

Country Programme Evaluation Series

Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Cabo Verde

2018–2022

**Annex 3: Assessment of the project “Building adaptive capacity and
resilience of the forestry sector in Cabo Verde” (budget code:
GCP/CVI/046/EC)**

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1. Introduction

1. In the framework of the evaluation of FAO's country programme in Cabo Verde (2018–2022) a specific focus was given to the project "Building adaptive capacity and resilience of the forestry sector in Cabo Verde" (GCP/CVI/046/EC), in order to cluster its final assessment within the country programme evaluation (CPE).
2. The project, so-called Reflor project, started in July 2017 for a duration of four years and, after two subsequent no-cost extensions, is expected to close in April 2022. With a budget of USD 5 464 726 (including FAO contribution), it is the largest FAO project implemented during the timeframe of the Country Programming Framework (CPF). This is the report of the final assessment of the project.

2. Methodology

3. The assessment was carried-out during the CPF evaluation and included meetings with FAO project team (international and national consultants based in Praia), the National Project Coordinator of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and other relevant staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment involved in project implementation, the Programme Officer of the European Union Delegation in Praia (the European Union was the resource partner), and focus groups of five communities participating in the project (Longueira, Rui Vaz, Rincon, Serra Malagueta and Pedra Cumprida in Santiago Island).
4. The documentation made available by the project included the project annual reports 2017–2018, 2018–2019, 2019–2020 and the executive summary of the report 11/2020–09/2021. The final report of the project was not yet available during the evaluation. The final results-oriented monitoring (ROM) of the resource partner carried out in May 2021 was made available to the evaluation team by the European Union Delegation. A large project documentation (national and international consultants' reports, technical papers, workshops proceedings, leaflets, Power Point presentations, among others) was also made available by the project team and consulted.

3. Design and objectives of the project

5. The project was well aligned with the main national strategies and plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), the National Plan of Investments in the Agricultural sector (PNIASAN), among others. The project was also well aligned with National Forestry Action Plan 2020 by promoting a participatory approach to forest management. As for the resource partner programme, the Reflor project is part of the initiative Global Alliance for Climate Change (GCCA+).
6. The overall objective of the project is “to increase resilience of women and men in forest communities and enhance key adaptive capacity in the forestry sector to address the additional risks posed by climate change to desertification and land degradation in Cabo Verde”.
7. The project was designed with two main operational axes. The first axis (Component 1) was conceived to support forestry policy frameworks mainly through institutional strengthening and capacity development for climate resilient forestry. The second axis (Component 2) was conceived to implement participatory and gender responsive actions of forest resources management in selected areas of reforestation or forestry restoration and/or re-naturalization. The project has also a third component focussed on knowledge building, expected to capture, systematise and disseminate lessons learned and good practices.
8. Each axis/component has its own expected outcome, as shown in following table:

Component	Outcomes
1. Support to policy frameworks and to institutional and individual capacity building	(i) Climate change risks and resilience are integrated into forestry policy frameworks, and adaptive institutional and individual capacity is strengthened for climate resilient forestry
2. Reforestation/re-naturalization and participatory approach to forest resources management	(ii) Desertification and land degradation are reduced in targeted islands (Santiago, Fogo, Boa Vista) via reforestation, re-naturalization of forested areas and strengthened participatory approach to forest resources management
3. Knowledge and lessons learned	(iii) Knowledge and lessons learned are captured, analysed and disseminated

Source: Elaborated by the evaluation team.

9. The logical framework matrix (LogFrame) of the project and the project work plan define more than 60 planned activities to produce a total of 13 outputs for the achievement of three project outcomes. The LogFrame also shows that some relevant baseline indicators of expected outputs were at zero level. For instance, the LogFrame points out that forest management plans did not exist in any of the islands, a systematic approach to climate change territorial planning was missing, planning and monitoring capacity in main forestry-related sectors was low and alarmingly decreasing at all levels, and there was no experience in co-management of forest areas with the participation of local communities and associations. The Reflor project was, therefore, ambitious and innovative.
10. The project design contemplated an abundant number of international and national consultants. It was foreseen, for the whole duration of the project (48 months) an international project manager and four national technical officers and administrative assistants, seven international consultants (total of 550 working days), five national consultants (total of 1 500 working days) and two supplementary national consultants for community work and gender mainstreaming (total of 28 months).

11. Despite the total amount directed to human resources be around 25 percent of the budget coming from the European Union– hence aligned with international projects of that kind – the high number of FAO personnel of different type represented a quite unbalanced situation when compared with the whole staff of the Forestry Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment. This situation reflected in the way FAO implemented the project operations, a sort of “direct” execution of the activities by FAO personnel, leading to the current concerns regarding institutional uptake, national ownership and results sustainability pointed out in section 4.2 and in Conclusion 2. The main report of this CPF evaluation is also describing and discussing this issue in sections 5.3 (FAO contribution to Priority Area 3) and 6.1 (lesson learned 1).

4. Results achieved

4.1. Project implementation and outputs delivery

12. The project has been challenged by different factors that hampered the smooth implementation of the activities. There have been delays in the inception phase of the project, particularly in setting the project team and in organizing project activities. Recruitment of project consultants and purchase procedures have been highly time-consuming and more cumbersome than expected. There has also been discontinuity in the project management core-team (project manager and operations manager) during 2020 and 2021. Drought years from 2017 onward were also not favourable to trees plantations until 2020. As a result, in July 2020 (with only one year of project left), the execution rate was just at 34,5 percent.
13. Despite the new, unexpected challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the project actually gained momentum in 2020 with the full setting of the team both for capacity development activities (Component 1) and for field activities (Component 2), and in September 2021 the rate of budget delivery was 73 percent. In 2021 a first no-cost extension was agreed (until December 2021), then followed by a second one that prolonged the project until April 2022.
14. There have been significant delays in the implementation of the activities of forestation in Boa Vista island, due to the specific socio-economic characteristics of the area (private land with irrigated plots, absence of community's associations) that required a long preparatory work of community's organization, consensus building and land preparation. The final report of the project will provide updated information on this issue.
15. Despite the limitations and initial delays, the Project has delivered most of the expected outputs, as outlined here below.
16. Component 1 was focussed on capacity development at individual, institutional and policy levels as foreseen in Outcome 1. The main results in this area include:
 - i. The setting of four thematic working groups with the participation of around 50 technical officers of different public services (themes: planning, monitoring, safeguard, governance). They are multidisciplinary and inter-institutional groups promoted to enhance participation and develop activities for the setting of improved forestry institutional framework.
 - ii. Based on the intense capacity development activities summarised above, three forestry sector master plans were completed as planned in the three islands of intervention (Santiago, Fogo and Boa Vista). They are the first forestry sector master plans at island level produced in the country. Six forestry sector master plans were also produced in six priority areas identified by the project (four in Santiago, one in Fogo and Boa Vista). Around 400 stakeholders have been participating in this planning process at different levels (local, island, central). The Forestry Inventory has also been updated in the areas of project intervention.
 - iii. The revision of the Forestry Law (dating back to the 1980s) is being finalized and reviewed. Though quite innovative at the time of its approval, the law was in need of adaptation to the new environmental challenges and national strategic objectives. A thorough revision of all normative and institutional national framework related to forestry was also carried out.

- iv. Individual capacity building was carried out all along the activities above, particularly addressing different services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, which significantly improved the Ministry capacity to address issues related to forestry planning and monitoring and to geographical information. The foreseen implementation of the digital platform based in the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment is under development, as well as the upgrading of the early warning system. Steps were also given for the setting and implementation of a National Forestry & Climate Change Forum.
 - v. Interesting to note the triangulation between the project, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and the University (UniCV). Seven students were integrated in the Reflor/Ministry of Agriculture and Environment team while preparing their final dissertation (five) and the Master thesis (two), with valuable results at project and academic level. Some internships of the Institute for Vocational Training and Employment (IEFP) were also very useful to the project.
17. Component 2 focussed on reforestation and restoration of forested areas, on the creation of new forested areas and on intense activity of communities' mobilisation and organization for soil conservation and plantation activities, as well as for strengthening the meaningful involvement of local communities in the management of forested areas. More specifically:
- i. Total reforested area is 1 053 ha. (the target was 800 ha.), being 469 ha. of new forested areas (afforestation) and 584 ha. of reforested/restored areas (in pre-existing and degraded forestry areas). The (re)introduction of endemic plants in the reforested areas (and of fruit trees in selected areas) is overall regarded as an innovative model promoted through the Reflor project.
 - ii. The project has worked in 26 rural communities (approximately 13 000 residents) that produced and planted around 125 000 trees through 22 community associations that signed a letter of agreement (LOA) with FAO.¹
 - iii. A social and gender appraisal was implemented in all the communities involved as a form of mainstreaming gender in all project activities.
 - iv. The project has subsequently significantly contributed to the increase of nationally determined contributions (NDC), i.e. the carbon sink-effect, estimated in around 10 percent of the forestry carbon sink target 2030 for Cabo Verde (and 2 percent of the total carbon sink).
 - v. New forms of management of forested areas (e.g. co-management through formal protocols between the government and the communities) foreseen - perhaps too ambitiously - by the project, were not put in place so far, lacking updated legal instrument of reference. They remain in the agenda of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, once legal conditions are in place.
18. Component 3 has remained quite behind when compared with the expected outcome, in terms of knowledge building, lessons learned analysis and dissemination. In the project design, this component was quite heterogeneously described and not coherently supported by appropriate capabilities and know-how through national and international experts. As a result, outputs have also been quite heterogeneous and did not significantly address the outcome. It can be mentioned:
- i. the meteorological stations for the early warning system have been established, in collaboration with the Institute of Meteorology and Geology (IMG) and the University, with staff training;

¹ Source: FAO. 2021. *Reflor project. Executive summary report - September 2021*. Rome.

- ii. members of ten community associations trained on information technology (IT) for monitoring and information on forested areas;
- iii. two on-going studies on "Description and analysis of causes of forests degradation" and on "Assessment of current status of forestry governance" (by two of the working groups, see Outcome 1);
- iv. the initiative "Educational Forest" in some primary and secondary schools; and
- v. organization of workshops and communication events for different audiences (e.g. journalists, general public).

Overall outputs assessment

19. Despite relevant challenges, outputs delivery has overall been satisfactory. Some outputs are still under development and completion (at the time of the evaluation) such as the finalisation of the digital platform, the final revision of the Forestry Law, the forestation works in Boa Vista island. The relevant Agroforestry sector was not developed at a suitable level and needs more structured actions.

4.2. Outcomes achievement and sustainability

Outcome 1

20. Capacity development at institutional and individual levels has been achieved at a great extent. The initiative of the thematic working groups represents an innovative and promising practice that, under the orientation and coordination of the project team, has achieved remarkable results in forestry planning, monitoring and management (e.g. master plans, management plans, forestry inventory).
21. The project has also contributed to improve the country's performance in some of the indicators of NDC and in other relevant international commitments related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, to land degradation and desertification and to the Agenda 2030. Project data show that Reflor has significantly addressed and improved many mitigation and adaptation measures foreseen in the NDC, by strongly contributing to seven out of nine targets of the Mitigation Measure n. 5 (fostering the natural sink function of ecosystems) and to three out of nine adaptation benefits.²
22. The project has supported the country in improving the policy and regulatory framework of forestry sector, mainly through the assessment of the whole institutional framework of the sector and the revision of the Forestry Law of 1982. A draft of the revised law has been produced and is currently under assessment and revision by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment.
23. The inter-institutional dynamics triggered by the project through the working groups is a potential asset that could be fruitful for the institutional consolidation of the sector. However, the dynamics established, though in coordination with the national counterpart (Ministry of Agriculture and Environment) has mostly been "project-driven", and concerns exist regarding the full institutional up-take by the national stakeholders, so as to increase their driving role in the capacity development process established by the project. Limited financial and human resources of national stakeholders is a conditioning factor of sustainability.

² Source: FAO. 2021. *Reflor-CV: How is the Project contributing to the NDC?* Power Point presentation to Steering Committee, November 2021. Rome.

Outcome 2

24. The works of soil and water conservation and the (re)forestation activities have contributed to reduce land degradation and desertification in the selected islands. Furthermore, the project has been relevant for strategically re-positioning soil conservation and forestation in the national agenda of sustainable development, which is considered a great achievement by all stakeholders.
25. The country will not probably be able, however, to sustain and upscale the effort done so far without external support, so as to complete the work initiated by the Reflor project in the three target islands, as well as to replicate the intervention in the remaining islands. Current national financial and human resources are not adequate to the challenge. Supplementary efforts are needed to sustain the efforts of the country to upgrade and upscale the results obtained so far through the Reflor project.
26. The work of communities' mobilisation and organisation has been intensive, particularly in the last two years, despite the strong hindrances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.³ The project has largely implemented the "cash for work" approach in all forestation activities: plants production, soil preparation, trees plantation and maintenance. The project, however, did not foresee in its design any mechanism for improving social inclusion and economic upgrading through pilot initiatives in the communities, so as to support the weak local economies and increasing their resilience to climate change and desertification.
27. The lack of a linkage with the approach "*Caisses de résilience*" promoted by an FAO project in some communities of Santiago island, including one in which both projects were operating - Achada Leite - represents an important missed opportunity. In fact, the weak involvement of the National Service of Rural Extension in the activities of community organisation is a relevant "missed opportunity" that is raising concerns for the continuity of field activities, once the project is finished.

Outcome 3

28. The project did not properly address this outcome, as already mentioned in §18 regarding Component 3. There has been a narrow interpretation of the purpose of this component, which resulted in few fragmented initiatives of communication and visibility, without addressing the core issue and the rationale of the outcome (knowledge and lessons learned). In fact, the project document clearly underlined that "lessons generated will be systematically fed to the policy mainstreaming processes, informing national planners and policy makers, in order to ensure top-down and bottom-up linkages between efforts to create an enabling policy and institutional environment and to implement community-based adaptation measures". This purpose was not essentially addressed.
29. Given the relevance of the project in addressing key-issues for the country, such as soil conservation and forestation, land degradation and desertification, communities participation and co-management of forested areas, safety nets, cash for work and social inclusion, it would have been extremely interesting and appropriate to give more attention and resources to this outcome/component. This is a major "missed opportunity" for FAO and for the country.

³ A contingency plan for COVID-19 has been conceived and implemented upon agreement between FAO, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and the European Union to give an extraordinary support to the communities involved in the project. The issue is described more exhaustively in the main CPF evaluation report, under Priority 3, section 5.3.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The Reflor project has significantly contributed to achieve relevant results in terms of capacity development at individual and institutional level, and in setting a more enabling environment for positioning soil conservation and forestation into the overall agenda of country's sustainable development. It has also significantly contributed to increase national capacities in addressing main targets and indicators on climate change mitigation and adaptation. All these efforts need to be sustained and continued. There is also the need of a comprehensive approach to interconnect soil conservation and forestation initiatives with social inclusion and economic empowerment of rural families and communities. The involvement of the National Rural Extension Service is needed.

30. The overall appraisal on outcomes' achievement shows relevant accomplishments in capacity development at institutional and individual levels (e.g. forestry plans in place at decentralised level, Forestry Inventory updated, ongoing revision of the Forestry Law, increased individual technical capacities, setting of a digital platform, among others).
31. A remarkable work has also been implemented at communities' level in three islands, enabling the active participation of local stakeholders in soil conservation and forestation activities. However, the lack of significant links with the Rural Extension Service is a relevant missed opportunity. The work done so far needs to be followed-up and consolidated through further activities at community level linking environmental sustainability actions with initiatives of social inclusion and economic empowerment at individual, families' and community-based organizations' level.

Conclusion 2. There are sustainability concerns regarding the full uptake by national stakeholders of the results obtained so far at institutional and inter-institutional level, as well as at communities' level. This calls for a joint appraisal and decision-making process with main national stakeholders regarding the sustainable mechanisms to be implemented to ensure full national ownership of the results obtained so far.

32. As discussed in the previous section 4.2 (outcomes 1 and 2), Reflor's results have been mainly project-driven, due to a series of concomitant factors. Some of them are related to structural limits of the national stakeholders in material and human resources, others are related to conjunctural situations (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic). There have also been operational and methodological shortcomings in the project approach and implementation, such as protracted initial delays that required the project team to speed-up the operations in the last two years, and an excessive recourse to project consultants (national and international) in the direct execution of all project's activities - as discussed above in § 10 and 11.
33. The implementing partners (FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment) share sustainability concerns and the resource partner has also recommended the implementing partners to define a clear "exit strategy" of the project. Building on that, it is imperative to discuss and design future actions enabling i) the full transition of capabilities, methodological and technical tools to the national counterpart; ii) the implementation of actions needed to achieve pending results both at institutional level (e.g. new Forestry Law) and at field level (forestation in Boa Vista island); iii) to design an overall roadmap and strategy to maintain soil and water conservation, forestation, desertification and climate change mitigation and adaptation high in the national agenda and well aligned and focussed on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030.

5.2. Recommendations

Background and rationale

34. Conclusions 1 and 2 represent the main rationale for the formulation of the below recommendation and its specific steps, which are conceived to build upon the strong points and results obtained in the past four years, to address existing weak points and shortcomings and, above all, to design a roadmap and a strategy for the next few years in view of the fulfilment of SDGs Agenda 2030 and main international commitment related to climate change and to the fight to desertification.

Addressed to: FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment

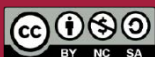
Timing: to be implemented before and immediately after the closure of the project (April 2022)

Recommendation 1. It is recommended to give immediate steps to formulate an exit strategy of the project, which should contemplate:

- i. the full transition of capabilities, methodological and technical tools to the national counterpart;
- ii. the implementation of actions needed to achieve pending results both at institutional level (e.g. new Forestry Law) and at field level (forestation in Boa Vista island);
- iii. the design of an overall roadmap and strategy to maintain soil and water conservation, forestation, desertification and climate change mitigation and adaptation high in the national agenda and well aligned with SDGs Agenda 2030; and
- iv. the interconnection between soil conservation and forestation initiatives with social inclusion and economic empowerment of rural families and communities, with the direct involvement of the National Rural Extension Service, non-governmental organizations and micro-finance organizations.

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