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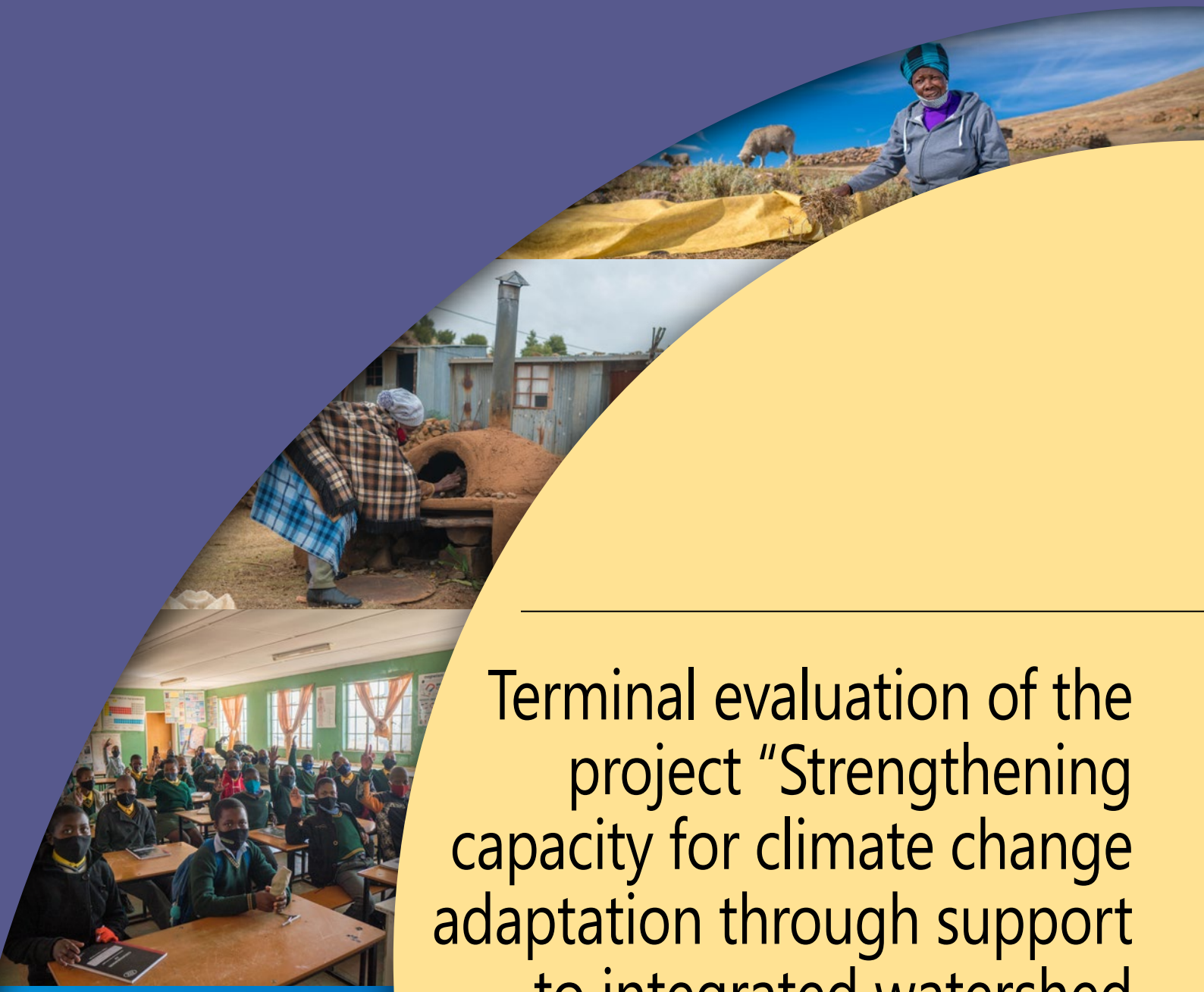

Terminal evaluation of the project "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation through support to integrated watershed management in Lesotho"

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Abstract

The project "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation through support to integrated watershed management in Lesotho" (Global Environment Facility - GEF) was executed and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation,[1] the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Energy and Meteorology, the Ministry of Water, the Ministry of Local Government, the Department of Environment and the National University of Lesotho (NUL). Its objectives are to: implement sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices and resource conservation in selected watersheds to reduce vulnerability and enhance the adaptive capacity at the community level; and strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crop, livestock and agro-forestry systems at the community level.

In 2019, FAO conducted a mid-term review (MTR) for this project. The evaluation found that the project was very well-received by key stakeholders in the country and was considered significant in improving the livelihoods and quality of life of beneficiaries. It was considered a highly relevant initiative with the potential to contribute to GEF's Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas. Under the biodiversity window, the work under this project, which has restored wetlands, promoted agroforestry and conservation agriculture, supported wildlife, supports GEF's goal of conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and maintaining ecosystem goods and services. Through the rehabilitation of land, sustainable land management initiatives and reforestation, the project seeks to arrest and reverse trends in land degradation. The evaluation made a number of recommendations and identified lessons learned to benefit future, similar designs.

[1] Formerly known as the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation.

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Acknowledgements

The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) would like to thank all those who contributed to this evaluation. The evaluation was managed by Ms Arwa Khalid and supervised by Mr Carlos Tarazona, both from OED; it was conducted by the independent consultants Ms Erum Hasan and Mr Ramochaha Simon Lethola.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AMAT	Adaptation Monitoring and Assessment Tool
CPF	Country Programming Framework
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DMA	Disaster Management Authority
DTT	District Technical Team
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LMS	Lesotho Meteorological Services
MTR	Mid-term review
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
PIR	Programme implementation report
ProDoc	Project document
PPR	Project progress report
SADP	Smallholder Agricultural Development Project
SILC	Savings and internal lending community
SLM	Sustainable land management
SLM/W	Sustainable land and water management
SO2	Strategic Objective 2
WAMPP	Wool and Mohair Promotion Project

Executive summary

Introduction

1. This terminal evaluation report presents the main findings from the project "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation through support to integrated watershed management". The project was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The terminal evaluation report is a requirement of the GEF and was conducted to support learning and provide accountability to the Government of Lesotho, FAO Management and the GEF on the project's achievements. This evaluation covers all the activities undertaken by the project since the start of its activities, with particular attention to the progress made since the mid-term review (MTR).

2. The terminal evaluation was conducted in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards, the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) Manual, the GEF Evaluation Policy 2019 and Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects. The evaluation was carried out in transparency and through ongoing consultation and exchange with OED and the FAO Representation in Lesotho.

3. The methodology employed in the terminal evaluation included a combination of methods and tools to collect qualitative and quantitative data necessary to answer the evaluation questions below, which drove the analysis and examination of evidence. The evaluation adopted a participatory, consultative approach with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, bearing in mind the challenges and limitations that arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the most significant of which being that the evaluation team leader was only able to conduct virtual interviews. The National Evaluation Consultant visited the project sites and interviewed stakeholders and beneficiaries in person. Government stakeholders and the Project Steering Committee were consulted through digital means. The information gathered was triangulated and cross-referenced through interviews, site visits, and any documents made available.

Main findings

4. Overall, the project was very well-received by key stakeholders in the country and was considered significant in improving the livelihoods and quality of life of beneficiaries.

Relevance (rated as Highly Satisfactory)

EQ 1. Are the project outcomes still congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, and the Country Programming Framework (CPF)?

EQ 2. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes?

EQ 3. Has there been any change in project relevance since its design, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project objectives and goals?

5. The project is highly relevant to national priorities, especially to programmes focused on sustainable land and drought management. The project was drafted in response to the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), and is complementary to national policies addressing food security, range, soil and water resource policies, as well as the National Strategic Development and Investment Plans. The project objectives align with FAO's Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner", and FAO CPF priorities. The project design addresses local needs, and is in line with, FAO Regional Priorities and the GEF's Biodiversity and Land Degradation

Focal Areas. The project team conducted both a socio-economic survey, establishing a baseline and identifying needs, and a biophysical survey to enhance understanding of land and water use in order to ensure the relevance of project interventions.

Effectiveness (rated as Satisfactory)

EQ 4. To what extent have the project objectives been achieved?

EQ 5. To what extent was the integrated watershed management model - focused on sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) - effective? Which factors were enablers or obstacles?

EQ 6. To what extent were the stakeholders trained in SLM/W implementing new practices? To what extent have the capacities generated been useful in preventing or reversing land degradation?

EQ 7. To what extent was the topic included in public policies and strategies of the responsible institutions?

6. The project was perceived as effective by stakeholders in supporting beneficiaries' livelihoods and addressing their most pressing needs. Outcome 1.1. Strengthened technical capacity in the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and the National University of Lesotho (NUL) at the national and district levels, and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management was successfully achieved. There is evidence that the project strengthened the capacity of over 170 government staff through training on gender mainstreaming, water harvesting, geographic information systems (GIS), conservation agriculture, climate risk assessments and agriculture. At the community level, there is evidence that the project strengthened the capacity of 1 374 direct beneficiaries and 40 communities through training on diversified livelihoods, nutrition, food preservation, conservation agriculture, and credit and lending.

7. The project achieved Outcome 2.1 "Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented focusing on most vulnerable watersheds". It produced a biophysical survey generating baseline data on land use, soil and water types, geology, types of degradation, soil texture, soil angles/slopes, climate impacts at different sites, and soil and water interventions. The project contributed content on soil type, fertility, classification and suitability to the national Lesotho Soil Information System. A livelihoods assessment was also conducted to capture the socio-economic circumstances of communities living in the project sites. There is evidence that these tools/data are being used by technicians at the district level.

8. The project was successful in achieving Outcome 3.1 "Sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices (e.g. soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover and range resource management) successfully adopted in 24 selected watersheds and catchments". The main achievements identified included: range rehabilitation; increased plant cover, bush control; and availability of spring water due to rehabilitation efforts, rainfall infiltration in two springs, and decreased run-off and flash flooding.

9. The project established and strengthened grazing associations that coordinated the grazing management programme. There were accounts of the return of wildlife and biodiversity in restored zones. Site visits revealed the re-emergence of traditional and medicinal plants. Watering holes designed for livestock to avoid pressure on degraded lands and wetlands resulted in the documented rehabilitation of two wetlands. Gabions to prevent and halt soil erosion in Mafeteng and stone-built fire walls were established in rehabilitated rangelands.

10. Water harvesting and conservation were practised using roof and spring water tanks, which included groundwater and/or sand dams, 74 roof water harvesting tanks, and one free standing communal tank (6 000 litres). According to feedback from beneficiaries, this increased people's access to water, reduced women's travel time, and replenished some natural springs and wetlands. Interviews estimate that 900 women have improved access to water as a result of this project.

11. Challenges such as conflict or lack of motivation to carry out activities on communal lands were addressed through the use of multi-stakeholder structures established and strengthened by the project, for example, grazing committees and District Technical Teams (DTTs), and with the support of community chiefs.

12. The project was successful in achieving Outcome 4.1 "Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households". Beneficiaries were supported through improved crop production, and around 900 households were provided with vegetable seed packages and shade nets for keyhole gardens, and seeds for trench and communal gardens. The project supplied high-value cash crops and demonstrated how to increase their production, and promoted various horticultural practices such as plastic mulch to conserve moisture and inhibit weed growth, fruit trees and agroforestry. Training was carried out in tandem to support the application of inputs, including how to build keyhole gardens, establish agroforestry systems, protective hedges and windbreaks, and stabilize riverbanks, and SLM/W. The project also supported short-cycle livestock such as pigs, poultry and rabbits, and egg production. Through interviews, it was confirmed that beneficiaries' livelihoods were supported by these short-cycle livestock. The project supported savings and internal lending communities (SILCs), which facilitated access to credit; 36 SILCs were supported by the project (597 participants, 448 of whom were female and 149 male) (Catholic Relief Services, n.d.).

13. Outcome 5.1 "Stakeholders and communities are aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household-level income-generating practices through wide dissemination" was moderately achieved. The project developed a communications strategy in 2018; however, the evaluation team could not confirm whether the project adhered to it (see the section on knowledge management). It emerged that the most effective means of communication were district-level meetings and quarterly Project Steering Committee meetings.

14. There is no repository for accessible documentation by all stakeholders. While aspects of the project were mainstreamed within communities, there were conflicting sentiments by stakeholders on whether local communities deepened their understanding of climate change beyond their livelihood or community restoration activities. The evaluation team received feedback that knowledge was still needed on climate change trends, community-based disaster preparedness, and climate forecasts for informed decision-making on seasonal agricultural activities.

15. The project achieved Outcome 5.2 "Project implementation based on results-based management and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned for future operations by producing and disseminating the following reports: project implementation reports (PIRs), project progress reports (PPRs) and biannual reports, and the Adaptation Monitoring and Assessment Tool (AMAT) (see the section on monitoring and evaluation). There were also documentary accounts that the project disseminated information through FAO press releases, website and print media. There was some radio/TV coverage and forums that hosted line ministries. Farmers also participated in the Climate Change Coordinating Committee.

Efficiency (rated as Satisfactory)

EQ 8. To what extent has FAO fulfilled its role as an implementing agency with regard to identifying the project, preparing the concept note, forecasting of expenditures, preparation, approval and launch, monitoring and supervision?

EQ 9. How well have the risks been identified and managed?

EQ 10. To what extent has FAO fulfilled its executing role with regard to cost-efficiency?

EQ 11. Has management been able to adapt to the changing conditions to guarantee project efficiency?

16. Overall, the efficiency of the project was satisfactory due to a few key features: i) ongoing engagement by district-level project personnel who exerted constant pressure on promoting activities, fostering cooperation, assisting communities at the local level and galvanizing government stakeholders to apply their training; ii) a competent project management team;[2] and iii) an engaged Project Steering Committee[3] that conducted site visits, provided accountability, promoted complementary activities within their own government departments, and held quarterly meetings following the MTR.

17. FAO fulfilled its role as budget holder. However, its procurement processes were criticized for delays, which resulted in reduced stakeholder morale and an interruption of activities, thereby adding risks to the project's success. Salary issues were raised, and project personnel was lost to other projects. However, the project was able to improve compensation and retain key personnel after the MTR.

18. The project fostered partnerships among government ministry partners in project activities, which involved high levels of collaboration, as well as active engagement on the Project Steering Committee. Project activities were delivered jointly through various ministries at the district level. Civil society participation in the Project Steering Committee was active until 2019, but declined when the representative from the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (LCN) passed away. The project partnered with civil society organizations such as the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to provide training on SILCs; Growing Nations on conservation agriculture; and with Serumula Development Association and the Institute of Natural Resources to conduct baseline studies. The Lesotho Red Cross and World Vision Lesotho were part of the DTTs. NUL was initially identified as a key partner, but withdrew over the course of the project duration due to conflicts.

19. The risk register was not complete and did not identify all key risks facing the project, even after the MTR. Missing risks are identified in Section 4.3 Efficiency.

Sustainability (rated as Moderately Likely)

EQ 12. Is there any evidence of integrated watershed management, or any change in the political, legislative and/or regulatory frameworks?

[2] The Project Team was composed of one project manager, one national project coordinator and three district-level officers.
[3] The Project Steering Committee was composed of: one representative each from the Forestry, Range and Conservation Departments of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC); one representative each from Field Services, Crops and Livestock, and the Research Departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; one representative from the Lesotho Meteorological Services of the Energy and Meteorology Department; one representative from the Department of Water Affairs; one representative from the GEF Operational Focal Point (Department of Environment); one representative from the NUL; one representative from the civil society sector, the LCN; one representative from UNDP; and the budget holder (FAO).

EQ 13. To what extent can the progress made towards the long-term be attributed to the project?

EQ 14. To what extent has the project supported financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental improvements to sustain long-term project results?

20. It is moderately likely that project results will be leveraged by other initiatives beyond the duration of the project. There are indications that outputs from the project will be integrated into various programmes of work of the Government. In all project sites, the DTTs indicated supporting project outputs, beyond project funding. The assumption is that these activities will be budgeted for by their respective departments and ministries because they are included in their annual work plans.

21. Due to the great success of the wetlands rehabilitation, the Minister from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Minister from the Ministry of Water made media appearances affirming that this approach for rehabilitation would be replicated elsewhere. The Mafeteng wetland site is now used as a centre for excellence for wetlands rehabilitation.

22. The project established and strengthened mechanisms that will be supported by other initiatives, indicating sustainability. For instance, the seven grazing associations that became active members of range resource management through this project will now collaborate with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP).[4] Similarly, nutrition clubs, supported by the project, will be onboarded by the Nutrition Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Activities geared towards commercialization, such as sustainable vegetable production and beekeeping, may be funded by the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP) and by IFAD through their Competitive Grants Programme (CGP).

23. There are some contradictory indications on what form the sustainable government support will take and for how long it will continue. On the one hand, government ministries have incorporated project activities into their programmes and provided more co-financing than anticipated. On the other hand, they had challenges in raising funds for basic activities such as site visits during project duration, which raises the question concerning how much financial support it can provide without external project support.

24. To ensure sustainability, the project trained technical staff from different government agencies on SLM/W – the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Energy and Meteorology and the Department of Water Affairs. The staff implemented project activities as a follow-up to training. The opportunity for learning by doing suggests that greater ownership of capacities was fostered.

25. Socially, communities have expressed pride in the recovery of their rangelands and biodiversity, which may contribute to social sustainability. Grazing associations have been endorsed by chiefs, thus increasing social support. The project has a sustainability and exit plan.

Factors affecting performance (rated as Moderately Satisfactory)

[4] It should be noted that, out of the seven grazing associations, only the three that were formed with the support of the project were functional, whereas the four that existed previously were non-functional. Membership to the grazing associations is open to all community members.

Monitoring and evaluation

EQ 15. How was information from the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system used during project implementation?

EQ 16. Has the M&E system worked according to the M&E plan?

EQ 17. Was the information gathered systematically, using appropriate methodologies?

EQ 18. Has the information from the M&E system been used to make relevant decisions about project implementation?

26. The AMAT and results framework were used for tracking the project. There was a lack of knowledge among the project team on how to best apply and/or optimize this tracking tool. The project tracked key indicators in the AMAT and reported on them at Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement and mid-term evaluation. The results framework was reported on in PPRs and PIRs. While gender was accounted for in the AMAT, it was not explicitly included in the results framework.

27. The indicators were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) and quantitative. For future projects, it would be useful to include qualitative indicators that assess the social changes taking place in terms of capacity, social collaboration, attitudes or practices.

28. The initial M&E framework was adequate, but not fully adhered to. There were no M&E personnel identified in the project document (ProDoc), which is a gap. There was an inconsistent approach to monitoring across sites. Given the level of success at the site, it would have been useful to consistently capture the nuances of results achieved across the sites.

29. Due to procurement delays, implementation of the M&E plan had to be re-adjusted. The project team addressed this to some extent by identifying many emerging risks, although some remained missing. The issues with M&E identified in the MTR also changed the way that the Project Steering Committee operated. Meetings and site visits were increased and held quarterly, improving oversight.

30. The MTR as well as the biophysical survey and socio-economic survey supported the project in reframing some of its activities to make them more strategic.

Quality of execution

EQ 19. To what extent have the national partners assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?

Sub-question: To what extent did the executing agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project?

Sub-question: Was the adaptive action undertaken after the MTR effective in increasing the pace of implementation while assuring the quality of outcomes and maximizing the potential for sustainability?

31. 'Quality of execution' pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF agencies and executed the funded activities. On-the-ground performance was rated using a six-point scale in Appendix 3, Project implementation and execution.

32. The evaluation team examined implementation, particularly after the MTR, and assessed how recommendations were implemented. FAO provided adequate project implementation in terms of technical knowledge. The Project Coordination Unit provided adaptive management and good

technical guidance and input, and demonstrated effective responsiveness to MTR recommendations.

33. One of the lessons learned regarding execution is that providing the National Project Coordinator (NPC) with an office within the government is beneficial for country ownership of the project. In addition, the salary of this position should be commensurate with a United Nations project to be on par with the rest of the project team financed by the project. The lack of a dedicated M&E personnel was perceived as a weakness in monitoring project progress, measuring results, and distilling valuable insights.

Co-financing

EQ 20. To what extent did the expected co-financing materialize, and how did shortfalls in co-financing or in the materialization of greater-than-expected co-financing affect project results, particularly with regard to the replication of sustainable SLM/W practices?

34. In the original design documents, the total co-financing amounted to USD 8 437 000. However, the project reported a co-financing of USD 1 031 306.[5] Co-financing was underreported and difficult to quantify, consisting in materials and equipment used for the Government Integrated Watershed Management Programme, labour for performing the work, rent for project personnel and office space, general operating expenses, district-level operations, and technical backstopping by different government departments. Government contribution was higher than reported.

35. The government in-kind contribution consisted in government staff supporting project implementation. Government staff included the NPC, Project Steering Committee members, DTT members, and extension staff at the field level. Due to budgetary constraints, the Department of Soil and Water Conservation could not fully deliver on the commitment of building water harvesting mechanisms or supporting oversight travel costs. The Ministry of Local Government, SADP and WAMPP joined as new co-financing sources during project implementation.

Stakeholder engagement (rated as Satisfactory)

EQ 21. To what extent has effective participation and involvement of the key project stakeholders (e.g. women, people with disabilities, non-governmental agencies and local authorities) been recorded?

36. Stakeholders are identified as those who have a stake in the outcomes of the project. This includes local governments, local communities, vulnerable communities, individuals living in project areas, and women and men who depend on the natural resources affected by the project. Overall, the participatory approach was highly commended by those interviewed. Government respondents noted that the project facilitated and increased working relationships among ministries. Women's participation in the project was exceptionally high (65 percent of project beneficiaries). The project strengthened community-level groups (grazing associations, credit lending groups and nutrition clubs), helping them manage their natural resources and disseminating information on project activities. DTTs participated with local communities on an ongoing basis.

37. At the national level, the Project Steering Committee was responsible for providing strategic guidance to the project. The Committee comprised key staff from relevant government departments and agencies, as well as one civil society organization member (until 2019). Academia was not as engaged as initially planned, due to personal conflicts.

[5] This was calculated by dividing the total amount by number of councils (18) to arrive at the amount per council, then multiplying it by three councils.

38. Civil society actively participated in the project, in partnership with the CRS to provide training on SILCs as well as Growing Nations, to support conservation agriculture. Serumula Development Association and the Institute of Natural Resources partnered with the project to conduct baseline studies. The Lesotho Red Cross and World Vision Lesotho were part of the DTTs. Despite this participation, the ProDoc and interviews did not fully capture the roles played by civil society. It is recommended that in future projects, these roles be further showcased.

39. The ProDoc identified opportunities to engage the private sector. There is some evidence that the SILCs will work with two financial institutions in the future; however, the role of the private sector in marketing or sustaining project results is unclear. This did not materialize in part due to the nature of the project (i.e. its focus on integrated SLM/W), and the remote sites where it was implemented. There was no mention of the participation of persons with disabilities.

Knowledge management

EQ 22. Were there mechanisms and platforms that enabled the systematization of knowledge and the communication of good practices and lessons learned?

EQ 23. Has the project promoted the strengthening and replicability of these practices and lessons? Which ones and how?

40. There is evidence that the DTTs, the Project Steering Committees, the grazing committees, the nutrition clubs and the saving/lending clubs were used as platforms to disseminate information, obtain technical advice and build partnerships.

41. A communications strategy was developed following the MTR. The Communications Officer left during the project, which created a gap in this area. There was evidence that the project provided datasets to government databases regarding biophysical and socio-economic data; however, a central repository of documents was not developed for other users.

42. Despite the platforms and a variety of reports produced under the project, interviews highlighted that: i) the public still needed to be informed on SLM/W; ii) this project and other projects did not communicate with each other sufficiently; and iii) the management of knowledge, produced under this project, was disparate and ad hoc. The lessons learned are hidden in PPRs and PIRs, and given the project's involvement in significant environmental issues such as water, land rehabilitation and SLM/W, and on social issues such as conflict management, it would be beneficial to have illustrative and accessible lessons learned and/or case studies.

Gender equality

EQ 24. How did the project contribute to the objectives of the GEF Policy on Gender Equality and FAO Policy on Gender Equality?

EQ 25. To what extent was the strategy for involving vulnerable groups (women, youth and people with disabilities) in project activities effective?

EQ 26. Has the project made specific contributions to the well-being of vulnerable groups (empowering them, reducing their vulnerability)?

EQ 27. What were the results achieved or likely to be achieved?

EQ 28. What are the lessons learned that could be used for future interventions?

43. A gender-sensitive approach was identified in the original project design. The project included a gender-sensitive approach to climate adaptation, which was carried out in three key ways:

i) targeting sites that affect women; ii) targeting women's livelihood sectors; and iii) facilitating opportunities for economic empowerment and social participation.

44. The project promoted water harvesting capabilities and improved women's access to water in water-stressed areas. Previously, women had to travel on foot through rugged terrain on long treks to obtain water for themselves and their households. The increase of roof water harvesting has saved women time and labour, and decreased the risk of their being victims of violence during travel.

45. The project supported poultry and egg collection, beekeeping and vegetable cultivation, which are women's areas of interest. The project took steps to increase women's access to funds by supporting the establishment of the SILCs. Women also became more engaged on issues in which they are not traditionally involved, such as rangeland and grazing.

46. The project recorded women's engagement in project activities and provided sex-disaggregated data in its reports. There were some qualitative gaps regarding information on empowerment. Given the project's success for women, it would have been useful to produce case studies or highlight socioeconomic indicators that shifted during the project. The project is in line with guidance provided by the *GEF's Policy on Gender Equality* and *FAO's Policy on Gender Equality*.

47. There was no mention of the inclusion of people with disabilities, nor was their presence observed at the community consultations held by the evaluation team.

Environmental and social safeguards

EQ 29. To what extent do/did the demonstration reference sites (DRS) and their replication in other areas fulfil the SLM/W criteria?

48. The project was designed to yield positive environmental benefits and was included in FAO's pre-approved list of projects that were excluded from detailed environmental assessment. For groundwater dams, no major safeguards were required, and they were considered safe. However, earth dams under this project have the potential to negatively affect the environment and/or the community if improperly constructed. This was the case at one site in the Mafeteng district, where a dam constructed a few years earlier overflowed in the upper catchment. To the evaluation team's best knowledge, no environmental degradation has occurred through project-constructed dams, but the project team must note potential risks and monitor the impacts of interventions. It should be pointed out that, at the time of project design, the safeguards policy was not as rigorous as it is today. Small earth dams were constructed by the Department of Soil and Water Conservation of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation. These government interventions followed national safeguards. However, for due diligence, it would be useful to add a level of oversight and ensure that even small dams meet FAO safeguards policies and are reflected in reporting.

49. The project also took on physical works that were not initially in the ProDoc, for example, repairing an access road below a wetland being restored. FAO purchased construction material and recruited additional labour, and construction was carried out jointly by the project, the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation's Land Reclamation Programme and the local government's rural roads programmes. While this met the community's needs, and was overseen by the Government and the project, due diligence was not observed; FAO should have conducted an assessment for this type of activity.

Conclusions

Relevance

50. The project was highly relevant to national and governmental priorities, especially government programmes and activities focused on sustainable land management (SLM) and drought-management. The project fits within FAO's CPF and contributes to Priority Area 4, natural resource conservation and utilization, including adaptation to climate change. The project specifically supports Outcome 4.3, which seeks to strengthen institutional and technical capacities for climate change adaptation and to enhance the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities. With regard to FAO's regional priorities, the project strengthened institutional capacity for resilience, supported early warning and information management systems, built community-level resilience and responded to water-related crises (FAO, 2014a).

51. This project is also aligned with FAO's Global Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner". It has invested in livelihoods through vegetable cultivation, agroforestry and agriculture. To fulfil Organizational Outcome 1 under SO2, "Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in the agricultural sector production systems in a sustainable manner", the project conducted training and capacity-building activities, and set up farmer field schools. In addition, its work to strengthen the relevant policy framework in Lesotho will contribute to SO2, Organizational Outcome 2 "Stakeholders in member countries strengthen governance – the policies, laws, management frameworks and institutions that are needed to support producers and resource managers – in the transition to a sustainable agricultural sector production system".

52. The project contributed to the eradication of poverty in all its forms (SDG 1) by investing in livelihoods and ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2), with inputs in agriculture, livestock, agroforestry and nutrition clubs. It also partly contributed to SDG 13 on climate action by promoting adaptive capacity and making climate information available.

53. The project contributes to the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas. It has restored wetlands, promoted agroforestry and conservation agriculture, and supported wildlife and thus meeting the GEF's goal of conservation and sustainable management of ecosystem goods and services. Through the rehabilitation of land, SLM initiatives, and reforestation, the project has arrested and reversed trends in land degradation.

Effectiveness

54. The project was successful in achieving all but one of its outcomes satisfactorily. It provided wide-ranging, capacity-building initiatives to the Government and local beneficiaries, enhancing their skills and abilities in carrying out SLM/W activities. This resulted in global environmental benefits such as restored landscapes, landscapes under improved practices, and strengthened biodiversity. The conservation of rehabilitated wetlands and improved management of water resources had visible effects in local communities. In particular, the project piloted several SLM/W practices to address the shortages of water experienced by many, thereby improving the quality of life and security of community members. Investing in livelihood activities and collaborative social mechanisms, and in addressing challenges faced by women led to strong results. Strengthening communication tools, messaging, and improving the relevance of climate data to users would further strengthen the results of the project.

55. The project further demonstrated the level of collaboration and partnerships that can take place at the district level. It will be essential that this momentum is not lost, and that lessons learned

through these interactions, particularly about managing conflict, creating opportunities for women, and creating incentives, social cohesion and motivation be effectively owned.

Efficiency

56. Despite facing severe procurement challenges and losing personnel to other projects, the project delivered activities with efficiency, cost-effectively, and in as timely a manner as possible. A strong project management team, effective management at the district level, and an engaged Project Steering Committee allowed for its efficient implementation. The project team demonstrated adaptive management, and new personnel responded quickly to the demands of the project. Ongoing briefings were provided to political staff to ensure continued support and buy-in. The ongoing focus on community needs, the supplementary capacity development activities and the leveraging of partner expertise (government, NGO and community organizations) allowed the project to be responsive to issues of the day. The Committee was composed mostly of director-level staff, which, as government interviewees noted, facilitated many opportunities for collaboration and communication among government entities that would otherwise be working in silos.

57. Some concerns were expressed over project personnel salaries and the inequities that may be perceived between salaries funded by co-financing and those funded by the project. There were also concerns over personnel salaries in general, particularly after facing personnel losses. The project budget was revised to increase salaries and address this concern. Although the understanding of procurement processes improved in the latter phases of the project, they were still administratively onerous, causing delays and loss of morale that the project team had to manage.

Sustainability

58. The project was implemented over the course of three political administrations. While these changes added burdens on project personnel, the project was structured so that its outputs could be used by different governments, demonstrating political sustainability. There are already indications that some of the project outputs will be integrated into various programmes of work in the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. The Ministry of Water showed interest in and visited the activities.

59. The project was not able to leverage the kind of funds anticipated in the design phase, which poses some risks to economic sustainability. There was no clear financial engagement or commitment from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, yet increased co-financing was leveraged during the life of the project. Co-financing was limited to in-kind payments only; cash contribution was never provided by the Government to the project. However, international projects such as IFAD, WAMPP and SADP will likely fund the development activities of sustainable agriculture and grazing committees. This demonstrates that the project may have better chances for economic sustainability if bolstered by international projects.

60. The project facilitated collaboration. The DTT allowed people to meet and implement activities in a more decentralized manner. The project also invested in social service mechanisms (grazing committees, nutrition clubs, savings and lending clubs), thereby creating structures to support the social sustainability of the project. This is further reinforced by the pride expressed by many community members, especially with regard to the recovery of rangelands and the return of biodiversity, as well as the livelihoods-focus of the project.

Factors affecting performance

Monitoring and evaluation

61. The AMAT was used for tracking the project, together with a results framework. While the AMAT tool is no longer used, it would be useful to ensure during project implementation that all project team members understand how to use the monitoring tools effectively. The project generated many social, environmental and gender-related results, and yet the monitoring tools on hand were slightly limited to capture their scope. The team was able to generate good narrative reports on the results achieved, but they were ad hoc rather than part of a consistent strategy of measuring the same results in the same way for each site. The baseline surveys were also conducted late in the project, which was a missed opportunity to capture the overall impact of the project.

62. The project provided datasets to government databases under development in relation to biophysical and socio-economic data, linking project findings to broader national monitoring tools.

Quality of execution

63. Overall, FAO delivered well on project implementation and execution through the Project Coordination Unit. The good execution was due to FAO's strong technical support and close supervision, including significant strategic support. It was also noted that considerable support was provided by the FAO Lesotho Office.

64. FAO project implementation was considered adequate in terms of the quality and level of technical knowledge. The project demonstrated adaptability to circumstances and in following MTR recommendations.

Financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing

65. The total co-financing in the original design documents amounted to USD 8 437 000, consisting in USD 937 000 from FAO and USD 7 500 000 from the Government's Integrated Watershed Management Programme. The project calculated a co-financing of around USD 1 031 306. The Ministry of Local Government, SADP and WAMPP joined as new co-financing sources during project implementation. Government co-financing was provided in the following forms: materials and equipment used for the Integrated Watershed Management Programme; labour for performing the work; rental fees for project personnel; office space; general operating expenses; district-level operations; and technical backstopping by different government departments. However, co-financing was not provided in cash. Co-financing was underreported and challenging to quantify.

Stakeholder engagement

66. There was active engagement of both government stakeholders at the national and district levels, as well as local beneficiaries, in particular, women. Civil society organizations supported the implementation of project activities, although this was not captured fully in the documentation. Collaboration with the NUL weakened over time, and there was low private sector involvement given the sites of the project. There are crucial lessons learned to be drawn on how the project galvanized local stakeholders around communal activities, strengthened social structures, integrated various government entities in project implementation, managed conflict, and advanced opportunities for women.

Knowledge management

67. The project provided datasets to developing governmental databases on biophysical and socio-economic information. It also produced useful reports, in particular on the saving and lending groups in the biannual report. The project also used innovative means to achieve results, specifically on communal lands. The project engaged various social structures and mechanisms to enhance cooperation, although it would have been useful to capture these success stories and methods in a case study so that they could serve as learning for other projects and initiatives.

68. It was unclear whether there was a coherent knowledge management strategy. Given the high levels of results achieved under the project, it will be crucial to disseminate them in a user-friendly manner so that they can be replicated and sustained, and targeted specifically to different user groups. For instance, civil society organizations can benefit from some of the social tools and mechanisms used to foster cooperation, and international organizations can benefit from the types of incentives and district-level organizing that contributed to attaining results. While outside of the project's scope, it would be useful to identify particular parties responsible for specific documentation that could ensure use beyond the project's duration. For example, interventions on livelihood activities should be monitored to see both the socio-economic benefits they yield in the medium term, and any further inputs and/or capacity building that may be required.

Gender equality

69. The project was highly inclusive of women and increased their livelihood opportunities, decreased their work burden, increased access to water and food, and provided them with access to credit and savings, as well as relevant training and capacity building. Most of the project beneficiaries were women, and the project resulted in significant social changes, such as their becoming engaged in rangeland and grazing issues that they typically were not engaged in.

70. The project is in line with the GEF's Policy on Gender Equality. The project shifts from a gender-aware, 'do no harm' approach to a gender-responsive, 'do good' approach by supporting women's livelihoods, agency in community organizations, and management of natural resources, skills and training. It targeted issues of interest to women and reported on gender results. The project is in line with FAO's Policy on Gender Equality by having women participate equally if not more than men in project activities and training, supporting women's access to decent livelihoods and productive resources, and decreasing their work burden (such as travelling to fetch water and firewood).

Environmental and social safeguards

71. The project was designed to yield positive environmental benefits. No adverse environmental or social impacts compromised the project. Small-scale earth dams and physical repairs were undertaken. They did not have negative impacts, but for due diligence (and from lessons learned during other interventions), it would be useful to add a level of oversight and ensure that even small dams would meet FAO safeguard policies by discussing them in annual reporting.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. To future GEF project developers: Ensure that the Project Indicators take gender into account.

Recommendation 2. To the Project Team: Develop case studies to showcase how women's circumstances were improved through the project, examining their livelihoods, and socio-economic and environmental factors.

72. This project achieved many positive gender results in several areas of women's lives: livelihoods, community engagement, labour and social indicators. However, the Results Framework did not include gender indicators that would monitor these results on an ongoing and high level. While the project team provided sex-disaggregated data, and the AMAT tool accounted for gender, it would have been useful to capture more complex gender results. It is thus recommended that FAO and government partners include gender indicators in the Results Framework and provide qualitative indicators that assess more than just levels of participation (sex-disaggregated figures), rather than indicators assess changes in empowerment, equity or improved livelihoods.

73. The project team should capture (either through case studies or documentation) some of the specific achievements made, with clear recommendations on how to maintain results for sustainability, and clearly identify governmental and civil society champions who can own and manage these results. In particular, the case studies should note the social mechanisms and livelihood opportunities that allowed women to advance in rangeland management or grazing committees.

Recommendation 3. To Project Management: Showcase local conflict management strategies on natural resource management so that they may be replicated and upscaled. This should take place in Sesotho and include the role that traditional leadership played to capture the nuances of this process. It would be useful to showcase some examples of conflict resolution that could be replicated elsewhere to improve community resource management. Develop a repository of lessons learned and project learning for other initiatives to be shared with and accessible to all stakeholders.

74. The project used innovative means to achieve results, particularly on communal lands, and engaged various social structures and mechanisms to enhance cooperation. It would be useful to capture these success stories and methods in a case study so that they could serve as lessons learned for other projects and initiatives. It is thus recommended that a closing socioeconomic survey be conducted to capture the results of the project and share results with the appropriate partners to boost their baseline data. It is also recommended that a project repository of data be shared with development partners and/or the civil society organizations sector to avoid the loss of knowledge. This repository need not be expensive—a Google or Dropbox folder could be used. It is also recommended that the project team identify champions at the community level to sustain specific work and disseminate knowledge.

Recommendation 4. To FAO: For future projects, FAO/GEF should consider providing funds for a socio-economic survey involving the project's participants to track changes in sample beneficiaries' lives. This would enable the Project Team to assess whether local communities' knowledge on climate change/SLM truly increased and in what ways, and to what extent people's incomes increased through project investment.

75. Although baseline studies and surveys were carried out relatively late in the project, it would be useful to have a survey at project closing to understand the project impacts. This would capture quantitative and qualitative changes in beneficiaries' circumstances in more rigorous ways and identify the impact of project interventions, which other projects and government programmes could draw lessons from.

Recommendation 5. To government partners: Alternative livelihood activities promoted by the project should be followed up by relevant project partners to ensure their sustainability and verify whether they require any additional inputs.

76. The project promoted and initiated various livelihood activities. However, its duration is too short to fully assess the impacts of these livelihood activities, i.e. whether they are still profitable, require additional capacity building or inputs, or create unintended consequences or harm. Government

partners, especially those at the district level that will be liaising with beneficiary communities, should continue to follow and provide support.

Table 1. The GEF rating scheme

FAO-GEF rating scheme	Rating	Summary comments
1) RELEVANCE		
Overall relevance of the project	HS	The project design addressed local needs and is in line with national plans, policies and priorities as well as FAO's CPF Regional Priorities, FAO's Global Strategic Objective 2, and the GEF's Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas.
2) EFFECTIVENESS		
Overall assessment of project results	S	This represents the average of the ratings of individual outcomes.
Outcome 1.1. Strengthened technical capacity in the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and land and water management (NUL) at the national and district levels, as well as community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management.	S	Capacity-building initiatives were carried out for a variety of stakeholders and were put into practice during the life of the project through a learning-by-doing approach.
Outcome 2.1. Improved data, tools and methods of assessment for determining impact of climate change on land suitability/use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level, with a focus on the most vulnerable watersheds.	S	New data were generated, which improved methods and contributed to tools for the assessment of climate change, vulnerability and risk. Stakeholders had different expectations of what this outcome was to produce. There is evidence that stakeholders used data generated by the project, such as the biophysical surveys and livelihoods assessment.
Outcome 3.1. Sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices (e.g. soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover and range resource management) successfully adopted in 24 selected watersheds and catchments.	S	Despite challenges faced, there is strong evidence that the project was able to improve SLM/W practices. In particular, access to water, which was identified as a pressing need in the communities, was addressed by the project. A particularly interesting aspect of some of the restoration activities is the role that local grazing committees have played in socializing and appropriating norms.
Outcome 4.1. Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households.	S	A variety of livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level, income-generating activities were successfully demonstrated and adopted. The only reason that this was not rated as "highly satisfactory" is that additional quantitative data are needed on how people's incomes increased as a result of the project interventions.
Outcome 5.1. Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household-level income-generating practices through wide dissemination.	MS	While many interventions have been piloted, owned and carried out, the communications and public awareness on climate change and adaptation require effort to further integrate some of the knowledge generated by the project.

FAO-GEF rating scheme	Rating	Summary comments
Outcome 5.2. Project implementation based on results-based management, and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned for future operations.	S	Reports and documentation of lessons learned are adequate. There is a transfer of several interventions to government ministries planned to enable them to follow up on the project.
3) EFFICIENCY, PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION		
Overall quality of project implementation and adaptive management (implementing agency).	S	FAO provided adequate project implementation in terms of technical guidance. The project demonstrated adaptability to circumstances and to MTR recommendations.
Quality of execution (executing agencies).	S	The Project Coordination Unit provided good technical execution. Some salary-related issues were raised during implementation.
Efficiency (including cost effectiveness and timeliness).	MS	Procurement challenges created delays and sub-optimal expenditures, and demoralized beneficiaries and stakeholders.
4) SUSTAINABILITY		
Overall sustainability	ML	Many of the mechanisms and interventions of the projects have a buy-in from government ministries and other international projects. Moreover, many of the social structures established by the project were anchored at the community level. Given the unpredictable co-financing and/or lack of government resources for vehicle use, etc., there is some uncertainty over whether government resources will be materialized for project outputs beyond the project's duration.
5) FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE (M&E and stakeholder engagement)		
Overall quality of stakeholder engagement.	S	There was excellent engagement of government stakeholders at the national and district levels as well as excellent engagement of local beneficiaries. There was effective civil society organizations engagement, which needs to be better documented. Collaboration with NUL weakened, and there was low private sector involvement due to sites selected.
Overall quality of M&E	MS	The AMAT tracking tool was not well understood. Although the project team was able to generate quality reports, there was not a consistent and coherent strategy for monitoring across different sites.
M&E design at project start-up	MS	The initial M&E plan was adequate, but did not include relevant risks or costs for oversight.
M&E plan implementation	MS	There was not a systematic approach to M&E across the sites and project. The AMAT tracking tool was not well understood. Some of the project impacts, e.g. changes in livelihoods, were not adequately quantified.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the terminal evaluation

1. This terminal evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning. It analyses the project's design and implementation process, as well as its outcomes and relevance for the beneficiaries and for the national needs and priorities. It also analyses the factors that may contribute to the sustainability of the outcomes. It presents strategic recommendations aimed at, inter alia, maximizing the institutionalization of outcomes and ownership by the different stakeholders, and disseminating information to other institutions that can ensure the sustainability of this intervention.

2. The evaluation also documents lessons learned to inform future actions and will serve as an input to improve formulation of projects that may use similar approaches, methods and tools. The purpose of the evaluation states why this evaluation is being conducted and why at this point in time (refer to the evaluation terms of reference - TORs). This should refer to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) requirements for terminal evaluations, and to the project document (ProDoc).

1.2 The intended users

3. The intended users and uses of this evaluation are as follows:

   i. the FAO Country Office, the Project Management Team, members of the Project Task Force at FAO headquarters and regional offices, who will use the findings and lessons identified in the evaluation to finalize project activities, plan for the sustainability of results achieved, and improve formulation and implementation of similar projects;

   ii. the GEF (project donor), who will use the findings to track progress in fulfilling its mission of delivering global environmental benefits and inform strategic investment decisions in the future. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) is directly accountable to the GEF Council and has the mandate to report on the performance and effectiveness of GEF projects and programmes;

   iii. the National Government counterparts, who will use the evaluation findings and conclusions for future planning;

   iv. the service providers (universities, community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations);

   v. the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, which will use the findings to track the project achievements and draw lessons learned to be shared in order to improve the performance of the FAO-GEF portfolio; and

   vi. other donors, organizations and institutions interested in supporting and/or implementing similar projects could equally benefit from the evaluation report.

1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

4. The evaluation covered the entire project implementation period (1 September 2015 – 30 November 2020), with a particular focus on the period following the mid-term review (MTR) (October 2018).[6]

5. The analysis and findings use the internationally recognized evaluation criteria as a reference: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Other evaluation criteria include ownership, involvement of stakeholders, gender issues, and financial, social, political and environmental risks, as requested by the GEF (GEF, 2017b).

6. The objectives of the evaluation are to:

   i. assess the extent to which the project achieved its stated objectives and outcomes to date, and determine the likelihood of future impacts, especially regarding environmental sustainability;

   ii. provide an assessment of the project performance, by collecting: i) socio-economic co-benefits data; ii) sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data; iii) geographic coordinates of the project sites whenever available or possible; and by iv) implementing planned project activities and planned outputs against actual results;

   iii. formulate lessons learned that may help in the design and implementation of future FAO, FAO-GEF or climate change adaptation projects and integrated watershed management-related initiatives.

7. During the inception stage, the evaluation team carefully examined the MTR. This terminal evaluation report refers to the MTR report in several instances, particularly to assess if the performance significantly changed during the last half of project execution, and to report if and how recommendations were implemented.

Box 1. Evaluation questions (EQs) following the GEF criteria

Relevance (rating required)	EQ 1. Are the project outcomes still congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, and the Country Programming Framework (CPF)?
	EQ 2. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes?
	EQ 3. Has there been any change in project relevance since its design, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project objectives and goals?
Effectiveness (rating required)	EQ 4. To what extent have the project objectives been achieved? EQ 5. To what extent was the integrated watershed management model - focused on sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) - effective? Which factors were enablers or obstacles?
	EQ 6. To what extent were the stakeholders trained in SLM/W implementing new practices? To what extent have the capacities generated been useful in preventing or reversing land degradation?
	EQ 7. To what extent was the topic included in public policies and strategies of the responsible institutions?

[6] The geographic scope of the evaluation covers: Lowlands (Mafeteng), Senqu River Valley (Quthing) and Mountains (Thaba Tseka), where the project was implemented.

Efficiency (rating required)	EQ 8. To what extent has FAO fulfilled its role as an implementing agency with regard to identifying the project, preparing the concept note, forecasting of expenditures, preparation, approval and launch, monitoring and supervision?
	EQ 9. How well have the risks been identified and managed?
	EQ 10. To what extent has FAO fulfilled its executing role with regard to cost-efficiency?
	EQ 11. Has management been able to adapt to the changing conditions to guarantee project efficiency?
Sustainability	EQ 12. Is there any evidence of integrated watershed management, or any change in the political, legislative and/or regulatory frameworks?
	EQ 13. To what extent can the progress made towards the long-term be attributed to the project?
	EQ 14. To what extent has the project supported financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental improvements to sustain long-term project results?
Monitoring and evaluation	EQ 15. How was information from the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system used during project implementation?
	EQ 16. Did the M&E system operate according to the M&E plan?
	EQ 17. Was the information gathered systematically, using appropriate methodologies?
	EQ 18. Has the information from the M&E system been used to make relevant decisions about project implementation?
Quality of execution	EQ 19. To what extent have the national partners assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?
	Sub-question: To what extent did the Executing Agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project?
	Sub-question: Was the adaptive action undertaken after the MTR effective in increasing the pace of implementation while assuring the quality of outcomes and maximizing the potential for sustainability?
Co-financing	EQ 20. To what extent did the expected co-financing materialize, and how did shortfalls in co-financing or in the materialization of greater-than-expected co-financing affect project results, particularly with regard to the replication of sustainable SLM/W practices?
Stakeholder engagement	EQ 21. To what extent has effective participation and involvement of the key project stakeholders (e.g. women, people with disabilities, non-governmental agencies and local authorities) been recorded?
Knowledge management	EQ 22. Were there mechanisms and platforms that enabled the systematization of knowledge and the communication of good practices and lessons learned?
	EQ 23. Has the project promoted the strengthening and replicability of these practices and lessons? Which ones and how?

Gender equality[7]	EQ 24. How did the project contribute to the objectives of the GEF Policy on Gender Equality and FAO Policy on Gender Equality?
	EQ 25. To what extent was the strategy for involving vulnerable groups (women, youth and people with disabilities) in project activities effective?
	EQ 26. Has the project made specific contributions to the well-being of vulnerable groups (empowering them, reducing their vulnerability)?
	EQ 27. What were the results achieved or likely to be achieved?
	EQ 28. What are the lessons learned that could be used for future interventions?
Social and environmental safeguards	EQ 29. To what extent do/did the demonstration reference sites (DRS) and their replication in other areas fulfil the SLM/W criteria?

* Two aspects will need to be assessed: i) M&E design: Was the M&E plan at the point of CEO endorsement practical and sufficient? Did it include baseline data? Did it specify clear targets and appropriate SMART indicators to track environmental, gender and socio-economic results, and a proper methodological approach, etc.; and ii) M&E implementation: whether or not the M&E system operated according to the M&E plan; where necessary, whether the M&E plan was revised in a timely manner, etc.

1.4 Methodology

8. The methodology applied to this evaluation consisted of a combination of gender-sensitive methods[8] that collected qualitative and quantitative data necessary to answer the evaluation questions in an objective manner, based on evidence. Quantitative data were assessed by reviewing the figures reported by the project team through documentation and interviews, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. In aiming to attribute the outcomes and impacts to the project activities and the results, the evaluation team considered the difference between what occurred due to the project and what would have occurred without it, based on documentary, anecdotal and physical evidence. The evaluation included eight stages: the inception stage; revision of documents; survey; stakeholder interviews; field-level interviews; processing and validation of data; elaboration of findings, conclusions and recommendations; and report development and revision.

9. The evaluation adopted a participatory, consultative approach with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. In scoping and during the implementation of the evaluation, key stakeholders of the project were consulted such as the members of the Project Steering Committee, including representatives from the Government, FAO (Country Office, Lead

[7] Evaluations must assess whether and how men and women are affected by changes to natural resource use and decision-making resulting from the GEF outcomes. Wherever feasible, evaluations should provide sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data. Units commissioning evaluations should strive for gender balance in the composition of evaluation teams.

[8] Methods involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For the qualitative approach, a range of data sources and processes were used (such as triangulation and validation) to guarantee inclusion and credibility; the evaluators also went beyond the indicators present in the project to assess effects on women. Broader questions were considered to understand gender-differentiated impacts from the project, specifically to discern: i) Did the project empower women in any way, if so how? ii) What concrete opportunities did the project present for women? What barriers did they face in participating or benefiting from project results? iii) Did the project increase/decrease women's labour in any way? Did it take into account other female-oriented responsibilities (household management, childrearing, food preparation, obtaining water, poultry, etc.)? iv) Did the project affect social dynamics? Did it inadvertently foster competition or cause conflict? Were some women privileged over others? v) What social mechanisms facilitated, enabled or limited female participation? The sampling frame also addresses the diversity of stakeholders affected by the intervention, particularly the most vulnerable. For the quantitative approach, sex-disaggregated data were collected; attention was paid to quantify female participation, seek out any increases in income as a result of the project, and document any gaps.

Technical Officer, Funding Liaison Officer), local representatives, and local communities from the three targeted sites.

10. Triangulation of evidence and information gathered underpinned the elaboration of findings, conclusions and recommendations. At the core of the evaluation work there was a series of bilateral interviews with the different project stakeholders (supervisors, executors, collaborators, beneficiaries). The evaluation team sought to include marginalized voices (local communities, women) as well as a gender analysis, thus noting the differentiated impacts of the project on men and women. Interviews did not follow a one-way question-answer pattern, but rather, were carried out in such a way that the interviewees were free to provide any information they wanted about the project and could make recommendations that they considered important to be included. Interviewees were also invited to follow up, if needed.

11. Since a gender-sensitive perspective underpinned communications, and interviewees were provided with the freedom to ask and respond to any questions, the evaluation demonstrated sensitivity to customary and cultural aspects influencing project performance. The gender-sensitive approach was addressed by assessing how women experienced project results differently and noting that impacts of the project may not be the same for both genders. The evaluation also sought to identify any unanticipated impacts on gender as well as achievements that may support greater empowerment or leadership opportunities for women. All consultations are sex-disaggregated (see Annex 1). Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality.

12. The stages of the evaluation were as follows:

    i. *Inception stage*. During inception, the evaluation team focused on familiarizing themselves with the project, planning the evaluation, adapting the evaluation questions, and developing an inception report.

    ii. *Revision of documents*. The evaluation team undertook a thorough review of the available documentation. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) provided most of the project-related documents, which were supplemented by the project coordination unit as requested. The evaluation team complemented this with documents produced by other organizations, particularly by GEF and FAO, and some policy documents of the Government of Lesotho. The various types of documents provided information for different evaluation criteria and questions. The full list of documents consulted is included in the Bibliography. Box 1 provides a list of evaluation questions, related to ten evaluation criteria, which served to score the evaluation matrix. As part of the inception report, the evaluation team developed an evaluation framework for this evaluation, which explains how each of the evaluation questions will be answered, its indicators and sources of verification (Appendix 2). The evaluation matrix used by the evaluators to obtain information is provided in Appendix 5.

    iii. *Stakeholder interviews*. The evaluation team held a series of semi-structured interviews with 44 stakeholders (30 men, 14 women) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 459 local beneficiaries (180 men, 279 women). With officials from the Government of Lesotho located in Maseru, all consultations were conducted remotely. Beneficiaries and local stakeholders were interviewed in person during group consultations. These groups of individuals were recommended by the Project Coordination Unit's key informants (executing agency, Project Steering Committee members, GEF focal point, district-level authorities, local beneficiaries – those responsible for some aspects of implementation – and a representation of all stakeholders, directly or indirectly impacted by the project). The evaluation team continued to identify interviewees through the implementation of the evaluation. In total, 20 people were interviewed one to one, and 24 were interviewed in small groups and were invited to follow up personally if they wished to (this excluded the local beneficiaries' FGDs, which is

discussed in the next bullet; the full list is included in Appendix 1). The questions were open-ended and allowed the evaluation team and the interviewee to have a wider conversation and not be restricted to a specific subject. The data from each interview were written down. The information from stakeholder interviews was treated confidentially and anonymously, and interviews were conducted solely by the evaluation team. During the entire evaluation process, contact with the Project Coordination Unit was maintained to validate, where needed, specific information obtained, to clarify points or provide additional documentation.

iv. *Field-level interviews*. In consultation with the Project Coordination Unit, a total of six interviews were held with the district coordinators, the District Technical Teams (DTTs) and 21 FGDs. The National Project Coordinator (NPC) accompanied the local consultant to all three districts and introduced the consultant to these entities and beneficiaries but was not part of the actual interviews. At each of the three districts, interviews were held with the district coordinators prior to visits to the villages, and the interviews with the DTTs were held on the last day of the visit to confirm, verify and triangulate information presented in Appendix 1. A total of 24 members (17 males and 7 females) of the DTT participated in the interviews. A total of 459 people (180 males and 279 females) participated in the FGDs.

v. *Processing and validation of data*. Once the data and information were gathered from the document review, stakeholder interviews and field visits, they were organized according to the criteria and evaluation questions. The gathered data and information were both quantitative and qualitative. In the latter case, the evaluation tried to quantify the information as much as possible. Information that supported indicators were compared with the project reporting on these indicators to validate the reported information. In the cases where the data from certain interviews coincided, they were used directly to support findings. When data did not coincide, information was validated through a process of confrontation (e.g. with the Project Coordination Unit) or triangulation (with additional informants).

vi. *Elaboration of findings, conclusions and recommendations*. Based on the data compiled during the information and data gathering phases and their initial processing, the evaluation team identified preliminary findings. These initial findings were presented to the Project Coordination Unit and FAO representatives in a debriefing session on 11 December 2020. Based on the feedback received, the evaluation team refined and developed final findings and the conclusions of the evaluation. The conclusions sustained the rating of evaluation criteria according to the scale included in the evaluation terms of reference (TORs) (Annex 1). As final elements of the evaluation, which referred to findings and conclusions, the evaluation team identified a set of lessons learned and recommendations. The lessons learned during the execution of the project can include good or not as good practices in the design, implementation and governance, or in the context of the project that are worth being considered in future, similar projects. The recommendations are directed towards implementation/execution agencies and refer to the immediate corrective actions, future activities or recommendable practices to increase sustainability of the project outcomes, the probability of achieving the impact, or the replicability at another geographical or temporary scale.

vii. *Report development and revision.* In line with the TORs for this evaluation, OED conducted a quality review of the report before sharing the revised draft report (corrected by the evaluation team where necessary) with the project stakeholders for their review and comments on the terminal evaluation of GCP/LES/049/LDF comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any factual errors and may highlight their significance in any conclusions, as well as provide feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons

learned. The stakeholders' comments were provided in a matrix for ease of reference. The evaluation team then considered the comments and prepared the final report, as well as a separate document with the response to the main comments and suggestions received.

13. This terminal evaluation was prepared by a team of two recruited consultants: one international and one national. The evaluation team consisted of a senior team leader and a team member with complementary, national expertise (policy, stakeholder engagement, gender), which was supervised by the evaluation manager from OED. The team undertook the evaluation according to the TORs and the methodology included in the inception report, presented in November 2020.

1.5 Limitations

14. There were major limitations in this evaluation due to the global COVID-19 pandemic: international travel restrictions prevented an in-country mission by the entire evaluation team as well as the physical visits and triangulation by the team leader at the local level. However, the evaluation consultant based nationally was able to conduct field visits and meet with local beneficiaries. Nevertheless, caution had to be exercised to avoid excessive in-person meetings other than at the community level. The follow-up was carried out through electronic means, and most of the preparations, interviews and triangulation had to be carried out through teleconferences. While the flexibility and good will from both parties allowed for sufficient consultations, there was less opportunity for personal communication with key stakeholders through direct interaction, informal conversations and immediate follow-up than typically occurs.

15. Another impact of COVID-19 was that the project activities themselves faced delays, which ordinarily would have been completed prior to the terminal evaluation. As a result, some project management team members both supported the terminal evaluation and conducted their own activities; the evaluation team is both cognizant of time spent and appreciative of the support received during a particularly busy time. Further, due to the pandemic, the project was unable to receive visits from FAO entities in the latter phases of project implementation, which would often assist with oversight and support.

2. Background and context of the project

Box 2. Basic project information

- GEF Project ID Number: **5124**
- Recipient country: **Lesotho**
- Implementing Agency: **FAO**
- Executing Agency: **FAO**
- Implementing partners: **Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation,[9] Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Energy and Meteorology, Ministry of Water, Ministry of Local Government, Department of Environment and National University of Lesotho (NUL).**
- GEF Focal Area: **Climate Change – Least Developed Country Fund (LDCF)**
- PIF approved: **25 January 2013**
- Date of CEO endorsement: **11 March 2015**
- Date of project start: **1 September 2015**
- Execution Agreement signed: **15 June 2015**
- Initial date of project completion (original NTE): **31 October 2019**
- Revised project implementation end date: **31 December 2020**
- Date of Mid-Term Review: **October 2018**
- Project Budget: USD 3 592 694

16. Lesotho is a small landlocked mountainous country situated in Southern Africa between the southern latitude 280 and 310, and eastern longitudes 270 and 300. The country has a total area of 30 588 km2, which is entirely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa and has a population of 2.2 million. Lesotho's main features are the Maloti Mountains, which are part of the greater Drakensberg range. Lesotho is the only country in the world with the entire land surface situated more than 1 000 m above sea level. The lowest point in the country, where the Senqu River flows across the border, is 1 388 m above sea level, while the highest part, Thabana Ntlenyana, is 3 482 m above sea level (FAO, 2015b).

17. Lesotho is one of the poorest countries in Southern Africa, with high levels of poverty and inequality; it is among the 20 percent most unequal countries in the world (World Bank, 2019). An estimated 49.7 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line, and 24.1 percent fall below the extreme poverty line. Rural areas, heavily dependent on subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture, account for 66 percent of the population and 80 percent of all people living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2019).

18. Agriculture plays a significant role in Lesotho's economy. Over 70 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas and directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for employment and livelihoods. The sector has the potential to increase food security, reduce rural poverty, and generate both on- and off-farm employment opportunities. Main crops include maize, sorghum and wheat planted as monocrops on 85 percent of the country's arable land, which comprises 10 percent of Lesotho's total land area. Livestock contributes 75 percent of the total agricultural output, including semi-intensive and intensive production of pigs and poultry, as well as extensive free-range production of goats and sheep on rangelands in the foothills and highland areas.

[9] Formerly known as the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation.

Sheep and goats, which dominate the livestock sector, are reared mainly for wool and mohair (World Bank, 2019).

19. Lesotho, like the rest of southern Africa, is facing climate change variability, which also has some negative impacts on wetlands. Nature-based services such as the rehabilitation of wetlands are critical in taking care of excess rainfall and in supplying streams with water during the dry season and drought years. Erratic rainfall, soil erosion and land degradation, poorly managed rangelands, chronic food insecurity and poverty characterize Lesotho. The National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) also identified as a constraint the lack of capacity to address climate change-related issues at all levels.

20. Climate change will also have detrimental impacts on the watersheds in the country already ravaged by recurrent droughts. This will particularly affect the wetland resources in the alpine zones of the mountain watersheds, which sustain the perennial flow of the rivers and supply water to the Lesotho water development projects, both in the highlands and lowlands. Moreover, high temperatures, reduced precipitation and climate variability could exacerbate soil erosion, land degradation and loss of valuable natural resources at watershed management scale. The latter would also affect the lifespan and sustainability of the water development infrastructure. However, smallholder and subsistence farmers are even more highly vulnerable to a slight shift in climate variability. Hence, building resilience at the watershed level is the first step towards national food security (FAO, 2015b).

21. The project (as detailed in Box 2), "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation through support to integrated watershed management in Lesotho" (GCP/LES/049/LDF) aimed to strengthen capacity for climate change adaptation through support to integrated watershed management. Its objectives were to: i) implement SLM/W practices and resource conservation in selected watersheds to reduce vulnerability and enhance the adaptive capacity at the community level; and ii) strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crop, livestock and agro-forestry systems at the community level.

22. The project plan was designed to be implemented in three vulnerable livelihood zones in three districts: Lowlands (Mafeteng), Senqu River Valley (Quthing) and Mountains (Thaba Tseka) in 24 selected watersheds. The project's main focus was on implementing climate change adaptation measures at the local level to reduce the vulnerability of local communities and improve their livelihoods and adaptive capacity, and scaling-up and transferring climate-resilient measures with consideration of all major ongoing and pipeline initiatives of the Government and development partners in order to enhance synergies and avoid potential duplications.

23. The project was initiated after the implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project, "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector" from 2009 to 2011, which was developed to contribute to addressing the technical shortcomings cited in the NAPA. The project goal was to contribute to the reduction of risks associated with climate change and variability among smallholder and subsistence farmers in three selected watersheds in Lesotho. The current project was therefore designed to upscale the adaptation practices identified in the TCP project.

24. The overall project objective is linked to the project's five components and associated outcomes, as detailed below:

Component 1: Strengthening technical capacity of national and district level staff and institutions on SLM/W and climate-resilient livelihood strategies.

Outcome 1.1 "*Strengthened technical capacity in the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and NUL at the national and district levels, and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management*".

Component 2: Assessing vulnerability of livelihoods and impacts of climate change on land suitability and use at watershed scale.

Outcome 2.1 "*Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district-level implemented, focusing on most vulnerable watersheds*".

Component 3: Promoting tested SLM/W practices to build resilience to climate risks in vulnerable sub-catchments and watersheds.

Outcome 3.1 "SLM/W practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in selected 24 watershed and catchments".

Component 4: Strengthening diversified livelihood strategies and implementation of improved income-generating activities at the community level.

Outcome 4.1 "Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households.

Component 5: Dissemination of best practices, project monitoring and evaluation.

Outcome 5.1 "*Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household-level income-generating practices through wide dissemination*".

25. The project commenced in November 2015 with a duration of 48 months until August 2019; however, it received a no-cost extension until 31 December 2020. An MTR was undertaken in October 2018, just over two-and-a-half years into project implementation.

26. The project fits into FAO's CPF by contributing to Priority Area 4 (FAO, 2019e) (Strengthening policy institutions), which concerns natural resource conservation and utilization, including adaptation to climate change. The project is also strongly aligned with Outcome 4.3, which concerns strengthening climate change and institutional and technical capacities for climate change adaptation to agriculture and enhancing adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities. With regard to FAO's regional priorities, the project strengthened institutional capacity for resilience; supported early warning and information management systems; built community-level resilience; and responded to water-related crises (FAO, 2014a).

27. This Project is aligned with FAO's Global Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner". It has invested in livelihoods through vegetable cultivation, agroforestry and agriculture. To fulfil Organizational Outcome 1 under SO2 "Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in the agricultural sector production systems in a sustainable manner", the Project carried out training and capacity-building activities and set up farmer field schools. In addition, the Project's work to strengthen the relevant policy framework in Lesotho will contribute to SO2, Organizational Outcome 2: "Stakeholders in member countries strengthen governance – the policies, laws, management frameworks and institutions that are needed to support producers and resource managers – in the transition to sustainable agricultural sector production system".

28. The project contributed to the eradication of poverty in all its forms (SDG 1) by investing in livelihoods and ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2) through inputs in agriculture, livestock, agroforestry and nutrition clubs. It also partly contributed to SDG 13 on climate action by promoting adaptive capacity and making climate information available.

2.1 Theory of change

29. The project document (ProDoc) did not present an explicit theory of change (TOC). The MTR provided a reconstructed TOC, which the evaluation team reviewed. It was observed that its causal logic was sound; however, the exceeding number of components and outcomes recommended by the reconstructed TOC was not reflected in reporting documents (project implementation reports [PIRs] and project progress reports [PPRs]). The Results Framework utilized by the project team in the PPR from July to December 2019 (Table 2) and reproduced in the evaluation's terms of reference (TORs) was used by the terminal evaluation team for its analysis.

Figure 1. The reconstructed theory of change presented in the mid-term review

Goal

To promote sustainable natural resources management and to support crop, livestock and agro-forestry systems to reduce vulnerability and enhance climate resilience

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Impacts

- **Reduced vulnerability**: Reduce vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change, including variability, at local, national, regional and global level
- **Increased Adaptive Capacity**: Increase adaptive capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, including variability, at local, national, regional and global level
- **Adaptation Technology adopted:** Promote transfer and adoption of adaptation technology

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Intermediate state (Target Interventions)

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Components

Component 1: Strengthening technical capacity of national and district level staff and institutions on sustainable land and water management and climate-resilient livelihood strategies	Component 2: Assessing vulnerability of livelihoods and impacts of climate change on land suitability and use at watershed scale	Component 3: Promoting tested Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLM/W) practices to build resilience to climate risks in vulnerable sub-catchments and watersheds	Component 4 Strengthening diversified livelihood strategies and implementation of improved income generating activities at the community level and	Component 5 Dissemination of best practices, project monitoring and evaluation

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Outcomes				
Outcome 1.1 Strengthened technical capacity in MFLR, MAFS, MNR, MLGC, DMA and NUL at national and district levels and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management	*Outcome 2.1 Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented focusing on most vulnerable watersheds*	*Outcome 3.1 Sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, vegetative cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in selected watershed and catchments. (Total beneficiaries - 1200 households and 4800 individuals and total area covered will be 2400 hectares).*	*Outcome 4.1 Diversified livelihood strategies and small scale and household level income generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities. Benefiting 750 and households (3000 individuals). Area covered under this investment 375 hectares).*	*Outcome 5.1 Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household level income generating practices through wide dissemination*
Necessary Preconditions				
• Implementation of training packages at the national and district levels. • Curriculum and training manual developed and mainstreamed in Government's regular capacity development plans.	• Making a comprehensive database available for use in policy and operational decisions. • Government agencies share the data to users and data sets are effectively used for decision making. • Comprehensive database available for use • At least 30 national level staff trained.	• Educate communities to be capable of implementing the SLMW practices • Impact to cover all 24 communities		• A communication strategy established and adopted by all stakeholders • Moderate capacity achieved (AMAT score • A systematic tracking of indicators. of 2) • Communication materials relevant to all successful SLM/WM practices and case studies documented and widely communicated
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Indicators				

Source: Prepared by the evaluation team.

Table 2. The results framework

Outcome/Output/Objective
Component 1. Strengthening technical capacity of national and district level staff and institutions on SLM/W and climate-resilient livelihood strategies
Outcome 1.1: Strengthened technical capacity in the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, the DMA and the NUL at the national and district levels, and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management.
Output 1.1.1: National-level Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, DMA and NUL staff, and district-level forestry and natural resources staff trained on climate change adaptation, integrated watershed management and community mobilization.
Output 1.1.2: Local representatives from community-based organizations (CBOs) trained on good practices of SLM/W, water harvesting and diversified livelihood strategies (at least 24 farmer groups (1 200 farm households in three livelihood zones will be trained).
Component 2. Assessing vulnerability of livelihoods and impacts of climate change on land suitability and use at watershed scale
Outcome 2.1: Improved data, tools and methods for assessing the impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented, focusing on most vulnerable watersheds.
Output 2.1.1: Livelihood and land use (crop, livestock, agro-forestry) database developed for most of the vulnerable watersheds (database will be established in the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation and linked to potential users at the national level) and relevant staff trained (at least 30 core staff).
Output 2.1.2: Vulnerabilities and risks (current and future) assessed for the selected watersheds in three livelihood zones, and spatial information on vulnerability available at the Disaster Management Authority to facilitate adaptation planning by the Government, and relevant staff trained (total 30 staff – ten staff from each district).
Component 3. Promoting tested SLM/W practices to build resilience to climate risks in vulnerable sub-catchments and watersheds
Outcome 3.1: SLM/W practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in selected watershed and catchments. (Total beneficiaries – 1 200 households and 4 800 individuals, and the total area covered will be 2 400 ha).
Output 3.1.1: Adaptive land use and SLM/W practices implemented in at least 24 communities in three livelihood zones (1 200 households and 1 200 ha of arable land – approximately 1 ha of arable land per household). The crops and cropping systems will be selected based on the detailed land suitability analysis to be conducted under Component 2.
Output 3.1.2: Improved water harvesting structures at the household level implemented in three livelihood zones (at least 150 households possess water harvesting structures, which also include women-headed households).
Output 3.1.3: Improved plant cover and range resource management measures adopted in 24 communities to improve productive use of marginal lands. (This will cover 600 households, or 2 400 individuals, and a total area of 1 200 ha [approximately 50 ha per community]).
Component 4. Strengthening diversified livelihood strategies and implementation of improved income-generating activities at the community level
Outcome 4.1: Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households. [Benefit 750 households, i.e. 3 000 individuals in area covered under this investment of 375 ha].

Outcome/Output/Objective
Output 4.1.1: Community participation ensured in 24 community groups in selected watersheds of three livelihood zones, and introductory sessions conducted and small-scale household-level income-generating and food and nutrition activities (e.g. horticulture, small ruminants, beekeeping) introduced to 750 households.
Output 4.1.2: Field demonstration of locally relevant, multi-purpose, agro-forestry to protect and improve livelihood systems conducted in 24 locations and adopted by the stakeholders covering 375 ha.
Component 5. Disseminating best practices, project monitoring and review
Outcome 5.1: Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household-level income-generating practices through wide dissemination.
Output 5.1.1: A communication strategy established in close collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security , the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship and NUL, and implemented.
Outcome 5.2: Project implementation is based on results-based management and the dissemination of best practices and lessons learned for future operations.
Output 5.2.1: Field-based data systematically collected to monitor project outcome indicators at all levels and reviews.

3. Key findings by evaluation questions

3.1 Relevance

EQ 1. Are the project outcomes still congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational programme strategies, and the Country Programming Framework (CPF)?

EQ 2. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes?

EQ 3. Has there been any change in project relevance since its design, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of the project objectives and goals?

Finding 1. The project was well aligned with national priorities at the time of its design and implementation.

Finding 2. The project design was driven by the demand of national and local stakeholders and addressed community-level needs.

30. The project is highly relevant to national and government priorities, especially the government programmes and activities that focused on SLM/W and drought management. The Government has been funding the Integrated Watershed Management Programme since 2007. This project supports afforestation and rehabilitation of forest resources; rehabilitation and construction of water conservation infrastructures; the protection of wetlands; and reseeding of degraded rangelands. The project also seeks to rehabilitate degraded lands while supporting livelihoods and sustainable production, all of which are reflected in the FAO project.

31. The project was drafted in response to the NAPA, which at the time identified the specific regions and communities that were vulnerable to climate change. The NAPA was developed before the project inception, yet its relevance and the essential adaptation interventions remain due to the threats posed by climate change. The project was designed to respond specifically to the following NAPA priorities:

    i. Improving the resilience of livestock production systems under extreme climatic conditions in various livelihood zones in Lesotho - this was achieved, according to interviews, by addressing/improving grazing practices, rehabilitating pasturelands, facilitating fodder, and promoting more resilient poultry.

    ii. Promoting sustainable crop-based livelihood systems in foothills, lowlands and the Senqu River Valley. According to site visits and interviews, this was achieved by increasing shade nets to increase production, establishing keyhole gardens, increasing access to water, and supporting smallholders to upscale their production.

    iii. Capacity building and policy reform to integrate climate change into sectoral development plans. The project supported this by sustaining district-level government work, aligning ministerial programming, and supporting capacity- building training.

32. The policy frameworks relevant to this project include the National Forestry Policy, the Draft National Range Resources Management Policy, the Draft Soil and Water Conservation Policy, the SLM/W Investment Plan, the Lesotho National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) and the Lesotho Food Security Policy and Strategic Guidelines. Intermediate Outcome 1.1 of the strategic objectives and interventions of the NSDP II highlights the importance of sustainable agriculture and food security to the economy by strengthening and promoting integrated catchment management, raising awareness among farmers on adopting climate-smart and conservation agricultural practices, and diversifying agriculture-based livelihood options, which are in line with the following project outcomes:

i. Outcome 3.1: "Sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in 24 selected watershed and catchments".

ii. Outcome 4.1: "Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households".

iii. Outcome 5.1: "Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household-level, income-generating practices through wide dissemination".

33. The strategic actions of the Food Security Policy include input supply, conservation agriculture, livestock production, land conservation and rehabilitation, as well as the establishment of micro-credit schemes. Outcome 3.1 on SLM/W and Outcome 4.1 on diversified livelihood strategies support these government priorities. The project was also directly aligned with several strategies of the National Climate Change Policy (2017) and the GEF Focal Area Strategies of reducing vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate, increasing adaptive capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, and transferring and adopting adaptation technology by, according to interviews, increasing beneficiaries' ability to produce despite climatic variations, and access water despite periods of drought.

34. The evaluation team found that the project objectives aligned well with the FAO's Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner". According to interviews with government stakeholders, the project strengthened the technical capacity of government staff at national and district levels, as well as community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management. Component 4 of the project focused on supporting diversified rural livelihoods. According to beneficiaries and project staff, beneficiary communities received training in different livelihood strategies (beekeeping, raising poultry, raising and breeding rabbits, range management, wetland protection, vegetable production, fruit production, food preservation) as well as inputs related to these livelihoods (chickens, rabbits, feed, seeds, fencing materials, shade nets, drip irrigation system, fruit trees, solar driers, clean energy stoves, no-till planters, pickaxes and spades).

35. The FAO CPF priorities are guided by FAO's comparative advantage and are aligned with national priorities as set out in the National Strategic Development Plan, which include strengthening agriculture and rural economy, nutrition, environment and climate change adaptation. FAO has been instrumental in promoting productivity and enhancing technologies for improving agricultural productive activities in order to improve livelihoods. It has a major comparative advantage in engaging the agriculture sector to promote technologies and practices that are known to conserve soil and water, which has been partly achieved by this project. The project also supports FAO's CPF by recognizing the role played by livestock in supporting the livelihoods of most rural households; hence, supported integrated watershed management includes range management practices that are known to conserve soil and water. The project components reflects these priorities (FAO, 2017a).

36. The design responded to the demand of local stakeholders for greater involvement in integrated watershed management activities.[10] Farmers, in particular women, who usually face more difficult conditions related to access to inputs, required assistance to access improved seeds suited to the

[10] During the project design consultations, the communities and stakeholders reported that poverty was the single most important reason for the current lack of adaptation to climate change, according to design documents.

climate conditions, farming implements and other inputs. The underlying climate-related causes of the watershed degradation and loss of livelihoods could be further fuelled by the projected climate change impacts on major livelihood zones of Lesotho that support arable farming and livestock production.

37. The project responded to community needs, in particular livelihoods and water (see the section on effectiveness). Access to water was initially not sufficiently part of the design; however, following the recommendations in the MTR, the project adapted to respond to this pressing need. This information was also gleaned following a socio-economic survey. As a response, the project management included provision of water as one of its priorities. Water was provided for home consumption, other household uses and for livestock. Water drinking points were constructed in Mafeteng District. By establishing water points for both livestock and wildlife, the project was able to minimize the trampling of rehabilitated wetlands by animals in search for water, as confirmed through site visits and beneficiary interviews.

38. The MTR identified three gaps in the project design to enhance relevance,[11] which, according to the documentation, were all addressed by project activities. The project team conducted a socio-economic survey establishing a baseline and identifying needs, carried out a biophysical survey to enhance understanding of land use and needs, and conducted activities increasing water.

39. The evaluation team rated the criterion of relevance as satisfactory.

3.2 Effectiveness

EQ 4. To what extent have the project objectives been achieved?

EQ 5. To what extent was the integrated watershed management model - focused on sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) - effective? Which factors were enablers or obstacles?

EQ 6. To what extent were the stakeholders trained in SLM/W implementing new practices? To what extent have the capacities generated been useful in preventing or reversing land degradation?

Finding 3. Project outcomes have generally been achieved. In cases where there were obstacles to the achievement of outcomes, there was evidence of adaptive management. The project was most successful in achieving outcomes that resulted in improved livelihoods, and addressed pressing beneficiary needs such as diversifying livelihoods, improving access to water, and increasing food security.

Finding 4. Stakeholders generally viewed the project as successful, demonstrating confidence in the project results. The project supported the establishment of local structures and natural resource management and improved nutrition and access to funds, which promise to be sustainable beyond the project duration.

Finding 5. Some outcome-level indicators appear to be more output level; it would be useful if they measured a higher level of impact.

[11] "*Community needs differ from location to location, hence it is necessary to undertake needs assessments to ensure that community priorities are addressed first. 1. There are communities that completely lacked access to water. The resilience of such communities will continue to diminish unless they are supported with water supply. The project should undertake a broader assessment to identify any communities that lack easy access to water and prioritize support to such communities. 2. The lack of baseline assessments seems to have contributed to the inability to identify communities that have acute water shortages. As provision of water to every community is a national priority, it is necessary to determine the extent of the challenge. 3. The MTR recommends that the PMU considers elaborating and* prioritizing the sub-activities under Output 2.1, as proposed in the reconstructed theory of change to enhance capacity for improved data and tools for land use and land suitability analysis."

Finding 6. While the project produced beneficial results for women (see the section on gender mainstreaming), gender considerations were not included in outcome-level indicators in the Results Framework, despite being part of the narrative.

40. Feedback from stakeholders confirmed that the project was generally effective, even from those who were critical of aspects of the project. Anecdotal accounts mentioned that the project was particularly effective in the following areas: i) investing in and strengthening peoples' livelihoods; ii) improving access to water; iii) supporting women's livelihoods; iv) restoring critical wetlands; and v) enhancing collaboration and communication among government stakeholders, who tend to work in silos. Details on each of these are provided in this sub-section as achievements under each outcome are explored.

41. While these aspects were reiterated by those interviewed (the Government, the project team, beneficiaries), in order to make an assessment on the effectiveness of the project, it is necessary to review achievements against the Results Framework to assess whether project outcomes were indeed achieved.

42. With regard to Outcome 1.1 "Strengthened technical capacity in the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, DMA and NUL at the national and district levels, and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management", there is evidence that the project strengthened the technical capacity of various government institutions through training. The text of this Outcome was adjusted slightly from the original ProDoc to account for political changes that led to the reforming and/or renaming of government ministries. In terms of the specific training provided, project reports highlight that more than 170 staff were trained from implementing line ministries, supporting the fulfilment of Output 1.1.1 "National-level Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, DMA and NUL staff and district-level forestry and natural resources staff trained on climate change adaptation, integrated watershed management and community mobilization" (FAO, 2019a). The types of training included:

i. gender mainstreaming;
ii. water harvesting (district level);
iii. geographic information systems (GISs) (district level);
iv. conservation agriculture (district level); and
v. climate risk assessment and agriculture (FAO, 2017b).

43. The evaluation team found that, at times, the training was not sufficient - occasionally, the technical staff lacked the sufficient baseline skills to integrate knowledge from the training. In these cases, project documentation notes that it "intervened in order to capacitate staff, harmonize knowledge and skills, and improve performance and quality of project deliverables and beyond. Support was offered through practically orientated methods, exchange visits and mobilizing technical backstopping" (FAO, 2019b). In 2017, the project also conducted capacity needs assessments through external consultants in order to gauge the level of technical knowledge and experience with regard to climate change adaptation strategies, vulnerability reduction, and promotion of transfer and adoption of adaptation technology (FAO, 2017b). This demonstrates that the effectiveness of the project was not merely assessed on the basis of the delivery of the training, but also on the basis of how well it took into consideration the capacity of recipients to absorb the knowledge. Since this is a critical point, it would be useful for future projects to reflect this qualitative aspect in their indicators.

44. The indicator for Output 1.1.1 is "Number of national level staff within the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, DMA and NUL staff at the national and district level trained on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management". While this indicator captures the number of people trained and is appropriate at the output level, it would be useful to capture the qualitative increase in, or the applicability of, technical skills under Outcome 1.1. One of the questions that the evaluation team sought to answer, which related to qualitative impact, was how useful the training was, and whether beneficiaries were able to apply it in their work. This question was posed during the site visits, and according to anecdotal accounts from some training recipients, they were useful and were applied. More rigorous documentation of this application would be useful.

45. The indicator for Output 1.1.2 is "At least 24 farmer groups from the three project sites will be trained on water harvesting, rehabilitation and maintenance of old ponds/dams; conservation agriculture, the Machobane Farming System,[12] crops, agro-forestry, fruit and vegetable production, beekeeping, piggery and poultry production, wool and mohair production, and marketing, as well as range management". Project documents note that the project has 1 374 direct beneficiaries and 40 communities, all of whom have participated in training in diversified livelihoods, nutrition education, food preservation and adaptive SLM/W practices. In addition to this training, the project provided ongoing refresher training to promote the uptake and mainstreaming of information (FAO, 2019b). Although the evaluation team was not able to confirm the exact number of beneficiaries in person, and was only able to do so through documents, the large number of respondents in FGDs at the project sites indicates that there was a significant number of training recipients.

46. While there is evidence that the project delivered training to farmer groups, the farmer field schools were delivered in English rather than Sesotho, which would have been more suitable, and could have resulted in greater ownership of the knowledge/skills shared. According to project staff, all other training was provided in Sesotho, but this one was not because the expertise came from outside of the country. Follow-up activities were conducted to ensure that the information was understood; however, it is worth examining other options such as training the trainer—the expert conducting the farmer field school could have trained an English speaker in Lesotho, who could have imparted the content. It is recommended that farmer field schools, field-level training, demonstrations and capacity building be conducted in local languages for improved comprehension and retention.

47. There was but one indicator for Outcome 1.1 "Number and type of targeted institutions with increased adaptive capacity to reduce risks of and response to climate variability", as mentioned above. It would be useful to also have a qualitative indicator that not only counts and lists institutions, but that is also able to measure the degree of change in capacity, for instance, the extent to which institutions use and apply (newly fostered) adaptive capacity, or document how the capacity of institutions has changed in a qualitative way. It is also worth noting that there is no gender element to the indicator. Even though the project team has provided gender-disaggregated data, it would be useful to integrate a gender perspective in indicators to ensure consistent reporting across outcomes.

[12] The Machobane Farming System is a simple, low-input technique based on intercropping and localized application of organic manures. Since its re-introduction in the early 1990s, nearly 5 000 farmers have integrated this system into their land management, increasing land productivity three-fold compared to traditional monocropping (AFSA, 2015).

Finding 7. Some stakeholders were confused about the type of climate tools that would be produced and how they would be used.

48. With regard to Outcome 2.1 "Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented focusing on most vulnerable watersheds", there were anecdotal accounts that the project was not as effective in delivering this outcome as expected. The central issues that emerged were that the project did not provide tailored climate information to the local level. In addition, despite improvements in the collaboration between the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) and other ministries, LMS does not have the staff capacity to absorb inputs and deliver the kind of information that was requested at the local level.

49. Despite these accounts, there is evidence that there were achievements under this Outcome. This should be noted because the documentation and most of the interviews provide a different picture of achievement under Outcome 2.1.

50. Under Output 2.1.1 "Livelihood and land use (crop, livestock, agro-forestry) database developed for most vulnerable watersheds (database will be established in Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation and linked to potential users at the national level) and relevant staff trained (at least 30 core staff)", a livelihoods assessment was conducted to assess the socio-economic conditions of people living in the project sites. According to information from project documentation, a database was being developed with relevant government partners, and the project was able to contribute socio-economic livelihood datasets to this database. Project documentation also notes that there were delays in establishing the database due to the limited institutional capacity of the DMA, and the GIS units of both the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. To address this shortcoming, the project engaged expertise within the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation to deliver on the land suitability dataset in the three project sites, focusing on soil type, fertility, health, suitability and classification. This information was used to inform the Lesotho Soil Information System and add more details on watershed conditions (FAO, 2019a). It is unclear to what extent the Government is using the database as a whole, but interviews indicate that DTTs, which include various government ministries, have used datasets on GIS, land suitability and soil mapping produced by the project.

51. Under Output 2.1.2 "Vulnerabilities and risks (current and future) assessed for the selected watersheds in three livelihood zones, and spatial information on vulnerability available to facilitate adaptation planning by the Government and relevant staff trained", there is evidence that the project produced a biophysical survey (2018) whose content was used to generate national baseline data on land use types, soil and water types, geology, types of degradation, soil texture, soil angles/slopes, climate impacts at different sites, and soil and water interventions already underway (Rasekoele & Matsumunyane, 2018).

52. Possibly, the real challenge with Outcome 2.1 was that many of the tools were developed late during the project implementation (after the MTR). This prevented the project from using some baseline information early on in project activities. This point echoes one of the critiques from the MTR concerning the lack of baseline information at the onset of the project.

53. According to anecdote, there was another issue concerning why there may have been a sense that this Outcome was underachieved; perhaps this was due to expectation. Some stakeholders anticipated that the project would strengthen the LMS to provide more downscaled climate information. Given the size of the country and the climate technology available, there is sufficient coverage with the tools available. However, people did not receive their local forecasts with

livelihood-relevant guidance. This may be more of an issue of communication and packaging of the climate data/forecast information available into sector-specific, usable guidance given that training on interpreting climate information interpretation was facilitated by LMS to DTTs in order to integrate weather forecasts into guidance for farming communities and relevant stakeholders. This also highlights some of the possible gaps between the meteorological and agriculture/livestock entities. There is already some coordination through workshops organized and facilitated by LMS, and through the National Climate Change Committee under LMS, in which the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is a stakeholder; however, there seems to be some discrepancy between what is expected at the local level in terms of climate information and appropriate agricultural guidance. While this is not solely a responsibility of the project, it is recommended that, at the closing of the project, a survey or exit interviews identify what is still needed to effectively disseminate climate forecasts in usable ways.

54. Nevertheless, the project delivered the expected tools despite possibly not meeting the different expectations of stakeholders who may have been anticipating specific climate tools/forecasts and site-specific guidance based on these forecasts.

55. In terms of the indicators for Outcome 2.1 (Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented focusing on most vulnerable watersheds), "risk and vulnerability assessment conducted", "updated risk and vulnerability assessment" and "relevant risk information disseminated to stakeholders", the first two are slightly more output-oriented than measuring impact. The latter is well-suited to the outcome level. Again, there is no gender element to the indicator.

56. With Outcome 3.1 "SLM/W practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in selected watershed and catchments", based on interviews, it was agreed that the project was highly effective. The main achievements identified by those interviewed are as follows:

i. Range rehabilitation (noted specifically in Linakeng and Ha Khoali in Thaba Tseka, Ha Mantsoepa and Moqalo in Quthing) and increased plant cover, brush control, decreased run-off and flash flooding. According to interviews, there was removal of invasive species, and reseeding of appropriate grasses and vegetation.

ii. Increased availability of spring water due to rehabilitation efforts and rainfall infiltration. Anecdotal accounts mentioned that spring water was replenished in two springs in Thaba Tseka.

iii. The establishment of grazing associations, which then coordinated the grazing management programme (these managed the removal of invasive species and oversaw the revegetation) in the three districts.

iv. The return of wildlife and biodiversity in restored zones.

v. Better performance livestock in zones where rehabilitation actions took place.

vi. Watering holes specifically designed for livestock to avoid pressure on degraded lands and wetlands.

vii. Wetland protection (resting sites from grazing in Mafeteng; documented rehabilitation of two wetlands in Mafeteng).

viii. Construction of gabions to prevent and halt soil erosion on the graveyards in Mafeteng.

ix. Stone-built fire walls established in rehabilitated rangelands.

x. Keyhole (raised) gardens established adjacent to households.

xi. Water harvesting/conservation through roof and spring water tanks.

57. Infrastructure was constructed to address critical water shortages under this Outcome 3.1, which is also why it is deemed as significantly successful. These included groundwater/sand dams, roof water tanks (10 in Thaba-Tseka, 20 in Mafeteng and 44 in Quthing), and one free standing communal tank (6 000 litres). According to feedback from site visits, this increased people's access to water, reduced women's travel times to get to water, and replenished some of the natural springs and wetlands. Interviews estimate that 900 women have improved access to water as a result of this project. This was achieved through the adaptive land use and SLM/W practices implemented to protect natural resources and to arrest further land degradation, based on local conditions. These SLM/W practices include: i) planting cover (grazing vetch); ii) protecting wetlands; and iii) implementing range resources measures such as range resting, controlling invasive species, fire management demonstrations, constructing stone lines, strengthening grazing associations, placing truncheons to stabilize river banks, constructing silt trap structures such as loose rocks and gabions, digging infiltration pits (swales) and practising conservation agriculture.

58. There were some challenges that arose notwithstanding the project's ability to produce under each of its outputs: Output 3.1.1 "Adaptive land use and SLM/W practices implemented in at least 24 communities in three livelihood zones"; Output 3.1.2 "Improved water harvesting structures at the household level implemented in three livelihood zones; and Output 3.1.3 "Improved plant cover and range resource management measures adopted in 24 communities to improve productive use of marginal lands".

59. There were reports that, in some areas in Quthing *Leboella,* grazing areas were not well-respected by all members of the community; some men grazed their animals at night, which resulted in poorer plant cover recovery than expected. To address this problem, the local chief and councillor intervened and held community meetings. The grazing committees played a major role in reinforcing the importance of communal work. Thaba Tseka district established three grazing associations, which set an example in terms of managing improved rangelands and imposing fines for defaulters, thus stopping illegal practices. Based on the consultations, this is a good example of how a community-based challenge was addressed and managed through the cooperation and collaboration of various stakeholders, each reinforcing its role in communal management, and enforcing shared environmental and social norms.

60. Local beneficiaries showed some reluctance to work on communal assets without cash incentives, and the provision of lunch was not always considered adequate compensation. According to interviews, this was appeased to some extent by leveraging influence through the grazing committees, demonstrating restoration successes, and providing cash-for-work for brush removal. However, it raised the concern that people are more likely to engage in activities on their own land for their own benefit than on communal lands, which has issues for sustainability (see the section on *Sustainability*). Farmer exchanges and field visits, and constant positive pressure from the district-level teams mitigated against this. However, ultimately, people were compensated for activities such as land rehabilitation works, which involved collecting stones, constructing gabion construction, stone lines and silt traps, stabilizing gullies, digging swales to protect communal assets, such as graveyards, fields and wetlands.

61. The request for compensation began two years into the project, when, reportedly, people faced pressing economic hardships linked to food insecurity, unemployment and lack of income. The

Government of Lesotho was paying individuals to carry out similar work under the Public Works' Poverty Reduction Programme, which added pressure.

62. There were also reports that the Quthing water tank was not functional due to piping issues; at the time of writing, it was repaired through project resources. This does raise questions as to who will bear these costs once the project has ended. According to project reports, the remaining water harvesting tools are functional despite some wear and tear, or vandalism.

63. The indicator for Outcome 3 "Percent target groups adopting adaptation technologies by type", was appropriate to measure impacts at the outcome level and was in line with the Adaptation Monitoring and Assessment Tool (AMAT) tracking tools used by the GEF.

64. Outcome 4.1 "Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households", was widely viewed as successful. Under *Output 4.1.1 "Community participation ensured in 24 community groups in selected watersheds of three livelihood zones and introductory sessions conducted and small-scale household level income-generating and food and nutrition activities (e.g. horticulture, small ruminants, beekeeping) introduced to 750 households"*, several activities were both documented and reported on through interviews. In particular, there were reports of supporting farmers through crop production, which was enhanced through the dissemination of shade nets introduced by the project. Shade nets were an adaptive tool put forth by the project allowing crops to be managed year-round, irrespective of season. They were especially promoted among smallholders and larger producers (not at a subsistence level) for greater uptake and were taken on successfully.

65. Crop production was also encouraged by the construction of keyhole gardens adjacent to households, in particular to increase food security and allow those who lacked access to large parcels of land to still grow some crops for household use. According to project documentation, 1 374 households were targeted to be provided with vegetable seed packages and shade nets for keyhole gardens, and seeds for trench and communal gardens (FAO, 2019d). However, during the site visits, a realistic assessment would be that only 70 percent out of the 1 374 households received the shade nets. The project supplied and demonstrated how to increase production of high-value cash crops such as mushroom spawns and garlic cloves in Quthing and Mafeteng (FAO, 2019d). Various horticultural practices were used in tandem: black plastic mulch was used to conserve moisture and inhibit weed growth and the planting of fruit trees and agroforestry was promoted. According to project documentation, 11 650 temperate fruit tree seedlings comprising ten species were purchased and planted in targeted households, together with communal gardens and a 5 ha commercial apple orchard.

66. The project also demonstrated support for short-cycle (intensive) livestock such as pigs, poultry and rabbits. Through interviews with beneficiaries, it was revealed that these greatly assisted with peoples' livelihoods. Rabbit production, for instance, increased dramatically in Quthing, where initially only one farmer was engaged with rabbit rearing; now there are many more. Rabbit rearing was deemed successful due to its good reproductive rate, the market price of rabbits, and its nutritious meat, and fur.

67. In Mafeteng district, beneficiaries reported that they were given a pregnant pig, which allowed them to raise piglets (documents noted that four pregnant sows were delivered to Mafeteng and Quthing; site consultations noted that piglets would be passed on to other beneficiaries). Poultry stakeholders highlighted that they were not only able to raise chickens and increase egg production (the ProDoc reveals that over 2 200 Boschveld chickens were supplied) (FAO, 2019d).

However, it was reported that in 2019, the chickens had a high mortality rate due to a lack of vaccination. It was also observed that individually owned chickens performed much better than community-owned chickens.

68. There are accounts that chickens were distributed along with training. Beneficiaries had to meet conditions to receive them, such as building appropriate shelter/coops for chickens and ensuring absorptive capacity of investments.

69. While beneficiaries expressed general satisfaction with the livestock inputs, one question that remains for the evaluation team is how livestock enhanced adaptive capacity. There are documented accounts that livestock were supplied together with training on improved water harvesting, grazing and cultivation techniques (e.g. the sustainable whole-of-farm approach). Project staff also highlighted that small livestock reduced pressure on degraded rangelands, require fewer inputs, and provided quick cash returns. However, it would be useful if a stronger rationale were provided in the project documentation as to how the project supplying these livestock *increased* adaptive capacity and decreased pressures compared to other livestock. The benefits to livelihoods is apparent. The evaluation team believes that diversifying livelihoods supported adaptive capacity leading to more diverse sources of income when negatively impacted by climate change. However, for the future, it may be useful to highlight the relationship between investment in livestock and resulting adaptive capacity, because this is not apparent. This is especially the case regarding chickens where there was a high mortality rate, and the contribution to adaptive capacity is not clear.

70. The distribution of livestock created conflicts between the local community members who received them and those who did not. In addition, there were procurement delays, and at times, district-level workplans were not fully funded (see the *Efficiency* section), this added more stress at the local level. How these conflicts were prevented or mitigated is unclear, but it would be very useful to capture.

71. Under Output 4.1.1, there is anecdotal and documentary evidence that community participation was promoted. There were two key success stories in the development of community groups, espousing principles initially promoted by the project, the development of grazing associations[13] and the development of savings and internal lending communities (SILCs).

72. According to project reports, 36 SILCs were supported by the project; the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provided partnership and assistance in delivering this activity. The project supported 597 participants (448 female and 149 male) in 36 groups, with an average of 17 people each (Catholic Relief Services, n.d.). The project produced a highly comprehensive report on the activities of the groups, with lessons learned that can be used beyond the project duration, as follows:

    i. Financial institutions have showed interest in meeting their needs by saving their money with SILCs. For example, Standard Lesotho Bank, Lesotho Post Bank and Vodacom Lesotho developed products that are tailor-made for SILCs without management fees, which they promoted during graduation ceremonies conducted in project training.

[13] The membership fee is LSL 50, and the monthly fee for each member is LSL 10. The association buys vegetables and paraffin to sell, thus increasing their funds. This is complemented by imposing penalties for members who arrive late at meetings.

ii. SILC was a successful endeavour for all participants. As the SILCs mature, members usually contribute the maximum levels to get the highest payout in the next cycle(s). This is evident with two graduated groups that increased their contributions in cycle two.

iii. SILC gained popularity and greater exposure among local communities after the graduation events that took place in the three districts. These events were also extensively covered on Lesotho television and radio, giving them more exposure.

iv. Historically, SILCs appealed to greater numbers of women than men, as evidenced by the gender breakdown of total participants. However, as SILCs evolved, and members begin to reap the benefits, men began to show greater interest (Catholic Relief Services, n.d.).

73. The evaluation team learned that 18 nutrition clubs were established, which engaged in training on food preservation techniques and on how to use mud stoves (FAO, 2019d). During site visits, the Thaba Tseka communities reported that malnutrition among children under five years old was beginning to show signs of improvement. Beneficiaries showed appreciation for the nutrition clubs and mud stoves. The clubs helped members support each other in preserving food during harvest time, when there was plenty, for future use when there will be short supply. Mud stoves were praised for saving fuel and for ease of construction and maintenance; however, not many were constructed. This again raises the question of who received the mud stoves and who did not, and the social repercussions, and how those decisions were made remain unclear.

74. Nutrition clubs may be sustained beyond the project since the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has agreed to take on this work under their Nutrition Department. Similarly, the grazing associations and the SILCs were part of processes that will help them become independent of the project. The SILCs, for instance, have a 'graduation' process following a series of training sessions, and with the involvement of the private sector, they are likely to survive beyond the project duration (see the section on sustainability).

75. Under Output 4.1.2 "Field demonstration of locally relevant multi-purpose agro-forestry to protect and improve livelihood systems conducted in 24 locations and adopted by the stakeholders covering 375 hectares", project documentation reveals that training was conducted on the following topics:

i. multi-purpose agro-forestry systems (fodder trees and grasses);

ii. how to establish keyhole gardens;

iii. how to establish protective hedges and live fences around homesteads;

iv. planting of windbreaks (*Populus simonii* trees were planted in three communities in Mafeteng project sites at the communal and household levels to protect communally owned orchards);

v. stabilizing riverbanks through restoration work; and

vi. SLM/W.

76. One of the key gains under this outcome was the use of shade nets, mentioned above, to have year-round cultivation. It was noted that this occurred for the first time in some of the pilot areas (FAO, n.d). These shade nets also protected crops from the elements with good adoption rates. Challenges were identified in finding the fruit trees that were suitable to the climate of Lesotho.

77. Although there are some quantitative data available on increased access to funds (report on SILCs, Assessment of Project Achievements), in general, there were not sufficient quantitative data on how much project beneficiaries' income had increased. Although one of the indicators is "percent

increase per capita income of farm households due to adaptation measures applied, additional information needs to be collected", data were insufficient on how much project beneficiaries' income had increased, however, there were some quantitative data available on increased access to funds (report on SILCs, Assessment of Project Achievements).

78. Under Outcome 5.1 "Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household-level income-generating practices through wide dissemination", there is one output, Output 5.1.1 "A communication strategy established in close collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship and NUL, and implemented". Under this outcome and output, the evaluation team found evidence of a well-developed communications strategy triggered by the recommendations of the MTR in 2018, which demonstrates a responsiveness action as result of the MTR.

79. While the communications strategy provides a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, much of its messaging is general and concerns the outlook of the project and not so much its content. It provides a monitoring and evaluation framework according to which particular stakeholders should be contacted. The project team reports finding it useful, but it is unclear to what degree this communications strategy was adhered to (see the section on knowledge management). The communications officer responsible for managing the plan left, which created a void in this area.

80. Based on consultations, the most effective means of communications were district-level meetings and quarterly Project Steering Committee meetings.

81. Based on interviews, communications were not completely satisfactory to all stakeholders. While aspects of the project, particularly those focused on livelihoods, were mainstreamed within communities, there were conflicting opinions on whether local communities deepened their understanding of climate change beyond their livelihood or community restoration activities—this was not a unanimous view but was expressed several times, and hence noted. While this is anecdotal, it should be verified through a closing survey at the end of the project to see whether local understanding of climate change has increased significantly, and if so, in what ways. The evaluation team received feedback that the following areas still require communication efforts:

i. climate change trends;

ii. locally relevant climate change shocks and extreme events (hail, strong winds, heavy rains and flash floods, recurrent droughts, snow, heat waves);

iii. community-based disaster preparedness plan;

iv. climate information and weather forecasts for informed decision-making, especially on seasonal agricultural activities.

82. There was also no repository for the project documentation that was used by various stakeholders. Since the project produced various reports and surveys, and some information was submitted as datasets under Outcome 2, it may be useful to establish a central repository at the end of the project for use by other stakeholders, especially working in the sectors. Although individual ministries may be provided with reports, especially through Project Steering Committee members, it may be useful to have a central space where all project stakeholders can access this information.

83. In terms of Outcome 5.2 "Project implementation based on results-based management and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned for future operations", the project did produce the appropriate reports (PIRs, PPRs and biannual reports), and the report on the AMAT tool (see

the section on monitoring and evaluation). There were also documentary accounts that the project disseminated information through FAO press releases, the FAO website and print media. There was some radio/television coverage and forums that covered line ministries. There were also farmer exchanges, participation in the Climate Change Coordinating Committee. It is unclear to what extent they were conducted according to the communications strategy, or whether these were conducted ad hoc.

84. Despite all the achievements under the project, there were challenges. For instance, the evaluation team was made aware that there were some challenges in implementing the plan to produce fodder for livestock and reduce pressure on vegetation because multi-fodder trees suitable to the growing conditions in Lesotho were not available. The project did demonstrate some adaptive management and sought to support the production of fodder crops (grazing vetch, lucerne, teff, barley, *Eragrostis curvula*, and sorghum fodder).

85. The project also faced extreme weather conditions. Project beneficiaries were affected by erratic weather conditions between October 2018 and February 2019 and a drought (less than 55–80 percent of cumulative rainfall). This posed significant threats to agriculture, natural resources at large, and access to water. The Mafeteng and Thaba-Tseka areas were under water stress, and Quthing was identified as being in crisis (FAO, 2019a). The project demonstrated adaptive management and shifted to focusing on water harvesting to mitigate aspects of the drought, supporting community needs and responding to the MTR. What could have been an obstacle to the project ended up being a supportive element.

86. The project had to manage some conflicts. In Linakeng, Thaba Tseka district, a chief who had initially agreed to allocating a parcel of communal land to be developed for orchards suddenly refused access to local villagers. The issue was handled by the district administrators, and ultimately the orchard was not developed in that area; local beneficiaries and the chief later saw the benefits from neighbouring villages, and wanted to participate, but the implementation was too far advanced.

87. There were also significant procurement delays, which limited certain activities such as beekeeping (see the section on efficiency), or caused the loss of a planting season. Beekeeping was perceived as successful in Quthing, while in Mafeteng, there were challenges such as bees absconding, dying and being eaten by lizards.

88. Given that the project significantly diversified peoples' livelihoods, due to a lack of baseline information at inception, it may not adequately capture the level of success or change in people's circumstances.

89. Based on the analysis of the various outcomes, outputs and indicators, one of the enabling factors of the effectiveness of the project was that following the recommendations of the MTR, it was able to focus and address the pressing needs of communities. The relevance of the project allowed it to maintain a level of credibility, despite procurement delays or implementation challenges. Since many of the sustainable land management (SLM) and adaptive practices were built into livelihood initiatives, there was a certain level of incentivization built into the activities. This was reinforced by a district management team that was strongly active (see the section on efficiency) and that maintained ongoing pressure and facilitated initiatives. As noted in the communications strategy, according to chiefs, community meetings are not well attended unless they included discussions on employment or donations. By making livelihoods central to the project, there was greater interest and participation.

EQ 7. To what extent was the topic included in public policies and strategies of the responsible institutions?

90. While the relevance of the project is noted, it is unclear what public policies emerged as a result of the project. Part of the reason is that the project taps into core issues that are already central to the Government (see the section on relevance). What has increased is inter-ministerial collaboration, both at the district level and at the Project Steering Committee level. As noted in the sustainability section, the following aspects demonstrate that the project was included in other programmatic initiatives:

    i. In all three project sites, the DTTs indicated willingness to continue supporting the project outputs in their areas of expertise even beyond project funding. The assumption is that these activities will be budgeted for by their respective departments and ministries because they are already included in their annual workplans.

    ii. Due to the great success in the rehabilitation of the wetlands, the Minister from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Minister from Water Affairs visited the sites and appeared in the media highlighting that the approach for rehabilitation would be replicated in other areas. The Mafeteng wetland site is now referred to as a center for excellence for wetlands rehabilitation, according to interviews.

    iii. The newly established grazing associations have been linked with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) for further nurturing and support. WAMPP is working with grazing associations countrywide to improve rangelands (see Appendix 5 for summary of achievements under each outcome).

91. The evaluation team rates the criterion of effectiveness as satisfactory.

3.3 Efficiency

EQ 8. To what extent has FAO fulfilled its role as an implementing agency with regard to identifying the project, preparing the concept note, forecasting of expenditures, preparation, approval and launch, monitoring and supervision?

EQ 10. To what extent has FAO fulfilled its executing role with regard to cost-efficiency?

EQ 11. Has management been able to adapt to the changing conditions to guarantee project efficiency?

Finding 8. The stakeholders considered the project team efficient. The decentralized units and technical teams were an efficient means to roll out project activities that were responsive to local needs and challenges, improved coordination among local level stakeholders, and supported a learning-by-doing approach.

Finding 9. The project was aware of salary concerns and responded accordingly to avoid further staff turnover.

92. The project management team was considered efficient by all those interviewed. It was recognized that the decentralized approach of the DTTs was particularly beneficial for project implementation. The fact that team members were working in the districts where the project was implemented allowed them to be in touch with the direct needs and challenges in the communities. This also allowed for the project team to maintain a continuous follow-up on ongoing activities, especially in cases where benefits were not immediately apparent, e.g. restoration work. The DTTs included the district coordinator, two community mobilizers and about 20 members from different ministries. Over the project duration, some participation of other ministries decreased. For example, in Thaba Tseka district, they were initially 26 and at the time of

writing this report, 15 active members. The main reason, as confirmed during site visits, was high staff turnover due to transfers, death of some members, retirement and resignations.

93. The decentralized work also allowed the project team to enhance coordination among district-level government partners and authorities and allowed for a learning-by-doing approach. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, for example, worked hand in hand with the project team and was both a beneficiary of and participant in the delivery of training and capacity-building interventions. This in turn enhances the capacity of government institutions and authorities to potentially replicate and sustain successful initiatives.

94. In terms of process, budgets were initially formulated at the district level by DTTs. These budget recommendations were then made to the project team in Maseru, and the NPC and the project advisor revised the budget for submission to FAO and GEF. At times, it was unclear to the DTTs why some of their budget requests, which were based on district-level workplans, were not met. It is understood that in some cases, the budgets were devised taking into account the whole of the project, and that strategic decision-making was taking place. However, at the district level, this was not always clear to the technical teams as to why some of their recommendations, which were based on a costed work-planning exercise, were not acted on. In future projects, it is recommended that there be more of an iterative relationship in budget formulation, and that once the final annual budget is developed, it would be broken down to the decentralized levels.

95. There was a project risk when the initial project advisor left the post to take on responsibilities with the World Bank; however, it was noted that the incoming project advisor who commenced work in February 2018 was competent and took on responsibilities quickly. There were consequently no observed project delays. It was also noted that the NPC remained the same, and exercised consistency and competency, which helped keep the project on track.

96. Stakeholders outside of the project team cited a lack of clarity on the different roles and responsibilities of the project adviser vis-à-vis the NPC. It was unclear to those outside of the project team what the decision-making chain was. It was also noted that there was a resource differential in the two positions. The NPC was financed from the Government as co-financing and was resourced with a lower salary than that of the project advisor, who was financed from FAO. The NPC also had other responsibilities within the Government in addition to his own tasks. While this did not cause any visible project delays, it was suggested that it would be useful for the NPC to be exclusively dedicated to the project, since other responsibilities took time away from the project.

Finding 10. The salary differentials between those financed by FAO and by the national government co-financing can lead to equity-related perceptions.

97. The issue of salary differentials between FAO-funded project staff and government-funded staff is worth noting in the terminal evaluation. Although this cannot be fully resolved when government co-financing is concerned, for the purposes of equity it would be useful to ensure that similar work be compensated similarly in future projects, both from FAO and the Government. Two possible ways of addressing this issue are: i) when co-financing is leveraged during project preparation (PPG), a higher amount would be committed to staff salary; and ii) using co-financing for more short-term consultancies so that the project staff do not have significant financial differentials among them. While this issue did not cause any notable inefficiencies, it was observed and should be taken into consideration in future projects, and to address perceptions of equity. Despite the salary differentials, it was noted that it was greatly beneficial for the NPC to be working in the government offices in order to sustain the project results, maintain country ownership, and

retain project-based learning. In the future, it may be useful to continue staffing an NPC from the Government, but with exclusively project-related tasks given the workload the project involves.

98. The issue of project staff compensation and salaries did arise. It was noted that the former Project Advisor left this project for a better-resourced and longer-term position with the World Bank. There was some other staff turnover (communications officer), but the project responded to this issue by increasing staff salaries.

Finding 11. FAO fulfilled its executing role, but procurement delays increased project inefficiencies, resulting in delays, the demoralization of staff and stakeholders, and missed opportunities, such as optimizing on planting seasons.

99. This project was designed as a continuation of a TCP. As such, there were efficiencies built into this project, since the mandate and objectives were clarified through the implementation of the previous project. This allowed this project to be rolled out in a straightforward manner; since FAO was not a new partner, the expectations and value added were clear from the onset from shared experience.

100. FAO was both the executing and implementing partner. Based on interviews, there was the overall feeling that the FAO country office did a good job of supporting project implementation, kept the project on track, and provided mentoring, coaching and oversight. There were, however, changes in the FAO representation, people going on leave or responsible for too many projects, as well as a perceived lack of consistency. This was exacerbated in the final stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented personnel from the FAO representation to visit project sites.

101. There was a difference of opinion among interviewees regarding whether this was an FAO project or a 'national project' - half the people interviewed from the Government expressed some concern that while it was a government project, it was often perceived as being an FAO project in the project sites. This did not affect the efficiency of the project, but may be useful to note in terms of perception and to sustain and mainstream a sense of ownership and uptake of future projects within the involved ministries. It was noted that it was useful that the NPC was a government employee for the purpose of knowledge retention. When examining this point in light of the aforementioned comment on the burden of having other government responsibilities, one possible solution would be to second a government staff member exclusively to project activities. This would allow knowledge retention within government institutions and ensure that other government responsibilities would not be added to the NPC's workload.

102. The main challenge related to FAO regarding project efficiency was due to procurement delays. The procurement challenges were well-captured in the MTR. The issue with procurement was three-fold:

i. There was no clear knowledge/training on procurement guidelines at project initiation. FAO procurement policies are complex and different from those of the Government and take into account international suppliers. A lack of training of project staff at inception can cause additional delays to the procurement. In addition to providing timely training to project management, it is also necessary to see whether the procurement processes could be adjusted to accommodate for often short project periods (4–5 years), especially when supply is often linked to seasonal activities; due to delays, activities would have to be put off for a year (e.g. related to agriculture, the planting season).

ii. Procurement delays caused project delays. This led to the demoralization of beneficiaries and partners, and at times a lack of confidence in the project at the local level. However, strong results countered some of these reactions.

iii. The procurement guidelines have at times prioritized international vendors who provided products that were not perceived as suitable to the needs of the project. For example, beehives were procured in Kenya and held up due to procurement protocols; they could have been procured locally.

Finding 12. The Project Steering Committee was highly engaged in the implementation of the project and supported its efficiency. Having cross-government, director-level participation, quarterly meetings and field visits led to an engaged Project Steering Committee.

103. Another aspect that contributed to efficiency was the engagement of the national Project Steering Committee. The Project Steering Committee was strongly involved in project oversight according to the commendations in the MTR. It increased the frequency of its meetings to quarterly in order to increase engagement in project activities and took part in regular site visits. This level of engagement was reported on very positively. One of the aspects that contributed to an engaged Project Steering Committee that went beyond rubber stamping the project to more programmatic engagement was due to the level and position of its members. Most Project Steering Committee members had a sufficiently senior position in their own institutions to be able to mobilize their own programmatic activities and ensure alignment of the project.

104. The other aspect that ensured an efficient Project Steering Committee was its representation across government. It was noted that many of the government ministries often work in silos, but the Project Steering Committee allowed many of these entities to work collaboratively. The institutions represented on the Project Steering Committee included:

i. the Department of Agricultural Research;

ii. the Department of Agriculture and Food Security;

iii. the Department of Water Services;

iv. the Department of Soil and Water Conservation;

v. the Department of Forestry, Range Management and Soil Conservation;

vi. the DMA;

vii. Lesotho Meteorological Services; and

viii. the Department of Field Services.

105. There was one representative from a civil society organization –the Lesotho Council of NGOs – on the Project Steering Committee. However, he passed away in 2019, and it is unclear whether there was any subsequent civil society organization representation.

106. Two persons on the Project Steering Committee complained that there were not enough resources in the project for more frequent travel by members to the project sites. This, however, did not cause any inefficiencies in oversight or management due to the ongoing engagement of Project Steering Committee members. It does, however, point to a peripheral issue that did at times affect the participation of community members or other government partners: in Lesotho, some other international development players, in particular development banks, have compensated people for participation. This terminal evaluation does not recommend that FAO do the same—the activities and their value-added should be incentive enough for participation. However, the terminal evaluation does make a note of this factor since it may influence peoples' levels of participation. Other than a few complaints that FAO only compensated with meals, there was no significant impact on efficiency of the Project Steering Committee. As mentioned in the effectiveness section, this did arise when conducting work on communal lands at the local level, and the project team had to find ways to engage.

107. To maintain this type of participation of Project Steering Committee members and the ministries taking on some of the programmatic components of the project, some minor funds must be allocated to facilitate some aspects of site visits. These costs are not evident in the original design documents.

108. Another issue that emerged causing delays was the withdrawal of academia from the project activities. NUL was to have provided improved risk reduction and proven adaptation practices to the project. The collaboration did not continue because the person assigned by NUL to the project as a member of the Project Steering Committee was ineffective and was not replaced. The person was also engaged in consultancies with the project and the performance, according to some anecdotal accounts, was not optimal, which resulted in poor relations between the two.

EQ 9. How well have the risks been identified and managed?

Finding 13. The project adjusted its risk register after the MTR; the risk identification and risk mitigation strategy was not complete.

109. The risk table provided in the ProDoc was limited. It did capture some of the key risks to the project, such as: institutional conflicts over ownership of the project, the highly fragile environment for intensifying crop and livestock production; conflicts in the management of communally owned resources, sustainability/institutionalization of technical assistance related to database development and management and capacity development activities. However, some risks were overlooked. This was noted in the MTR, which suggests the inclusion of the risks and mitigation strategies for consideration in Table 3.

110. Overall, the risks identified in the ProDoc were all appropriate but not comprehensive. For instance, the risks, "Sustainability/institutionalization of technical assistance related to database development and management, and capacity development activities", should have had a more detailed mitigation strategy than the one described below:

> The concerned ministries and institutions were consulted, and a thorough assessment was done to identify the host institution for data collection and management especially related to the land use and vulnerability and risk assessment. The capacity development activities under Component 1 and 2 are designed based on the needs assessment, and participants will be identified in close consultation with the respective ministries. The training resources will be integrated into the regular training activities.

111. One of the shortcomings related to both the risk and the mitigation strategy is the lack of capacity of the Lesotho Meteorological Services, and on the impact that this gap would have on project results (the impact is explored more fully under the effectiveness section).

112. Overall, the evaluation considers the risks identified in the MTR to be very useful and applicable (Table 3).

Table 3. Risks identified in the mid-term review

Risk	Mid-term review status assessment
Financial risks to sustainability	
Likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends.	The risk is low, considering that the Government of Lesotho is already funding the Integrated Watershed Management Programme, which supports the afforestation and rehabilitation of existing forest resources, rehabilitation and construction of water conservation infrastructures, protection of wetlands, and reseeding of degraded rangelands.
Socio-economic risks to sustainability	
Social or political risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes. Insufficiency of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by the Government of Lesotho and other key stakeholders) to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained. Insufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives.	This risk is high and relevant. Due to a change in government or priorities, natural resources conservation is considered of little importance. In terms of social risk jeopardizing sustainability, this is unlikely to occur provided that there are tangible socio-economic benefits accruing to the communities. Various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow, hence project activities are integrated into regular mandates. As such, the risk is mitigated by this factor. Public awareness is one of the most significant and strategic achievements of the project to date. This awareness, therefore, is sufficient for the public/stakeholders to support the long-term objectives. As indicated earlier, lessons are being documented through quarterly, reports, PIRs, scientific publications and online dissemination. Such means of sharing lessons ensures that appropriate parties learn from the project and they can potentially replicate and/or scale it up in the future.
Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability	
Legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes posing risks that may jeopardize the sustenance of project benefits.	The presence of various national development goals, plans, policies, governance structures and processes enhance sustenance of project benefits as long as the sustainability concerns raised in this MTR are addressed. Domestic development priorities outlined in the National Vision 2020 (2001–03), the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS, 2003), the Agriculture Sector Strategy of 2003, the Food Security Policy of 2005, the National Action Plan for Food Security (NAPFS, 2006) and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP 2012–2017). Such instruments include international conventions to which Lesotho is a party (e.g. the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification [UNCCD]).
Environmental risks to sustainability	
Environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes	During field visits, feedback from beneficiaries to the evaluation team indicated that water shortage, hailstorm and frost were mentioned as challenges to impacting crop production. They may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes. Other issues raised included the potential for increase in invasive species occurrence in rangeland areas. According to a research report in 2016, Lesotho is experiencing rangeland degradation manifested by invasive plants including *Chrysochoma ciliata*, *Seriphium plumosum*, *Helichrysum splendidum*, *Felicia filifolia* and *Relhania dieterlenii* (Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, 2016). It is believed that this threatens the country's wool and mohair enterprise, and it is suggested that this could be mitigated through the distribution of lambs that graze on some invasive species.

113. In response to these recommendations in the MTR, new risks were added by the project management team, such as:

i. lack of gender-sensitive interventions and replicable approaches; and

ii. the nature of adaptive SLM/W and diversified livelihood strategies and/or interventions are not relevant to location and are not responsive to communities' felt needs.

114. In addition to the risks identified in the MTR and those added by the project management team, the evaluators felt that the following should have been considered given the types of activities undertaken by the project:

i. **Process delays.** Given that FAO procurement processes and their interpretation caused unnecessary delays, there should be some risk mitigation strategy on how process delays would be managed. These process risks could cover risks such as purchasing chickens with high mortality because they were not vaccinated, which the project had to face.

ii. **Political changes and instability.** The Ministers changed three times during project implementation, and ongoing briefing was required to keep them abreast and solicit their buy in. While this created demands on the NPC working in the government offices, the risk was managed by engaging civil servants who were directly responsible for the implementation, who have both programmatic responsibilities and mandates. The work was thus able to continue despite ongoing political flux; however, it would be useful to identify this challenge in the risk register.

iii. **Government infrastructure/environmental assessment risks.** The project had to rely on government processes to build ground/earth dams and on their environmental assessment processes and procedures. During the implementation, adequate funding was not provided in co-financing, and the project had to supplement costs for fuel and maintenance. This interdependency on government institutions and potential delays or impacts should have been captured in mitigation strategies.

iv. **Physical/public work risks**. Could the construction of dams, or other project-related activities cause any harm to beneficiaries or risks to project activities? This consideration was missing both from a safeguards perspective and from a risk perspective. It was identified that one of the pre-existing dams in one of the project sites (see the section on safeguards) had caused a risk; since the project was using the same government vehicles, this risk should have been better noted.

115. Finally, no one could have foreseen the risk of a global pandemic, which caused project delays and limited travel and consultations to some extent. Nevertheless, this possibility should be covered adequately in project reports, which should also highlight what mitigating activities took place.

116. There were two budget revisions during implementation. It emerges from the budget revision documents that the project team took strategic decisions to address both procurement challenges and the community-level need/demand for compensation for project-related labour. The budget revision notes:

117. Component 3 of this project carries the biggest budget, and the largest proportion of that budget was for expandable procurement. Major activities under this component are around land rehabilitation works and other natural resources management initiatives. As project implementation progressed, project stakeholders agreed that a participatory public works programme would be a better vehicle to deliver the expected outputs. This required moving the budget from expandable procurement to locally contracted labour, which facilitated the engagement of casual labour for initiatives such as removal of invader plants, construction of conservation and water harvesting structures.

118. There is anecdotal evidence that this action supported the engagement of local communities and promoted a learning-by-doing approach. However, it also decreased the budget allocated for the procurement of inputs. The budget documents reflect this, showing a decrease in procurement in the latter years (a decrease of USD 657 370 in procurement – expandable procurement, USD 611 407, and non-expandable procurement, USD 45 962) to proportionate increases in training, local contracted labour, travel costs and general operating expenses.

119. The cost increase in general operating expenses, noted transparently in the budget revision, amounted to USD 124 016. It was stated that this was partly due to government partners not assuming vehicle costs for project oversight. This raises some questions of sustainability in the future. If the cost of driving to the sites cannot be borne by government partners, what evidence is there that they will do so in the future? This also hearkens to the point raised by the Project Steering Committee about needing resources for travel; in the future, these resources should be included in project design under M&E costs since co-financing fell through. There also needs to be a follow-up discussion with government partners on these costs as part of co-financing. If there is to be country ownership of projects, then the commitment from the Government to cover the cost of site visits, among other expenses, must be confirmed (see the section on co-financing).

120. The project is currently undergoing a financial audit.

121. The evaluation team rated the efficiency criterion as moderately satisfactory.

122. It also rated the overall quality of project implementation and adaptive management (implementing agency) as satisfactory.

123. The evaluation team rated efficiency (including cost-effectiveness and timeliness) as moderately satisfactory.

3.4 Sustainability

EQ 12. Is there any evidence of integrated watershed management, or any change in the political, legislative and/or regulatory frameworks?

EQ 13. To what extent can the progress made towards the long-term be attributed to the project?

EQ 14. To what extent has the project supported financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental improvements to sustain long-term project results?

Finding 14. The knowledge of and experience with participatory approaches created among a variety of stakeholders have contributed to increased knowledge for effective SLM/W, which is a basis for future sustainability.

Finding 15. The working relationships between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation have improved as a result of the project, and some project outputs have already found institutional embedding within these government ministries.

124. Political sustainability. The project was implemented by three different administrations, which posed a risk related to political sustainability. As a result, many different people worked on the project, who had different mandates, political interests and priorities. Also, some partners were passionate about the project, while others were passive. Notwithstanding uncertain political sustainability, the nature of the outputs is such that they can be utilized by different government entities and meet overarching needs (see the section on relevance). There are already indications that some of the outputs from the project will be integrated into various government programmes

of work, which promises a degree of political sustainability beyond project duration. This is evidenced by the fact that these outputs are already included in the plans of these departments, as follows:

i. In all three project sites, the DTTs indicated willingness to continue supporting the project outputs in their areas of expertise even beyond project funding. The assumption is that these activities will be budgeted for by their respective departments and ministries because they are already included in their annual workplans.

ii. The rehabilitation of wetlands was so successful that the Minister from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Minister from the Ministry of Water Affairs, visited the sites, appeared in the media highlighting that the approach for rehabilitation would be replicated in other areas. The Mafeteng wetland site is now used as a center for excellence for wetlands rehabilitation, according to interviews. During this media event, the project supported and recognized champions of conservation, who will be awarded at the project closing ceremony.

iii. The newly established grazing associations have been linked with the IFAD-funded WAMPP for further nurturing and support. WAMPP is working with grazing associations countrywide to improve rangelands.

iv. Nutrition clubs will be adopted by the Nutrition Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

125. **Economic sustainability.** The project was not able to leverage the kind of funds anticipated in the design phase. There was no clear financial engagement/commitment from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation. The co-financing was limited to payments in kind only; the cash contribution was never provided by the Government to the project. However, some activities such as support to the grazing associations is likely to be supported by WAMPP. Other activities that are geared towards marketing such as protected vegetable production and beekeeping may be funded by the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP) through their Competitive Grants Programme (CGP). Given that the Government faced challenges in raising funds and carrying out site visits, etc., it is likely that financing of follow-up activities by the Government could be problematic, without external project support. In the short to medium term, the interest by WAMPP and SADP in follow-up activities suggests that some may be supported in the long term.

126. **Social aspects contributing to sustainability.** All government staff spoke highly of the participatory nature of the project. The project was innovative in bringing diverse stakeholders (governmental agencies, some NGOs such as the CRS, the Lesotho Red Cross, World Vision, Growing Nations, local communities) together and allowing them to exchange experiences. The DTTs comprised members who are experts in the field and resource centre personnel from different Ministries and Departments. The evaluation team found that the team played an important role in planning, implementing and supervising in its areas of expertise. However, there are indications that there is greater commitment from those who continued until the end of the project timeframe. Moreover, the project activities at the district level, such as the community clubs and associations, allowed people provided an opportunity for the beneficiaries to meet and interact, although some of the participation in these forums decreased by time; this was anecdotally due to transfers, deaths, retirements, resignations and lack of incentives when compared to other projects such as the IFAD-funded SADP. The main disadvantage is that, due to their absence, their technical expertise will not be available to support project implementation.

127. To ensure sustainability, the project trained technical staff from the different government agencies (Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Energy and Meteorology, the Department of Crops, the Department of Livestock, Lesotho Meteorological Services, the Department of Rural Water Supply, the Department of Water Affairs, the Department of Agricultural Research and the DMA), to play a leading role in project implementation through the DTTs. The training and deployment of these partners at the local level indicates that these partners were involved in the delivery of project activities, providing opportunity for learning by doing, which suggests greater ownership and sustainability of capacities developed.

128. Another social aspect that may contribute to sustainability is that the project has increased public awareness about conservation and good range management practices, as observed during site visits. This resulted in reduced wildfires, reduced hunting and an increase in biodiversity, especially the availability of medicinal plants that were almost extinct from the rangelands (FAO, n.d.). Site visits in Thaba Tseka and Quthing districts revealed the re-emergence of traditional and medicinal plants such as wild carrots and gladiolus. There were anecdotal and documentary accounts that activities under Outcome 3.1 led to the return of biodiversity that had been disappearing, including but not limited to insects, birds, hares, antelopes, snakes and porcupines.

129. Since rangelands are a commonly used resource, greater pressure will be required for their proper management, and their sustainability will depend on the engagement of the district authorities. The general pride in the recovery of some rangelands and biodiversity may, however, contribute to social sustainability.

130. Grazing associations and grazing committees have been established to oversee the management of rangelands by the users. The project worked with seven grazing associations, but only the three that were formed with the support of the project were functional, whereas the four that existed previously were non-functional and no longer met to discuss related to their association. Since rangelands are free resources in Lesotho, membership in grazing associations is open to all community members. Grazing associations have a management committee responsible for running their affairs. They are usually registered and are legal entities. The members of the association are responsible for ensuring compliance with the set rules and regulations, including respecting the preserved areas (*Leboella*) for future use. The grazing associations are responsible for the management and governance of the rangelands. The associations have the rules and regulations endorsed by the principal chiefs that govern them. Prior to this project, the committees were predominantly formed by men, but now, there is increased female representation due to the capacity building provided to both men and women. Similarly, the nutrition clubs that are greatly appreciated at the local level fulfilled a practical and social need.

131. Livelihood outputs related to individual beneficiaries have better chances of being sustainable. In all FDGs, the beneficiaries reported different benefits of the livelihood strategies promoted by the project as well as their willingness to continue implementing them with the support of the local extension agents. A total of 459 beneficiaries (180 men, 279 women) reported their willingness to continue with the strategies promoted by the project, utilizing the support of extension agents.

132. To further ensure the sustainability of the SILCs, FAO with support from the CRS trained independent SILC field agents. Their role is to establish new groups and to provide guidance to existing groups and with the cost of future SILCs not borne by the project. The field agents are responsible for establishing new groups and providing technical assistance to those already existing, especially the community committees. The practice is expected to be self-sustaining in

the long term. Given the interest of two financial institutions to partner with these groups (see the section on effectiveness), there is a promise of sustainability beyond the project duration.

Finding 16. The future sustainability of project outputs and outcomes fully depend on the political and institutional context and on public funding beyond the project life. Outputs of a communal nature such as communal orchards and improved communal rangelands will require more monitoring and continuous support than outputs targeting individuals.

133. Other than the obvious challenges in funding project activities, the main obstacles to sustainability are as follows:

i. maintaining positive pressure to continue improved SLM practices;

ii. the tragedy of the commons: if individuals begin exploiting newly rehabilitated grazing lands, or drawing water from wetlands, this may result in more people reversing the benefits gleaned from the project; the project has already faced challenges such as vandalism;

iii. erosion of infrastructure – water harvesting methods, shade nets, etc.; and

iv. lack of political will.

134. The sustainability plan should address the above challenges. Relevant government partners should address each of these challenges through their programme of work by clearly defining their roles and responsibilities accordingly. These interventions should be assisted by closing public awareness activities. The project team should support a transition so that various aspects of the project are granted ownership to relevant stakeholders.

135. The evaluation team rated the sustainability criterion as moderately likely.

3.5 Factors affecting performance

3.5.1 Monitoring and evaluation

EQ 15. How was information from the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system used during project implementation?

EQ 16. Has the M&E system worked according to the M&E plan?[14]

EQ 17. Was the information gathered systematically, using appropriate methodologies?

EQ 18. Has the information from the M&E system been used to make relevant decisions about project implementation?

Finding 17. The project did not adhere to the timelines stated in the M&E plan at the project design phase, and information was not gathered systematically across sites.

Finding 18. Gender indicators were lacking in the Results Framework (despite being accounted for in the AMAT and the project document).

Finding 19. Some reports such as the MTR, and the socio-economic and biophysical surveys were key in shaping the project and promoting adaptive management.

136. AMAT was used for tracking the project, together with the Results Framework.

[14] Two aspects will need to be assessed: i) the M&E design (was the M&E plan at the point of CEO endorsement practical and sufficient? Did it include baseline data? Did it specify clear targets and appropriate SMART indicators to track environmental, gender and socio-economic results; or a proper methodological approach etc.); and ii) M&E implementation (did the M&E system operate according to the M&E plan? Where necessary, was the M&E plan revised in a timely manner? etc.).

137. There was a lack of knowledge of how to use the AMAT tracking tool, which is not user-friendly. There had been some requests to FAO to provide training on it, but this was not carried out. Given that GEF no longer uses this tool for measurement, it is understandable that it was not adequate for measuring the progress of the project.

138. With respect to the Results Framework, at the time of design, the indicators did not take gender into consideration. While the project reports provided gender-disaggregated data, and gender is accounted for in the AMAT, it would have been useful to have gender indicators built into the Results Framework for coherence (especially since project staff had challenges managing the AMAT tool). The indicators were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), but quantitative. For future projects, it would be useful to have some qualitative indicators that can assess the social change taking place, especially in capacity, social collaboration, attitudes and practices. "Number of training sessions", for instance, does not capture the level to which the training is being applied or used.

139. The initial M&E framework was adequate, although not completely adhered to. For instance, the baseline surveys were to be conducted within three months of the project inception, but some were carried out after the MTR (FAO, 2015b). Had the project respected the timeline, or close to it, the baseline situation would have become apparent early on.

140. There are no M&E personnel identified in the ProDoc, which is a gap. Interviews reveal that there was an inconsistent approach to monitoring across sites. Although timely reports were provided, there was no adherence to M&E across sites; M&E was conducted ad hoc and was dependent on the various reports that had to be generated.

141. Due to issues regarding delays and procurement, the implementation of the M&E plan had to be re-adjusted. The project team addressed this to some extent by identifying emerging risks. The issues with M&E identified in the MTR also changed the way that the Project Steering Committee met and engaged with the project. Meetings were held quarterly, together with site visits, so that there was greater oversight.

142. The MTR as well as the biophysical survey and socio-economic survey, which provided detailed information on livelihoods, supported the project in reframing some of its activities so that they were more strategic.

143. One of the gaps in the M&E was accounting for some of the new risks identified in the MTR (see the safeguards section).

144. The project was successful in initiating various livelihood activities. However, it is unable to document in quantitative terms how much income changed in some sample households. There is some data from the SILC analysis on how many funds were accessed, but the results of livelihood-level investments are not clear. An M&E staff person would be useful to capture nuanced results.

145. The evaluation team rated the design of the M&E criterion as moderately satisfactory.

146. It rated the M&E design at project start-up as satisfactory.

147. It rated the M&E plan implementation as moderately satisfactory.

3.5.2 Quality of execution

EQ 19. To what extent have the national partners assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?

Sub-question: To what extent did the executing agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project?

Sub-question: Was the adaptive action undertaken after the MTR effective in increasing the pace of implementation while assuring the quality of outcomes and maximizing the potential for sustainability?

148. The evaluation team examined performance and implementation, particularly following the implementation of the MTR, and if the change was significant during the last half of project execution; in particular, it looked at how recommendations were implemented. The evaluation team found that FAO provided adequate project implementation in terms of technical knowledge. The project demonstrated adaptability to circumstances and to the MTR recommendations. The Project Coordination Unit provided good technical guidance and input. However, there were some salary-related issues raised during implementation.

149. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF agencies and executed the funded activities, whose performance was rated using a six-point scale in Appendix 3 (project implementation and execution).

150. One key lesson learned during project execution is that having an NPC working in the government offices is beneficial for ownership of the project; the salary of this role should be commensurate with expectations of a United Nations project for purposes of equity with the rest of the project team financed by the project. The lack of a dedicated M&E staff person was perceived as a weakness in monitoring project progress and measuring results.

3.5.3 Financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing

EQ 20. To what extent did the expected co-financing materialize, and how did shortfalls in co-financing or in the materialization of greater-than-expected co-financing affect project results, particularly with regard to the replication of sustainable SLM/W practices?

Finding 20. New co-financing was made available during project implementation.

Finding 21. Some of the co-financing was planned but not provided because the type and quality were not agreed on; thus, it was difficult to insist on providing the co-financing.

151. The total co-financing in the original design documents was USD 8 437 000 (USD 937 000 from FAO as a GEF agency, and USD 7 500 000 from the Integrated Watershed Management Programme of Lesotho). The project estimated a co-financing of about USD 1 031 306.[15] It constituted materials and equipment used for the programme, labour for performing the work, rent for project staff and office space, general operating expenses, DTT operations and technical backstopping by different government departments. Co-financing was underreported and difficult to quantify.

[15] This was calculated by dividing the total amount by number of councils (18) to arrive at the amount per council (then multiplied by three councils).

152. Invasive plant species were uprooted, and the community benefited from remuneration of LSL 1 200 per person per month (20-day period) from the project. This remuneration was to have been paid by the Government as part of its co-financing to the project.

153. According to FAO-Lesotho as the budget holder, the government contribution was in kind in the form of government staff who supported project implementation at all levels. Government staff included the NPC, Project Steering Committee members, members of the DTT and extension staff at the field level. One of the responsibilities of the Committee was to ensure the timely availability of co-financing, but this was not fully accomplished. The NPC dedicated most of his time to the project activities in addition to completing his own tasks.

154. Another in-kind co-financing mechanism adopted in the project involved the use of government machinery for the construction of water conservation structures. Due to budgetary constraints faced by the Government, the Department of Soil and Water Conservation could not fully deliver on this commitment. The project had to intervene by entering into an agreement with the government, where it paid for diesel and maintenance of the government machinery so that the project outputs could be realized. The Government made their machinery available for the project in dam construction. There were other shortfalls by the Government on supporting costs for vehicle use for oversight. One of the challenges was that while co-financing was committed and agreed by some partners, the individual elements and their value/cost were not detailed. The project team has a costed co-financing budget, which is provided in Appendix 4; however, the government partners did not adhere to the budget.

3.5.4 Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement

EQ 21. To what extent has effective participation and involvement of the key project stakeholders (e.g. women, people with disabilities, non-governmental agencies and local authorities) been recorded?

Sub-question: To what extent have the national partners assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation from the various public institutions involved in the project?

Sub-question: Were other actors, such as civil society, indigenous populations or the private sector, involved in project design or implementation, and what was the effect on the project results?

Finding 22. The project's approach was participatory and generally very well perceived by project stakeholders. The project achievements include a wide participation of people from relevant government agencies at different levels, for both the Project Steering Committee and the DTT. This participation was during project development and implementation, and in management committees, as well as in concrete project activities such as training, monitoring and research. The informed and active participation of a variety of stakeholders reflected country ownership, which contributed to the successful achievement of several project outcomes.

Finding 23. The project stakeholders were mainly from government agencies; nevertheless, different types of partnerships were forged with civil societies and NGOs such as the CRS, Growing Nations, Serumula Development Association, SILCs and the Institute of Natural Resources to provide training on savings and conservation agriculture, and baseline studies. At the district level, the project DTT in Thaba Tseka, included the Lesotho Red Cross, and the DTT in Quthing included World Vision. There was no active private sector involvement in the project except in instances where it provided a service to the project. CBOs such as grazing associations were strengthened and established by the project, and they actively participated in the project activities.

155. Overall, the participatory approach was highly commended by the interviewees, especially by government staff. Stakeholders within the scope of this project are those who have a stake in the outcomes of the project. This includes local governments, local communities, vulnerable

communities, those living in project areas, and women and men who depend on the natural resources affected by the project (GEF, 2017a).

156. All government respondents noted that the project facilitated and increased communication and working relationships among ministries. Women's participation in the project was exceptionally high (65 percent of project beneficiaries were women). The project supported the strengthening of community-level groups (grazing associations, credit lending groups and nutrition clubs) in managing their natural resources and disseminating information on project activities. DTTs enabled ongoing participation with local communities.

157. For many stakeholders, it was the first time they had worked closely with very diverse groups on joint activities and at a decentralized level. Monthly district meetings provided opportunities for planning, liaising and identifying comparative advantages among stakeholders. It was commented by stakeholders that the project facilitated interactions among ministries that were otherwise competitive (the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Ministry of Water), and those that have low capacity and operate independently (Lesotho Meteorological Services).

Finding 23. Academia did not participate actively in the project activities in the latter phases, mainly because of conflicting interests between NUL, which was initially identified as a key partner, retreated during the course of project due to personality conflicts.

158. The Government was one of the main project stakeholders. Academia was initially planned to be involved, but NUL's participation was withdrawn as project implementation progressed. The withdrawal of academia from project activities was a major setback because NUL was to have provided improved risk reduction and proven adaptation practices to the project. Furthermore, the person assigned by NUL to the project as a member of the Project Steering Committee was not replaced. The ineffectiveness was observed after the individual was engaged in consultancies with the project and the performance was, according to anecdotes, not optimal, which resulted in poor relations between the two.

159. At the national level, the Project Steering Committee was responsible for providing strategic guidance to the project. It comprised key staff from relevant government departments and agencies, and one civil society organization member. One of the responsibilities of the Project Steering Committee was to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders. The composition of the Project Steering Committee was as follows:

i. Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation – one representative from Range, one from Conservation and one from Forestry Departments;

ii. Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security – one representative from Field Services, one from Crops, one from Livestock and one from Research;

iii. Energy and Meteorology Department – one representative from Lesotho Meteorological Services;

iv. Ministry of Water;

v. one representative on behalf of the GEF Operational Focal Point (Department of Environment);

vi. NUL – one representative;

vii. LCN – one representative;

viii. UNDP – one representative; and

ix. the budget holder (FAO).

160. It was noted in the interviews that the working relationships between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation had improved because the two ministries planned activities related to the project together, whereas previously they had worked independently. This working relationship went beyond the project activities to other ministerial activities that are not related to the project.

161. At the district level, the DTTs were very active and guided project implementation at the local level. They comprised district staff from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, DMA, the Ministry of Energy and Meteorology, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship and the Ministry of Water. Their responsibility included developing seasonal and annual plans and budgets, organizing meetings and training, and providing overall technical support in project implementation in their field of expertise. The team also reviewed implementation progress, monitored field activities and supported local community mobilizers. The team meets once a month to report on the previous months' activities and to plan activities for the next month while assigning responsibilities for ensuring that the activities are carried out.

162. The state agencies improved their knowledge about climate change adaptation and mitigation through project activities. Members of the DTT from the three districts confirmed during interviews that their knowledge of the project and the related components improved. Some had never had any training related to climate change and adaptation to climate change. Individuals in these agencies also benefited from the training provided. Training covered disaster risk reduction, vulnerability assessments, climate change and development, climate-smart agriculture and livelihoods diversification strategies (FAO, n.d.). However, it should be noted that the number of active DTT members decreased, to the disadvantage of the project (see the sustainability section).

163. The benefits to the stakeholders were as follows:

i. There was improved coordination of activities between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Forestry at both the national and district levels.

ii. The grazing associations acquired knowledge on how to manage the rangelands properly in theory and practice through a learning-by-doing approach.

iii. Three new grazing associations were established as a result of the project, and four were revived. Although rangelands are traditionally subject areas that men mostly engage in, women are members of these associations and were empowered to assume the roles and responsibilities that used to be male-dominated, as indicated by members of the three grazing associations established in Thaba Tseka district and one in Quthing and Mafeteng districts. The grazing associations coordinate grazing management programmes in collaboration with the chief and councilor, enhancing collaboration and synergies.

iv. Trespassing of livestock from neighbouring villages and within the community on improved rested rangelands were reported in Thaba Tseka and Mafeteng. The issues were reportedly resolved through the application of conflict management training related to rangelands between community members as well as neighbouring communities. The local chiefs and community councilors played an important role in ensuring that the conflicts were resolved amicably.

v. Coordination of activities among stakeholders improved, especially within the DTT members. The DTT also learned the importance of having competent people from different departments nominated to the team because they can provide the technical support to the

project in line with their competencies. Technical information related to the project interventions was disseminated during monthly meetings of the DTT and site visits.

vi. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation identified opportunities for working together. Since, for example, the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation is responsible for trees including fruit trees and the Department of Crops under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is also responsible for fruit production in its mandate, the two Ministries agreed on how they could complement each other with respect to fruit production. Fruit preservation was also promoted by the Nutrition Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Nutrition clubs were also established, bringing together different community members.

vii. With technical support from the CRS to introduce the SILC model, community-based microfinance savings and lending schemes were established in all three project sites. SILCs are predominantly female-owned; monitoring reports demonstrate that they generated benefits.

164. The ProDoc acknowledges the involvement of, or opportunities to engage, civil society and the private sector. But at the implementation level, this did not materialize due to the nature of the project, whose main focus was on integrated SLM/W, and the limited presence of civil society in the project area. There was one civil society organization representative on the Project Steering Committee, but he passed away in 2019. It is unclear whether another civil society organization representative replaced him substantially. There is some evidence that the SILCs will engage with two financial institutions; however, the role the private sector can play either in marketing or sustaining project results is unclear.

165. The evaluation team rated the stakeholder engagement criterion as moderately satisfactory.

3.5.5 Knowledge management

EQ 22. Were there mechanisms and platforms that enabled the systematization of knowledge and the communication of good practices and lessons learned?

EQ 23. Has the project promoted the strengthening and replicability of these practices and lessons? Which ones and how?

Finding 24. There were mechanisms in place that allowed for the exchange of knowledge; it is unclear to what extent information was systematized or produced in a user-friendly manner.

Finding 25. There are some key findings from this project, such as on how improved SLM/W can result in improved benefits for women, and how strengthened community management can decrease conflict, which needs to be showcased further.

166. There was evidence that the DTTs and the Project Steering Committee were used as platforms to disseminate information, obtain technical advice and build partnerships. Also, a variety of training and capacity-building activities (see the section on effectiveness) was conducted in order to mainstream improved understanding of climate adaptation and SLM/W. One of the strengths of these capacity-building activities was that they took into account the capacities of those receiving them, and often provided refresher courses on an ongoing basis to maintain capacity. The SILC programming demonstrates a graduated programme of learning so that people can become independent of the project.

167. Following the MTR, a communications strategy was developed. Although it highlights some of the challenges and weaknesses, it provides general messaging. The Communications Officer left during the project, which created a gap in its management.

168. There was evidence that the project provided datasets to government databases under development on biophysical and socio-economic data.

169. Despite the mechanisms available and a variety of reports produced under the project, some interviews highlighted that: i) greater public awareness was still required; ii) this project and others did not communicate with each other sufficiently; and iii) the management of knowledge created under this project was disparate and ad hoc. The lessons learned are hidden in PPRs and PIRs, and given the project's involvement with significant environmental issues such as water, land rehabilitation and SLM, and on social issues such as conflict management, it would be beneficial to have illustrative and accessible lessons learned.

170. The main recommendations to improve knowledge management at closure of the project are as follows:

i. given the level of impact observed on gender, the project should develop case studies to capture the changes it produced;

ii. conduct a final socio-economic survey to capture the results of the project and share results with the appropriate partners to boost their baseline data;

iii. create a project repository of data (this need not be expensive - it can be a Google or Dropbox folder), and share it with development partners, and the civil society sector; and

iv. identify champions at the community level to sustain some of the work and disseminate knowledge.

171. There is some indication of replication due to interest from IFAD projects, as well as through the establishment of the Mafeteng wetland as a centre for excellence and a site for learning.

3.6 Gender equality

EQ 25. To what extent was the strategy for involving vulnerable groups (women, youth and people with disabilities) in project activities effective?

EQ 26. Has the project made specific contributions to the well-being of vulnerable groups (empowering them, reducing their vulnerability)?

EQ 27. What were the results achieved or likely to be achieved?

Finding 26. The project achieved gains in decreasing women's burden, increasing their participation in resource management and increasing access to funds.

172. The initial design documents recognized some of the gender challenges in the project context. Particularly, the ProDoc noted the gendered aspect of agriculture and livestock management, and the different roles that women occupy within these sectors. The ProDoc was also effective in identifying the gendered impacts of climate change. A gender-sensitive approach was identified at the onset, particularly in the areas of women and poultry, gender considerations in water harvesting, agroforestry and fuelwood concerns. These gender-relevant areas identified in the PPG were further expanded during project implementation.

173. The ProDoc did not have an explicit section outlining how gender issues would be addressed and monitored at various stages in the project cycle. As the MTR noted, it would be useful to undertake a targeted community assessment to explore the differential gender needs and concerns, social and cultural norms and practices, and legal frameworks and practices in place to bridge the gender gaps, as well as structural and systematic barriers. This approach would lead to a more deliberate project strategy that would ensure different livelihood activities, existing and future

prospects from a gender perspective providing insights about tools, methodologies, and technologies to break the existing social, cultural and structural barriers for women and other vulnerable groups.

174. Some gender targets were mentioned in the design documents, such as "at least 50 percent of women in all training". With regard to field activities, design documents noted: "*In the community-level training programmes, women's groups and women's associations will be given preference*"; and "*At least 50 core staff at the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship and NUL at the national level will be trained (of whom at least 20 will be women) updating data and use of new database on land use and its suitability under scenarios of climate change*". However, these are all quantitative targets. Although challenging, in this project, some qualitative targets/indicators would have been very useful to capture, for example, the decrease in women's' labour/burden; the movement of women into typically male-dominated sectors (e.g. rangeland); women's increased access to funds and/or resources; level of inclusion into community structures and organizations.

175. The design documents also outlined that the project would adopt a gender-sensitive approach to climate adaptation, which was achieved in three key actions:

i. targeting sites that affect women;

ii. targeting women's livelihoods sectors; and

iii. facilitating opportunities for economic empowerment and social participation.

176. With regard to the first action, the project promoted climate-adaptation in areas identified in the ProDoc and PPG as relevant to women. In particular, the project promoted water harvesting capabilities and improved women's access to water in water-stressed areas. This, based on anecdotal accounts, has had a tremendous impact on women. Prior to having this access to water, women had to travel on foot through rugged terrain, on long treks to obtain water for themselves and their households. The increase of roof water harvesting indicates that women have now been able to save time and labour and face decreased risks of violence during travel. This had a significant impact on women's lives, safety and time.

177. The project also targeted livelihood sectors that benefit women, in particular, areas related to poultry, egg collection, beekeeping and vegetable cultivation, which are primarily related to women's areas of interest. There are also accounts that investments in livelihood opportunities allowed many women to increase their livelihood practices and organize in new ways. For instance, due to support in poultry raising, the women are now producing more eggs than needed. As a result, they organized as a collective, which has positive social and economic implications.

178. Finally, the project took concrete steps in increasing women's access to funds by supporting the establishment of the SILCs. This was noted in the July 2020 Assessment of Project Achievements Report, and then further triangulated by site visits with beneficiaries and interviews with project staff as being dominated by women. Anecdotal accounts reveal that the women felt empowered by a new sense of economic opportunity.

179. Another interesting benefit is that women have become more engaged on issues that they were traditionally not involved in, such as rangelands and grazing, which were typically dominated by men. However, due to the encouragement of women's participation in grazing committees, they engage in and work on rangeland issues.

180. Based on interviews, project documentation and site visits, this evaluation notes that the project was effective in achieving the following benefits for women:

i. increased access to financial resources through SILCs (with a general rate of return on savings of 49 percent) (Catholic Relief Services, n.d.);

ii. greater opportunities for engagement in project training, demonstrations and activities (in 2020, women made up on average 62.4 percent of participants at public meetings) (FAO, n.d.);

iii. greater opportunities for leadership in natural resources through participation on grazing committees;

iv. reduced workload, travel, and exposure to violence;

v. enhanced food security potential through training on use of shade nets, preservation and drying of foods; and

vi. increased access to water for approximately 900 women.

181. While the project was able to record women's participation and provided consistent sex-disaggregated accounts in its reports, there was a gap in terms of some of the qualitative monitoring of changes in levels of empowerment. Given the great success in implementing activities that benefit women, it would be useful to showcase case studies, or demonstrate the changes that occurred in the life of the project through socio-economic indicators. As the project is still technically underway at the time of writing, it would be useful to demonstrate how women's agencies changed during the life of the project. Answering the following questions could be possible ways to explore this:

i. Do women have new roles and responsibilities in the community?

ii. Have new collectives/cooperatives emerged? If so, what are women's roles in these bodies?

iii. Were women able to make new purchases as a result of their increased livelihoods? What were some more expensive items purchased during project duration? Could these be attributed to gains made through the project?

182. Another interesting area to explore by the end of the project, which was missing from project documentation, was whether there were any negative effects due to some women obtaining benefits from the project. Did this create any rivalries or competition? Did the excess of production in one area reduce the profits of someone who had previously been in that sector?

183. There was no mention of inclusion of persons with disabilities and no observation of their presence at the community consultations held by the evaluation team.

EQ 28. What are the lessons learned that could be used for future interventions?

184. The key lessons learned are that when the interventions focus on areas that women are already working in, the rate of adoption, interest and participation is higher.

185. Women are already operating at high levels of agriculture production and some livestock-related activities (poultry) and are likely to take part in community meetings. The question now is how to create a transformational shift from participation to empowerment. The grazing committees would make a useful case study to explore how this can occur. Similarly, it would be useful to study the SILCs to examine how funds were generated, and what societal factors allowed women to engage freely in these bodies.

186. The confluence of organizational structures helped achieve some of these gains. The engagement of the DTTs, the grazing committees and local governance structures were all supported through capacity building, which mutually reinforced one another.

EQ 24. How did the project contribute to the objectives of the GEF Policy on Gender Equality and FAO Policy on Gender Equality?

187. Based on anecdotal accounts and the evidence provided through project documentation, the project is in line with the GEF's Policy on Gender Equality. This project recognizes from the onset that men and women use natural resources differently and, as a result, environmental conditions have different impacts on men and women. The project complied with the GEF policy as follows:

i. The project shifts from a gender-aware, 'do no harm' approach to a gender-responsive, 'do good' approach by supporting women's livelihoods, agency in grazing committees and nutrition clubs, and management of natural resources, skills and training. It seeks to target issues that are of interest to women.

ii. There is some level of reporting on gender results, through the reporting on gender-disaggregated indicators.

188. The project also supported the FAO Policy on Gender Equality through the following actions:

i. having women participate equally, if not more, than men in project activities and training;

ii. supporting women to access to decent livelihoods and productive resources; and

iii. decreasing women's work burden (such as through travel to fetch water, firewood).

3.7 Social and environmental safeguards

EQ 29. To what extent do/did the demonstration reference sites (DRS) and their replication in other areas fulfil the SLM/W criteria?

Sub-question: To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in project design and implementation?

Finding 27. The project did not adequately identify potential social or economic risks that could emerge from any infrastructure, works or project activities.

Finding 28. It is unclear at this point where replication will ensue, but the Mafeteng wetland site is now used a center for excellence for wetlands rehabilitation.

189. The ProDoc recognizes that the project was designed to have positive benefits to the environment. No adverse environmental or social impacts were likely to compromise the project, and it conforms to FAO's pre-approved list of projects excluded from a detailed environmental assessment. However, the earth dams constructed under this project may bring potential environmental and social impacts if not properly constructed, as it was the case in one site in Mafeteng district where a dam burst in the upper catchment. While to the evaluation team's knowledge, no environmental degradation has occurred, it would be necessary for the project team to note the potential risks and monitor impacts of the interventions. It is worth noting, however, that at the time of drafting the ProDoc, the safeguards policy was not as rigorous as it is now.

190. For groundwater dams, no major safeguards were required, and they were considered safe. Small earth dams were constructed by the Department of Soil and Water Conservation of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation. This Department is responsible for providing guidance on the construction of earth dams. An incidence was reported in Mafeteng where a government-

constructed earth dam burst and flooded neighbouring fields. At the time of the evaluation, that dam was undergoing repairs. It is noted that these government interventions were carried out in collaboration and consultation with national safeguards processes—just as the project's initiatives were. For due diligence, it would be useful to add a level of oversight and ensure that any dams additionally meet FAO safeguards policies and are reflected in annual reporting.

191. The project also took on some physical works that were not initially identified in the ProDoc. As noted in project documentation, a community asked for assistance in repairing an access road below a wetland being restored. FAO purchased construction materials and recruited additional labour, and the construction was carried out jointly by the project, the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation's Land Reclamation Programme and the local government's rural roads programmes. While this met the community's needs and received government oversight, in order for there to be due diligence, FAO should have conducted an assessment for this type of activity. It is unclear whether risks were considered such as increased traffic, and if a road passed through any sacred areas, or which members of the community were benefiting from the road and which were not. These considerations may have been negligible; however, for construction-related activities, it would be useful to see some of these considerations in annual reporting documents.

192. Another gap in the project documentation was how the project distributed some of the livelihoods-related inputs, especially livestock, and whether this created any secondary conflicts between those who received them and those who did not.

193. There was also no mention of whether the project had any negative impacts on prices related to supply. For instance, by increasing the supply of certain products (e.g. rabbits, poultry, eggs), was there an impact on prices that disadvantaged certain farmers? Did it dampen the economic activities of some farmers? This is not clearly stated in the project documentation, nor how these socio-economic risks are managed.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Relevance

194. The project was highly relevant to national and government priorities, government programmes and activities focused on SLM and drought-management, and addressed vulnerable communities' most pressing needs. The project fits within FAO's CPF and contributes to Priority Area 4, which covers natural resource conservation and utilization, including adaptation to climate change. The project specifically supports Outcome 4.3, which seeks to strengthen institutional and technical capacities for adaptation to climate change and enhance the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities. With regard to FAO regional priorities, the project strengthened institutional capacity for resilience; supported early warning and information management systems; built community-level resilience; and responded to water-related crises (FAO, 2014a).

195. This project is also aligned with FAO's Global Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner"; the project has invested in livelihoods through vegetable cultivation, agroforestry and agriculture. To fulfil Organizational Outcome 1 under SO2 "Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in the agricultural sector production systems in a sustainable manner", the project carried out training and capacity-building activities and set up farmer field schools. In addition, the Project's work to strengthen the relevant policy framework in Lesotho will contribute to SO2, Organizational Outcome 2: "Stakeholders in member countries strengthen governance – the policies, laws, management frameworks and institutions that are needed to support producers and resource managers – in the transition to sustainable agricultural sector production system".

196. The project contributed to the achievement of the eradication of poverty in all its forms (SDG 1) by investing in livelihoods and ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2), through inputs in agriculture, livestock, agroforestry and nutrition clubs. In part it also contributed to SDG 13 on climate action by promoting adaptive capacity and making climate information available.

197. The project also contributes to GEF's Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas. Under the biodiversity window, the work under this project (restoration of wetlands, promotion of agroforestry and conservation agriculture, conservation of wildlife) has contributed to GEF's goal of conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and maintaining ecosystem goods and services. Through the rehabilitation of land, sustainable land management initiatives and reforestation, the project, aimed at arresting and reversing trends in land degradation.

Effectiveness

198. The project was successful in achieving all but one of its outcomes satisfactorily. It provided wide-ranging, capacity-building initiatives to the Government and local beneficiaries to enhance their skills and abilities in carrying out SLM/W activities, resulting in global environmental benefits such as restored landscapes, landscapes under improved practices, and strengthened biodiversity. The conservation of rehabilitated wetlands, the establishment of orchards, and improved management of water resources had visible effects on local communities. In particular, the project piloted a number of SLM/W practices to address the shortages of water experienced by many, thereby improving the quality of life and security of community members. Financial investments

in livelihood activities and collaborative social mechanisms, and in addressing challenges faced by women led to strong results. Strengthening communication tools and messaging and improving the relevance of climate data to users would further strengthen the project results.

199. The project further demonstrated the level of collaboration and partnerships that can take place at the district level, among different stakeholders. It will be essential that this momentum is not lost, and that the learning obtained through these interactions, particularly with regard to conflict management, incentivization, social cohesion and motivation be distilled in a useful manner.

Efficiency

200. The project delivered activities efficiently, cost-effectively and in as timely a manner as possible, despite facing severe procurement challenges and losing staff to other projects. A strong project management team, effective management at the district level and the engaged Project Steering Committee allowed the project to be implemented efficiently. The project team demonstrated adaptive management in the face of procurement delays, staff turnover and political changes. New staff adapted quickly to the demands of the project, and ongoing briefings were provided to political staff to ensure their continued support and buy-in. The continued focus on community needs, the top-ups of capacity development activities, and the leveraging of partner expertise (government, NGOs and community organizations), allowed the project to be responsive to issues of the day. The Project Steering Committee, which met quarterly following the MTR and conducted site visits to meet with beneficiaries and observe activities, provided oversight. The Project Steering Committee was composed of mostly director-level staff which Government interviewees noted that the project facilitated many opportunities for collaboration and communication among government entities that would otherwise be working in silos.

201. There were some concerns expressed on project staff salaries, and the inequities that can be perceived between salaries funded by co-financing and those funded by the project. There were also concerns expressed on staff salaries in general, particularly when faced with staff loss, the project budget was revised to increase salaries and address this concern. While the understanding of procurement processes improved in the latter phases of the project, they remained administratively onerous causing delays, and loss of morale, which the project team had to manage.

Sustainability

202. The project was implemented over the course of three political administrations. While these changes added burdens on project staff, the project was structured so that its outputs can be used by different governments, demonstrating political sustainability. There are already indications that some of the outputs from the project will be integrated into various programmes of work in the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Safety. The Ministry of Water showed interest in and visited project activities.

203. The project was not able to leverage the kind of funds anticipated in the design phase, which poses some risks to economic sustainability. There was no clear financial engagement/commitment from the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, yet increased co-financing was leveraged during the life of the project. Co-financing was limited to payments in kind only; the cash contribution was never provided to the project by the Government. However, international projects such as WAMPP and SADP will likely support activities such as the development of sustainable agriculture and support to grazing committees. This demonstrates that the project may have better chances for economic sustainability if bolstered by international projects.

204. The project was perceived by stakeholders as bringing diverse stakeholders together (e.g. governmental agencies, NGOs such as the CRS, local communities) and allowing them to engage. The DTT allowed people to meet and implement activities in a more decentralized manner. To ensure the sustainability of activities, the project trained technical staff from different government agencies to play a leading role in project implementation through newly acquired know-how. The project also invested in social service mechanisms (e.g. grazing committees, nutrition clubs, savings and lending clubs), thereby creating structures to support the social sustainability of the project. This is further reinforced by the pride expressed by many community members, especially with regard to the recovery of rangelands and return of biodiversity, as well as the livelihoods focus of the project.

Factors affecting performance

Monitoring and evaluation

205. AMAT was used for tracking the project, together with the Results Framework. The project tracked the key indicators in the AMAT and reported on them at CEO endorsement and mid-term. The Results Framework was reported on in progress reports and PIRs; however, while gender was accounted for in the AMAT, it was not included in the Results Framework.

206. Although the AMAT was applied and reported on, there was a lack of knowledge on how to best use this tool across the project team. The initial M&E framework was adequate, although not completely adhered to. There was an inconsistent approach to monitoring results across sites. Given the level of success at the site level, it would have been useful to capture the nuances of results achieved. The team was able to generate good narrative reports on results achieved, which were ad hoc rather than part of a consistent strategy of measuring the same results in the same way for each site. The baseline surveys were also conducted late in the project, which was a missed opportunity to capture the overall impact of the project.

207. The project provided datasets to government databases under development in relation to biophysical and socio-economic data, linking project findings to broader national monitoring tools.

Quality of execution

208. Overall, FAO delivered well on project implementation and execution through the Project Coordination Unit. Its good performance on project execution was due to their strong technical support provided and close supervision and important strategic support. There was noted support by the FAO Lesotho Office.

209. FAO provided adequate project implementation in terms of technical knowledge. The project demonstrated adaptability to circumstances and to MTR recommendations.

Financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing

210. The original design documents had a total co-financing figure of USD 8 437 000 comprising of USD 937 000 from FAO and USD 7 500 000 from the Government's Integrated Watershed Management Programme. The project estimated co-financing of USD 1 031 306. The Ministry of Local Government, SADP and WAMPP joined as new co-financing sources during project implementation. Government co-financing was provided in the form of materials and equipment used for the Integrated Watershed Management Programme, labour for performing the work, rent for project staff and office space, general operating expenses, district-level operations and

technical backstopping by different government departments – but not in cash. Co-financing was underreported and challenging to quantify.

Stakeholder engagement

211. There was active engagement of government stakeholders at the national and district levels, and by local beneficiaries, and in particular, women. Civil society organizations supported the implementation of project activities, although this was not captured fully in project documentation. Collaboration with NUL weakened over time, and there was low private sector involvement, due to the remoteness of the project sites. There are crucial lessons to be drawn on how the project galvanized local stakeholders around communal activities, strengthened social structures, integrated various government entities in project implementation, managed conflict, and advanced opportunities for women.

Knowledge management

212. A communications strategy was produced following the MTR. DTTs and the Project Steering Committee were used as platforms to disseminate results and share challenges related to project implementation, together with workshops and inter-ministerial meetings. The project provided datasets to developing governmental databases on biophysical and socio-economic information. The project produced useful reports, in particular those related to the saving and lending groups in the biannual report, and used innovative means to achieve results, particularly on communal lands. The project engaged various social structures and mechanisms to enhance cooperation; it would have been useful to capture these success stories and methods in a case study to serve as lessons learned for other projects and initiatives.

213. It was unclear whether there was a coherent knowledge management strategy. Given the high levels of results achieved under the project, it would be crucial to disseminate them in a user-friendly manner so that they can be replicated and sustained, targeted specifically to different user groups. For instance, civil society organizations can benefit from some of the social tools and mechanisms used to foster cooperation and international organizations can benefit from the types of incentives and district-level organizing that contributed to attaining results. While beyond the project's scope, it would be useful to identify particular parties responsible for specific documentation that can ensure use beyond the project's duration. For example, interventions on livelihood activities should be monitored to see both the socio-economic benefits they yield in the medium term and any further inputs or capacity building that may be required.

Gender equality

214. The project was highly inclusive of women. The gender-sensitive approach to climate adaptation was used in three key ways: (i) targeting sites that affect women; ii) targeting women's livelihoods sectors; and iii) facilitating opportunities for economic empowerment and social participation. In terms of key aspects that contributed to women's empowerment, livelihoods and equity, the project made great progress by increasing women's access to financial resources through savings and lending groups, increasing opportunities for their leadership in grazing committees, which had typically been dominated by men, and reducing risks related to travel for water and firewood. Livelihoods were strengthened through strategic training and inputs, for example, poultry, and crop production. Nutrition clubs supported by the project provided health and nutrition-related information for improved quality of life and safety.

215. The project is in line with GEF's Policy on Gender Equality. The specific way in which this project meets the GEF policy are that the project shifts from a gender-aware, 'do no harm' approach to a gender-responsive, 'do good' approach by supporting women's livelihoods, agency in community

organizations and management of natural resources, skills and training. It seeks to target issues that are of interest to women and provides reporting on gender results. The project is in line with FAO's Gender Policy by: i) having women participate equally if not more, than men in project activities and training; ii) supporting women in accessing decent livelihoods and productive resources; and iii) decreasing their work burden such as travelling to fetch water and firewood.

Social and environmental safeguards

216. The project was designed to yield positive environmental benefits. No adverse environmental or social impacts compromised the project. Small-scale earth dams and physical repairs were undertaken, which did not have negative impacts. However, for due diligence and lessons learned from other interventions, it would be useful to add a level of oversight and ensure that even small dams additionally meet FAO safeguards policies and are reflected in annual reporting.

4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. To FAO, Project Management Unit: Ensure that project indicators mainstream gender issues.

217. This project achieved many positive gender results. However, the Results Framework did not include gender indicators to monitor these results on an ongoing basis and at outcome level. Even though the project team provided sex-disaggregated data and the AMAT tool took gender into consideration, it would have been useful to capture gender results in a consistent manner, linked in particular to women's livelihoods and/or access to food and water security. It is thus suggested to:

i. capture (either through case studies or documentation) some of the specific achievements made, with clear recommendations on how to maintain them for sustainability and clear governmental and civil society champions that can own and manage such results;

ii. ensure that FAO and government partners include gender indicators in results frameworks in future projects and initiatives; and

iii. provide qualitative indicators that assess not only levels of stakeholders participation (provide gender-disaggregated data), but also changes in empowerment, equity or improved livelihoods.

Recommendation 2. To the Project Team: Develop case studies to showcase how women's circumstances were improved through the project, examining their livelihoods, and economic, social and environmental factors.

218. Given the positive effects of the project on women, it is suggested that future project design ensure to:

i. develop case studies to capture the changes produced by the project;

ii. conduct a closing socio-economic survey to capture the results of the project and share them with the appropriate partners to boost their baseline data;

iii. create a project repository of data (this need not be expensive – it can be a Google or Dropbox folder) and share with development partners and/or the civil society sector;

iv. identify champions at the community level to sustain some of the work and disseminate knowledge.

Recommendation 3. To Project Management: Showcase local conflict management strategies and attempts to share natural resource management information so that they may be replicated and

upscaled. This should take place in Sesotho and include the role that traditional leadership played to capture and understand the nuances of this process. It would be useful to showcase some of the downscaled examples of conflict resolution that could be replicated elsewhere to improve community resource management. Develop a repository of lessons learned and project learning for other initiatives to be shared with and accessible to all stakeholders.

219. The project used innovative means to achieve results, particularly on communal lands, and engaged various social structures and mechanisms to enhance cooperation. It would be useful to capture these success stories and methods in a case study so that they can serve as learning for other projects and initiatives.

Recommendation 4. To FAO: For future projects, FAO/GEF should consider providing funds in order to conduct a socio-economic survey in a timely manner, involving the project participants in tracking changes. This would enable the Project Team to:

i. assess whether local communities' knowledge on climate change/SLM has truly increased and in what ways; and

ii. assess to what extent people's incomes increased through project investment.

220. Although baseline studies and surveys were carried out late in the project, it would be useful to have a final survey to understand the impacts of the project. This would capture quantitative and qualitative changes in beneficiaries' circumstances in more rigorous ways, and identify the impact of project interventions, which other projects and government programmes could draw lessons from.

Recommendation 5. To Government partners: Alternative livelihood activities promoted by the project should be followed up by the relevant project partners to ensure their sustainability and verify whether they require any additional inputs.

221. The project promoted and initiated various livelihood activities. However, the project duration is too short to fully assess the impacts of these livelihood activities: whether they are still profitable, require additional capacity building or inputs or create unintended consequences or harm. Government partners, especially those at the district level that will be liaising with beneficiary communities, should continue follow and provide support.

5. Lessons learned

Lesson 1. Livelihoods and other pressing needs (water, food security) must be at the heart of sustainable development initiatives to obtain traction. The challenge is to maintain interest in communal sustainable development initiatives that do not directly yield income. The project was able to manage this by creating an ongoing presence at the local level, leaning on social structures (chiefs, grazing associations, lending groups, nutrition groups) and including people in a learning-by-doing approach. However, the question of incentives in how to motivate people to work on communal project without financial gain will be an ongoing challenge for other projects.

Lesson 2. Decentralized elements of the project team were successful. Having people residing in the districts where activities are underway creates stronger linkages, opportunities for feedback and adaptive management. It also fosters a culture of trust among stakeholders.

Lesson 3. The Project Steering Committee must be composed of members with some programmatic clout who can influence work in their own divisions/departments in complement to the project. This would ensure greater ownership of project activities, synergies and buy-in from the national government. Project Steering Committees often play a rubber-stamping role; however, inviting members for field visits and oversight missions can be extremely beneficial.

Lesson 4. Although climate data are available, they still do not meet the needs or expectations of users at the local level. These needs must be clarified since there is a gap in communications and expectations.

Lesson 5. Having an NPC working in the government offices is beneficial for project ownership, alignment of the project with national programmes, capacity building, and the retention of skills in the Government. However, the salary of this position should be commensurate with expectations of a United Nations project for purposes of equity with the rest of the project team financed by the project.

Lesson 6. Project Steering Committee budget costs should include modest costs related to Project Steering Committee site visits, which can be paid for by co-financing. Given how instrumental an engaged Project Steering Committee can be, steps should be taken to facilitate their access to the project sites. The Project Steering Committee participation was seen as a strength of this project, which was partially due to the site visits they made. In order to avoid financing issues on this front, this should be added to the co-financing budget.

Lesson 7. The lack of a dedicated M&E staff member was perceived as a weakness in monitoring project progress and measuring results. It is recommended that this be included in the M&E budget together with increased costs for supervisory travel to sites as part of the technical back-stopping budget.

Lesson 8. For any physical work, additional FAO oversight should be ensured beyond the government processes. Even small works could have social or environmental consequences if proper oversight is not provided. The project strictly adhered to national environmental assessment procedures in the integrated watershed management programme to avoid inconsistencies. However, these processes were shown to be inadequate since other small dams approved by the Government overflowed. Additional FAO oversight should be carried out to ensure that works do not exacerbate any risks.

Lesson 9. Training on FAO procurement policies must be carried out as soon as staff is retained for future projects. Lessons learned from procurement challenges should be documented by the project management team to be applied to other FAO initiatives. Recommendations on how to improve procurement practices should be communicated to FAO senior management to ensure greater alignment between policies at the institutional level and their application at the local level. Lack of understanding of FAO's procurement procedures was a challenge in this project. To overcome it, it is essential that project staff receive the kind of support necessary to understand and employ procurement procedures as early as possible. Also, while it is understood that the procurement policies are in place to allow for international competition, there should be vehicles to support local participation, especially to strengthen national

actors, foster local expertise, and mitigate long delays that may result from international procurement. The lessons learned from this project vis-à-vis specific procurement challenges should be fed up the chain to inform administrative processes.

Lesson 10. Projects should capture the qualitative impact of training and capacity-building initiatives: e.g. how new skills are applied; how useful they are; and how they will be integrated into future programmes of work for sustainability. This would also help to identify which capacity-building activities were optimal and should be replicated, and which require adaptation or refresher training. Since baseline capacity assessments have already been conducted, government partners should follow up to continuously build on the capacity gained. It would be very useful for project results to capture the applicability of various capacity-building initiatives, which would inform the design of future other governmental initiatives and international projects. In addition to the number or type of training, for replicability and monitoring, it is recommended that the documentation of results capture how useful the training was and whether beneficiaries were able to apply it in their work, and if not, what the barriers were. While this question was raised during the terminal evaluation during site visits, more rigorous documentation of this application would be useful to understand which training sessions were effective, which were not, and if not, what the gaps were, and what training sessions and capacity-building activities should be incorporated into government's programmes of work, and which require follow-up.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. People interviewed

Appendix Table 1. Project management-related stakeholders

Name	Position	Men	Women	Date
Lekholoane Lekholoane	Project Manager/NTA	X		16/10/2020
Tsilane Mokitjima	National Project Coordinator/NPC	X		2/11/2020
Pulane Thulo	District Technical Coordinator		X	18/11/2020
Deborah Pokothoane	District Technical Coordinator		X	17/11/2020
Mokitinyane Nthimo	Budget Holder	X		27/11/2020
Selvaraju Ramasamy	Lead Technical Officer	X		04/12/2020
Kuena Morebotsane	Funding Liaison Officer		X	04/12/2020

Appendix Table 2. Stakeholders at the national level

Name	Organization	Position	Men	Women	Date
Ratsele Ratsele	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation	Director – Range Management	X		04/11/2020
Elias Sekaleli	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation	Director – Forestry	X		09/11/2020
Refuoe Boose	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation	Director – Soil Conservation	X		10/11/2020
Makomoreng Fanana	Ministry of Water	Integrated Catchment Management Project Coordinator	X		05/11/2020
Moahloli Ntelo	Lesotho Meteorological Services		X		09/11/2020
Lereko Masopha	Ministry of Agriculture	Chief Information Officer	X		10/11/2020
Lisebo Motjotji	Ministry of Environment	Principal Environment Officer		X	18/11/2020
M. Damane	Ministry of Environment	Director of Environment (GEF Focal Person)	X		08/12/2020
Daniel Thakhisi	Disaster Management Authority		X		
Makhotho Malibeng	Ministry of Agriculture	Principal Livestock Officer		X	
Total			**8**	**2**	

Appendix Table 3. District stakeholders – District coordinators

District	Name	Position	Men	Women	Date
Mafeteng	Majoro Khoanyane	District Coordinator	X		9/11/2020
Quthing	Keneuoe Nnena	District Coordinator		X	11/11/2020
Thaba Tseka	Mamabitsa Makara	District Coordinator		X	16/11/2020
Total			1	2	

Appendix Table 4. District stakeholders – District technical teams

District	Date	Name	Ministry/Department	Men	Women
Mafeteng	10/11/2020	Teboho Mokoaqo	Forestry	X	
		Thato Loke	Agriculture		X
		Sandile Nhlapo	Agriculture	X	
		Mamoletsane Qhotsokoane	Agriculture		X
		Motekoa Ramalitse	Forestry		X
		Mahali Lebese	Forestry		X
		Reentseng Tsikoane	Forestry	X	
		Lejone Moloi	Rural Water Supply	X	
		Sekhobe Molomo	Forestry	X	
		Lesia Mafura	Forestry	X	
Quthing	13/11/2020	Mampho Moremi	Meteorological Services		X
		Leeto Masasa	FAO – Community Mobiliser	X	
		Rethabile Minyane	Water Affairs	X	
		Thapelo Mothae	Agriculture	X	
		Katleho Rathebe	Forestry	X	
		Pati Thoahlane	Forestry	X	
		Motsieli Mafatlane	Local Government	X	
		Katiso Matekane	FAO – Community Mobilizer	X	
		Keneuoe 'Nena	Forestry		X
Thaba Tseka	20/11/2020	Thakampaka Ntsihlele	Agriculture and Food Security	X	
		Ntlama Monyane	Forestry	X	
		Molatuoa Moruti	Meteorological Services	X	
		Mothusi Ramotsali	District Administrator's Office	X	
		Makabelo Mothata	Forestry		X
Total				**17**	**7**

Appendix Table 5. Participants in focus group discussions in the three districts

Livelihood Zone	District	Village	Men	Women	Total	Date
Lowlands	Mafeteng	Patsa	7	33	40	9/11/2020
		Boluma Tau	4	12	16	9/11/2020
		Mohlehli	8	17	24	10/11/2020
		Joele	3	6	9	10/11/2020
		Sebothoane	2	1	3	10/11/2020
		Maoela	3	4	7	10/01/2020
Southern Lowlands along Senqu River	Quthing	Mantsoepa	13	40	53	11/11/2020
		Moqalo	17	34	51	11/11/2020
		Moreneng	10	26	36	11/11/2020
		Robi	6	15	21	12/11/2020

Livelihood Zone	District	Village	Men	Women	Total	Date
		Borokhong	6	3	9	12/11/2020
		Koali	2	2	4	12/11/2020
		Mphethi	12	13	25	12/11/2020
Mountains	Thaba Tseka	Linakeng	14	45	59	16/11/2020
		Khoali	22	44	66	17/11/2020
		Matlatseng	9	17	16	18/11/2020
		Khatho	11	15	26	18/11/2020
		Seroalankhoana	12	36	44	19/11/2020
		Rajoalane	4	20	24	19/11/2020
		Kutoane	12	22	34	19/11/2020
		Makoko	3	7	10	19/11/2020
	TOTAL		180	279	459	

Appendix Table 6. Participants at the preliminary findings presentation

Name	Position	Men	Women	Date
Arwa Khalid	Manager for the Evaluation		X	11/12/2020
Selvaraju Ramasamy	LTO	X		11/12/2020
Carlos Tarazona	Office of Evaluation	X		11/12/2020
Kuena Morebotsane	Funding Liaison Officer		X	11/12/2020
Genevieve Braun	FAO GEF Focal Person	X		11/12/2020
Mokitinyane Nthimo	Budget Holder	X		11/12/2020
Lekholoane Lekholoane	Project Manager/NTA	X		11/12/2020
Pulane Thulo	DTC – Thaba Tseka		X	11/12/2020
Deborah Pokothoane	DTC – Mafeteng		X	11/12/2020
Total		**5**	**4**	

Appendix 2. GEF rating table

FAO - GEF rating criteria	Rating	Summary comments
1) RELEVANCE		
Overall relevance of the project	HS	The project design addresses local needs and is in line with national plans, policies and priorities as well as FAO's Country Programming Framework (CPF), FAO's Regional Priorities and FAO's Global Strategic Objective 2, as well as the GEF's Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas.
2) EFFECTIVENESS		
Overall assessment of project results	S	Average of the ratings of individual outcomes.
Outcome 1.1: Strengthened technical capacity in Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and the National University of Lesotho (NUL) at the national, district levels, and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management.	S	Capacity-building initiatives were carried out for a variety of stakeholders during the life of the project through a learning-by-doing approach. There is evidence that the project strengthened the capacities of over 170 government staff in gender mainstreaming, water harvesting, geographic information systems (GISs), conservation agriculture, climate risk assessments and agriculture. There is documentary evidence that the project strengthened the capacity of 1 374 direct beneficiaries and 40 communities through training in diversified livelihoods, nutrition education, food preservation, conservation agriculture, and by providing credit and lending.
Outcome 2.1; Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented focusing on most vulnerable watersheds.	S	The project was able to generate new data, improve methods and contribute to tools for the assessment of climate change, vulnerability and risk. There were different expectations from stakeholders on what this outcome was to produce. There is evidence of stakeholders using data generated by the project such as the biophysical surveys and the livelihoods assessment.
Outcome 3.1: Sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in selected 24 watershed and catchments.	S	Despite challenges faced, there is strong evidence that the project was able to improve SLM/W practices. In particular, access to water, which was identified as a pressing need in the communities, was addressed. A particularly interesting aspect to some of the restoration activities is the role that local grazing committees have played to socialize and appropriate norms.
Outcome 4.1: Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households.	S	A variety of livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level, income-generating activities were successfully demonstrated and adopted. The only reason that this was not rated as "highly satisfactory" is that additional quantitative data are needed on how people's incomes increased as a result of the project interventions.
Outcome 5.1: Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household level income-generating practices through wide dissemination.	MS	While many interventions have been piloted, owned and carried out, the communications and public awareness on climate change and adaptation require efforts to further embed some of the knowledge generated by the project.
Outcome 5.2: Project implementation based on results-based management and dissemination of	S	Reports and documentation of lessons learned are adequate. There is a transfer of several interventions to

FAO - GEF rating criteria	Rating	Summary comments
best practices and lessons learned for future operations.		government ministries planned to enable them to follow up on the project.
3) EFFICIENCY, PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION		
Overall quality of project implementation and adaptive management (implementing agency)	S	FAO provided adequate project implementation in terms of technical guidance. The project demonstrated adaptability to circumstances and to MTR recommendations.
Quality of execution (executing agencies)	S	The Project Coordination Unit provided good technical execution. There were some salary-related issues that were raised during implementation.
Efficiency (including cost- effectiveness and timeliness)	MS	Procurement challenges created delays, led to sub-optimal expenditures, and demoralized beneficiaries and stakeholders.
4) SUSTAINABILITY		
Overall sustainability	ML	Many of the mechanisms and interventions of the projects have buy-in from government ministries and other international projects. Many of the social structures established by the project have found community-level anchors. Given the unpredictable co-financing, lack of government resources for vehicle use, etc., there is some uncertainty about government resources being materialized for project outputs beyond the project's duration.
5) FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE (M&E and stakeholder engagement)		
Overall quality of stakeholder engagement	S	There was strong engagement of government stakeholders at the national and district levels. There was also excellent engagement of local beneficiaries. Moreover, there was effective civil society organization engagement, which needs to be better documented. However, collaboration with the National University of Lesotho (NUL) weakened; and there was low private sector involvement due to the remoteness of the sites selected.
Overall quality of M&E	MS	The AMAT tracking tool was not well understood. Although the project team was able to generate quality reports, there was not a consistent and coherent strategy for monitoring across different sites.
M&E design at project start-up	MS	The initial M&E plan was adequate but did not include relevant risks or costs for oversight.
M&E plan implementation	MS	There was not a systematic approach to M&E across the sites and across the project. The AMAT tracking tool was not well understood. Some of the project impacts, such as changes in livelihoods, were not adequately quantified.

Appendix 3. Rating scheme

Project results and outcomes

Project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes:

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	*"Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings."*
Satisfactory (S)	*"Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings."*
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	*"Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings."*
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	*"Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there wee significant shortcomings."*
Unsatisfactory (U)	*"Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings."*
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	*"Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings."*
Unable to assess (UA)	*The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.*

Project implementation and execution

The quality of implementation and execution will be rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF agencies and executed the funded activities on the ground. The performance will be rated on a six-point scale:

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	*There were no shortcomings and quality of **implementation** or **execution** exceeded expectations.*
Satisfactory (S)	*There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of **implementation** or **execution** meets expectations.*
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	*There were some shortcomings and quality of **implementation** or **execution** more or less meets expectations.*
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	*There were significant shortcomings and quality of **implementation** or **execution** somewhat lower than expected.*
Unsatisfactory (U)	*There were major shortcomings and quality of implementation substantially lower than expected.*
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	*There were severe shortcomings in quality of **implementation** or **execution**.*
Unable to assess (UA)	*The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of **implementation** or **execution**.*

Monitoring and evaluation

Quality of project M&E will be assessed in terms of:

i. design

ii. implementation

Sustainability

The sustainability will be assessed taking into account the risks related to financial, socio-political, institutional, and environmental sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability will be assessed using a four-point scale:

Rating	**Description**
Likely (L)	*There is little or no risk to sustainability.*
Moderately likely (ML)	*There are moderate risks to sustainability.*
Moderately unlikely (MU)	*There are significant risks to sustainability.*
Unlikely (U)	*There are severe risks to sustainability.*
Unable to assess (UA)	*It is not possible to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.*

Appendix 4. Co-financing table

The Government of Lesotho, through the MFLR will provide in-kind support in terms of office facilities (including electricity, telephone and fax line, internet line facility, cleaning, etc.) and time of key staff, including the NPC. The district level offices will provide technical assistance, coordination and participation in project activities. The Government will also provide substantial investments into agriculture and livestock across all the selected districts. These investments are estimated to value in total USD 7.5 million during the project period.

GCP/LES/049/LDF Govement contribution to date (August 2016 - December 2020)

Description	Officers participating	% Contribution	Period in months	Cost (LSL)	Amount (LML)
1. Salaries					
1.1 DA		0.2	53	40 000	424 000
1.2 DC		0,5	53	25 655	679 858
1.3 DAO		0.3	53	21 410	340 41 9
1.4 CCS		0.2	53	17 556	186 094
1.5 25 DTT members (technical assistance, trainings, follow-ups, supervision)	DEO	0.2	53	17 556	186 094
	DNO	0.2	53	14 409	152 735
	DIO	0.5	53	17 556	465 234
	DAPO	0.1	53	14 409	76 368
	SSCO	0.05	53	17 556	46 523
	DSO	0.3	53	14 409	229 103
	SRO	0.3	53	17 556	279 140
	DFO	0.3	53	14 409	229 103
	LENA	0.3	53	14 409	229 103
	SDCO	0.3	53	17 556	279 140
	Surveyor	0.3	53	21 410	340 419
	CLO	0.3	53	14 000	222 600
	Inspector	0.3	53	21 410	340 419
	Senior Engineer	0.3	53	21 410	340 419
	SEO	0.3	53	14 409	229 103
	DMA	0.3	53	14 409	229 103
	LMS	0.3	53	9 819	156 122
	RTO	0.3	53	9 819	156 122
	ATO NUTRITION	0.3	20	9 819	58 914
	ATO CROPS	0.3	20	9 819	58 914
	AA	0.3	20	7 357	44 142
	AA	0.3	20	7 357	44 142
	AA	0.3	20	7 357	44 142
1.6 Technical Departments' Backstopping (6)	Livestock, crops, range resources, nutrition, soil and water conservation, irrigation and water harvesting, etc.	0.4	15	250 000	1 500 000
1.7 NPC			60	13 083	784 980
1.8 HQ Hall - Department of Range Resources Management	Six meetings/year x 5 years = 18 ordinary + EO		30	800	24 000
1.9 Councillors		0.8	53	7 357	311 937
1.10 Chiefs		0.8	53	4 712	199 789
				Sub-total 1	**8 888 181**

Description	Officers participating	% Contribution	Period in months	Cost (LSL)	Amount (LML)
2. Rent for project personnel in three districts					
2.1 Staff housing (60 months)	3	1	60	2 280	410 400
2.2 Office space (60 months)	3	1	60	3 000	540 000
2.3 Hall hire/meeting venue (60 months)	3	1	60	600	108 000
2.5 Provision of 980 fruit tree seedlings at LSL 47 per tree	3	1	47	980	138 180
				Sub-total 2	**1 196 580**
3. GeneraloperatIn1expenditure					
3.1 Vehicle operational costs	3	0.2	60	50 000	1 800 000
3.1 Electricity (60 months)	3	1	60	1 000	12 000
3.3 Water (60months)	3	1	60	1 000	12 000
3.4 Cleaning (60 months)	3	1	60	500	6 000
				Sub-total 3	**30 000**
				TOTAL1+2+3	**10 114 761**
4. Poverty alleviation programme (Public Works Programme-Fato-Fato)					
Fiscal Year		Thaba-Tseka (five community councils)	Mafeteng (eight community councils)	Quthing (five community councils)	
2016/2017	Materials	1 094 575	1 256 824	485 608	
	Labour	7 315 000	11 704 000	7 315 000	
2017/2018	Materials	1 230 737	1 345 184	1 005 848	
	Labour	5 775 000	9 240 000	5 775 000	
2018/2019	Labour	5 400 000	8 640 000	5 400 000	
2019/2020	Labour	2 700 000	4 320 000	2 700 000	
	Total (LSL)	**23 515 312**	**36 506 008**	**22 681 456**	**82 702 776**
				Grand Total (LSL)	**92 817 537**

Appendix 5. Results matrix showing achievements and evaluation team comments

Planned project outcomes and outputs vs. achievement level

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
Outcome 1.1 Strengthened technical capacity in Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and the National University of Lesotho (NUL) at the national and district levels, and community representatives on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management.	Number and type of targeted institutions with increased adaptive capacity to reduce risks of and response to climate variability.	Evidence that the project strengthened the capacity of over 170 government staff through training and learning-by doing opportunities. Training was provided on gender mainstreaming, water harvesting, geographic information systems (GISs), conservation agriculture, climate risk assessments and agriculture. Project staff took into account the absorptive capacity of training recipients, to ensure skills were fostered, and training was optimized. A capacity needs assessment was carried out in 2017 to provide improved baseline knowledge. With regard to community-level beneficiaries, there is documentary evidence that the project strengthened the capacity of 1 374 direct beneficiaries and 40 communities through	Output 1.1.1: National level Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, DMA and NUL staff and district-level forestry and natural resources staff trained on climate change adaptation, integrated watershed management and community mobilization. Output 1.1.2: Training to the local representatives from CBOs on good practice examples of SLM/W, water harvesting, diversified livelihood strategies (at least 24 farmer groups [1 200 farm households] in three livelihood zones will be trained).	Evidence that training was provided to government and local-level governance on integrated watershed management and community mobilization. The project often used trained staff to implement activities to promote learning-by-doing. NUL did not participate in this training. Community members in three sites also noted receiving training from district-level teams.

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
		training in diversified livelihoods, nutrition education, food preservation, conservation agriculture, credit and lending. Again, the project staff ensured an adaptive management approach by providing supplementary refresher training over the life of the project if it were deemed that beneficiaries' skills had weakened in particular areas.		

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
Outcome 2.1 Improved data, tools and methods for assessment of impact of climate change on land suitability and land use, vulnerability and risk at the national/district level implemented focusing on most vulnerable watersheds.	Tools developed	A biophysical survey generating baseline data on land use, soil and water types, geology, types of degradation, soil texture, soil angles/slopes, climate impacts at different sites and soil and water interventions underway was developed. The project contributed content on soil type, fertility, classification and suitability to the national Lesotho Soil Information System. A livelihoods assessment was conducted to capture the socioeconomic circumstances of communities living in project sites. There is evidence of district-level technicians applying the content of these tools in their work. Interestingly, while there is evidence that this outcome was achieved, there was a sentiment among stakeholders that it was not—there were different expectations of what this outcome should have delivered and some	Output 2.1.1: Livelihood and land use (crop, livestock, agro-forestry) database developed for most vulnerable watersheds (database will be established in Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation and linked to potential users at the national level) and relevant staff trained (at least 30 core staff). Output 2.1.2: Vulnerabilities and risks (current and future) assessed for the selected watersheds in three livelihood zones and spatial information on vulnerability available (at Disaster Management Authority) to facilitate adaptation planning by the Government and relevant staff trained (total 30 staff – ten staff from each district).	The database is not fully functional and is under development. Vulnerabilities and risks were identified as per the various assessments that were produced under this Outcome. Local-level community members did note that they did not sufficiently receive weather-forecasting to support their livelihood interventions. This suggests that there may be a problem with information trickling down at the local level in a relevant manner.

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
		expected a strengthening of the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) products, which was outside the scope of this project.		

Outcome 3.1 Sustainable land and water management (SLM/W) practices (soil erosion control, soil and water conservation, water harvesting, run-off reduction, plant cover, range resource management) successfully adopted in selected watershed and catchments. (Total beneficiaries – 1 200 households and 4 800 individuals and total area covered will be 2 400 ha).	Percent target groups adopting adaptation technologies by type.	The main achievements included: range rehabilitation in Linakeng and Ha Khoali in Thaba Tseka, Ha Mantsoepa and Moqalo in Quthing, increase in plant cover, brush control, decreasing run-off and flash flooding. Communities reported increased availability of spring water due to rehabilitation efforts and rainfall infiltration, in two springs in Thaba Tseka. The project established and strengthened grazing associations that coordinated the grazing management programme in the three districts. There were accounts of the return of wildlife and biodiversity in restored zones. Watering holes designed for livestock to avoid pressure on degraded lands and wetlands and resulted in documented rehabilitation of two wetlands in Mafeteng. Gabions to prevent and halt soil erosion on the graveyards in Mafeteng and stone-built fire walls were established in rehabilitated rangelands.	Output 3.1.1: Adaptive land use and SLM/W practices implemented in at least 24 communities in three livelihood zones (1 200 households and 1 200 hectares of arable land – approximately 1 ha of arable land per household). The crops and cropping systems will be selected based on the detailed land suitability analysis to be conducted under Component 2. Output 3.1.2: Improved water harvesting structures at the household level implemented in three livelihood zones. (At least 150 households possess water harvesting structures, which also include women headed households). Output 3.1.3: Improved plant cover and range resource management measures adopted in 24 communities to improve productive use of marginal lands. (This will cover 600 households, or 2 400 individuals and cover a total area of 1 200 hectares [approximately 50 hectares per community]).	Adaptive land use and SLM/W activities were carried out in the target sites. There were demonstrably improved water harvesting structures, and women in particular noted their access to increased water. It was noted that one of the large communal water tanks was in a state of disrepair. Community members exhibited great pride at the improvement of plant cover. Particularly in Linakeng and Ha Khoali in Thaba Tseka, Ha Mantsoepa and Moqalo in Quthing, increase in plant cover, brush control, decreasing run-off and flash flooding. Communities reported increased availability of spring water due to rehabilitation efforts and rainfall infiltration, in two springs in Thaba Tseka. The project established and strengthened grazing associations that coordinated the grazing management programme in the three districts. (These associations managed the removal of invasive species and oversaw the revegetation processes). There were accounts of the return of wildlife and biodiversity in restored zones. Watering holes designed for livestock to avoid pressure on degraded lands and wetlands and resulted in

		Water harvesting and conservation was carried out through roof and spring water tanks. These included groundwater/ sand dams, roof water tanks (ten in Thaba-Tseka, 20 in Mafeteng and 44 in Quthing), and one free standing communal tank (6 000 litres). According to feedback from beneficiaries, this increased people's access to water, reduced women's travel times to get to water and replenished some of the natural springs and wetlands. Interviews estimate that 900 women have improved access to water as a result of this project. Challenges that arose, such as conflict or lack of motivation in carrying out activities on communal lands, were addressed through adaptive management, and the use of multi-stakeholder structures established and strengthened by the project (e.g. grazing committees, District Technical Teams).		documented rehabilitation of two wetlands in Mafeteng. Water harvesting and conservation was carried out through roof and spring water tanks. This reduced women's travel time in fetching water and replenished some of the natural springs and wetlands. Interviews estimate that 900 women have improved access to water as a result of this project.

Outcome 4.1 Diversified livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households. (Benefit 750 households [3 000 individuals] in an area covered under this investment of 375 hectares).	Percent increase per capita income of farm households due to adaptation measures applied, additional information needs to be collected.	Beneficiaries were supported through improved crop production, which were enhanced through the dissemination of shade-nets, introduced by the project. Around 900 households were provided with vegetable seed packages and shade nets for keyhole gardens and seeds for trench and communal gardens. The project supplied and demonstrated how to increase production of high-value cash crops such as mushroom spawns and garlic cloves in Quthing and Mafeteng, and various horticultural practices were promoted: plastic mulch was used to conserve moisture and inhibit weed growth, fruit trees and agroforestry was also promoted. Training was carried out in tandem to support application and use of inputs; these included: how to establish keyhole gardens, establishing agroforestry systems, protective hedges, windbreaks, stabilizing riverbanks and on	Output 4.1.1: Community participation ensured in 24 community groups in selected watersheds of three livelihood zones and introductory sessions conducted and small-scale household level income-generating and food and nutrition activities (e.g. horticulture, small ruminants, beekeeping) introduced to 750 households. Output 4.1.2: Field demonstration of locally relevant multi-purpose agro-forestry to protect and improve livelihood systems conducted in 24 locations and adopted by the stakeholders covering 375 hectares.	See extent achieved under Outcome 4.1.

		SLM/W. The project also supported short-cycle livestock such as pigs, poultry, rabbits and egg production. Through interviews with beneficiaries, it was revealed that these greatly assisted with peoples' livelihoods. The project supported the promotion of Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC), which facilitated access to credit; 36 SILCs were supported by the project, supporting 597 participants, 448 of which are female and 149 of them males. An end of project socioeconomic survey is recommended to capture to what extent these inputs and training increased recipients' livelihoods.		

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
Outcome 5.1 Stakeholders and communities aware of improved SLM/W practices, livelihood diversification and household level income-generating practices through wide dissemination.	Stakeholders' awareness of project activities.	The project developed a communications strategy in 2018; however, it is unclear to what degree this was adhered to. The communications officer responsible for managing the plan withdrew from the project, which created a void in this area. The most effective means of communication was district-level meetings and quarterly Project Steering Committee meetings. There was no repository for documentation used by various stakeholders. Although aspects of the project were mainstreamed within communities, particularly those focused on livelihoods, there were conflicting opinions by stakeholders on whether local communities deepened their understanding of climate change beyond their livelihood or community restoration activities. The evaluation team received feedback that the areas that still required communications efforts	Output 5.1.1: A communication strategy established in close collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship and NUL and implemented.	A communications strategy was developed although was not closely adhered to after the communications officer left the project team.

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
		included climate change trends, locally relevant climate change shocks and extreme events (hail, strong winds, heavy rain and flash floods, recurrent drought, snow, heat waves), community-based disaster preparedness plan, climate information and weather forecasts for informed decision-making especially on seasonal agricultural activities.		
Outcome 5.2 Project implementation based on results-based management and the dissemination of best practices and lessons learned for future operations.	Project monitoring and evaluation system in place.	The project produced appropriate reports (project implementation reports, project progress reports and biannual reports), and a report on the AMAT tool (see the section on monitoring and evaluation). There were also documentary accounts that the project disseminated information through FAO press releases, website and print media. There was some radio/television coverage and forums, which covered line ministries. In addition, farmers shared	Output 5.2.1: Systematic collection of field-based data to monitor project outcome indicators at all levels and reviews.	There was a collection of systematic information to produce project progress reports, project implementation reports and reports for steering committee meetings. However, there were no consistent monitoring methods for each site, nor were qualitative data collected. The lack of an M&E personnel indicates that monitoring was not optimized.

Outcome	Outcome-level indicator	Extent achieved	Outputs	Extent achieved
		knowledge and participated in the Climate Change Coordinating Committee.		

Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of reference

http://www.fao.org/3/cb6603en/cb6603en.pdf

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