**PROJECT EVALUATION SERIES**

**Midterm Evaluation - Forest and Farm Facility**

**Gambia Country Case Report**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**OFFICE OF EVALUATION**

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ANR | Agriculture and Natural Resources |
| CF | Community Forest |
| CFC | Community Forest Committees |
| CFMC | Community Forest Management Concept |
| COP21 | 21st Annual Conference of the Parties |
| CRR | Central River Region |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FFF | Forest and Farm Facility |
| FFPO | Forest and Farm Producer Organization |
| FI | Financial Institution |
| IIED | International Institute for Environment and Development |
| IP | Indigenous Peoples |
| IR | Intermediate Result |
| IS | Intermediate State |
| IUCN | The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources |
| LoA | Letter of Agreement |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| M&LS | Monitoring and Learning System |
| MA&D | Market Analysis and Development |
| MFI | Micro Finance Institution |
| MTE | Mid-Term Evaluation |
| NACO | Natural Resources Consulting |
| NEA | National Environment Agency |
| NFP | National Forest Programme |
| NFPG | National Famers' Platform of the Gambia |
| NMSC | National Multi Stakeholder Steering Committee |
| PROFOR | Program on Forests |
| ROPPA | Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l"Afrique de l'Ouest |
| SO | Strategic Objective |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| URR | Upper River Region |
| VCD | Value Chain Development |
| WG | Working Group |

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# Introduction

1. The Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) was one of the first “umbrella programmes” within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The FFF receives funding through a multi-donor trust fund, from donors including Sweden, Finland, United States, AgriCord (through its Farmers Fighting Poverty Programme) and Germany (under the Carlowitz project). The World Banks’ Program on Forests (PROFOR) also provided startup funds through two of the main partners: the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the International Union for Conservation (IUCN). Though the Programme was established with a target budget of USD 50 million for five years, only USD 12.5 million dollars were secured by FAO as of June 2016.
2. The FFF was designed under a partnership co-managed by IIED, IUCN and AgriCord, with inputs from major alliances of forest and farm producer organizations including representatives from the International Family Forest Alliance, the Global Alliance for Community Forestry and the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests. The FFF was implemented through a participatory multi-stakeholder process and informed by scoping studies, resulting in a multi-year work plan that is country and context specific, and designed to improve the Country Programming Framework and to catalyze and leverage existing initiatives. The FFF was set up for a duration of five years, running from December 2012 to December 2017. However, the first significant funding was only received in August 2013, and a decision was made to launch in-country activities in six paired pilot countries during 2013: Guatemala and Nicaragua (Latin America), The Gambia and Liberia (Africa), and Nepal and Myanmar (Asia).
3. Beginning in November 2013, four more countries were selected (Bolivia, Kenya, Zambia and Vietnam) through a comprehensive selection process; work began in the second half of 2014 and the beginning of 2015. Expressions of interest were received in various forms from over 44 countries and 70 forest and farm producer organizations, indicating unmet demand.
4. The project has a monitoring and learning system (M&LS) to monitor progress on a range of indicators under each of the outputs described in the programme theory of change (ToC). An annual aggregated report on the FFF’s M&LS is presented to the Steering Committee each February, summarizing country level achievements and lessons learned.
5. FFF activities are currently underway across the 10 countries, albeit at different stages of intervention; Gambia is one of those countries. The interventions of the project include work by apex level producer organizations supported through partnership agreements, small grants to producer organizations to support enterprise and other organizational needs, multi-sectoral platforms led by government actors at national and sub-national levels, exchange visits and capacity building.
6. This MTE was conducted in accordance with the agreements signed with donors. With 1.5 years left in the current project, this evaluation provides an opportunity to improve implementation and to envisage its future after December 2017.

## Purpose of the evaluation

1. As mentioned above, the mid-term evaluation is programmed in the FFF project document and financing agreements. The purpose of the MTE is to inform the Project Steering Committee, the Programme Management Team, the Donor Support Group and other stakeholders about the project’s progress and performance toward attaining the expected outputs and outcomes. The intention is therefore to evaluate the programme for planning purposes as well as to inform the multi donor fund of progress to date. The mid-term evaluation is expected to bring valuable external reflections to help strengthen the programme, and to validate and complement the M&L system of the project.
2. The MTE draws specific conclusions and formulates recommendations for necessary further action by the Steering Committee, the Project Management Team and other international and in-country FFF stakeholders. It also identifies good practices and lessons learned for the formulation and execution of other similar projects that address forestry governance and/or utilizing a small grant scheme.

## Intended users

1. The intended users of the results of this MTE include the FFF Steering Committee, the Donor Support Group, the Project Management Team the FFF national facilitators, implementing partners, FAO country office staff, government stakeholders, and other international and in-country FFF parties.

## Scope and objective of the evaluation

1. **Scope:** This MTE evaluates the results achieved from the inception of FFF in December 2012 until December 2015, bearing in mind that activities did not start until mid- to late-2013. The evaluation assesses all key elements of the programme across its interventions as outlined in the ToC, with a representative set of forest and farmer producer organizations (FFPOs) and government partners in the selected five countries, and at the regional and global levels. Additionally, the management and governance structure of the project were assessed as well as the linkages between the project and other in-country and global initiatives in the context of FAO’s Strategic Objectives (in this case SO3 Output 1.1 and SO2 Output 2.2).

**Objectives and Evaluation Questions:**

1. The FFF mid-term evaluation had the following objectives:
   1. Assess progress made toward achieving project results; and
   2. Identify design and implementation issues that should be addressed in order to achieve the project’s intended results.
2. In order to achieve these objectives, the evaluation sought to deliver findings under the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, partnerships and coordination, normative values, sustainability, and coherence and synergies. In this regard, the evaluation was guided by the below preliminary evaluation questions respective to the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, partnership and coordination, sustainability, and FAO’s normative values. In the course of the work, the MTE added a question on the “Likelihood of Impact of the Project” to capture the project’s crucial early effects which were not recorded by its M&LS.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Relevance**

* Evaluation question 1: How relevant is the FFF’s primary focus and logic in terms of its stated mission, in relation to the target countries’ contexts, broader sustainable development initiatives, and smallholder farmers' needs?
* Evaluation question 2: How and to what extent does the project contribute to the broader strategic FAO objectives? Sub-questions: (2.1) How coherent is FFF in terms of how it fits in with the policies, programmes and projects undertaken by the governments, FAO and other development partners? (2.2) To what extent has the FFF integrated its programme with other technical teams within the Forestry Department; with FAO’s internal priorities, building on Country Programming Frameworks and regional initiatives; and especially by linking with the Strategic Objectives (in this case SO3 Output 1.1 and SO2 Output 2.2)? (2.3) Is FFF coherent with other forestry initiatives operating within the target countries?
* Evaluation question 3: Was the project design appropriate for achieving the mission, vision and outcomes?

**Effectiveness**

* Evaluation question 4: To what extent is the FFF on track to achieving outcomes across the three pillars, and what changes are attributable to the FFF’s interventions which are directly linked to the FFF’s main objectives? Sub-questions: (4.1) To what extent were producer organizations strengthened for business development and engagement in policy dialogue? (4.2) Did FFF Catalyze multi-sectoral policy platforms? (4.3) Did FFF link local voices to global processes?

**Efficiency**

* Evaluation question 5: To what extent is the current operational modality contributing to the efficient achievement of the program outcomes?

**Likelihood of impact**

* Evaluation question 6: To what extent is FFF contributing to progress toward the expected outcomes and impact?

**Partnership and coordination**

* Evaluation question 7: Was FFF successful at engaging other partners in the FFF-supported processes?

**Sustainability**

* Evaluation question 8: How sustainable is the FFF concept of investing in the organizational capacity of forest farm producer organizations – and how might this be enhanced?

**Normative values**

* Evaluation question 9: To what extent have gender and human rights been taken into account in the design of the FFF and during the implementation?

## Methodology

1. The MTE adopted a consultative and transparent approach with FFF internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The triangulation of evidence and information gathered underpins its validation and analysis, and supports the conclusions and recommendations.
2. To assess the contribution of the project toward its stated outcomes and expected impact, five participating countries were visited. In each country, national and sub-national stakeholders were interviewed and field visits were carried out to meet directly with FFF-targeted FFPOs. A sixth mission was planned for Nicaragua, but this was cancelled due to timing and logistical constraints. The five visited countries were The Gambia, Kenya, Guatemala, Myanmar and Vietnam. While these five countries were the primary focus countries for the evaluation, the MTE team also conducted desk reviews of the FFF activities carried out in the other five countries in order to corroborate the findings from the primary evaluation missions.
3. Desk reviews and consultative interviews with the FFF team at FAO headquarters constitute an important aspect of the evaluation approach, primarily in relation to questions of programme management, coherence and synergies. Interviews were also conducted with staff of IUCN and IIED, the two main FFF partners.
4. To answer the above evaluation questions, the MTE’s approach is based on mixed methods and triangulation of information. This approach was selected to ensure that the evaluation findings fully respond to the purpose of the evaluation. The methods used included the following:

* Review of existing documentation on FFF;
* Analysis of FFF self-reported information, in particular the 2014 and 2015 annual reports;
* Semi-structured interviews with key informants, stakeholders and participants, supported by the questions listed in the evaluation matrix;
* Targeted FFPOs discussion and direct observation during field visits in the focus countries;
* Validation of MTE mission observations through debriefing discussions with key stakeholders at country and FAO headquarters level.

1. In order to answer evaluation questions 1 and 3 on relevance, country visits and key informant interviews were conducted with in-country stakeholders and beneficiaries. To answer question 2 on the coherence and consistency of FFF with FAO’s strategic objectives and other FAO initiatives, the evaluation team conducted interviews with key informants at FAO headquarters and country level, as well as a desk review. For questions 4 and 9, the MTE used different analytical approaches for assessing progress and impact under each FFF pillar. In assessing progress towards Outcome 1, Pillar 1, the analysis was based on four levels for influencing forest and farm related policies (adapted from Keck and Sikkink, 1998[[2]](#footnote-2)), as follows:

* Getting issues on the political agenda;
* Encouraging discursive commitment from government;
* Securing procedural change at national level;
* Influencing behavioral change in key actors.

1. In assessing the effectiveness of activities under Outcome 2, the MTE analyzed progress made by FFF in supporting interventions aimed at improving forest and farm based value chain governance[[3]](#footnote-3) as well as the upgrading[[4]](#footnote-4) trajectories followed by FFPOs. On value chains governance, three analytical lenses were used:

* Analyzing support to policy and institutional improvements of the environment in which value chains operate;
* Analyzing support to new laws and regulations governing value chains;
* Analyzing the facilitation offered to the negotiation of trade relationships between FFPOs and downstream value chain operators.
* To analyze the upgrading strategies, three analytical lenses were used:
* Analyzing value chain upgrading strategies used by FFPOs with the support of FFF in different countries;
* Analyzing market access models practiced by FFPOs;
* Analyzing the outcomes for FFPOs and their member households.

1. The evaluation also analyzed why some FFPOs derived greater benefits from their participation in value chains. For Question 6 on the project’s expected impact on forest and farm livelihoods, the achievements under each pillar were framed in terms of the assets and capitals identified in the sustainable livelihood approach (i.e. human capital, social capital, political capital, natural assets, physical assets and financial assets).

# Background and context of the project/programme

* 1. Context of the project

1. In the context of the Gambia, FFF is the follow-up of the National Forest Programme Facility (NFP) which was launched in 2009 with the objective of empowering communities to sustainably manage natural resources, implement rehabilitation systems, conserve biodiversity and halt environmental degradation and desertification. To accomplish this objective, the country created a National Multi-stakeholders Steering Committee (NMSC) which met regularly to discuss and forward the country's National Forest Programme (NFP) activities.
2. The main achievements of the NFPF support are:

* Further consolidation and development of community forests through training and elaboration of a community Forestry Field Manual;
* Providing further trainings for enterprise development in Community forests;
* Launching of the “All Gambia Forestry Platform” with the aim to strengthen stakeholder capacity and coordinate stakeholder efforts toward successful implementation of the Gambian NFP;
* Communication efforts on better understanding the Gambia’s national forest programme;
* Establishing the National Multi-stakeholder Steering committee of the Gambian NFP.

1. At the start of the implementation of FFF, The Gambia was one of the six pilot countries selected by the FFF steering committee in the meeting held on 10 – 11 January 2013. A scoping mission was conducted to launch the Facility from the 11th to 13th March 2013. The objectives of the launching workshop was to present and discuss the relevance of the FFF with Government institutions, partners and farmer organizations in The Gambia and to identify initial activities to get the FFF started. Based on the outcome of the launching workshop, the following findings surfaced:

* The focus on strengthening local forest and farm organizations was well received by both Government and the local forest and farmers’ organizations;
* The links between forestry, food security, poverty reduction and socio-economic development were recognized by all stakeholders and the need for more cross/sectoral integration of the forest sector and strengthening of local producer organizations were the main issues discussed during the launching;
* Existing Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy adopted in 2009, created an interface between Agriculture and Natural Resources sectors represented by a Working Group which needs to be broaden to include farmer organizations;
* The need to revive Community Forestry programme in the country in order to contribute to the attainment of Forest Policy 2009- 19 objectives were emphasized;
* All actors of the forestry and the stakeholders attributed the causes of deforestation to increase in farming activities, bushfire, illegal logging, use of wood for domestic energy where by 95% of domestic energy rely on fuel wood and charcoal;
* Key challenges confronting Forest and Farm Producer Organizations were inadequate awareness of policy related programs (ANR policy), lack of capacity on landscape management, unclear tenure agreements, difficulty to access to bank loans (credit unions and community banks), need for training and training of trainers on sustainable forest landscape management.

1. These findings have contributed to contextualizing and giving shape to FFF programme in Gambia.
   1. The theory of change
2. FFF developed a generic ToC that links development results at FFPOs level (organization capacity, access to technologies, and access to markets) with voice and participation in policy processes at national and global levels, in order to achieve the intended Impact. The strategies to achieve the Impact are arranged under three Pillars, four Outcomes and seven Outputs as presented in Figure 1. The MTE found that on this basis, the internal logic of the project is largely sound between the Outputs and Outcomes level. However, a close analysis shows that it does not express the conditions that should be in place to allow development results to reach impact. The ToC lacks important building blocks in terms of Assumptions and Impact Drivers[[5]](#footnote-5), between Outcomes level and Impacts level.

**Outcome 1:** Strengthened producer organizations engage in policy dialogue

**Outcome 2**: Local communities and producers are organized and thereby have the capacity to invest in sustainable forest and farm management and integrate into market

**Outcome 3**: Cross-sectoral coordination (...) for sustainable forest and farm management operating at national and sub-national levels

**Outcome 4:** National and global agendas and initiatives (…) are informed about the knowledge and priorities of smallholders, women, communities and IPs.

**Vision:** Smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples’ organizations have improved their livelihoods and decision-making over forest and farm landscapes

**Impact:** Smallholders, women and indigenous peoples groups have improved income and food security from sustainable forest and farm management

**Pillar1:** Strengthen smallholder, women and indigenous peoples’ produces’ producer organizations for business/livelihoods and policy engagement

**Pillar 2:** Catalyze multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms with governments at local and national levels

**Pillar 3**: Link local voices and learning to global processes through communication and information dissemination

**Output 4.1**: International and regional organizations representing smallholder-, women-, and IPs groups in international fora and negotiations have established communication and information channels to their respective constituencies at national and local levels (….)

**Output 4.1**: International and regional organizations representing smallholder-, women-, and IPs groups in international fora and negotiations have established communication and information channels….

**Output 1.2:** Collaboration for policy dialogue between smallholder, women, community, IPs groups, large scale private sector and government enhanced

**Output 3.1**: Establishment and coordination of government’s inter-ministerial multi-stakeholder platforms/committees (involving local organizations, CSOs, and the private sector) facilitated

**Output 3.2**: Increased information sharing and coordination between sectors results in improved understanding and implementation of different policies and programs affecting FFPOs within forest and farm landscapes

**Output 1.1:** Dispersed local forest and farm smallholders, women, and IPs are organized and strengthened to cooperate in (effective and gender inclusive) networks, alliances and federations

**Output 2.1**: Local FFPOs have knowledge about business development (…) and access to financing mechanisms

**Output 2.2**: Establishment of services such as producer hubs in support of small scale FFF- facilitated (and actively provided) services to female and male members

**Output 2.3**: Experience sharing and exchanges between FFPOs involving men and women result in increased resilience, improved practices and continued networking

Figure 1 FFF Results Framework

1. It should be recalled that it is between the levels of Outcomes and Impacts that the design should express the main changes that are expected to take place as “Intermediate States (IS)”, as the stepping-stones to Impacts in the respective pathways. It is therefore important to indicate explicitly in the ToC what are the required assumptions allowing Outcomes to lead to intermediate results (IR), and from there to planned impacts. The MTE reconstructed the ToC based on the original one in order to include the missing building blocks (Assumptions and Impact Drivers); this provides a framework that more clearly articulates the conditions that are required to reach the expected impact. The reconstructed ToC does not modify the Outputs, Outcomes, Impact and Vision. Rather it places them together with Intermediate Results (the current Pillars), Assumptions and Impact Drivers into a graphic representation of the FFF.
2. The different FFF ToC building blocks are illustrated as shown in Figure 2. The original ToC blocks are illustrated in green color and connecting black arrows, and are unchanged. Dashed black arrows are added to show the actual connectedness from the Project implementation experience to date. Other colors indicate the blocks that are missing in the original ToC: blue for the Assumptions, and dark orange for Impact Drivers.
3. During the country visits, the MTE Team discussed with National Facilitators and their key partners the conditions that were necessary to reach impact. The information obtained was used to identify factors and conditions that influence (or may influence) progress to impact. The reconstructed ToC shows that to reach the FFF Impact, three Intermediary States (IS) that correspond to the 3 Pillars must be achieved; these are:
4. IS-1: FFPOs capacity for doing business is enhanced and they engage in policy decision;
5. IS-2: Multi-sectoral stakeholders policy platforms are catalyzed;
6. IS-3: Local voices are linked to global processes.
7. To achieve IS1, FFF enhances the FFPOs capacity for doing business and for engaging in policy decision processes. The MTE found that despite the considerable progress made in implementing related Outputs at FFPOs level (as demonstrated later in this report), the real changes for sustainable results can take place if two important Assumptions are met:
8. Governments put in place conditions enabling FFPOs to engage in business and policy formation;
9. Partnerships with Financial Institutions (FIs) and Micro-Financial Institutions (MFIs) can be mobilized to address FFPOs finance issues.
10. To achieve IS-2, FFF intends to catalyze multi-sectoral policy platforms. However, this highly political objective can be reached only if, as above, the Assumption that “Governments put in place conditions enabling FFPOs to engage in business and policy formation” is met.
11. To achieve IS-3, FFF intends to link local voices to global processes. This can be achieved if the Assumption the “avenues for exchange at regional and global levels are offered” is met.
12. The Vision is stated as “Smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples’ organizations have improved their livelihoods and decision-making over forest and farm landscapes». It is understood from this articulation that it relates to 10 participating countries, which is an understatement because Pillar 3 of the Project leads arguably to important regional and global impacts. FFF needs therefore to integrate these impacts in the formulation of the Vision. This is why the MTE added a plain black arrow linking the Intermediary State “Local voices are linked to global processes” to the Vision, while the arrow link to Impact is dashed.
13. The Impact is stated as «Smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples’ groups have improved income and food security from sustainable forest and farm management”. This is also an understatement of the impacts. With the importance that the Vision attaches to livelihoods improvement, the FFF should articulate the impact accordingly in order to cover the potential livelihoods related impacts and not a subset of those impacts (income and food security). Given the wide regional and country scope of Project implementation, the livelihoods related impacts should be defined in terms of improved human, social, political, natural and physical capitals.
14. At the Impact level, FFF intends to contribute to improving income and food security of smallholders, communities and indigenous people groups, from sustainable forest and farm management. This formulation is not wide enough to be at the level of the Vision which emphasizes improving livelihoods of smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples organizations and their decision-making over forest and farm landscapes. In addition to income and food security (financial capital and resilience), important impacts can be expected in terms of improved human capital, social capital, political capital, natural capital and physical capital.

# Evaluation questions: key findings

1. This section presents the findings which are based on the desk review of the FFF documents, interviews with FFF Team, visit in the Gambia, and interviews with target FFPOs at grassroots level and key program stakeholders in the country.

## Evaluation question 1: How relevant is FFF primary focus and logic in terms of its stated mission, in relation to the target countries’ contexts, to broader sustainable development initiatives, and to smallholder farmers' needs?

1. FFF approach is highly relevant to national policies of The Gambia. The FFF country programme is in line with the Agricultural and Natural Resources Policy 2009-2015 (ANR), which was launched in 2012, and which supports development towards an integrated approach in managing landscape resources. It was well received, most notably for strengthening the experience gained in the country by the NFP Facility in further supporting Community Forests.

## Evaluation question 2: Consistency with FAO’s strategic objectives: How and to what extent does the project contribute to the broader FAO strategic objectives?

1. FFF is aligned to FAO’s Strategic Objective 2 (SO2), «Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner». It is particularly aligned with FAO’s Strategic Objective 3 (SO3), “Reduce rural poverty”, to which it strongly contributes. Under SO3, FAO recognizes that rural poverty is mostly concentrated among households of small-scale subsistence producers and family farmers, among others. It further recognizes that women are often amongst the most marginalized and need strengthened rights to the natural resources on which they depend.
2. Under SO3, FAO’s focus is on a holistic approach to rural development and poverty reduction. Likewise, FFF Gambia program emphasizes integrated approaches in which forests and other farm components are considered functionally interdependent components of the same rural landscapes that must be sustainably managed and used to improve the livelihoods of their users. FFF also focuses on opportunities that strengthen linkages between forests, crops and animal production, for sustainability reasons.
3. More specifically, the FFF is aligned to FAO’s corporate outcome 3.1: The rural poor have enhanced and equitable access to productive resources, services, organizations and markets, and can manage their resources more sustainably. The output under this outcome to which FFF is contributing most is Output 3.1.1: *Support to strengthen rural organizations and institutions and facilitate empowerment of rural poor*. The FFF objectives under pillars 1 and 2 are closely in line with those of SO3.
   1. Evaluation question 3: Was the project design appropriate for achieving the Outcomes and the Vision?
4. In the context of the Gambia, the appropriateness of the Project’s design for achieving its Outcomes and Vision is unquestionable. Forest and farm smallholders of the county face challenges that include limited organization skills, limited access to markets and market information, to financial capital, smallholder friendly technologies, and limited or no participation in policy formation processes relating to forest and farm landscape management and use. Addressing these challenges is in the realm of FFF’s Vision and Outcomes. All key informants interviewed by the MTE Team said that the FFF model is a practical and effective methodology in delivering the support to FFPOs as compared to traditional development projects. It facilitates access to smallholders through these organizations, with training and other services allowing them to do business and link to markets, and to participate in policy formation processes.
5. The appropriateness of the FFF model is further evidenced by the strong response it has received from FFPOs receiving grants and training, and other smallholder groups and government agencies responding to capacity building activities. Table 1 provides a list of beneficiaries of capacity building organized by FFF country programme.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1: FFF target organizations/groups and their characteristics | | | | |
| Organization/group | **Capacity development/organizational area** | **Number of beneficiaries** | **Gender** | |
| **Male** | **Female** |
| National farmers platform of The Gambia (NFPG) | 8 new groups (CFCs, TAD, Rice irrigation Group, Livestock owners Association) | 30 000 | 17 500 | 12 500 |
| NFPG | Facilitated the constitution of 6 regional CF Task force | 124 | 90 | 34 |
| NFPG | Training of executive members | 24 | 15 | 9 |
| NFPG | Group management and strengthening topics | 119 | 56 | 63 |
| NFPG | Strengthening roles and responsibilities of CF Management Committees through training | 119 | 82 | 37 |
| NFPG | Inauguration of Federation of Cashew Farmers Associations of The Gambia | 10 500 | 8 500 | 2 000 |
| National Environment Agency (NEA) | 2 regional awareness raising meeting on ANR Policy in CRR and URR | 60 | 53 | 7 |
| NEA | Capacity strengthening programme for ANR Working Group & Platform (ANR WG) on strategic planning, programming and participatory M&E | 37 | 28 | 9 |
| NEA | ANR WG and Platform meeting review FFF 2015 and identification of priorities 2016 | 56 | 43 | 13 |
| All Gambia Forestry Platform (AGFP) | MA&D Phase 1&2 training in Kartong and Tumani Tenda villages | 24 | 16 | 8 |
| AGFP | Affiliated 9 CFCs formalized | 5 515 | 2 506 | 3 009 |
| AGFP | 1 Agroforestry Food processors group | 43 | 6 | 37 |
| NACO | Training on commercial salt production for CFMCs | 40 | 16 | 24 |
| FFF Small Grants Beneficiary Groups | | | | |
| Aquaculture Fish Farmers | Training on Business Planning for members | 20 | 14 | 16 |
| REFESSA | Training on food processing for young women | 15 | 0 | 15 |
| Japanteh Society | Training on rapid compost making for vegetable growers | 25 | 11 | 14 |
| Bureng Adult Literacy | CF Management Planning for Folonko CF | 15 | 9 | 6 |
| Rural development organization | Commercial tree nursery training | 30 | 16 | 14 |
| TOTALS | | 46 766 | 28 961 | 17 805 |

* 1. Evaluation question 4: To what extent is the FFF on track to achieving outcomes across the three pillars and what changes can be observed that are attributable to the FFF’s interventions and are directly linked to the FFF’s main objectives?

1. This section presents the MTE findings with respect to overall achievements per Outcome for each Pillar. Overall, the MTE found substantive evidence that FFF country programme is on track for Outcomes in the three Pillars. Based on interviews with key informants and direct field observations regarding progress toward achieving the project Intermediary States, the MTE findings indicate that FFF has made the considerable progress in relation to the IS-1, “FFPOs capacity for doing business is enhanced and they engage in policy decision processes”. With regard to IS-2, “Multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms are catalyzed”, the Program also made considerable achievements. The government has established cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms for policy formation at national level, and for policy implementation at sub-national levels. With regard to IS-3, “Local voices are linked to global processes”, there are important achievements in relation to processes at global level, such as participation of FFPOs delegations in UNFCCC COP21.

**Pillar 1, “Strengthen smallholder, women, community and indigenous peoples’ producer organizations for business/livelihoods and policy engagement”**

1. **With regard to progress to Outcome 1, “Strengthened producer organizations engage in policy dialogue”, FFF programme in Gambia is on track in supporting grassroots FFPOs and their Apex structures to organize for policy dialogue and engagement.** FFF is effective in supporting FFPOs to engage in policy dialogue. Table 2 summarizes the progress made in influencing the forest and farm related policy processes. As a basis to analyze this progress, the MTE distinguished 4 levels for assessing policy influence (adapted from Keck and Sikkink, 1998[[6]](#footnote-6)), as follows:
2. Getting issues on political agenda
3. Encouraging discursive commitment from government
4. Securing procedural change at national level
5. Influencing behavioral change in key actors.
6. ***Getting issues on political agenda.*** Under Output 1.1, “Dispersed local producers are organized into effective and gender inclusive groups”, FFF’s approach of targeting smallholders through FFPOs as the vehicle to transfer knowledge and skills for getting organized has led to increased awareness of the many advantages of working together. The farmers’ apex organizations play an increasing role in getting issues regarding smallholders concerns on political agendas.
7. With regard to Output 1.2, “Producer groups work together with government and private sector to improve policy”, the MTE noted that there is a strong interaction between farmers apex organizations, those of FFPOs included, and the government on policy improvement discussions. For example, FFF played a broker role in facilitating dialogue between FFPOs representatives, Minister responsible of Forestry and Parliamentarians.
8. ***Encouraging discursive commitment from government.*** FFF country programme organized training of FFPOs in “law literacy” to influence behavioral change, so that with the information on existing laws and regulations of interest to their activities, they can engage with the Government and parliamentarians on issues related to their interests as far as access to and use of forest resources are concerned. FFF also facilitated a multi-actor dialogue to revive the country’s community forestry programme and to discuss forest tenure transfers to local communities. Because of this effort, there is a favorable discursive commitment of government authorities, which led to profound change as far as forest tenure is concerned. In 2015, the Government transferred 77 community forest areas covering 5,335 hectares to local communities across the country. This transfer had an overwhelming effect on the prospects of rural development in the country, in general, and on the structuring of FFPOs in particular. This is arguably one of the noteworthy successes of FFF advocacy effort in the country.

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| Table 2: Progress made by FFF in influencing forest and farm related policies (Pillar 1 & 2) | |
| Results levels | Examples of results obtained with FFF support |
| Getting issues on political agenda | The ANR Working Group and Platform engaged with FFPOs on many issues, including those relevant to the Rio conventions and on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. |
| Encouraging discursive commitment from state | There is a particular influence of the work of FFF on the government policy discourses at national and sub-national levels as far as rural development strategies are concerned. |
| Securing procedural change at national level | Spaces were opened to allow Apex FFPOs organizations to participate in inter-institutional policy platforms and working groups. |
| Influencing behavioral change in key actors. | FFF influenced the decision-makers to enforce the Forest Act (in relation to transfer of forest ownership to communities) and the implementation of the Natural Resource and agricultural Policy. |

1. **Securing procedural change at national level and influencing behavioral change in key actors.** The FFF country programme played a broker role that led the Government to open spaces were allowing apex FFPOs to participate in inter-institutional policy platforms and working groups.
2. **Influencing behavioral change in key actors.** TheFFF country programme influenced the decision-makers to enforce the Forest Act (in relation to transfer of forest ownership to communities) and the implementation of the Natural Resource and agricultural Policy.
3. **With regard to Outcome 2, “Local communities and producers are organized and thereby have the capacity to invest in sustainable forest and farm management and integrate into the market”, the FFF Gambia programme is achieving progress in strengthening producer organizations’ capacity to engage in business.** Through Output 2.1 “Local forest and farms organizations have knowledge about business development”, Outcome 2 is the key focus of FFF in the country as far as meeting grassroots priority support needs is concerned. The trainings organized by the programme have focused on the knowledge that smallholder farmers need to add value to their productions and to link to markets.
4. Poor forests and Farms producers often struggle to gain market integration because they lack knowledge of market requirements or the skills to meet those requirements. Furthermore, weak or lack of access to information, together with other obstacles in value chains prevent FFPOs from getting the benefits that entering into national and global markets can offer. The existing Value Chain Development experiences achieved by the target FFPOs through MA&D trainings are essential to deepen the integration of smallholder farmers into the market.
5. For these reasons, the MTE put the analysis of VCD progress made by the FFF country programme at the heart of the assessment of Outcome 2. To this end, the MTE analyzed progress made by FFF in supporting interventions aimed at improving forest and farm based value chain governance as well as the upgrading trajectories followed by FFPOs.
6. ***Emerging experience in value chain governance.*** In the country visit, the MTE mission found interesting emerging experiences in value chain governance in Gambia. The FFF programme played a key advocacy role in the Government’s decision on the transfer of forest tenure to local communities, in implementation of its policy and enforcement of its Forest Act. As a result, local communities countrywide can clearly improve the use of management of the forest resources, and participate profitably in the forest-based value chains development processes. An MA&D training conducted in 2015 led to the identification of six main value chains for forest and farm producers in The Gambia: ecotourism, handicraft making, beekeeping, nursery production, timber production, and firewood production. These are the focus of FFF, although support is also given to other value chains such as cashew, horticulture, food processing and aquaculture.
7. FFF is also generating encouraging experience in the area of application of laws and regulations in the country. At the national level, FFF supported the Federation of Gambia Cashew Farmers Associations (which has 15 000 members from eight associations) which successfully lobbied the government to reduce the informal cross-border trade of cashew, which was affecting both the quality and prices. The Farmers also got a quintupling of cashew price which passed from 13 Dalasi to 65 dalasi per kilogram.
8. With regard to experiences in facilitating negotiation between FFPOs and downstream value chain operators, FFF facilitated the convening of contact and collaboration fairs for producers and other actors on the product value chains. This initiative has proven effective in stimulating dialogue and forging alliances among FFPOs and other actors.
9. ***Emerging experience in value chain upgrading.*** The MTE found that FFF implicitly supports value chains upgrading through the activities aimed at value addition. It identified the following upgrading trajectories: products upgrading[[7]](#footnote-7), process upgrading[[8]](#footnote-8), functional upgrading[[9]](#footnote-9) and inter-chain (or inter-sector) upgrading[[10]](#footnote-10). Table 3 presents examples of emerging experiences that target FFPOs have achieved in value chain upgrading with the FFF support.
10. ***Product upgrading.*** There are interesting results in product upgrading in the country. The country programme support implicitly enhances products upgrading activities that raise the forest and farm producers’ awareness on the standards and quality that attract consumers. Products upgrading goes hand in hand with process upgrading because improving product quality often involves improving production processes. With products upgrading through packaging of processed products and process upgrading, FFF is transforming forest and farm economics in target communities. New livelihoods opportunities are created for the beneficiaries and smallholders are helped to build up technological skills and are stimulated to participate in value chains and engage in business. Favorable factors influencing product upgrading include a good link of the chains to national markets.
11. Examples of successful cases include: Pakalinding Women Food Processors and Nyangen Women Group Processors (packaging and hygiene standards), many honey processing organizations (packaging), Aquaculture Fish Farmers Association (smoking and salting fish), FFPOs producing nursery seedlings (use of improved seeds).

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| Table 3: FFF-supported FFPOs’ Emerging experiences in value chain upgrading strategies | |
| Type of upgrading | **Example of FFPOs supported by FFF** |
| Product upgrading | * Pakalinding Women Food Processors and Nyangen Women Group Processors: packaging and hygiene standards * Many honey processing organizations: packaging * Aquaculture Fish Farmers Association: smoking and salting fish * FFPOs producing nursery seedlings: use of improved seeds. |
| Functional upgrading | Many FFPOs which process their productions are also involved in marketing activities. |
| Inter-chain upgrading | Tumani Tenda Ecotourism Camp: produces and packages honey, and collects oyster, and has developed an important eco-tourism activity. |

1. ***Functional upgrading***. With regard to functional upgrading, the FFPOs which get FFF support for value addition through processing of their productions are also involved in marketing activities.
2. ***Inter-chain upgrading***. The FFPO Tumani Tenda Ecotourism Camp produces and packages honey, collects oyster, and has developed an important eco-tourism activity.
3. **FFF experiences in helping FFPOs to know business and access markets.** With the training activities targeting FFPOs’ members, FFF country programme has been effective in the implementation of Output 2.1. The application of the acquired knowledge has further motivated the beneficiaries to orient their production systems to commercialization. In Table 4, the MTE summarizes FFF experiences in The Gambia to date in helping FFPOs to know business and access to markets. From the information available, five main business models have been identified as fit for FFF-targeted groups: (i) Farm gate, roadside, or local market place driven; (ii) Trader-driven; (iii) Buyer company-driven; (iv) FFPOs-driven; (v) Public institution procurement driven.
4. Table 4 shows that all the five business models are practiced in Gambia, which illustrated not only a good integration of forests and farm activities, but also the diversity of sources of livelihoods supported by FFF in that country. It also reflects the challenge that FFF faces in providing trainings for business skills that are adapted to the requirements of each business model.
5. One of the business models with which FFF is having interesting results is the FFPO-driven model. Based on field observations, this model is most likely to give higher and more sustainable benefits to FFPOs and their members. It reflects not only higher internal organization (like with Tumani Tenda Ecotourism Camp), but also entrepreneurship skills. Buyer company-driven model and public institution driven model are interesting because they provide incentives to FFPOs to maximize their production efficiency and reliability as far as product quality and respect of standards are concerned.
6. Access to finance is considered by many FFPOs visited by the MTE missions as an important barrier as far as strengthening their business development is concerned. They consider that without bank loans they cannot buy the equipment and material that processing activities require. FFF has not yet developed approaches to address this problem.

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| Table 4: Main business models driving FFF supported FFPOs’ business | |
| Type of business model | Examples of FFF targeted FFPOs | |
| Farm gate, roadside, local market place | Pakalinding Women Food Processors sell products processed from NTFPs (mango juice and jam, Hibiscus and tamarind juice, pepper sauce) partly at roadside; Nyangen Women Group processors who add value to horticultural products. | |
| Trader-driven | Jassobo Community Forest Women Salt Producer; Pakalinding Women Food Processors sell processed food products (pepper sauce and tamarind juice) in bulk to Senegalese traders. | |
| Buyer company-driven | Cashew producers associations sell to buyer companies; Tumani Tenda Ecotourism Camp sell processed honey. | |
| FFPOs-driven | Tumani Tenda Ecotourism Camp sells its services and honey to tourists. | |
| Public institution procurement driven | Aquaculture Fish Farmers Association has contracts to sell fish to Boarding Schools, Army Barracks, Prison, Hospital, in addition to local market. | |

1. **FFF country programme further strengthened FFPOs’ capacity to know business and access to markets through Output 2.2 and Output 2.3**. Under Output 2.2, “Establishment of services in support of small forest business”, FFF programme has been effective in establishing services to support small forest and farm based business. This has been done for example by getting the government services involved in training and advising FFPO committee members in seedling production.
2. Under Output 2.3, “Experience sharing between producer organizations in-country”. In Gambia, FFF programme has had considerable success in organizing sharing of experience between producer organizations namely through workshops.

**Pillar 2: “Catalyze multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms with governments and at local and national levels”**

1. With regard to Outcome 3, “Cross-sectoral coordination (…) for sustainable forest and farm management operating at national and sub-national levels”, the FFF Gambia programme has made considerable progress in brokering the establishment of multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder policy platforms. The MTE noted that farmers’ apex organizations are represented in cross-sectoral coordination for policy formation or law formulation processes.
2. With regard to Output 3.1, “Establishment and coordination of multi-sectoral policy platforms”, the government has established a quasi-formal multi-sectoral policy formation mechanism in the form of a Natural Resource Working Group, co-chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment.
3. ***Influencing through official cross-sectoral coordination, on a permanent basis.*** The broker role played by FFF country programme has allowed FFPOs to be represented in cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms on a permanent basis. Thus they have strengthened their voice and are able to influence policy formation and decision-making processes. The MTE mission observed that in general FFF activities are politically smart, and FFF facilitation was able to influence the Government to bring key private sector and civil society actors, as well as representatives of farmer apex organizations to participate as members of the Natural Resource Working Group, which is a multi-sectoral platform for policy discussion. This platform is fostering the voice of farmer organizations in policy processes, and has been recognized by development actors in the country as an innovative effort. The MTE Mission had an opportunity to participate in a meeting of this Working Group and found it quite effective in making heard the voice of participating sectors and groups.

**Pillar 3 “Link local voices and learning to global processes through communication and information dissemination”**

1. **With regard to Outcome 4, “National and global agendas and initiatives (…) are informed about knowledge and priorities of smallholders, women, communities and indigenous peoples”, FFF country programme has made good progress on national, regional and global levels.** For Outcome 4, FFF delivers at national, regional and global levels. The MTE found that FFF made very good progress at all these levels. At national level, all relevant fora are used to make smallholders priorities known. At regional and global levels, FFF supported farmers’ organization representation in the Africa Farm/Family Forest Producers Organizations Conference that was held in Nairobi 9-11 of June 2015, to prepare African FFPOs representation in the XIV World Forestry Congress. [[11]](#footnote-11) FFF also supports the representation of Gambian farmers’ organizations in the Network of West Africa Peasant and Agricultural Producers’ Organizations (ROPPA).

## Evaluation question 5: To what extent is the current operational modality contributing to the efficient achievement of the program outcomes?

1. The MTE also found that FFF country programme management structure is appropriate and provides the necessary expertise required to keep the programme activities on track as far as the planned outputs and outcomes are concerned. The work of the programme Facilitation is highly appreciated by target FFPOs and FFF program partners at national, and subnational and community levels.
2. To strengthen the efficiency in achieving program outcomes, the program Facilitation has adequately mobilized support to FFPOs by subnational state services of the agricultural and environment departments in particular.
3. The operational FFF modality is one of the factors for its efficiency. FFF country program can be regarded as being highly efficient in terms of inputs relative to results if account is taken of the relatively limited financial resources invested and duration of implementation so far. Its main delivery mechanisms which include small grants to FFPOs, communications, training and workshops and contact and collaboration fairs are appreciated by target FFPOs and partners at all levels.

## Evaluation question 6: What is the likelihood that FFF will contribute to the expected impact?

1. **There is a strong likelihood of reaching the Impact of the Project and contributing to its Vision.** Full project impact is normally reached some time or many years after completion of its activities. At this stage, the MTE can only assess the likelihood for reaching that Impact and for contributing to the Vision which is “Smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples organizations have improved their livelihoods and decision-making over forest and farm landscapes”.
2. The likelihood of FFF rural poverty impact can be assessed by looking at the main livelihoods “building blocks” as follows:
3. Human capital. The strongest FFF results are in the fundamental domain of human capital development, in which there are considerable achievements in enhancing the stock of skills in FFPOs members (organizational, managerial, technological, MA&D). The smallholders that the MTE mission met were unanimous in their appreciation of the contribution of training to their performance in production, processing and marketing activities. The MTE also observed many cases at grassroots level of positive effect on the quality of life of women who participated in trainings.
4. Social capital. The most significant contribution of FFF to this domain has come from the support to FFPOs organizational capacity. Its interventions are increasing the stock of trust that FFPOs members have in the governance of their organizations, and strengthening solidarity in communities. Smallholders are being empowered through raised awareness on the benefits of working together. The FFPOs and their governing committees are effectively contributing to a sense of local ownership of FFF’s results by their members.
5. Political capital. FFF supported the enhancement of the political capital of its target FFPOs through a diversity of trainings. As a result, FFPO leaders and leaders of their Apex organizations are in regular interaction with state services at national and subnational levels, and with members of parliament on matters relating to forest and farm management. Apex organizations take part in policy-making processes and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms and raise issues for discussion through these mechanisms.
6. Natural assets. FFF’s main focus at the local level is advocacy role in the Government’s decision on the transfer of forest tenure to local communities, and support to sustainable management and use of these resources. With this transfer, communities’ natural assets have expanded, and as a result, local communities countrywide can clearly improve the use of management of the forest resources, and participate profitably in the forest-based value chains development processes.
7. Physical assets. In general, FFF grants to FFPOs do not cover investment in physical capital. There is therefore likelihood that FFF will have limited impact on FFPOs physical assets.
8. Financial assets. Due to limited data available, it is not possible to assess the full extent to which FFF is affecting financial assets of households of FFPOs members. From the interviews with FFPOs representatives, the MTE mission found that production and value addition activities supported by FFF grants are positively affecting household income. Working together has allowed men and women to adopt the practice of growing off-season crops by means of small-scale irrigation, which gives them a possibility of getting all year round income, and boosts community resilience. Increased incomes are allowing them to improve home equipment and pay school fees for their children. Women of the horticulture FFPO told the MTE mission that revenue from sales has substantially contributed to household asset accumulation for members. In many poor rural communities, this has strengthened the resilience of the communities in which these FFPOs are based.

## Evaluation question 7: Is FFF having success in engaging other partners in the FFF supported processes?

1. Partnerships have featured prominently in FFF country interventions. They have mainly involved government services at subnational levels in facilitating forest tenure transfer and resolving related conflicts, and NGOs for training FFPOs members. FAO and IIED partnership has also played a key role in couching the use of M&LS and contextualizing certain indicators to the country’s specificities.

## Evaluation question 8: How sustainable is the FFF concept of investing in the organizational capacity of forest farm producer organizations – and how might this be enhanced?

1. Sustainability is the likelihood of the programme benefits to be delivered for an extended period after its completion. The MTE found that the high political and social ownership of FFF model in the country is a powerful factor of sustainability. The government and its agencies at national and subnational levels have integrated the FFF model (or Triple F under which it is known in the country) in their rural development discourse, and are sparing no effort to ensure its success. The MTE also found that target FFPOs have been the main advocates of the model, and the steadily increasing social and economic benefits of their members contribute to the likelihood of sustainability of the FFF concept.
2. Another equally important factor of sustainability is the success of the training activities targeting smallholders through their FFPOs. These activities are transforming farms into businesses and motivating them to move further in commercialization activities.
3. However, the MTE found that the provision of grants without defined counterpart FFPOs contribution to invest in their project may in certain situations generate an unintended effect of dependency, albeit temporary. Although small grant agreements LoAs have sections on cash or in-kind contributions by the service providers, sustainability may be enhanced if FFPOs in receipt of FFF grants contribute matching funds to their project budgets, either from their own resources, from other partners, or loans from micro-finance institutions.

# Crosscutting issues

## Evaluation question 9: To what extent have gender and human rights been taken into account in the design of the FFF and during the implementation?

1. In the context of the country programme, the main cross-cutting issues is gender. The programme supports efforts to address gender equality and empowerment in FFPOs’ governance and activities. Gender equality awareness among women and men in target organizations has improved, and trainings supported by FFF have enhanced the capacity of female members of the FFPOs governance committees, and technology skills of female members of those organizations. Women are well represented in the membership and governance structures of targeted FFPOs. There is also an effort to mainstream gender issues in the design of proposals submitted by those organizations to FFF for funding.
2. The MTE noted FFF’s effort in supporting the development of women’s leadership skills. In most FFPOs visited in the country, the MTE mission found women are more enthusiastic in their organizations’ activities than are men. This enthusiasm is particularly strong in horticulture and NTFPs processing activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The conclusions and recommendations are formulated in the overall MTE report.

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# List of people met

**National Environment Agency (NEA)**

Omar Ceesay, Programme Officer/Agriculture and Natural Resource, Secretary to the ANR WG & Platform

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Alhagy Jatta, Department of Community Development

Ansumana Njie, Department of Agriculture

**Local Government Authority**

Demba Sanyang Head District Chief, Kiang West District

1. In order to avoid repetition in the presentation of the findings, some questions from the Evaluation Terms of Reference have been reclassified as sub-questions here in the final evaluation report where it was appropriate. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998). Activists beyond borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Cornell University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Value chain governance is understood as the power to control, influence, and set the modes and rules of interaction in the value chain. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Value chain upgrading refers to the acquisition of capabilities and market linkages that enable enterprises to improve their competitiveness and move into higher-value activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Distinct from assumptions, impact drivers are factors that project/programme management can influence to a certain extent. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998). Activists beyond borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Cornell University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Products upgrading: where a chain actor engages in the production of more sophisticated products in order to increase unit value. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Process upgrading: where a chain actor increases the efficiency of internal processes (production, new technologies, storages, distribution, logistics). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Functional upgrading: where a chain actor changes the mix of functions performed by producer organizations, by working in more than one node of a value chain. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Inter-chain upgrading: where a chain actor introduces value-adding processes from other chains to offer new products or services. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The conference outcomes were captured in “Resolution of the Africa Farm/Family Forest Producers Organizations Conference Nairobi 9-11 of June 2015 - An initiative of the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA)”. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)