional anchoring, and safeguards limit certainty of achieving long-term impacts.	**ML**

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Financial Management		
1. Adherence to financial policies and procedures	UNEP and RA have complied with financial policies, and reallocation decisions have been documented and approved.	**S**
2. Completeness of financial information	Financial reporting is timely, comprehensive, and meets UNEP/GEF requirements.	**MS**
Efficiency	Adaptive management has been evident through re-sequencing activities, reallocating funds to strengthen FPOs, and accelerating digital extension. However, some structural bottlenecks (e.g., slow convergence, delayed governance mechanisms) were not addressed early enough.	**MS**
Monitoring and Reporting		
1. Monitoring of project implementation	The MEL system is adequate, integrates digital tools, and informs adaptive decisions. However, gaps remain integrating the tracking systems of the various partners and in tracking more effectively social inclusion beyond gender.	**MS**
2. Project reporting	Reporting is timely, gender-responsive, and aligned with UNEP/GEF requirements, but social inclusion and safeguard reporting need strengthening.	**MS**
Exit Strategy and Sustainability		
1. Socio-political sustainability	Good in Andhra Pradesh due to APCNF integration; weaker in Karnataka where state-level policy convergence remains incomplete.	**ML**
2. Financial sustainability	Continued outcomes depend on securing blended finance, maturing market linkages, and embedding financing within public budgets.	**MU**
3. Institutional sustainability	Dependent on accelerating MSLMB formation, legal anchoring, and capacity building; risk remains if not institutionalised before closure.	**ML**
Factors Affecting Performance		
1. Quality of project management and supervision		**S**
1.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	Strong compliance oversight; needs deeper technical engagement in adaptive design and institutional sustainability.	**S**
1.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	RA has effectively coordinated complex arrangements; needs stronger facilitation in Component 3 and follow-up on governance structures.	**S**
2. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Good engagement at community level; uneven government cooperation across states; private sector engagement still nascent.	**MS**
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Some degree of gender mainstreaming; insufficient systematic inclusion of Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities.	**MS**
4. Environmental and social safeguards	Integrated into operational planning; procedural documentation and grievance mechanisms incomplete.	**MS**
5. Country ownership and driven-ness	Good in Andhra Pradesh; more limited in Karnataka where policy anchoring is still emerging.	**MS**
6. Communication and public awareness	Communication tools and awareness activities in place; scope to scale private sector outreach.	**S**
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-Point	**The project is delivering strong results in gender-responsive sustainable agriculture, monitoring systems, and state-level institutionalization in Andhra Pradesh. Weaknesses remain in institutional sustainability, private sector engagement, safeguards documentation, and convergence in Karnataka.**	**MS**

a. Lessons Learned

Lesson Learned #1:	**Embedding project interventions within existing government programmes from the outset improves the chances for sustainability and scalability.**
Context/comment:	A key lesson from the Sabal project is that complementarity in complex policy environments requires not just alignment with priorities but active reinforcement of the institutions implementing them, creating a multiplier effect that extends relevance beyond direct interventions. The integration of sustainable agriculture activities into Andhra Pradesh's APCNF programme has strengthened political alignment, institutional ownership, and resource convergence, supporting rapid scale-up and sustainability. In contrast, slower institutional anchoring in Karnataka underscores the need to secure such integration early in project implementation.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 4, 23, 28.

Lesson Learned #2:	**Early and formal establishment of governance structures is critical to sustaining landscape-level outcomes.**
Context/comment:	Delayed formation and legal anchoring of MSLMBs have slowed progress in landscape governance, limiting their ability to coordinate convergence and mobilise resources. Accelerated institutionalization, capacity-building, and policy endorsement are necessary to maintain momentum and safeguard results.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 25, 28, 78.

Lesson Learned #3:	**Farm-level progress on gender equality must be institutionalized in governance and market systems to secure equitable and durable outcomes.**
Context/comment:	The project demonstrates strong gender responsiveness at the farm level in Andhra Pradesh, with high women's participation through CRPs and SHGs and consistent sex-disaggregated tracking via URVI and PxD. However, these gains are not fully reflected in landscape governance or market outcomes. Inclusion of Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities remains uneven, and formal inclusion indicators are not systematically applied. Governance bodies such as MSLMBs lack full institutionalization to ensure equitable representation, while disaggregation for governance and private sector indicators is limited. As a result, inclusion risks remaining programmatic rather than embedded within institutions and markets.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 84, 99, 100.

b. Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Clarifying key institutional structures	• The project should fully clarify and formalize the "landscape" concept in both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, ensuring the use of a consistent definition, spatial demarcation, and institutional roles that align with state planning frameworks. • The project should accelerate the formalization and institutionalization of MSLMBs by embedding them within existing state-recognized governance structures (e.g., Gram Panchayats in Karnataka, Village Organizations in Andhra Pradesh), while at the same time strengthening their legal and policy mandates. • It should also provide capacity-building and knowledge support so that these bodies can deliver on landscape-level planning, resource management, and cross-sector coordination in a consistent and sustainable manner.

Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The landscape approach and the concept of MSLMBs were insufficiently defined at the design stage, resulting in delays, uneven progress, and weak legal/policy anchoring. Without accelerated formation, institutionalization, and capacity-building of these governance structures, as well as formal integration into state planning and budgeting systems, there is a high risk that landscape-level outcomes (e.g., restoration, sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation) will not be sustained beyond the project's lifecycle.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 23, 32, 72.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Institutional/Policy Recommendation
Responsibility:	Project Management Unit (PMU), in collaboration with State Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment; with support from UNEP and national executing agencies.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Immediate to medium-term (initiate acceleration and formalization within the remaining project period; secure policy anchoring and budgetary commitments within the next 12–18 months, before project closure).

Recommendation #2: Strengthening private sector engagement	• The project should accelerate the engagement of the private sector and the mobilization of blended finance by developing a structured roadmap that links FPOs and micro-landscapes to concrete sourcing commitments and investment pipelines. This could include the organization of targeted buyer roundtables with the Coffee Board and leading commodity companies, piloting alternative certification or assurance schemes where Rainforest Alliance uptake is constrained, and designing blended finance instruments in collaboration with financial intermediaries. • Rainforest Alliance, together with BAIF in Karnataka and RySS in Andhra Pradesh, should facilitate these partnerships and ensure that business plans for FPOs are market-ready. UNEP should provide technical support on structuring investment mechanisms and tracking co-financing.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Limited progress in private sector engagement, certification uptake, and blended finance mobilization, with no sourcing contracts signed and only a portion of targeted co-financing leveraged.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 33, 66, 98.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Market engagement and financing
Responsibility:	Rainforest Alliance (market systems lead), BAIF (field partner in Karnataka), RySS (Andhra Pradesh), in coordination with Coffee Board
Proposed implementation time-frame:	These measures should be prioritized for 2025–2026, with binding contracts and financing instruments secured no later than 2027 to enable market transformation and sustain farmer adoption beyond the life of the project.

Recommendation #3: Developing sustainability financing roadmap	• The project should develop and implement a comprehensive sustainability financing roadmap to address the high risk of financial discontinuity beyond GEF support. This roadmap should set out concrete mechanisms for embedding project approaches into state and district budgets, establishing revolving funds for community-based organizations, and leveraging convergence with major public schemes such as MGNREGS and Forest Department programmes. It should also identify and operationalize blended

	finance instruments in partnership with financial institutions, while expanding engagement with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Financial sustainability risks remain high due to weak convergence with public schemes and insufficient embedding of project activities into state budgets. Without a resource mobilization plan, outcomes in restoration, certification, and market development may not be sustained.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 62, 92, 109.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Financing and resource mobilization
Responsibility:	Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, MoEFCC, MoAFW, State Governments, and financial institutions
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, and state government counterparts should jointly lead this process, ensuring that commitments are secured by 2026 and financing mechanisms are operationalized by 2027. This will provide the institutional and financial continuity required to sustain restoration, certification, and market development outcomes beyond the project's closure.

Recommendation #4: Strengthening national ownership and institutional engagement	• The project should focus on strengthening institutional engagement at both state and federal levels to ensure stronger policy convergence and ownership of the project. • In Karnataka, Rainforest Alliance and BAIF should prioritize building formal partnerships with state-level line departments to accelerate the convergence of SLMPs and secure buy-in for the operationalization of MSLMBs. • At the federal level, UNEP and Rainforest Alliance should engage more systematically with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAFW), ensuring that policy briefs, fiscal incentive studies, and technical recommendations are reviewed and integrated into national frameworks on land degradation neutrality, agroecology, and biodiversity conservation. • This dual-level engagement should be institutionalized through regular interdepartmental coordination mechanisms, high-level policy dialogues, and documented commitments. • In Karnataka, the project should formalize the engagement with the Kodagu University, using the university as a strong base for organizing community organization events and research.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Stakeholder engagement is uneven - very strong at community level in Andhra Pradesh, but weaker in Karnataka, with limited buy-in at the state and federal levels.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 98, 105.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Stakeholder Engagement
Responsibility:	Rainforest Alliance (PMU), RySS, FES, BAIF, UNEP (for supervisory follow-up), respective and federal line departments
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within the next 12 months

Recommendation #5: Developing exit strategy	• The project should develop and implement a comprehensive, time-bound exit strategy that integrates institutional commitments, convergence mechanisms with public schemes, and dedicated financing pathways for key interventions.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Lack of a fully articulated exit strategy and over-reliance on future funding and public scheme convergence put financial and institutional sustainability at risk.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 90, 97.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Strategic/Sustainability
Responsibility:	RA, UNEP, State Governments, MoEFCC
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within the next 6 months

Recommendation #6: Strengthening financial management and the tracking of results and social safeguards	• For the remainder of the project, the project team should establish an integrated annualized financial plan that clearly indicates expected expenditures per component for each year. This plan should be updated at the beginning of each workplan cycle and tracked against actual spending, thereby enhancing the ability to monitor progress and make course corrections. • The project should develop an interoperable data management protocol that links the Project Management Platform with partner MIS systems, ensuring timely consolidation, reduction of reporting gaps, and harmonization of indicator definitions across all partners. • The project should integrate predictive analytics and milestone-based alerts into the MEL framework to identify potential underperformance proactively and trigger corrective action before delays materialize. • The project should strengthen the consolidation of financial data at the PMU level rather than only in response to external reviews. • The project should strengthen social safeguards and inclusion frameworks by establishing formal grievance mechanisms and integrating risk monitoring tools to cover Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities. • The project should strengthen the use of disaggregated indicators that capture the participation and benefits of Scheduled Tribes, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The current method of presenting the budget does not reflect annual planning or allocation, thereby limiting its usefulness for management and accountability. Current safeguards and inclusion approaches are operational, but lack procedural documentation, structured monitoring, and targeted measures for vulnerable groups beyond gender. There is currently no milestone-based adaptive planning tool or “Adaptive Management Log” to systematically track risks, responses, and lessons learned
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paragraphs: 72, 73, 74, 75.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Safeguards/Human Rights
Responsibility:	Rainforest Alliance, BAIF, RySS, UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within the next 12 months

ANNEX I. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 14: People consulted during the review

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Task Manager	Provides project oversight and technical guidance	Female
UNEP	Programme Management Assistant	Provides project administrative and programme support	Male
UNEP	Budget/Finance Officer	Provides financial oversight	Male
UNEP	Finance Assistant	Provides financial oversight support	Female
Rainforest Alliance	Director, Global internal Compliance	Conducts internal compliance reviews to ensure adherence to organizational policies and regulatory requirements	Female
Rainforest Alliance	Manager, Internal Compliance, Asia Pacific	Conducts internal compliance reviews to ensure adherence to organizational policies and regulatory requirements	Female
Rainforest Alliance	Senior Associate, Finance and Adminstration	Manages all administrative, contractual, and financial aspects of the project to ensure smooth and compliant operations.	Male
Rainforest Alliance	Manager, Markets	Leads efforts to connect Farmer Producer Organisations with national and international markets, engaging private sector partners and coordinating with Rainforest Alliance's international markets team.	Male
Rainforest Alliance	Senior Associate, MEL	Supports Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) activities according to the project M&E plan, reporting to the Project Coordinator and providing data and information for project progress and learning.	Male
Rainforest Alliance	Senior Technical Associate, Karnataka	Oversees partners and consultants delivering project outputs and maintains close relationships with Karnataka state government departments and Commodity Boards.	Male
Rainforest Alliance	Senior Technical Associate, Andhra Pradesh	Oversees partners and consultants delivering project outputs and maintains close relationships with Andhra Pradesh state government departments and Commodity Boards.	Female
Rainforest Alliance	Environment Consultant	Provides technical expertise on environmental aspects of the project, ensuring activities promote land degradation neutrality, conserve biodiversity and High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF), and comply with environmental standards to support sustainability.	Male
Rainforest Alliance	Communications consultant	Develops and implements communication strategies, manages outreach materials, and supports internal and external project communications.	Female
Rainforest Alliance	Associate GIS	Manages the project's GIS database, performs time series analysis and land use/land cover planning, delineates polygons for micro-landscapes and project boundaries, and supports spatial analysis to inform project planning and reporting	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Rainforest Alliance	Gender Consultant	The Gender Specialist brings tools and expertise to support gender mainstreaming in the project. They assess gender gaps in farms and micro-landscapes and contribute to work plans, training methodologies, and content to ensure gender-responsive implementation.	Female
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	State Team Lead - Andhra Pradesh	Leads the project's policy work in Andhra Pradesh to drive changes in government policies and procedures that encourage sustainable agriculture. Responsible to IUCN and the Steering Committee for executing deliverables related to IUCN within project implementation arrangements.	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Senior Project Manager	Liaises with government officials in Andhra Pradesh for advocacy and develops policy briefs based on project findings. Provides direction for landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes and oversees research studies.	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Field Resource Person	Implements landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Senior Project Manager	Liaises with government officials in Andhra Pradesh for advocacy and develops policy briefs based on project findings. Provides direction for landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes and oversees research studies.	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Field Resource Person	Implements landscape-level activities in micro-landscape	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Senior Project Manager	Liaises with government officials in Karnataka for advocacy and develops policy briefs based on project findings. Provides direction for landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes and oversees research studies.	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	State Team Lead - Andhra Pradesh	Leads the project's policy work in Karnataka to drive changes in government policies and procedures that encourage sustainable agriculture. Responsible to IUCN and the Steering Committee for executing deliverables related to IUCN within project implementation arrangements.	Male
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Field Resource Person	Implements landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes	Male
WASSAN	Associate Director	Is responsible as the field implementation partner in the Eastern Ghats and coordinates closely with the PMU to ensure smooth execution in Andhra Pradesh as per the donor-approved work plan	Male
WASSAN	Micro-landscape Thematic Coordinator	Coordinates thematic work and ensures activities are implemented in micro-landscapes in coordination with Cluster Coordinators and MSLMBs, maintaining quality and alignment with project work plans. Oversees ground implementation of project interventions in specific micro-landscapes.	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
WASSAN	Micro-landscape Cluster Coordinator	Serves as the key liaison in micro-landscapes, mobilizes stakeholder groups to form MSLMBs, participates in meetings with local authorities to formalize these bodies, and facilitates the development and implementation of SLMPs	Male
WASSAN	Micro-landscape Cluster Coordinator	Serves as the key liaison in micro-landscapes, mobilizes stakeholder groups to form MSLMBs, participates in meetings with local authorities to formalize these bodies, and facilitates the development and implementation of SLMPs	Male
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WASSAN	Micro-landscape Thematic Coordinator	Coordinates thematic work and ensures activities are implemented in micro-landscapes in coordination with Cluster Coordinators and MSLMBs, maintaining quality and alignment with project work plans. Oversees ground implementation of project interventions in specific micro-landscapes.	Male
WASSAN	Micro-landscape Thematic Coordinator	Coordinates thematic work and ensures activities are implemented in micro-landscapes in coordination with Cluster Coordinators and MSLMBs, maintaining quality and alignment with project work plans. Oversees ground implementation of project interventions in specific micro-landscapes.	Female
RySS	Advisor	The Advisor of RySS acts as the key link between RySS and the project governance structures. The Advisor represents RySS in Project Management Unit (PMU) meetings, ensuring RySS's perspectives and contributions are integrated into project planning and implementation. The Executive Vice Chairman (EVC) represents RySS in Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings.	Male
BAIF	Project coordinator	Coordinates thematic work and ensures activities are implemented in micro-landscapes in coordination with Cluster Coordinators and MSLMBs, maintaining quality and alignment with project work plans. Oversees ground implementation of project interventions in specific micro-landscapes.	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
BAIF	Field Resource Person	Conducts training for farmers on regenerative agriculture and implements on-farm and landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes.	Male
BAIF	Field Resource Person	Conducts training for farmers on regenerative agriculture and implements on-farm and landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes.	Male
BAIF	Field Resource Person	Conducts training for farmers on regenerative agriculture and implements on-farm and landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes.	Male
BAIF	Field Resource Person	Conducts training for farmers on regenerative agriculture and implements on-farm and landscape-level activities in micro-landscapes.	Male
Humane World for Animals (HWS) -	Manager, Wildlife Protection Division	Provides technical support and advice on mitigating human-wildlife conflict in the Western Ghats. Designs project interventions, mobilizes stakeholders, conducts sensitization activities, and influences policy to reduce conflict and promote coexistence.	Male
HSI	Field Resource Person	Supports stakeholder mobilization through capacity-building activities related to human-wildlife conflict, targeting the Forest Department and coffee plantation estates.	Male
Karnataka Forest Department	Range Forest Officer	Forest Range Officers (FROs) play a vital role in implementing forest and wildlife conservation efforts in Karnataka. Collaborating with them strengthens the project's impact, particularly in areas related to human-wildlife conflict mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land use planning in micro-landscapes.	Male
Gram Panchayat	President	Gram Panchayats play a central role in local governance and community mobilization across Karnataka. Collaborating with them enhances the project's ability to implement sustainable land use practices, promote regenerative agriculture, and strengthen participatory planning and convergence of schemes in micro-landscapes.	Female
Gram Panchayat	Vice president	Gram Panchayats play a central role in local governance and community mobilization across Karnataka. Collaborating with them enhances the project's ability to implement sustainable land use practices, promote regenerative agriculture, and strengthen participatory planning and convergence of schemes in micro-landscapes.	Female
Gram Panchayat	PDO	Gram Panchayats play a central role in local governance and community mobilization across Karnataka. Collaborating with them enhances the project's ability to implement sustainable land use practices, promote regenerative agriculture, and strengthen participatory planning and convergence of schemes in micro-landscapes.	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Coffee Board of India	Deputy Director (Extension)	The Coffee Board supports sustainable coffee cultivation and farmer livelihoods in Karnataka. Collaborating with them helps promote regenerative agriculture, provide technical support, and align project activities with landscape planning and government schemes.	Female
Coffee Board of India	Senior Liaison officer	The Coffee Board supports sustainable coffee cultivation and farmer livelihoods in Karnataka. Collaborating with them helps promote regenerative agriculture, provide technical support, and align project activities with landscape planning and government schemes.	Male
Coffee Board of India	Junior Liaison officer	The Coffee Board supports sustainable coffee cultivation and farmer livelihoods in Karnataka. Collaborating with them helps promote regenerative agriculture, provide technical support, and align project activities with landscape planning and government schemes.	Male
Tata Coffee	Sr General Manager (FRM & Sustainability)	Leads sustainability initiatives and collaboration supports landscape-level conservation, sustainable agriculture, and integration of project goals with corporate sustainability strategies.	Male
Tata Coffee	Manager, Safety & Sustainability	Oversees safety and sustainability practices. Collaboration ensures safe field operations and alignment of project activities with Tata Coffee's sustainability standards.	Male
Tata Coffee	Manager-Certification	Manages certification processes. Collaboration helps align project interventions with certification requirements and supports compliance and market access for coffee growers.	Male
Kodagu University	Vice Chancellor	The Vice Chancellor of Kodagu University plays a pivotal role in fostering academic research and community engagement. Collaboration supports the integration of scientific studies, capacity building, and knowledge dissemination to enhance sustainable landscape management and promote innovation in regenerative agriculture.	Male
RySS	L1	The cadre builds farmers' capacities through continuous support and innovative farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing. They facilitate knowledge transfer within communities, promote RySS's natural farming practices, and engage with women's self-help groups and government schemes to support sustainable agriculture.	Male
RySS	L2	The cadre builds farmers' capacities through continuous support and innovative farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing. They facilitate knowledge transfer within communities, promote RySS's natural farming practices, and engage with women's self-help groups and government schemes to support sustainable agriculture.	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
RySS	L3	The cadre builds farmers' capacities through continuous support and innovative farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing. They facilitate knowledge transfer within communities, promote RySS's natural farming practices, and engage with women's self-help groups and government schemes to support sustainable agriculture.	Female
RySS	ICRPs	The cadre builds farmers' capacities through continuous support and innovative farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing. They facilitate knowledge transfer within communities, promote RySS's natural farming practices, and engage with women's self-help groups and government schemes to support sustainable agriculture.	Male
RySS	Additional DPM	Prepares annual operational plans and provides yearly updates on natural farming activities across project landscapes in Andhra Pradesh. Ensures that project results and lessons are internalized in RySS for integration into its work in other production landscapes.	Male
RySS	Model Mandal Incharge	Leads RySS's model mandal strategy in designated model mandals, driving implementation, community engagement, and synergies with the Sabal project.	Male
M.Nittaputtu Farmer Producer Organisation	Board of Director	Represents the FPO for coffee farmers in tribal areas. Supports capacity building and market linkages through the Sabal project. Advocates for farmers and promotes sustainable practices.	Female
M.Nittaputtu Farmer Producer Organisation	Board of Director	Represents the FPO for coffee farmers in tribal areas. Supports capacity building and market linkages through the Sabal project. Advocates for farmers and promotes sustainable practices.	Female
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M.Nittaputtu Farmer Producer Organisation	Board of Director	Represents the FPO for coffee farmers in tribal areas. Supports capacity building and market linkages through the Sabal project. Advocates for farmers and promotes sustainable practices.	Male
M.Nittaputtu Farmer Producer Organisation	Board of Director	Represents the FPO for coffee farmers in tribal areas. Supports capacity building and market linkages through the Sabal project. Advocates for farmers and promotes sustainable practices.	Male
ASR District Government officers	Forest Range Officer, Paderu	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
ASR District Government officers	Project Director (DWMA) Watersheds	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male
ASR District Government officers	District Agricultural Officer,	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male
ASR District Government officers	District Horticulture Officer	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Female
ASR District Government officers	Deputy Director (Coffee Board), Paderu	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male
ASR District Government officers	Senior Field Officer (Spices Board), ASR	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Female
ASR District Government officers	Project Director (DRDA), ASR	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male
ASR District Government officers	Divisional Manager (GCC)	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male
ASR District Government officers	District Project Manager (RySS), ASR	ASR District Government Officers facilitate coordination between the project and government departments at the district level. They support implementation by ensuring alignment with local policies, mobilizing resources, and promoting convergence with government schemes	Male

Organization	Position	Role in the project	Gender
SERP	Mandala Samakya President	Leads and coordinates natural farming activities at the mandal level, facilitates community mobilization, and ensures alignment of project goals with local governance structures	Female
SERP	Village Organisation President	Guides the village-level organization, mobilizes community members, and supports implementation of natural farming and other sustainable practices within the village	Female
Community	VSS president	Leads the Vana Samrakshana Samiti (Forest Protection Committee), mobilizes community efforts for forest conservation, and oversees the protection and sustainable use of local forest resources	Male
Gram Panchayat	Sarpanch	Elected head of the village council, responsible for local governance, resource allocation, and ensuring government schemes and projects reach the community. Supports for project linkages with gram panchayat plans	Male
Gram Panchayat	Village Horticulture Officer	Provides technical support and guidance on horticulture practices, promotes sustainable crop production, and assists farmers in improving yields	Female
Gram Panchayat	Village Animal husbandry officer	Supports livestock health and management, advises on best practices, and helps integrate animal husbandry with sustainable farming systems	Male
CPF (Centre for Peoples Forestry)	Manager	Oversees project activities of CPF related to recognition of forest rights act in the mandal.	Female
Pasidi panta	Field Resource Person	Acts as a key link between the project and farmers, facilitates training and knowledge transfer, and supports field-level implementation	Male
SERP	Cluster Coordinator	Coordinates Mandal Samakhya activities within a cluster of villages, mobilizes stakeholders, and monitors progress towards project goals	Male
RySS	L1	Supports capacity building and continuous handholding of farmers, promotes natural farming practices, and facilitates farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing	Male
MGNREGS	Field officer	Implements MGNREGS activities as per approved gram sabha works, monitors field progress, and liaises with community members and local authorities.	Male
FPO	FPO -Board of director	Represents farmer interests, guides strategic decisions, facilitates market linkages, and promotes sustainable agricultural practices within the producer organization	Male
Chamundeshwari temple committee members	Community members	Potential area for sacred grove conservation in western ghats	Female
Tribal Bee Keepers	Bee farmers	farmers in Honey Bee Clusters who are providing training to other farmers in Train the trainer model	Male

ANNEX II. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- GEF- 10204- Revised Results Framework 05-09-2022
- Master workplan_rev. 01_27.03.2025
- CEO Endorsement
- Half Yearly Progress Report 2022
- Half Yearly Progress Report 2023
- Half Yearly Progress Report 2024
- Action Plan Rekalakunta GP - B Mattam -YSR Kadapa
- Action Plan for NRM MGNREGS -D Gonduru-Paderu Mandal- ASR
- HCVF - Workshop
- FES - HCVF Case study - 15 Jan 2025
- SABAL Achievements by 30th Dec 2024
- Report on training to Coffee board Extension Officers
- RASAS Certification Training Report
- Mandal Level convergence meeting - MOM KG Pudi
- Patterns of Human Fatalities
- International Coffee Day Report
- CRD Letter to RA
- RySS Letter for RA Marketing Workshop_July 2024
- Visit report to Cocoa growing areas of AP – Nov 2024
- Minutes of Workshop-Guntur
- Market_Study_Synthesis Report_draft_17.12.24
- Market Partners_SABAL
- MoU GVK & Rainforest Alliance
- WorldSoilDay-05Dec2024-Poster
- Case Study on Linking Nursery to Biodiversity & LDN
- RA-APCNF Baseline_Report_Final Version_14.12.24
- Participants- Geofence Training
- Budget new and old formats24 May 2021
- Approved UN Environment Project Document (including Appendixes)
- CEO approval/endorsement letter
- Draft Project Supervision Plan
- Inventory of Non-expandable Equipment Report Template
- Non- expendable Equipment Ownership Transfer Letter Template
- Funds_Transfer_Docusign and stamp
- Cash advance Requests
- Quarterly expenditure statements
- Cofinance Reports

- Decision Sheet-GEF10204 India project - signed SG
- Rainforest Alliance Account Info Letter 6450 - December 2020
- Signed PCA
- UNEP -Letter of Commitment
- PIR2023
- PIR2024
- APCNF Baseline (Practices & Cost-Benefit Analysis)
- MEL Plan
- MEL Workshop Proceedings
- PMP User Manual
- Theory of Change (ToC)
- Project Approved Workplan
- Project Logframe- Results Framework (RF)
- RASAS Baseline (Practices & Cost - Benefit Analysis)
- Project Document (ProDoc)

ANNEX III. REVIEW ITINERARY

12-14 Jun 2025 in Andhra Pradesh

Time	Theme	Focus of session
Day 1 (12 Jun 2025 Thursday) @ Hotel Green Park, Visakhapatnam		
Forenoon: Introduction and Context		
10:00 – 10:15	Introductions and opening remarks	Setting up the context
10:15 – 10:45	Project Overview	Lead Presentation (RA)
10.45: 11:30	Salient features of Eastern Ghats & APCNF and need for SABAL Project in Andhra Pradesh	Senior Advisor, RySS
11:30 – 11:45 Tea Break		
11:45-12:45	Overview and key characteristics of 8 Micro landscapes	WASSAN and Micro-landscape teams
12:45 – 13:45 Lunch		
Post lunch: Presentation on Achievement, processes, learnings and challenges		
13:45 -15:30	Presentations by project partners	• Policy / MSLMB • Marketing and Certification • Knowledge Management and Learning
15:30-15:45 Tea Break		
15:45 – 17:15	Open Discussions	
17:15 -17:30	Interaction with ATN (Virtual)	

- RA: Rainforest Alliance
- RySS: Rythu Sadhikara Samstha
- WASSAN: Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (Partner Non-Governmental Organization [NGO])
- MSLMB: Multi Stakeholder Landscape Management Body
- ATN: Associate Trainer Network

Time	Theme	Focus of session
Day 2 (13 Jun 2025 Friday) @ D Gonduru Landscape • Exploring D-Gonduru Micro landscape • Interactions with NF Farmers, VOs, SHGs, MSLMBs • **Natural Farming at "Landscape" Approach** • **Interactions with Coffee Farmers and FPOs** • **Biodiversity and Natural Farming**		
7:30 AM	Start from Hotel	
Forenoon: Understanding Models of Natural Farming leading LDN and Biodiversity		
11:00-13:00	Introduction and Transect Walk	SABAL Team
	On farm and Off Farm Activities: 1. Integrated Farming 2. Community Entrepreneurs Natural Farming Models	**Visiting different models:** Model as Support systems for NF leading to LDN and sustainable enterprises a) Eco Farm Pond b) Paddy Dehuller & Fish Feed Mill (Circular economy) & Millet Mixi (Nutritional Security) c) BRC Unit, APCNF d) ATM Model, APCNF e) A Grade model, APCNF f) Coffee intensification
13:00 -14:00 **Community Lunch:** at Kokkelu village		
Community Interactions:		
14:00 – 18:00	Interactions with community and existing institutions and different	**Context and Situation** • Profile presentation work • Plan and SLMP

	stakeholders to understand the social capital	• Activities and Progress • NF • HCVF, Commons, LDN **Interaction with MSLMB Community** • VO, SHG and Other CBOs, • NF Farmers • NF cadre • GP leaders

- SABAL: Strengthening Agriculture Biodiversity in All Landscapes (Short name of the project)
- LDN: Land Degradation Neutrality
- VO: Village Organisation (Federation of women Self Help Groups at Village Level)
- BRC: Bio Resource Center
- APCNF: Andhra Pradesh Community managed Natural Farming
- NF: Natural Farming
- HCVF: High Conservation Value Forest
- CBO: Community Based Organisation
- GP: Gram Panchayat

Time	Theme	Focus of session
Day 3 (14 Jun 2025 Saturday) **@ M Nittapattu Landscape Interactions with APCNF Farmers and CRPs and FPO** **Interactions with Government and other stakeholders**		
7:30 AM	Start from Araku Hotel	
8:30-11:00	Understanding Coffee Intensification as model to enhance incomes, establish enterprises and sustainable Models, understanding transition to LDN	Meeting with NF Farmers and Cadre Meeting with FPO (facilitation by SABAL field Team)
11:00 -11:45 **Travel to Paderu**		
11:45 – 13:30	Interacting with key Government officials and other stakeholders • District Collector • ITDA, GCC, DWMA, DRDA, APCNF DPMU • Coffee Board and Spice Board • Local Forest Department and Others	Understanding Contribution, scope of convergence and future directions
13:30 PM	Lunch and Travel to Visakhapatnam	

					Start	End	Time
	Travel from Gonikoppa to Virajpet				**9:15:00 AM**	**9:45:00 AM**	0.30 Hr
1	**First location: Virajpet**						
	Theme	**Description**	**Facilitation**	**Interaction with Officials/farmers/ entrepreneurs**			
a	Biodiversity - Human Elephant Conflict Management and landscape conservation	Collaborative working with Karnataka Forest Department on Conflict Mitigation	Joint presentation by Forest Department and HSI	Mr. Jagannath, Dy Conservator of Forests ACF, Range Forest Officers	10:00:00 AM	11:30:00 AM	1:30 hr
	Travel from Virajpet to Thithimathi				**11:30:00 AM**	**12:15:00 PM**	0.45Hr
b	Community Meeting	Building Community Informants Network, Community engagement for Conflict Mitigation	Interaction with beneficiaries of Human Elephant conflict management	Community	12.15:00	1:15:00 PM	1 Hr
c	Lunch Break				1:15:00 PM	2:15:00 PM	1 Hr
2	**Second Location: Aravathoklu**				**2:15:00 PM**	**2:30:00 PM**	1:00 hr
d	Sustainable and Regenerative approaches in Coffee	Collaboration with Coffee Board, Training of Extension Officers, ToTs	Interaction with Coffee Board Extension Division	Dr Sridevi, Dy Director & Team	2:30:00 PM	3:00:00 PM	30 Min
e	HCVF	Biodiversity Conservation-NTFP	Interaction with LAMP Society	S.Kumar, CEO & Members	3:00:00 PM	3:30:00 PM	30 Min
3	**Third Location: Maldhare**				**3:30:00 PM**	**16.00:00**	0.30 Hr
f	Human Elephant Conflict Management - Collaboration with Stakeholders	Collaborative working with Private Companies for Conflict Mitigation	Interaction with Elk Hill Estate and Tata Coffee Wildlife Division representatives	Mr Karthik, Tata Coffee Mr Pawan Monappa, Elk Hill Estate	4:00:00 PM	5:00:00 PM	1.00 Hr
	Return to Hotel @ Gonikoppa				5:00:00 PM	5:30:00 PM	0.30 Hrs

ANNEX IV. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

During the Mid-Term Review (MTR) visit held in June 2025, the Rainforest Alliance and its project partners presented detailed updates on project implementation, progress against targets, and emerging challenges. These presentations collectively reflected the achievements made under different thematic components and geographies, while also outlining key lessons and areas for course correction in the next phase of implementation.

Rainforest Alliance Provided an overview of overall project progress, key achievements against targets, implementation challenges, and priorities for the next phase.

MTR_slide deck_achievements_challenges_June 2025.pptx

RySS highlighted field-level implementation progress in Andhra Pradesh, showcasing farmer outreach, training coverage, and learnings from agroecological interventions.

RySS ppt. for SABAL project-120625f.pptx

Markets Component: Summarized progress in strengthening value chains, producer-market linkages, and enterprise development under the GEF-supported activities.

Markets_review_GEF.pptx

BAIF presentation focused on community mobilization, sustainable livelihoods, and natural resource management activities, along with key challenges faced during field execution.

BAIF_MTR Presentation 16th June 2025.pdf

FES presented landscape-level outcomes, progress in water and soil conservation, and collaborative efforts to enhance ecosystem resilience.

PPT for MTR - 16 June 2025_FES.pptx

HWA shared updates on capacity-building programs for reducing human wildlife conflict, farmer engagement strategies, and success stories from demonstration sites.

HWA Presentation_MTR 16th June 2025.pptx

PxD provided insights on digital advisory services, farmer feedback mechanisms, and data-driven learning outcomes from the advisory platform.

PxD_MTR PPT 16th June 2025.pptx

ANNEX V. PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATON STRUCTURE

Implementing Agencies

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) funds the project through two co-Implementing Agencies:

- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** – Primary Implementing Agency responsible for overall project supervision, compliance with GEF policies, and disbursement of funds to the lead executing agency. UNEP oversees technical and fiduciary quality, monitors delivery against the results framework, and liaises with the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** – Co-Implementing Agency with specific oversight for Component 1 (policy and enabling environment), contracting and supervising its designated executing partner. IUCN also provides technical expertise in biodiversity conservation and landscape governance.

Executing Agencies

- **Rainforest Alliance (RA)** – Lead Executing Agency and Project Management Unit (PMU) host, responsible for day-to-day coordination, financial management, procurement, MEL, and technical delivery of Components 2 (Sustainable Agriculture), 3 (Markets), and 4 (Knowledge Management). RA also manages contracts with most on-the-ground partners.
- **Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)** – Contracted by IUCN to lead Component 1, focusing on policy, advocacy, and enabling frameworks for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. FES also supports research, stakeholder engagement, and integration of project lessons into policy processes.
- **Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)** – Government-promoted entity and lead executing agency in Andhra Pradesh for Component 2 delivery on natural farming. RySS integrates APCNF principles into micro-landscape interventions and mobilizes community institutions such as Village Organizations (VOs) to anchor MSLMBs.

Key Project Partners and Roles

Government Partners

- **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW)** – PSC Chair; provides strategic direction, facilitates alignment with agricultural policy, and promotes integration of sustainable agriculture into government programs.
- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** – PSC Co-chair; ensures alignment with biodiversity, land degradation neutrality (LDN), and high conservation value forest (HCVF) objectives. Acts as GEF Focal Point.
- **State-level Departments (Agriculture, Environment, Forestry)** in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka – Support landscape-level interventions, facilitate policy linkages, and provide technical and institutional backing for MSLMB formation.

Private Sector Partners (Co-financiers and Market Linkages)

- **Tata Coffee** – Co-financier and supply chain partner in Karnataka, facilitating adoption of RASAS-certified coffee production.
- **Sucden** – Coffee trader and co-financier, supporting sustainable sourcing commitments.
- **Rabobank Foundation** – Financial partner promoting sustainable agribusiness financing models.

Local and Technical Partners

- **WASSAN** – Primary implementing partner in Andhra Pradesh due to FCRA compliance; delivers field activities in natural farming, livelihoods, and community mobilization.
- **Humane Society International (HSI)** – Leads human–wildlife conflict mitigation in Karnataka, including elephant movement tracking, conflict mapping, and development of farmer advisories.
- **Precision Development (PxD)** – Collaborates with the Coffee Board of India to enhance the Coffee Krishi Tantra digital advisory platform with sustainable agriculture content.
- **BAIF Development Research Foundation (BAIF)** – Provides technical assistance and extension services for sustainable agriculture practices in Karnataka.

Technical Advisory Partners

- **CIFOR–ICRAF** – Agroforestry expertise, supports integration of tree-based systems into landscape management plans.
- **Associate Trainer Networks** – Independent trainers working with Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and cooperatives to expand certification coverage and sustainable agriculture adoption.
- **Gender Specialist Consultant** – Provides training, sensitization, and integration of gender considerations into project activities.
- **LDN/HCVF Expert** – Designs and localizes frameworks for land degradation neutrality and high conservation value forest management; guides GIS-based mapping and prioritization.

Role in Project Delivery and Performance

Collectively, these partners deliver the four project components:

- **Policy and Enabling Environment (Component 1)** – FES, in coordination with government agencies, produces policy briefs, facilitates policy dialogues, and aligns project practices with state and national priorities.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Production (Component 2)** – RySS, WASSAN, BAIF, and RA field teams deliver APCNF and RASAS adoption, promote agroecological practices, and establish MSLMBs.
- **Markets and Finance (Component 3)** – RA's markets team, with private sector co-financiers and PxD, mobilizes market demand, strengthens supply chain linkages, and promotes access to sustainable finance.

- **Knowledge Management and MEL (Component 4)** – RA leads evidence collation and dissemination, supported by GIS specialists, thematic experts, and the MEL team using the Project Management Platform (PMP) for global reporting.

ANNEX VI. PROPOSED CHANGES TO RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND TOC

Proposed Changes to Results Framework

Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	End of project target	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks	Status & Proposed changes
O1. Area of landscapes under improved management aimed at achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and biodiversity conservation (qualitative assessment, non- certified) (GEF 4.1) (excludes value of GEF 4.4)	0	40,000 ha	135,000 ha (60,000 ha RA-SAS On-Farm) + 75,000 ha (KA+AP) off-farm)	**What:** **On-farm:** Sample-based survey of farmers´ practices and records of farmers with at least 50% application RA-SAS practices, verified by third party **Off-farm:** Field surveys to record changes in values of selected indicators Both on-farm and off-farm supplemented by high- resolution satellite images to detect changes in vegetation indexes **When:** At baseline, midterm and end of project **By whom:** PMU, supported by consultants.	Risk: Government may limit the authority of land management structures to implement micro-landscape management plans	**Status:** It has been very difficult to ascertain the adoption of 50% RA-SAS practices in 60,000 ha. the off-farm areas is expected to be implemented through government convergence, which can be influenced by policy, but it is not possible to detect changes in vegetation index in a short period of 2-3 years under the project through high-resolution satellite images. **Suggested change**: It is suggested to drop 50% RA-SAS practices, rather include conducting RA-SAS training programs as MOV to cover the on-farm area. For off-farm areas, SLM proposals developed and advocated to government agencies and key landscape stakeholders. For both on and off-farm, it is requested to drop high-resolution satellite images as MOV. **What**: On farm: Training programs are conducted through ATNs to support farmers in adopting sustainable agricultural practices aligned with RA-SAS code. Off-farm: The Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) approach is used to influence the targeted area by promoting proposed policy changes that enable land degradation neutrality and biodiversity conservation. Proposals submitted to the

Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	End of project target	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks	Status & Proposed changes
						government for consideration and adoption demonstrate the influence of the project at the policy level. **When:** At baseline, midterm and end of project **By whom:** PMU, supported by consultants.
O2. Area of landscapes certified under RA SAS standard, including new requirements for farm planning and climate risk assessments (GEF 4.2) (excludes value of GEF 4.3)	TBD (Year-1)	55,000 ha	75,000 ha	**What:** Farm and farmer group certificates **When:** At baseline, mid-term and end of project **By whom:** PMU	Risk: Farmers may decide that they do not want to pursue certification	**Status:** There are many factors influencing the uptake of farm certification, including international prices and global supply chain demands, which are beyond the scope of the project. As of June 2025, the status of RA-SAS certification is 43,077 ha certified, with an additional 19,170 ha in pipeline. **Suggested change:** The project targets include "certification-ready" farms instead of certified farms under RA-SAS. This reflects that the principles of RA-SAS are being implemented on these farms, and the farmers are just one step away from achieving certification. Once the market is ready and there is a demand for certified products, farms can move towards RA certification. It is also proposed to include other sustainability certification programs, e.g. Fairtrade, 4C, NPOP, which are available for farmers to choose from. Readiness or getting certified to these standards (and not only RA-SAS) can also be considered under the progress of project targets. **What:** Farm and farmer group sustainability standard certificates and/ or registration on sustainability standard certification platform and/ or training programs attended to become sustainability certification-ready. **When:** At baseline, mid-term and end of project **By whom:** PMU

Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	End of project target	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks	Status & Proposed changes
O3. Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems, not yet certified (GEF 3.1 + 4.3)	TBD (Year-1)	475,000 ha	1,015,000 ha (940,000 RySS +15,000 RA SAS+ 60,000, RySS 365 days soil cover system)	**What:** Sample-based survey of farmers´ practices and records of farmers with at least 50% application of CNF or RA-SAS practices, verified by third party and MIS system of RySS **When:** At baseline, mid-term and end of project. **By whom:** PMU, supported by project consultant.	Assumption: The CNF approach to farming will continue to receive political support from the Andhra Pradesh State government and central government.	**Status:** This indicator is a combination of GEF sub-indicators 3.1 and 4.3. The status of CNF practices on farm (GEF 4.3) is 3,52,433 ha as reported from RySS MIS system, URVI app. The progress for on-farm 365 DGC (GEF 3.1) is 66,659 ha. **Proposed change:** The target of 60,000 ha 365 days green cover (DGC) of RySS is already included in 9,40,00 ha area and hence, it is a mistake to add this number to the total target. The duplication should be removed, and the total target should be kept as 955,000 ha (940,000 ha + 15,000 ha).
O4. Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided (GEF 4.4)	0	5,000 ha	25,000 ha (15,000 AP + 10,000 KA)	**What:** Record of project activities undertaken as part of SLMPs to protect identified HCVF in project landscapes, supplemented by use of high-resolution satellite images to detect changes in vegetation indexes. **When:** At mid-term and end of project. **By whom:** PMU, supported by project team and consultant	Risk: Local governance structures may not take needed initiatives	**Status:** As per the MOV, HCVFs must be identified and included within the SLMPs targeting 100,000 ha. However, the total area of micro-landscapes for which SLMPs are being prepared is 41,931 ha ha. It is not feasible to identify 25,000 hectares of HCVFs confined within these micro-landscapes. Therefore, the project proposes to identify and implement HCVF-related activities within the broader project landscape, beyond the micro-landscape boundaries, to meet the target. It is also not possible to detect the changes in vegetation index in a short period of 2-3 years under the project. Hence, it is requested to drop high-resolution satellite images as a MOV. **Proposed change:** **What:** Record of project activities undertaken and proposals submitted to the forest department by project team in the

Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	End of project target	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks	Status & Proposed changes
						project landscapes to protect HCVF areas. **When:** At mid-term and end of project
2.1.3 Number of hectares of farmland in project landscapes (certified and non- certified) applying RA-SAS practices to conserve biodiversity and	TBD (Year-1)	75,000	150,000	**What:** Sample-based survey of farmers´ practices, records of participating farmers and audit reports of certified farms. **When:** At baseline, mid-term and end of project. **By whom:** PMU supported by project consultant.	**Assumption:** Farmers perceive it as in their interests to apply RA-SAS sustainability practices.	**Status:** There are many factors influencing the uptake of farm certification, including international prices and global supply chain demands, which are beyond the scope of the project. As of June 2025, the status of RA-SAS certification is 43,077 ha certified, with an additional 19,170 ha in pipeline. **What:** Farm and farmer group sustainability standard certificates and/ or registration on sustainability standard certification platform and/ or training programs attended to become sustainability certification-ready.
3.2.1 Value (US$) invested through private and blended financing mechanisms in project landscapes	0	1,000,000	5,000,000	**What:** Report describing sources, amounts (in US$) and destination of private and blended financing funds invested in SLM **When:** At mid-term and end of project **By Whom:** PMU	**Assumption:** Intermediary finance organizations can effectively manage financing smallholders	**Status:** The project has not been able to get confirmed commitments from private sector and blended finance yet, to the project landscapes. However, significant amount of convergence ($54,240) opportunities and public finance from government is being leveraged under the project. **Proposed changes:** Government convergence can be added to acknowledge the convergence realized through existing government schemes in the project. **Indicator:** 3.2.1 Value (US$) invested through private, public and blended financing mechanisms in project landscapes **What:** Reports describing sources, amounts (in US$) and destination of private, public and blended financing funds invested in SLM

Reconstructed Theory of Change

The project seeks to transform agricultural systems in high biodiversity areas of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka through sustainable land management (SLM), biodiversity conservation, and strengthened market and financial incentives. At the output level, the project delivers: (i) capacity-building programmes for farmers, extension agents, and multi-stakeholder landscape management bodies (MSLMBs) on climate-resilient and biodiversity-friendly practices aligned with RA-SAS and CNF principles; (ii) participatory landscape-scale plans integrating on-farm and off-farm SLM interventions; (iii) strengthened policy recommendations for integrating SLM and biodiversity into state and national agricultural frameworks; (iv) improved market linkages and buyer engagement for sustainably produced commodities; (v) facilitation of access to public, private, and blended finance for SLM adoption; and (vi) a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system to generate evidence on environmental, social, and economic benefits. Across all outputs, the project actively integrates human rights, gender equality, and inclusion of marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities, ensuring that training, decision-making, and benefit-sharing mechanisms are accessible and equitable.

These outputs contribute to outcomes where: (1) SLM and biodiversity conservation are embedded in fiscal and agricultural policy instruments; (2) multi-stakeholder bodies plan and implement integrated landscape management, with inclusive representation; (3) farmers adopt sustainable agricultural practices that improve yields, conserve biodiversity, and enhance household income; (4) off-farm restoration and conservation activities protect high conservation value forests; (5) companies increase procurement from sustainably managed landscapes; (6) public, private, and blended finance flows incentivise SLM at scale; and (7) evidence from the MEL system influences policy and replication decisions. The transition from outputs to outcomes is driven by inclusive stakeholder participation, political support for CNF and RA-SAS approaches, market interest in sustainable commodities, and active measures to address barriers faced by women, marginalised groups, and those living with disabilities in accessing project benefits.

When these outcomes are achieved, they lead to intermediate states in which: (a) agricultural landscapes are sustainably managed at scale; (b) biodiversity conservation and land degradation neutrality are achieved; (c) farming households experience sustained economic and social benefits; (d) enabling policy, governance, and market frameworks are institutionalised; and (e) equitable participation of all stakeholder groups is embedded in governance and value chains. This stage is sustained by ongoing political commitment, functioning and inclusive MSLMBs, continued private sector engagement, and financing mechanisms that remain accessible to smallholders, including women and vulnerable groups.

The long-term impact is the transformation of agricultural systems in high biodiversity areas towards climate-resilient, biodiversity-positive, and socially inclusive landscapes that contribute to global environmental benefits, including reduced land degradation, enhanced ecosystem services, and improved human well-being. Human rights, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalised groups operate as both a driver (enabling adoption, innovation, and equitable benefit distribution) and an assumption (requiring sustained commitment from all stakeholders to uphold these principles) across the entire causal pathway, ensuring that the transformation is not only environmentally and economically sustainable, but also socially just and inclusive.

ANNEX VII. SAFEGUARDS ASSESSMENT TOOL

Assessment of the Management of Environmental and Social Safeguards by the Project

Objectives:

[i] To assess sufficiency in planning for Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) during project design

[ii] To assess monitoring of potential and/or emerging ESS risks during project implementation

[iii] To assess management responsiveness to ESS events that are triggered during project implementation

ESS PLANNING AT PROJECT DESIGN	
List any ESS issues identified at project design (e.g. SS 1.7, SS 2.3, etc.)[3]	• SS 1 – Biodiversity, Ecosystems, and Sustainable Natural Resource Management: Risks of habitat disturbance, land degradation, and human–wildlife conflict associated with restoration and agricultural activities in biodiversity-rich landscapes. • SS 1.7 – Reduced Quality or Quantity of Water Resources: Potential impacts on groundwater and surface-water quality and availability linked to agricultural and land-management interventions. • SS 1.8–1.9 – Reforestation and Agricultural Production Risks: Land-use change risks from agroforestry, afforestation, and sustainable agriculture requiring biodiversity-friendly design. • SS 5 – Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment: Recognition of women's critical role in agriculture, nutrition, and governance; gender mainstreaming identified as a safeguard priority. • SS 7 – Indigenous Peoples and Vulnerable Groups: Engagement with Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised groups required culturally appropriate participation and equitable benefit-sharing measures.
For any ESS issues identified at project design, were mitigation strategies developed (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	**Yes**. • Sustainable Land Management Plans (SLMPs): Developed through participatory processes and environmental risk assessments to guide restoration, agroforestry, and biodiversity conservation while minimizing habitat disturbance. • Agroecological farming systems (APCNF and RA-SAS): Promoted soil health, reduced chemical use, and enhanced ecosystem services, addressing risks under SS 1.8–1.9. • Participatory governance mechanisms (MSLMBs): Ensured inclusive decision-making across communities, local authorities, and

	implementing partners, mitigating SS 7 risks related to tribal participation and benefit sharing. • Gender integration and empowerment frameworks: Implemented through women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Community Resource Persons (CRPs) to operationalize SS 5 and ensure equitable access to resources, training, and enterprise opportunities. • Safeguard screening and avoidance measures: High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF) were identified and protected; land-use planning avoided displacement or conversion of natural habitats; human–wildlife conflict risks were mapped for targeted mitigation.
Were any gaps in ESS issues identified at the review inception phase (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	**Yes**. • Absence of formal safeguard documentation: No established community grievance redress mechanism or structured risk-monitoring reports had been submitted at mid-term. • Limited social inclusion indicators: Lack of systematic tracking and quantitative data for Scheduled Tribes, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups; inclusion remained primarily qualitative. • Inconsistent data disaggregation: Gender data were tracked through URVI and PxD systems, but similar disaggregation for other social categories and governance structures (e.g. MSLMBs, FPOs) was not consistently applied. • Safeguard indicators not fully integrated into the MEL framework: No standardized social-risk or benefit-sharing metrics, particularly concerning tribal rights and land-tenure security. • These gaps reduced the project's ability to evidence full compliance with UNEP's safeguard policies and to systematically monitor equity and social accountability.

ESS MONITORING AT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Is there evidence that the potential emergence of ESS issues was actively monitored during project implementation (Y/N)? [4] (If yes, briefly describe)	**Yes**. • Participatory Sustainable Land Management Plans (SLMPs): These incorporated environmental risk assessments to guide restoration, agroforestry, and biodiversity-conservation priorities, ensuring ecosystem and land-use risks (SS 1) were continuously tracked. • Identification and monitoring of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs): Conducted jointly with local communities to prevent habitat conversion and to manage biodiversity-sensitive

	areas, supported by human–wildlife conflict mapping in Kodagu. • Gender-disaggregated monitoring systems (URVI and PxD): Enabled systematic tracking of women's participation, enterprise involvement, and benefits under SS 5. • Engagement of tribal communities: Implementing partner BAIF regularly collected field data on livelihood support, agroforestry performance, and inclusion of Scheduled Tribe groups, contributing to ongoing monitoring under SS 7. • Adaptive management reviews: Monitoring results were integrated into quarterly reviews to refine training curricula, CRP deployment, and ecosystem-service interventions based on identified safeguard risks.
Is there a justification for the absence of ESS monitoring (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe[5])	**Partially (Yes).** While Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) monitoring was integrated into implementation through participatory planning, digital tracking systems, and field-level reporting, formal safeguard documentation was not consistently produced. The Mid-Term Review notes that compliance remained more operational than procedural. Specifically: • Safeguard monitoring occurred indirectly through SLMPs, biodiversity assessments, and field observations but no formal safeguard reports, risk registers, or grievance records were submitted at mid-term. • Monitoring responsibilities were shared among multiple partners (BAIF, HSI, WASSAN), yet no unified safeguard reporting format or central oversight mechanism was established. • Social inclusion and safeguard indicators were embedded in MEL systems but lacked standardization, limiting visibility of safeguard-specific monitoring outputs. • Justification: Given the project's decentralized structure and focus on community-led implementation, safeguard issues were tracked within technical and performance monitoring frameworks rather than through standalone safeguard reports.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIVENESS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Identify the ESS issues/events triggered [6] by the project.[7]	• Human–Wildlife Conflict (SS 1.6): Agricultural expansion and restoration activities in Kodagu District increased interactions between wildlife and communities, leading to crop damage and safety risks. This was identified as a key

	environmental safeguard issue requiring targeted mitigation. • Uneven Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups (SS 7): While gender integration was strong, the systematic inclusion of Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities remained limited. Engagement in decision-making platforms such as MSLMBs and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) was not yet fully representative. • Inconsistent Safeguard Reporting (cross-cutting): The absence of formal grievance mechanisms, standardized safeguard indicators, and structured reporting created gaps in procedural compliance, even where operational safeguards were in place. • Limited Disaggregation of Governance Indicators (SS 5, SS 7): Participation data for governance structures, private-sector partnerships, and benefit-sharing arrangements were not fully disaggregated by gender or vulnerability category.
Describe <u>consequences</u> of ESS issues/events during project implementation.	The consequences of identified ESS issues and events during implementation were moderate and localized, without major adverse environmental or social impacts. Specific outcomes included: • Human–Wildlife Conflict (SS 1.6): Crop losses and perceived threats to human safety in Kodagu landscapes created tension between conservation and livelihood objectives. While community awareness and coordination mechanisms helped mitigate impacts, the absence of a formal grievance mechanism limited systematic documentation and resolution of incidents. • Uneven inclusion of vulnerable groups (SS 7): Limited participation of Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities in governance and decision-making structures constrained equitable benefit-sharing and weakened the project's alignment with the human rights–based approach. • Procedural gaps in safeguard reporting (cross-cutting): The absence of standardized safeguard documentation and indicators reduced transparency and accountability, limiting the ability to track long-term social and environmental risks. • Data disaggregation limitations (SS 5, SS 7): The inconsistent capture of gender- and vulnerability-disaggregated data restricted the project's capacity to assess the differentiated impacts of interventions on various social groups.
Describe the management response and identify supporting documentation. [8, 9]	The project team and implementing partners (BAIF, WASSAN, HSI, RA/SAS) demonstrated proactive management of emerging safeguard issues, with responsive actions primarily focused on risk

	mitigation, adaptive management, and capacity building. • Human–Wildlife Conflict (SS 1.6): Management addressed this issue through a partnership with the Humane Society International (HSI) and the Forest Department, implementing measures such as risk mapping, early-warning awareness campaigns, and community-based monitoring. Localized mitigation efforts included training on non-lethal deterrents and improved fencing practices. These actions were reported in field mission records and internal progress updates. • Biodiversity and Land-use Safeguards (SS 1.8–1.9): The project ensured identification of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) and prioritized land-use planning to avoid conversion of natural habitats. Restoration, agroforestry, and afforestation activities were conducted with community participation and environmental screening through Sustainable Land Management Plans (SLMPs). • Gender Equality and Inclusion (SS 5, SS 7): The project strengthened women's leadership through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Community Resource Persons (CRPs), reinforcing gender-responsive training and enterprise support. Partners such as BAIF supported tribal livelihoods via agroforestry, while data on women's participation were tracked through URVI and PxD systems. • Safeguard Integration and Monitoring: Adaptive management practices were strengthened through quarterly reviews, coordination meetings, and the use of digital monitoring tools. Although formal safeguard reports and grievance logs were not produced, monitoring data were compiled through partner field reports, beneficiary tracking systems, and mid-term supervision missions.
Were negative ESS effects offset by management response (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	**Partially (Yes).** Negative ESS effects were mitigated through adaptive and community-based management responses, although the absence of formal safeguard documentation limited full verification of outcomes. • Human–Wildlife Conflict (SS 1.6): Risks were actively addressed through awareness campaigns, coordination with the Forest Department and Humane Society International (HSI), and local mitigation measures such as non-lethal deterrents and fencing improvements. These actions helped reduce incidents and promote coexistence, effectively offsetting environmental risks at the community level. • Environmental safeguards (SS 1.8–1.9): The identification of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) and adherence to sustainable land-use

	planning prevented habitat conversion and ensured biodiversity-sensitive restoration. • Social safeguards (SS 5, SS 7): While gender inclusion was well-managed through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), CRPs, and digital tracking (URVI, PxD), the inclusion of Scheduled Tribes and persons with disabilities remained partial. Absence of formal grievance mechanisms and inclusion indicators limited comprehensive tracking of social risk mitigation. • Documentation gap: Though operational mitigation was effective, offset verification was weakened by the lack of standardized safeguard indicators and formal reports.

ANNEX VIII. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Names	Elinor Bajraktari
Profession	International Consultant
Nationality	Canada
Country experience	• Europe: Albania, Kosovo, Belarus, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova, Slovakia, North Macedonia, Ireland • Asia & Pacific: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Laos, China, India, Thailand, Bhutan, Nepal, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Iran, Turkey, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Pacific Region • Africa: Mozambique, Mali, South Africa, Lesotho, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia • Arab Region: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq • Americas: Canada, USA, Chile, Belize, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, Saint Martin, Suriname
Education	• Master's degree in public administration

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Mr. Elinor Bajraktari is an experienced public policy professional with over 20 years of diverse international experience. He has an extensive background in program management and evaluations, impact studies, policy assessments, program design and formulation, results-based management, data analysis, and reporting. His experience spans over 50 countries in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and North America. He has worked for several governments and international organizations like UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF, UNDESA, UNCDF, etc. The consultant holds a Master's degree in Public Administration in International Development from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Over 15 years of experience in programme and project evaluations, impact studies, policy assessments, and results-based management across 55+ countries.
- Expertise in evaluation methodologies including case study, surveys, outcome mapping, randomized control trials, contribution analysis, participatory evaluation, and utilization-focused evaluation.
- Proven ability to design, implement, and assess large-scale international development programmes for UN agencies, governments, and donor organizations.
- Strong analytical and reporting skills with proficiency in STATA, SPSS, Tableau, SQL, and other data analysis tools.
- Skilled in public financial management, governance, and institutional capacity development.
- Academic grounding with an MPA in International Development (Harvard University) and ongoing PhD in Political Science (University of Alberta).
- Multilingual: fluent in English and French; advanced Russian; working knowledge of Spanish.

SELECTED ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPERIENCES

Independent reviews/evaluations:

- Final Evaluation Humanitarian Assistance Project- Response to COVID-19 Emergency and early recovery support
- Terminal Project Evaluation Report: UNDP-GCF National Adaptation Plan to Advance Medium and Long-Term Adaptation Planning in Armenia
- Governance thematic evaluation (Parliamentary Support; Constitutional Review and Support; Women in Politics; REFS projects)
- Strengthening climate resilience of the Batken Province of the Kyrgyz Republic through introduction of climate smart irrigation and mudflow protection measures

ANNEX IX. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (FOR GEF FUNDED PROJECTS)

Portal Entry: What is the performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets? *(For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided[46])*

The GEF Core indicators progress for the SABAL project at MTR is added in the following sheet.

Appendix 4a GEF 7 Core Indicator Worksheet.docx

Core Indicator 3	**Area of land restored**				(Hectares)
		Hectares (3.1+3.2+3.3+3.4)			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		150000	75,000	66659	
Indicator 3.1	**Area of degraded agricultural land restored**				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Agricultural land that maintains green cover for 365 days in the project landscapes.	130,000	75,000	66,659	
Indicator 3.2	Area of forest and forest land restored				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		20,000	0	0	
Core Indicator 4	Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)				(Hectares)
		Hectares (4.1+4.2+4.3+4.4)			
		Expected		Expected	

		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		1,850,000	1,175,000	373,904	
Indicator 4.1	Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Areas developed under the governance of Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies (MSLMBs)	350,000	135,000	41,931	
Indicator 4.2	Area of landscapes that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations				
Third party certification(s): Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard (RASAS)		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		0	75,000	43,077	
Indicator 4.3	Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Improved land management through the adoption of at least some natural farming principles under the Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF)	1,350,000	940,000	285,773	

Indicator 4.4	Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Proposal developed and submitted to the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department for identified sites in the Eastern Ghats.	150,000	25,000	3,123	
Core Indicator 6	Greenhouse gas emission mitigated					(Tons)
			Tons (6.1+6.2)			
			Expected		Expected	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Expected CO2e (direct)		0	22,406,180	0	
	Expected CO2e (indirect)					
Indicator 6.1	Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector					
			Tons			
			Expected		Expected	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Expected CO2e (direct)		0	22,406,180	0	
	Expected CO2e (indirect)					
	Anticipated Year			2041		
Core Indicator 11	Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment					(Number)
			Expected		Number Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Female	850,000	304,000	433,453	
		Male	850,000	466,000	15,637	

		Total number of people applying sustainable agricultural practices under RA-SAS and APCNF.	1,700,000	770,000	449,090	

Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/programme? *(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation)

The project actively engaged a diverse group of stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies at central, state, and district levels, civil society organizations, private sector companies, financial institutions, and research institutions. At the higher level, it continuously engaged with stakeholders from the government at the national level and project-level bodies such as the Project Steering Committee (PSC), the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment GEF Focal Point, and the Technical Coordination Committee (TCC), executing agencies including RySS and FES, and implementing agencies including UNEP and IUCN. Five Project Steering Committee meetings were held under the leadership of the Additional Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (NRM, DA&FW), and one virtual TCC meeting was conducted along with a physical visit to the project landscapes.

The UNEP Task Manager visited the RA office where the project progress was presented and visited project landscapes to interact with the district administration and other key stakeholders. The first meeting of the Technical Coordination Committee (TCC) was held virtually on 18th November 2024. On 20th and 21st February 2025, TCC members visited the project's micro-landscapes in the Eastern Ghats and engaged with local communities, district administration, and other stakeholders. Based on their observations, they offered recommendations to improve land degradation interventions, enhance community participation, and strengthen monitoring mechanisms.

In May 2025, RA met with the GEF Focal Point at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with UNEP and IUCN, to discuss project progress, LDN and HCVF themes, and align activities with national priorities.

In May 2025, a preparatory meeting was held with implementing agencies (UNEP, IUCN) and executing agencies (RA, FES, RySS) to review progress, discuss the MTR field visit, and align approaches across micro-landscapes.

At the state level in the Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh, the project consulted with the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department on the Green Credit Program, identifying 20 ha of degraded land in the Vanjangi forest of Paderu Mandal for restoration, with additional sites under consideration. The Andhra Pradesh Biodiversity Board was engaged to build capacities of BMCs (Biodiversity Management Committees) in project villages in May.

A District Level Multi-Stakeholder Workshop was held in Alluri Sitharama Raju district, chaired by the District Collector and attended by officials from agriculture, forestry, horticulture, animal husbandry, FPOs, NGOs, and community representatives.

The project collaborated with the Commissionerate of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Andhra Pradesh. The SABAL team engaged with SERP (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty) across state,

district, and mandal levels, facilitating VO discussions and the formation of MSLMBs, with the first MSLMB established in the D. Gonduru micro-landscape in May 2025.

The project engaged with Hershey's, Ferrero Chocolate Company, and Ritter Sport to explore collaboration and sourcing opportunities from the cocoa-growing region of Andhra Pradesh, with RA supporting risk assessments, introducing the project, and sharing dried cocoa samples. Additionally, the project identified companies such as Plant Lipids, Ancient India Organics, and Jayanti to facilitate market linkages for spices produced in the Eastern Ghats.

In the Western Ghats landscape, Karnataka, the SABAL project engaged with the Karnataka Forest Department and other NGOs to address the high incidence of human-elephant conflicts and develop collaborative solutions to mitigate their impacts. The project is collaborating with NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) and A- Rocha India to utilize their expertise on better management of human elephant conflict using a landscape approach.

Meetings were held with Divisional Conservators of Forest in both divisions of Kodagu to update them on the project and explore convergence for agroforestry interventions by the project partner, BAIF. Meetings were held with Sacred Groves Committees, Gram Panchayat elected members, tribal farmers, NGOs such as the Isha Foundation, the Integrated Social Welfare and Research Centre (ISWAR) Foundation, the Support for Network and Extension Help Agency (SNEHA) and the women SHG Federation (SANJEEVANI) during the reporting period. The discussions focused on updating stakeholders about project progress, introducing new partners, and exploring collaborative efforts on human-elephant conflict management.

A consultation workshop was organized in July, 2024 in Kushal Nagar to promote sustainable and ethical practices in the coffee sector. The event brought together representatives from private companies (Olam, Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC), Tata Coffee, and Sucden), the Coffee Board of India, NGOs (Isha Foundation, BAIF and ISWAR Foundation), academic institutions (Kodagu University, College of Forestry and Coffee Sub Research Station), existing RA certification holders, and certification bodies. The workshop aimed to initiate open dialogue among diverse stakeholders, gather input and feedback on critical social issues such as child labour, forced labour, and freedom of association, identify best practices to address social risks in the coffee sector, and support certificate holders in meeting the RA-SAS 2020 standards.

The project engaged with financial institutions, including Samunnati Finance and NABKISAN, to explore opportunities for financing Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and individual farmers.

Challenges in stakeholder engagement

At the project level, one notable challenge has been the limited ability of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change to participate in the last three PSC meetings, primarily due to multiple commitments and scheduling constraints faced by government officers. This has resulted in some delays in coordination and alignment with national environmental priorities. However, continued efforts are being made to re-engage the Ministry and ensure their active involvement in future meetings.

At the central as well as the district level, frequent changes in additional secretaries, district collectors and district-level officials hinder the continuity of rapport and coordination. Rebuilding relationships and establishing networks takes time, causing delays in project implementation.

Multi-stakeholder's bodies (MSLMB): The concept involves creating a unified group by integrating various stakeholders such as VOs, FPOs, VSS, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), Mandal-level officials, MMS, NGOs, and others. Initially, due to the project's nascent stage, it was challenging to bring all these diverse stakeholders onto a single platform. However, the SABAL project now has active beneficiaries

across all relevant villages. As a result, the team successfully facilitated the formation of the first MSLMB in May 2025.

Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas? *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)*

Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality)

The project adheres to the 2018 GEF Policy on Gender Equality, addressing gaps and empowering women through planned activities. It commits to gender mainstreaming, empowering women, and enhancing resource ownership and management. The project team integrated the gender mainstreaming action plan into the Results Framework before the project started.

Workshop on Building Perspectives on Gender: Gender has been mainstreamed in the entire SABAL project cycle, especially for activities being implemented in the tribal landscapes. As part of efforts to develop a Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan, RA facilitated a three-day workshop to understand the field teams' perspectives on gender to create awareness of the concept of gender and gender discrimination, sensitize participants on the various forms of gender inequality and their root causes and to enable participants to identify ways of implementing the SABAL project in a gender-sensitive way.

Women are empowered to actively participate in all activities in the micro landscapes. In addition, the project encourages women's access to and control over resources, thereby helping them to take part in decision making in the family and community. Wall writings promoting gender equality are being displayed in common areas, such as community centers, schools, and other appropriate village locations across all micro-landscapes, serving as visible reminders of the project's inclusive strategy. The project celebrated significant observances, especially events like International Women's Day and other important events across the landscapes. These events featured awareness meetings and rallies, with women participants prominently displaying quotes and slogans on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Till now, more than 17,000 women coffee farmers in the Eastern and Western Ghats have received critical support through the Coffee Krishi Taranga (CKT) advisory service, a mobile-based platform implemented by Precision Development in partnership with the Coffee Board of India. The service provides women with timely information on coffee cultivation, seasonal operations, subsidy schemes, and market trends, enabling informed decision-making and improved productivity. Through its user-friendly Interactive Voice Response system, the initiative ensures accessibility for women with limited literacy or digital access, promoting greater gender inclusion in the coffee value chain.

The SABAL project supported the development of a gender-disaggregated Management Information System (MIS), designed by implementation partners to capture participation data separately for men and women. This system enables continuous gender analysis across project activities and outcomes, providing a strong evidence base for inclusive planning and decision-making. By institutionalizing gender-responsive data practices, the MIS plays a vital role in tracking progress, identifying gaps, and informing targeted interventions.

Drawing on this system, the project has been able to generate valuable insights into women's engagement across diverse thematic areas. Women are showing strong interest in enterprise development and capacity-building opportunities, with notable participation in trainings and livelihood-focused interventions. Their involvement in natural resource management and land

restoration efforts, though traditionally limited, is steadily growing, reflecting a shift toward more inclusive environmental governance

Women represent 48.8% of the beneficiaries under the project's Micro Enterprise promotion initiatives. These women are actively engaged in diverse livelihood activities, including operating agricultural produce processing units for rice and millets, Deshi Poultry units, NF input supply, as well as marketing vegetables, fish, and other local commodities. Their participation underscores the project's commitment to fostering women-led enterprises and enhancing their role in local economic development. While this percentage is cited here to emphasize the scale of women's involvement, it represents just one dimension of the rich data captured by the project's MIS. The broader dataset continues to offer valuable insights into the diversity and reach of all micro-enterprise interventions undertaken.

Over the course of three years, the SABAL project has made significant strides in embedding gender-responsive practices throughout its implementation landscape. The project aims to involve women in various initiatives, but accurately capturing their involvement remains challenging due to limited ownership of assets, lower literacy levels, limited mobility and social norms. Women are prioritized in MSLMBs, ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. This promotes gender equality and diverse perspectives for implementing more effective landscape management practices.

Portal Entry:

1- *Provide an overall ESS risk classification to be entered into the portal as either Low, Medium/Moderate, or Hight/Substantial). Please reach out to UNEP Safeguards Advisor.*
2- *Provide updates on any revisions to identified types of risk classifications/ratings and describe progress made in the implementation of the management measures as outlined in the CEO Endorsement/Approval. Please make reference to any PIR-reported ESS risks.*
3- *Provide supporting documents*

Response:

1. Medium

2. During the PPG (Project Preparation Grant) phase of the project, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) conducted an Environmental, Social, and Economic Review based on its Sustainability Framework. However, this process was later replaced by the UNEP Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF). The assessment conducted using SRIF indicated that there were no major risks associated with the project, and overall, it is expected to have positive impacts on reducing land degradation in the project landscape. In the PIF (Project Identification Form) submission, two risks were identified and rated as Medium. These risks were related to Safeguard Standard 5 concerning Indigenous Peoples and Safeguard Standard 6 regarding Labor and Working Conditions. During the PPG phase, both risks were further investigated through research and consultation and were subsequently downgraded to Low. The project actively engaged tribal communities in the Andhra Pradesh Landscape, and micro-landscapes were selected based on their tribal population. RA has been working in Karnataka's Kodagu district where indigenous people reside for over a decade, and one micro-landscape is aligned with their needs. Regarding Safeguard Standard 6, a potential risk related to child and forced labor was identified during the PPG phase. The risk arises from the increasing cost and scarcity of labor in the agricultural sector, especially during harvest times. However, this risk is mitigated since the project primarily works with smallholder farmers. Both RA and RySS explicitly prohibit the use of child or forced labor on farms. RA's 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard (SAS) requires producers to assess the risk of child labor and establish an Assessment Committee to review and take appropriate actions if a risk is identified. Auditors review documentation when farms or smallholder groups apply for certification. The established

systems for farm training, technical assistance, and monitoring by both organizations ensure that farms receiving the project's services are regularly monitored to prevent labor exploitation. There are no additional risks identified or added with respect to the risks mentioned in the project document at CEO endorsement.

Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions. *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Communication and Public Awareness)

The implementation of the Knowledge Management System has progressed through the development of diverse knowledge products, training modules, localized LDN frameworks, and participatory outreach initiatives across Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Collaborations with government departments, NGOs, and research institutions have strengthened information sharing and capacity building at multiple levels.

The project team made a film introducing the project and showcasing the initial stages of project implementation in the field and stakeholder engagement to highlight how the team engaged with stakeholders and created awareness of the project. The film showed the efforts put in by the team to gather feedback and inputs from various stakeholders and incorporate them into the project. The team took great care to ensure that the film accurately captured the critical aspects of the project i.e. sensitizing farmers on the less tangible but critical values of sustainable agriculture for the ecosystem in which they farm (climate resilience, soil quality, water retention and the increased security of a more diversified cropping system) and effectively conveyed the message to the intended audience. Through this film, the team hoped to generate interest in the project.

GEF_Project Introduction.mp4

As a part of the Knowledge Management System, a wide range of knowledge products and studies, including policy analyses, market assessments, ecological monitoring reports, soil health posters, and training manuals across Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Knowledge modules and training materials were developed on agro-biodiversity, regenerative coffee cultivation, human-elephant conflict management, and community-based land management (SLMP).

Localized frameworks for Land Degradation Neutrality (L-LDN) were created, integrating biophysical, socio-economic, and GIS-based indicators for micro-landscapes. Several capacity-building initiatives such as workshops, training sessions, community theatre (Kalaajaatha), and digital tools like animation films and advisory service videos have enhanced awareness and participation. Collaborations with government departments including the Coffee Board, Forest Department, and RySS, as well as NGOs like FES and WASSAN and academic institutions, have further strengthened the sharing and application of ecological knowledge.

The initiative also faced several challenges. Data integration and standardization across different studies and landscapes proved complex, particularly when combining scientific and community-based indicators. Limited accessibility and awareness among local stakeholders regarding digital knowledge tools and advisory services have hindered adoption. Ensuring policy coherence and coordination across sectors such as agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and finance remains a challenge for scaling sustainable practices. Sustaining community engagement and ensuring consistent use of knowledge materials require ongoing facilitation and long-term capacity support.

Overall, the Knowledge Management System has led to enhanced knowledge sharing and evidence-based planning for natural farming, soil health management, and land restoration. Community-level monitoring systems and training modules have strengthened local ownership of sustainable land management. Improved cross-sector collaboration and comprehensive data frameworks have established a foundation for adaptive and informed decision-making. Increased awareness and behavioural change at the community level, driven by participatory and culturally resonant outreach tools, have further contributed to the sustainability of natural resource management practices.

Portal Entry: *What are the main findings of the review?*

Response: The Sabal Project is piloting innovative approaches in India, particularly the landscape approach and the MSLMB model, both of which have been applied by Rainforest Alliance in other countries, but remain experimental in the Indian context. One of the project's main values lies in testing and adapting these global concepts to India's diverse governance systems and socio-economic realities. This MTR highlights both achievements and constraints to date, while the project's Final Evaluation will ultimately determine the extent to which these approaches can be successfully institutionalised in India and provide lessons for their replication and scaling at national and state levels.

Overall, the project has performed at the "Moderately Satisfactory" level. It has demonstrated good performance in farmer outreach and capacity building, with nearly 450,000 farmers adopting sustainable practices across Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by mid-2025, equivalent to almost 60% of the end-of-project target. This achievement was made possible by strategically leveraging existing institutional platforms, particularly RySS and the world's largest agroecology programme (APCNF) in Andhra Pradesh. Through integration with government extension systems, deployment of over 15,000 Community Resource Persons, and the use of low-cost digital advisory tools provided by PxD, the project achieved a high volume of farmer training and adoption at relatively low cost. These efforts were further supported by adequate gender integration, with women accounting for over 96% of adopters, reinforcing the project's social inclusiveness and community legitimacy. In addition, the project has established an operational MEL system, complemented by cost-benefit analyses, knowledge packages, and visibility in national and international forums, which is now enabling the tracking of activities and creates conditions for the project's replication and scale-up in the future. Conservation outcomes are also visible, with more than 3,000 hectares of high conservation value forests protected, participatory land-use planning initiated, and nearly 400,000 hectares brought under natural farming and Rainforest Alliance standards. These achievements show the project's potential to operationalize sustainable land management practices at scale.

Despite these strengths, progress in building the institutional and market systems necessary to sustain and scale these results has been slower and uneven. A key challenge has been the formation of the MSLMBs, of which only one has been formally constituted against a target of ten. While preparatory agreements have been secured in nine micro-landscapes, the absence of fully operational MSLMBs has delayed the development of Sustainable Landscape Management Plans and business models, which in turn constrains the project's capacity to institutionalize landscape governance. This shortfall stems from the lack of a clearly defined MSLMB concept at the design stage, requiring the PMU to improvise and adapt to existing local institutions, a process that has proven time-consuming and dependent on protracted government endorsement.

Market engagement and financing is also lagging. Although the project has established relationships with buyers, convened FPOs, and facilitated participation in high-profile commodity events, no formal private sector sourcing contracts or impact investment proposals have yet materialized. Only a small fraction of the targeted $5 million in blended finance has been mobilized. These challenges are attributable to delayed institutional groundwork, certification bottlenecks, and unfavorable external market conditions, such as high global coffee prices that reduced farmer incentives to pursue certification. As a result, the benefits of extensive farmer training and capacity building are not yet fully translating into sustained market access and financial sustainability.

Furthermore, while the project's financial management is sound and compliant with UNEP/GEF requirements, expenditure under Component 3 remains low, showing slow progress in market-facing

activities. Monitoring systems are in place and adaptive management is evident, yet reporting gaps on governance indicators, social inclusion of vulnerable groups beyond women, and safeguards documentation show that not all cross-cutting priorities are being systematically captured.

With regards to the key strategic questions presented in the MTR's TOR, the review concluded the following:

- Evidence of contribution to sustainable production, supply chains, and public-private finance is strongest on-farm and nascent downstream. Sustainable production is demonstrated by 449,090 farmers applying CNF/RA-SAS practices across 395,510 ha (352,433 ha CNF; 43,077 ha RA-SAS) and 3,123 ha of HCVF conserved, with SLMPs initiated over 25,300 ha and one evidence-based policy proposal delivered to align incentives. Supply-chain and finance signals remain preliminary.

- Evidence of increased capacity and awareness is substantive and system-wide. The project has trained 449,090 farmers and 600 FPO members, deployed agri-tech with 550 adopters, and built a 15,854-strong Community Resource Person network, with women comprising 96% of adopters. Overall, the project has contributed to raising stakeholder understanding of sustainable production, value-chain requirements, and financing options in both states.

Overall, the Sabal project has already achieved some key early results in areas where it could rely on established institutions, community systems, and technical delivery platforms. However, there is a need now to focus on institutionalizing the landscape governance and MSLMBs, securing private sector commitments, and embedding financing mechanisms. Unless accelerated in the remainder of the project's lifetime, these institutional and market gaps may jeopardize critical deliverables into the latter part of the project cycle, limiting the durability of outcomes beyond 2028.

Portal Entry: *Actual Sources of Co-financing*

Response: Please include evidence for co-financing for the project as at MTR (please add rows as necessary and confirm with the EA and FMO as relevant)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount ($)
Recipient Country Government	RySS	Cash	Investment Mobilized	40,644,918
Civil Society Organization	Rainforest Alliance	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	336,000
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	50,000
Other	IUCN	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	190,000

UNEP has received confirmed reports of $41,220,918 (see table above) reflecting a healthy 60% realization rate at mid-term. However, the disbursements reported by project partners totaled US$137,795 million (see Table 6 of the MTR Report Document), almost twice the planned total. This figure is largely explained by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) reporting, which indicates expenditures far beyond the original planned contribution. RySS & Rainforest Alliance cofinancing was used to strengthen the implementation of the APCNF project in Andhra Pradesh and Sustainable Agriculture practices in Karnataka. The co-finance amount has been allocated towards several key activities. In Andhra Pradesh, RySS has deployed significant resources within the project landscapes to support NF practices. Extensive training programs have been conducted to equip farmers with the knowledge and skills required for natural farming practices. These programs are designed to enhance farmers' understanding of sustainable agricultural methods, soil health management, pest control, and water conservation techniques. While this shows significant alignment and national resource commitment, it underscores again the need to carefully interpret what counts as co-financing, distinguishing between pre-existing public programmes and resources directly mobilized through the project. In recognition of

these discrepancies, the project team has been working with RySS to confirm and recalculate its co-financing contributions to ensure complete and correct information is reported. While this was unavailable at the time of this MTR, it will be completed before end of Q4 2025.
Portal Entry: Key Risks (please refer to ANNEX XI)

ANNEX X. GEF RISKS TO ACHIEVING PROJECT OUTCOMES (FOR GEF FUNDED PROJECTS)

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	Low	Climate variability may affect agricultural productivity and restoration efforts, but the project's integrated approach to sustainable land and water management, agroforestry, and ecosystem restoration provides significant adaptive capacity. Climate-smart practices embedded in SLMPs and alignment with APCNF enhance resilience at landscape level.
Environment and Social	Moderate	Environmental safeguards (HCVF identification, SLMP screening, human-wildlife conflict mitigation) were operationalized. Social inclusion for women advanced through SHGs and CRPs, though participation of Scheduled Tribes and PwD remains partial. Formal grievance and safeguard reporting mechanisms are still needed. Strengthened monitoring and documentation are planned.
Political and Governance	Substantial	Institutional coordination across states varies. In Karnataka, limited state buy-in and delayed MSLMB formation risk undermining sustainability. Engagement with sector ministries and integration into state planning are being reinforced to secure legal mandates and convergence mechanisms.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Moderate	The enabling policy environment is improving through alignment with national agroecology and biodiversity frameworks. Yet, formal policy integration of MSLMBs and financial commitments remain pending. Policy briefs and technical studies exist; further advocacy for institutional embedding is underway.
Technological	Low	Digital platforms (URVI, PxD) and GIS tools for monitoring are functioning effectively. Risks are minimal given partner capacity and UNEP oversight. Continued interoperability between MEL and partner MIS is being developed to sustain data flow and adaptive management.
Financial and Business Model	Substantial	Blended-finance and market-linkage components are progressing slowly. Private-sector engagement is in early stages, and co-financing pipelines remain tentative. Mitigation includes targeted buyer roundtables, structured financing roadmaps, and integration of revolving funds within state budgets.
EXECUTION		
Capacity for Implementation	Substantial	PMU and partners (BAIF, WASSAN, HSI) demonstrate strong technical capacity, but uneven institutionalization of MSLMBs and variable state engagement pose implementation risks. Focused capacity-building, clearer

		roles, and time-bound institutionalization plans are mitigating factors.
Fiduciary	Low	UNEP and RA maintain sound fiduciary systems. Financial tracking and audits are compliant. Recommendation 6 of the MTR advises integrating an annualized financial plan and interoperability across MIS platforms to strengthen forward planning.
Stakeholder	Substantial	Community participation and gender inclusion are robust, but engagement of marginalized groups (ST, PwD) and private sector is still limited. Quotas for inclusive representation in MSLMBs and targeted outreach strategies are recommended to mitigate stakeholder exclusion risks.
Other	Moderate	Knowledge-management risks relate to limited documentation and dissemination beyond partners. A strengthened KM plan, including a digital repository and state-level learning exchanges, is underway to support scaling and replication.
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate to Substantial	The project demonstrates strong environmental performance and adaptive management, but institutional, financing, and inclusion-related uncertainties keep residual risk at a Moderate-to-Substantial level. Continued institutionalization of MSLMBs, structured exit strategy, and financing roadmap are critical for long-term outcome achievement.

ANNEX XI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.: 10204 Sabal

Contact Person (TM/PM): Allyson Rivera

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	**ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)**	**WHAT WILL BE DONE?**	**EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE**	**REPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY**
Rec 3. The project should develop and implement a comprehensive sustainability financing roadmap to address the high risk of financial discontinuity beyond GEF support. This roadmap should set out concrete mechanisms for embedding project approaches into state and district budgets, establishing revolving funds for community-based organizations, and leveraging convergence with major public schemes such as MGNREGS and Forest Department programmes. It should	Yes	As part of the exit strategy, Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, and state government counterparts will discuss current commitments and options for securing commitments and financing mechanisms by 2027. This will provide the institutional and financial continuity required to sustain restoration, certification, and market development outcomes beyond the project's closure.	2027	Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, MoEFCC, MoAFW, State Governments, and financial institutions

also identify and operationalize blended finance instruments in partnership with financial institutions, while expanding engagement with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Financial sustainability risks remain high due to weak convergence with public schemes and insufficient embedding of project activities into state budgets. Without a resource mobilization plan, outcomes in restoration, certification, and market development may not be sustained.				
Rec 5. The project should develop and implement a comprehensive, time-bound exit strategy that integrates institutional commitments, convergence mechanisms with public schemes, and dedicated financing pathways for key interventions.	Partially	UNEP will support project partners in the development of a fully articulated exit strategy, including consideration of alternatives to the over-reliance on future funding and public scheme convergence which currently put financial and institutional sustainability at risk.	Within the next 6 months	RA, UNEP, State Governments, MoEFCC

Project Title and Reference No.: 10204 Sabal

Contact Person (TM/PM): Allyson Rivera

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	**ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)**	**WHAT WILL BE DONE?**	**EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE**	**REPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY**
Rec 3. The project should develop and implement a comprehensive sustainability financing roadmap to address the high risk of financial discontinuity beyond GEF support. This roadmap should set out concrete mechanisms for embedding project approaches into state and district budgets, establishing revolving funds for community-based organizations, and leveraging convergence with major public schemes such as MGNREGS and Forest Department	Yes	As part of the exit strategy, Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, and state government counterparts will discuss current commitments and options for securing commitments and financing mechanisms by 2027. This will provide the institutional and financial continuity required to sustain restoration, certification, and market development outcomes beyond the project's closure.	2027	Rainforest Alliance, UNEP, MoEFCC, MoAFW, State Governments, and financial institutions

programmes. It should also identify and operationalize blended finance instruments in partnership with financial institutions, while expanding engagement with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Financial sustainability risks remain high due to weak convergence with public schemes and insufficient embedding of project activities into state budgets. Without a resource mobilization plan, outcomes in restoration, certification, and market development may not be sustained.				
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ANNEX XII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

UNEP Evaluation Office to insert

ANNEX XIII. PICTURES FROM THE PROJECT

Figure 5: Stakeholder Consultation



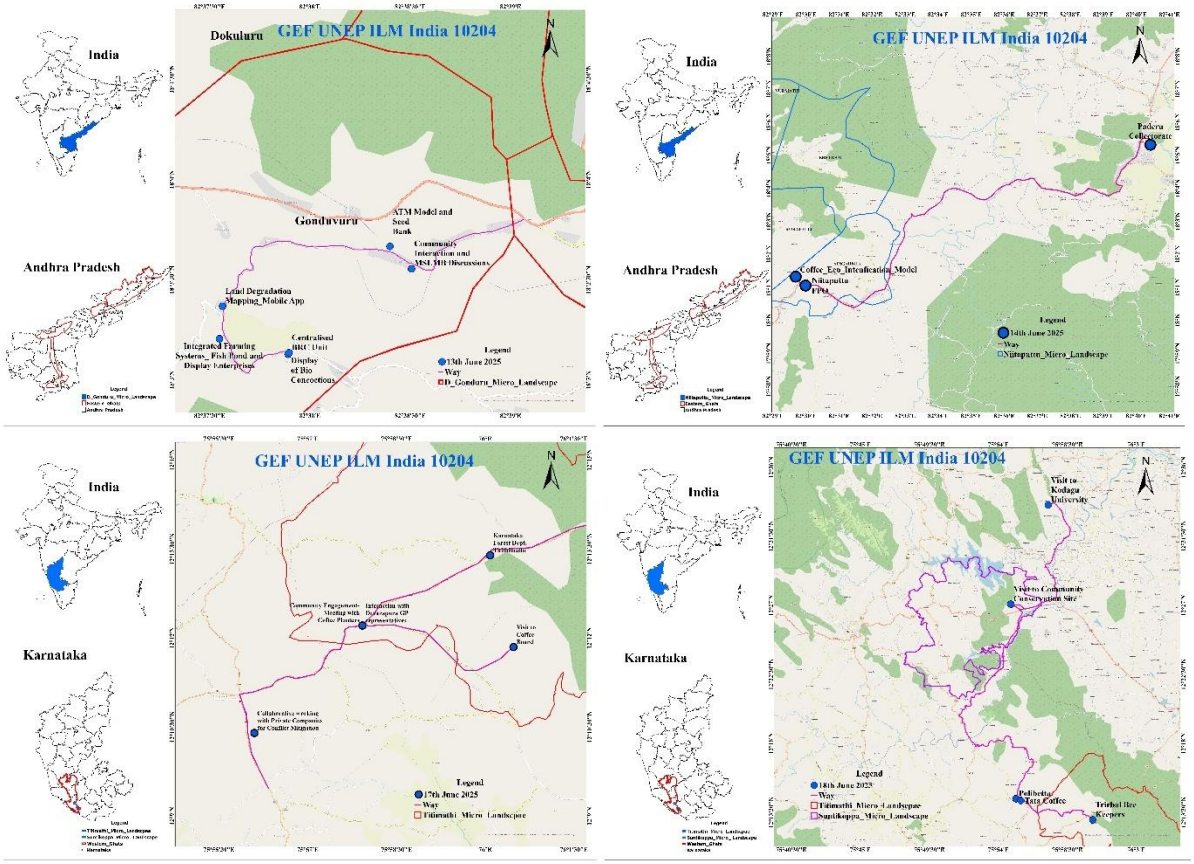
Figure 6: Farmers Supported by the Project



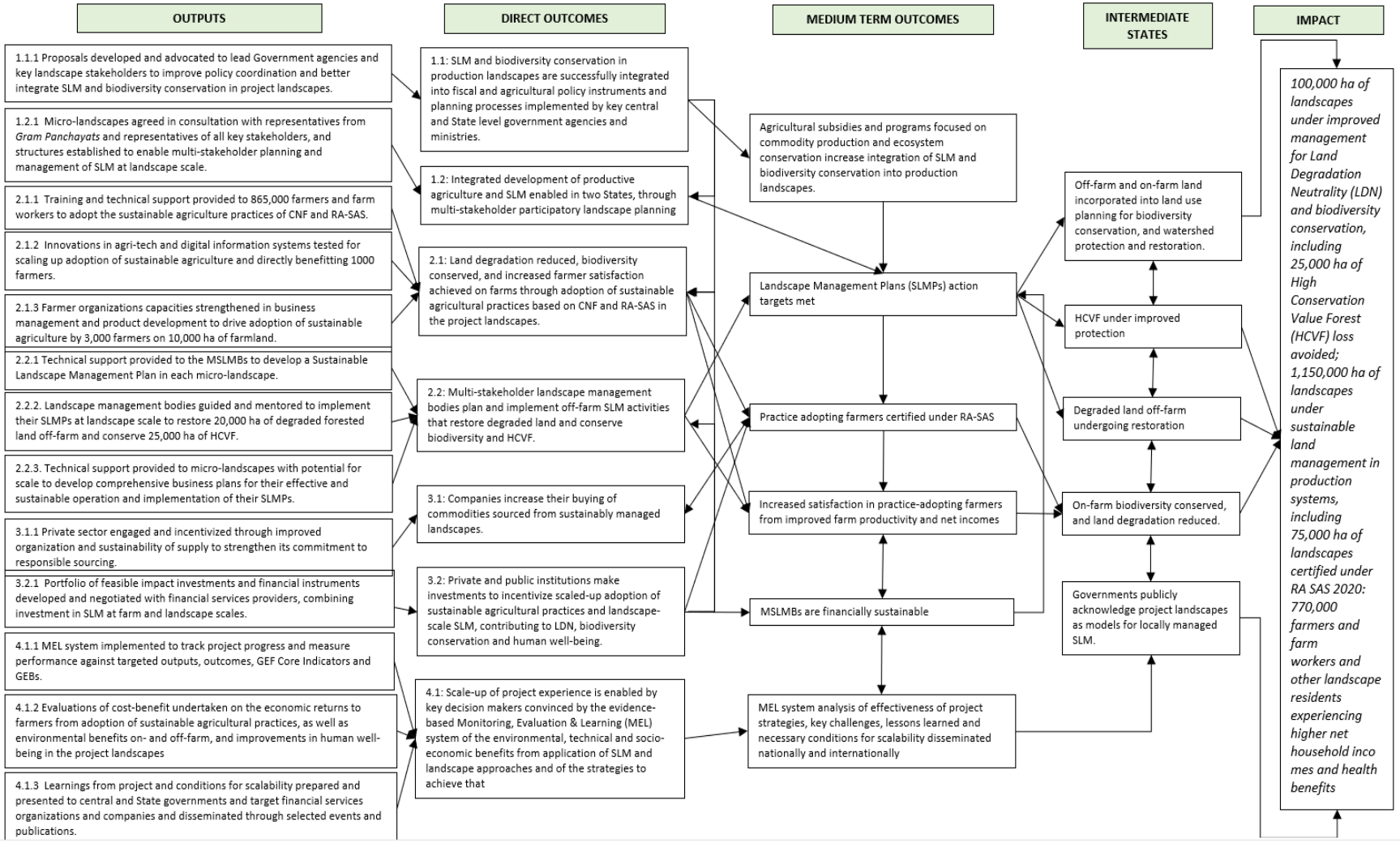
Figure 2: FPO Meeting in Andhra Pradesh During the MTR



ANNEX XIV. PROJECT SITES AND LOCATIONS OF MTR VISITS



ANNEX XV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW



Endnotes

[1] SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023. Previously, it was referred to as a PIMS ID number.
[2] GEF Programme refers to 'Parent' project.
[3] Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.
[4] Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund.
[5] For these items do not include full text; only enter the number or reference.
[6] Expected/planned dates are listed in the Project Document (ProDoc).
[7] Actual start date is the date of the last signature on the PCA or ICA.
[8] UNEP projects of four or more years duration require an MTR unless there is an exceptional circumstance. See the *Evaluation in the Project Cycle* section in the Evaluation Office's operational manual. Donor requirements may vary and should be considered in conjunction with UNEP's requirements.
[9] https://www.rrcap.ait.ac.th/Publications/State%20of%20the%20Environment%20report,%20India.pdf
[10] https://keralabiodiversity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Gadgil-report.pdf
[11] https://teebweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/India_Background_Review.pdf
[12] https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/statistical_publication/ExplainerSeries-Soil_Erosion_Prevention_22052323v1.pdf
[13] https://www.isec.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/PB-52-Economic-Loss-of-Forest-Ecosystem-Services-and-Policy-Implications-in-Karnataka_Final.pdf
[14] https://povertyevidence.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Impact-of-Covid-19-on-Employment-Income-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-India.pdf
[15] The Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF) program is implemented by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS), a not-for-profit, government-owned company established by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. RySS is mandated to scale up natural farming across the state. Natural Farming involves farming without synthetic chemical inputs, using locally available, natural methods for soil fertility, pest control, and crop nutrition. It emphasizes farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing and reduced cost of cultivation.
[16] The Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard is implemented under the Rainforest Alliance's certification program, designed to promote sustainable and resilient agricultural practices globally. It is used to certify agricultural production that meets defined thresholds for environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability. RASAS-certified systems typically emphasize biodiversity conservation, improved livelihoods, reduced deforestation, and adherence to labour and human rights standards.
[17] Multi-Stakeholder Landscape Management Bodies (MSLMBs) are participatory governance platforms established at the landscape or micro-watershed level that bring together different actors (farmers, local authorities, government line departments, women's groups, tribal representatives, CSOs, and private sector) to plan, implement, and monitor natural resource management strategies.
[18] Micro-Landscapes are small, spatially defined areas such as watersheds, catchments, or village clusters where natural resources (soil, water, vegetation) and livelihoods are closely interconnected.
[19] Rainforest Alliance has pioneered landscape-level, micro-landscape, and multi-stakeholder landscape management board concepts (often referenced as MSLMB, LMBs, or LandScale platforms) in various countries. These innovations aim to break down siloed approaches, bringing together local communities, companies, governments, and civil society to address sustainability, climate resilience,

and biodiversity challenges. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, Rainforest Alliance facilitated the development of LMBs with representatives from communities, farmers, the private sector, and both formal and traditional authorities. Across Latin America (Mexico, Peru, Colombia) and Indonesia, Rainforest Alliance's LandScale initiative empowers stakeholder groups to assess landscape health, set shared sustainability goals, and coordinate investments to address critical challenges.

[20] A Gram Panchayat is the lowest tier of the country's decentralized rural governance system, created under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, which institutionalized Panchayati Raj as a three-tier system of local self-government (village, intermediate/block, and district levels). The Gram Panchayat represents the village level. At its core, a Gram Panchayat is both an institution and a body of elected representatives responsible for managing local governance, development, and service delivery in one or a cluster of villages (usually with a population of 500–5,000 people). It functions as the executive committee of the Gram Sabha, which is the assembly of all registered voters in the village.

[21] FCRA certification refers to the legal authorization granted under India's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010, which governs the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions (donations, grants, or funding) by individuals, associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in India.

[22] The Raithu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) is a government-owned, not-for-profit company established by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to implement and scale up Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF) by supporting farmer capacity building, extension, and institutional innovations for climate-resilient, low-cost, chemical-free agriculture.

[23] Raithu Sadhikara Samstha's (RySS) natural farming promotes community-managed, chemical-free agriculture that relies on locally available natural inputs, biodiversity-based practices, and farmer-to-farmer learning to reduce cultivation costs, restore soil health, and build climate resilience in Andhra Pradesh.

[24] Source: Project Implementation Reports (2023–2025), Results Framework.

[25] Based on the Project Document and PCA.

[26] The table presents financial information only for the Rainforest Alliance component of the project. No integrated data for the whole project was available.

[27] https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41114

[28] https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/42752

[29] It should be noted here that these two ministries did not show sufficient level of engagement with this MTR, as it was not possible to arrange interviews with their representatives despite multiple and repeated attempts. However, they remain key audiences for the results of this MTR as the Sabal project carries important lessons for India at the national scale.

[30] Percentage of people involved in the project who were contacted.

[31] Percentage of people contacted who responded.

[32] Very rough estimate, as this number includes household members and training participants in villages.

[33] Very rough estimate, as this number includes household members and training participants in villages.

[34] Percentage of entities involved in the project who were contacted.

[35] Percentage of entities contacted who responded.

[36] Contributing partners may be providing resources as cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).

[37] In case of a global project, the unit of analysis is 'region'. In case of a regional or multi-country project, the unit of analysis is 'country'. In case of a single country project, the unit of analysis is 'locality', which could refer to a city, town, village, etc.

[38] Percentage of total number project sites in each region, country or locality that were visited.

[39] If the project design document contains commitments on human rights and gender equality that are not reflected in the results framework, the commitment must appear as Driver.
[40] If the project design document and the framework are silent on human rights and gender equality, the following assumption must be included in the TOC: 'The project works toward the UN principles on human rights and gender equality'.
[41] The progress reported in this table is based on data provided by the Project Management Unit, which has consolidated this information from various sources that the implementing partners involved in this project use. Particularly crucial here has been the data system used by RySS.
[42] The progress reported in this table is based on data provided by the Project Management Unit, which has consolidated this information from various sources that the implementing partners involved in this project use. Particularly crucial here has been the data system used by RySS.
[43] Large Area Multi-Purpose (LAMP) Societies are a type of cooperative institution in India, primarily promoted by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) and state cooperative departments to support the socio-economic development of tribal populations. They were established as part of the Government of India's tribal development strategy in the 1970s and 1980s.
[44] This area corresponds to three micro landscapes where FES has already helped stakeholders develop and align on the SLMPs.
[45] The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is India's flagship rights-based rural employment programme, enacted under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. It provides a legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment per financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work.
[46] This does not apply to Enabling Activities.