Project Evaluation Series
24/2025

Evaluation of the project "Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal"

Interim report
Project code: GCP/NEP/076/GCF

Annex 6. Interim changes to the project proposed by the FAO BRCRN team and Evaluation Team response

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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Summary

1. The FAO Nepal team developed a range of proposed changes over early 2024, detailed in the following table. The Interim evaluation was seen as a good point to gain objective, external assessment of these changes, and the evaluation team has discussed these with stakeholders in the data collection phase.

2. Some of the changes proposed stem inevitably from a better understanding of needs, the context and the appropriateness of project interventions drawn from the experience of first years of implementation.

3. Some changes are necessitated by flaws in the project design and/or associated assumptions. Where this is the case, this is noted.

4. Note that the Evaluation Team's assessment of these proposed changes feed directly into recommendations for action in the near future and longer term. Some of the recommended endorsements on changes proposed are mutually reinforcing/dependent and should be considered as such.

5. The Evaluation Team endorses most of the proposed changes and recognises that such changes (especially taken together) have significant potential for increasing and improving delivery in the coming period.

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Changes proposed from the FAO BRCRN implementation team

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Theory of change/paradigm shift related changes proposed					
1.1	Paradigm shift objective on *Increased climate-resilient sustainable development*	See right column	See highlights below: The BRCRN project will contribute to increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems in 26 vulnerable river systems by working with community-based organizations **through adoption of soil and water conservation measures to reduce impacts from climate induced disasters,** scale up adoption of climate-resilient land use practices and other climate-resilient SNRM approaches. The project will do so by directly supporting community-based organizations to adopt and apply such practices in their communities, while also building the capacity of these community-based organizations and their governments to sustain and scale up such investments beyond project closure.	In order to enhance community resilience, there is strong demand and rationale to first address the direct threats posed on community livelihoods from climate induced disasters such as agriculture land being wiped out by river runoff and river sedimentation, water shortage due to low water retention capacity of the landscape, etc. The community in the project area identify that interventions such as establishment of gully controls, check dams, conservation ponds, riverbank stabilization efforts, etc., are essential, and priority as a condition to adopt climate resilient agriculture and other climate-resilient NRM practices. The paradigm shift statement should fully recognize this, and the interventions from the project in this regard.	**The evaluation team endorses this proposed change**

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Project target / indicator related changes proposed					
2.1	Climate Resilient Agriculture area target (Activity 1.1.2 and 2.2.2) Indicator A4.1 and Impacts (core) indicator M4.1	final target: 48 772 ha mid-term target: 12 189 ha	Final target: 2 340 ha (see also climate resilient agriculture related to budget change)	The basis of the original target in the funding proposal are unknown.[1] On the other hand, the activity deliverable for Activity 1.1.2 is "*260 training events organized (reaching about 7 800 Farmer Beneficiaries)*", and indicates the deliverable target should correspond to 7 800 beneficiaries multiplied by the average area of farm per household (0.3 ha), amounting to 2 340 ha[2]. 1. The implications of this reduced target area for implementation, combined with other changes in implementation area as proposed elsewhere in this note is expected to amount to less than 20% reduction of the Impact level indicator M4.1 target, assuming the use of the emission factor given in the funding proposal. If the emission factor is increased, this gap can be further reduced. There are efforts being taken by the project to generate project specific data for the emission factor. 2. Further to this: after the addition of items 2.9 and 2.10, the implication of change is **updated to less than 32% reduction against the original target (from 20% mentioned above)** - all other factors and assumptions remaining constant.	The evaluation team notes the lack of documented rationale in the original design for these targets, and the subsequent difficulty in understanding the intentions under the target with concern – see recommendation 2. (Presumably, some sort of calculation was made on multi-year benefits and assumptions on ripple effects arising from this intervention in the design stage, but this was not documented) The budget allocated for this was only for the training activities with the targeted HHs, with no resources currently available for further activities. The proposed calculation on reduction of the target is logical although the causal link between training and actual adoption is tenuous, to be tested. However, the evaluation team endorses this approach. The Interim HH survey showed a good adoption rate at mid-term 77%. The assumption in the funding proposal was 80%, so the assumption appears mostly valid although data capture on this was basic. This will be refined and repeated at endline.
2.2	ANR implementation area (Activity 1.3.3)	Activity level target	13 000 ha	Degraded land that is potential for ANR activities is approximately 13 000 ha, according to the	The evaluation team endorses this proposed change

[1] The only reference found of this final target is the breakdown of climate resilient agriculture in the Churia (35,257 ha) and Terai (25,708ha) areas, then further broken down by year of implementation. This is in paragraph 255 and corresponding table in the Feasibility Study of the FP.

[2] Noting that it is even an overestimation to assume that climate resilient agriculture would be implemented on the entire farm area of households trained.

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	Outcome level / Result target and Impact (core) indicator M9.0, M4.1 and A4.1	Final: 15 990 ha		baseline data. Therefore, the activity implementation area target will be reduced to this amount, and the result target will be 80% (10,400ha) of the above. *For resulting impact on Impact (core) indicator M4.1, see above under SN 2.1.	
		Final target: 12 792 ha Mid-term target: 4 000 ha	Final target: 10 400 ha		
2.4	Plantation target for demonstration activities (Activity 1.3.2) Indicator A4.1 and impacts Core indicator M4.1	1,300 ha	Add 3 000 ha of woodlots to 1 300 ha for demonstration plantation.	Target of plantation: 1 300 ha. + 3 000 ha from woodlots should also be considered for mitigation calculation. *For resulting impact on impact (core) indicator M4.1, see above under SN 2.1.	The evaluation team endorses this proposed change
2.5	Private forest / Woodlot establishment target (Activity 1.3.4) Indicator A4.1 and impacts Core indicator M4.1	Woodlots: 16 500 ha	3 000 ha	Reduction in the target is based on private forest network development study report as land holding of individual household is quite low (0.3 ha/households) hence there is limited scope for private woodlots. This should also be added to the contributions for the mitigation target M4.0. *For resulting impact on Impact (core) indicator M4.1, see above under SN 2.1.	The evaluation team notes the design flaw in setting this target. Noted that upstream sites (where the project tends to be more focused) has less land availability for private woodlots but downstream sites offer more potential. The evaluation team endorses a reduction in target but recommends an assessment of potential downstream sites suitable in revising this target
2.6	Output level indicator 1.2 on Sedimentation level (Activity 1.1.4) Output level indicator 1.2	Sedimentation level	Change indicator	The existing indicator of the funding proposal does not appropriately reflect the objectives of the interventions (gully control, check dams, conservation ponds, riverbank stabilization etc.), which are to primarily for the purpose of soil and water conservation measures to avoid negative impact from climate induced disasters. The existing indicator also does not take into account broader environmental contexts that affect sedimentation levels. Propose to change this indicator to adopting a proxy approach such as, "percentage of households that feel their livelihoods have	The evaluation team notes the proposed change as well as rationale. Estimating percent reduction in sedimentation level compared by baseline is quite complex, as it is a non-linear function of many things. Therefore, changing the indicator to "Volume of sediment retained by gully/river and riverbank stabilization measures (m3)" would be an appropriate measure. The volume of sediment captured by check dams can be estimated from dimensions of structure (height, breadth (= width of

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				benefited from the soil and water conservation interventions based on household survey”	river) and length (= approximate estimate of length in upstream up to where sediment can be stored due to influence of check-dam)). We need to factor-in appropriately shape of river as well as slope while estimating average length and average depth. In case of river-bank stabilization interventions, we need to estimate, with proper judgement: When distance (or width transverse to the river) that are protected. is multiplied by depth and length of riverbank protection structure, we get an estimate of sediment stored (or erosion controlled).
2.7	MOV of Output level indicator 1.3 on Density of forest area Output level indicator 1.3 and Impact indicator M4.1 and A4.1	Biomass measurements in permanent sample plots of National Forest Inventory (NFI) in the project area	i) Results of plot inventories from the CFUGs OPs that will be updated at the timing of the project endline. Or ii) A direct sample-based plot inventory to be conducted by the project at end of project	PSPs in NFI that fall within the project area are limited and are not sufficient to be representative to capture the interventions from the project. Therefore, two options are proposed in the order or preference/priority. 1) The project will be supporting the plot inventories needed for OP. Those plot inventory data may be adopted as a sample of the forest density impacted by project interventions. (The feasibility of this option should be further verified by the project); and/or ii) A field plot inventory done by the project at endline, echoing the baseline plot inventory, and estimating the changes in biomass thereof. (This is already budgeted for in the funding proposal). For this indicator, no mid-term status can be reported, noting that there are no data generated by either the NFI nor can the options a) or b) above be feasibly generated. Noting that the project activities or funding did not plan for this, the mid-term target should be removed.	The evaluation team endorses these two options, with an immediate preference for option A as this underlines the importance of the CFUG Operational Plans and would strengthen monitoring. The evaluation team also sees the value in the option B endline study as essential for summative progress assessment. This needs to be clearly written into the design for the final evaluation process and budgeted accordingly. Given the timescales involved necessary for observable change in these interventions the evaluation team also accepts that a mid-term target is of limited value and should be removed.

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2.8	MoV of Output level indicator 1.3 on Forests and tree cover Output level indicator 1.3 and impacts M4.1 and A4.1	Forest cover assessment using FAO Open Foris Collect Earth toolkit. Ground-truthing exercises by project staff.	Apply forest cover according to the results of National Land Cover Monitoring System (NLCMS) under FRTC	This change will support alignment with national approaches and accounting for forest carbon and facilitate the replication of such monitoring efforts. For this indicator, no mid-term status can be reported, noting that the latest data generated by the NLCMS is from 2019, and that any interventions taken by the project will not have resulted in measurable changes to forest cover within the limited time. Noting that the project activities or funding did not plan for this, the mid-term target should be removed.	The evaluation team endorses this proposed change, with the rationale of this better fitting established government systems. The Interim target should be removed as there would likely be limited demonstrable change to measure.
2.9	Target of forest ecosystems sustainably managed	Midterm target 45 848ha Final target 148 998 ha	Final target 186 764 ha or 181 820 ha	The original target in the funding proposal is 80% of the total forest area of the project (as indicated in the F/S). This figure can be updated as a) 80% of all CFUG area (i.e. 100% is 235 455ha) according to the community-based organizations' profiles collected during the project inception phase, or 80% of the forest area as updated in the baseline survey (i.e. 227 276ha). Both are similar figures (as shown.) Note that this is simply an update. Not a request for change.	N.A.
2.10	Area under climate resilient agriculture as basis for the Core Mitigation target as applied in the F/S Annex 3.4 mitigation calculation excel sheet. Core Mitigation target	97 121 ha total of "CRS" interventions (before 80% factor applied)	2 340 ha – see item 2.1 above	The project understands that there is fault with the funding proposal and F/S annexes (spreadsheet). Of the four CRS "Systems" identified in the said excel spreadsheet, the only one directly mentioned in the funding proposal text is System 1 for climate resilient agriculture, which is 60 965ha (corresponding with activity 1.1.2, and also Outcome indicator A4.1 and M9.1). The other Systems 2-4 are questionable as to where the basis for these area targets come from – only System 2 has any reference to a slightly	As per item 2.1 response

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				related number occurring only in Annex I of the funding proposal (for agroforestry systems), but the main funding proposal section describing the related activity (1.1.3) is silent on any such area target. Table 10 of the F/S also points to the total area target of 60 965 ha for all climate resilient agriculture activities and corroborates the above. Moreover, similar to item 1.2 of this table, budget notes for 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 provide funding for "training" only – no budget is available for establishment of field plots and implementation of climate resilient agriculture activities, so these area targets cannot be materialized.	
3.5	Shift budget allocation from Government of Nepal budget to FAO TA budget for example: i. Vehicle procurement ii. Project personnel / Service providers iii. Travel budget for gov't staff. iv. International/national exchange learning and exposure visits budget	Budgeted under Government of Nepal	Shift allocation to FAO TA component, either by swapping budget notes with other costs under FAO TA or by shifting.	There is a clause in the agreement between FAO and Government of Nepal which speaks to the possibility FAO, required by the GCF, to discharge activities under the Government of Nepal in case of default on activities (clause h of the Agreement). Using this clause, it is proposed that a recommendation from interim report is made to the GCF to require this for FAO, for project procurements that are cumbersome need to be shifted from GON to FAO portion such as for the items noted below. i. Vehicles are urgently needed at PPMUs for field implementation of the project. However, there were complications in the vehicle purchase due to tax issue. Earlier PMU opened call for bidding twice, but none of the bidders applied. It shows, the bidders will have no interest in buying tax exempted vehicles through government system. Therefore, for simple and quick way to purchase vehicles will be through FAO	The evaluation team endorses this proposed change. The project team should provide a costed budget for this re-allocation.

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				system. Which is possible if the Ministry of Finance transfers vehicle budget to FAO Nepal. ii. Project personnel / Service providers: timely recruitment of project personnel is critical to smooth delivery. However, this is hindered when the budget is under Government of Nepal. iii. Exchange learning and exposure visit budget / Travel budgets for PMU staff: if under GON, government cost norms must be applied, which is not enough to cover actual costs. FAO cost norms can be applied if budget is shifted to FAO TA.	
Operational aspects of GCF project					
5.1	Budget notes in the funding proposal	Changes to budget notes require prior notification and acceptance by GCF	Budget notes need to be flexible in order to be able to cater to emerging needs in project implementation. Changes to budget notes should be documented and reported to the GCF periodically, and wherever the changes are within the 10% threshold per component, changes should be assessed by the budget holder (FAO).		The evaluation team endorses this proposed change and notes the 10% allowance in the Accredited Master Agreement for the component level.

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