FP200

Scaling up the implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management (Project 2)

Lao People's Democratic Republic (the)

September 2026

Interim Evaluation Report

This report presents the Interim Evaluation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF)-funded project “Scaling up the implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management (Project 2)”. The evaluation was independently commissioned by the Accredited Entity (AE), Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and submitted to GCF. GCF assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information in this report.

KNOWING WHAT WORKS

Project evaluation

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management, Laos - Project number 2018.2092.7, GCF FP 200

Mid-Term Evaluation Report

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CfW	Cash for Work
CliPAD	Climate Protection through Avoided Deforestation and Implementation of the Governance, Forest Landscapes and Livelihoods Project
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAEO	District Agriculture and Environment Office
DAFO	Former District Agriculture and Forestry Office, now merged into DAEO
DIG	Democratic and Inclusive Governance
DPMS	Digital Project Monitoring System
EFF	Environment and Forest Protection Fund
EPF	Environmental Protection Fund (now merged into the EFF)
ER-P	Emission Reductions Programme
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FFRDF	Forest and Forest Resource Development Fund
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Credit Institute for Reconstruction)
MAE	Ministry for Agriculture and Environment, Lao PDR
MAF	Former Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR, now merged into the MAE
MONRE	Former Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, now merged into the MAE
MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprises
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution

NRS	National REDD+ Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAEO	Provincial Agriculture and Environment Office
PAFO	Former Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, now merged into PAEO
PD/GG	Participatory Development/Good Governance
PDMS	Provincial Deforestation Monitoring System
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Plans (understood at village level)
PSAP	Promotion of Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Agricultural Practices
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation + (enhancing forest carbon stocks)
tCO2eq	Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent
VDF	Village Development Funds
VFAGC	Village Forestry Agriculture Grant Committees
VFMP	Village Forest Management Plan
VLFMC	Village Land and Forest Management Committees

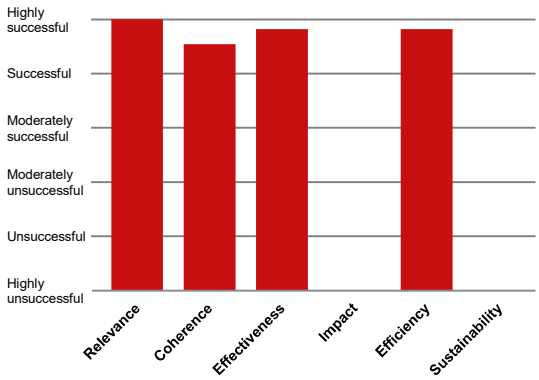
Executive Summary

Project title	Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management
Country/region/global	Laos
Sector and creditor reporting system code	31210 – Forestry policy and administrative management
Project number	FP200 (GCF Project 2), 2018.2092.7 (BMZ, CliPAD IV)
Commissioning party/co-financier	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Green Climate Fund (GCF)
Lead executing agency/partner organisation(s)	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)
Development cooperation (DC) pro-	Climate-friendly management of the environment and natural resources in Laos
Implementing organisations of the DC programme	GIZ, KfW
Project value	FP200 (GCF): EUR 34,947,121; CliPAD IV (BMZ): EUR 11,500,000
Project term	FP200: 03/2023–03/2027; CliPAD IV: 07/2019–03/2027

Objectives of the projects

The project aims to strengthen institutional and regulatory systems for low-emission planning and development and to improve the management of land and forest areas in order to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in Laos.

Overall rating: Successful (90/100)



Context of the project

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a land-locked, least developed country in Southeast Asia with a population of 6.9 million and a per capita income of USD 2,270. Its economy relies heavily on natural resources, especially forestry and agriculture, which together account for 16% of GDP and employ 64% of the workforce. Subsistence farming is widespread, and many rural communities depend on forests for their livelihoods, with shifting cultivation remaining an important subsistence strategy. However, the expansion of cash crops such as rubber and cassava has contributed to deforestation, causing the country's forest cover to decline from about 70% in the 1960s to around 58% today. Deforestation and land use change generate an estimated 26.6 million tCO2eq annually, with forestry and agriculture accounting for the vast majority of emissions. The country is considered highly vulnerable to climate change, facing floods, landslides and wildfires, with marginalised groups being the most affected.

Persistent governance challenges, including weak implementation of land use plans, limited law enforcement, unclear land boundaries and inadequate monitoring, contribute to forest encroachment and illegal clearing that often remain unreported. In response, Lao PDR has prioritised sustainable forest management in key policy frameworks, including the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021–2025, its Nationally Determined Contribution, and the Forestry Strategy to 2035, aiming for 70% forest cover and enhanced rehabilitation efforts. Since 2008, the country has been engaged in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, with a REDD+ Emission Reductions Programme targeting six northern provinces, supported by institutional and legal reforms developed by the national REDD+ Task Force and Technical Working Groups. The project supports the Government of Laos in implementing its Emission Reductions Programme, focusing on improved forest

management, law enforcement and the promotion of sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural practices in the six provinces. Emission reductions are expected to unlock results-based payments of up to USD 42 million issued by the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

Brief description of the project

The project features three components, reflecting the three outputs listed in the table below. **Component 1** aims to create an enabling environment for REDD+ implementation. At national level, the project provides advisory services and capacity development to government institutions with the objective of improving Lao PDR's capacity to establish and operationalise REDD+, including a REDD+ funding window, and a national Monitoring Reporting and Verification (MRV) system to calculate emission reductions from forest protection. At village level, the project obtains free prior and informed consent (FPIC) from villages to join the Emission Reductions Programme, establishes village bank accounts, and supports the development of Participatory Land Use Plans (PLUP). These are necessary preconditions for the implementation of agriculture (Component 2) and forest management activities (Component 3). **Component 2** focuses on the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices (PSAP) with the objective of providing villages with economic alternatives to slash-and-burn-based agriculture. A group of selected households in each village receives agricultural inputs (worth EUR 400 per household) and training, based on crops or commodities they select from an approved list. Villagers are expected to apply improved agricultural practices that are anticipated to increase the quality and quantity of yields, thereby contributing to increased and diversified household income and improved livelihoods (Outcome 2d), while reducing vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change (Outcome 2c). **Component 3** focuses on village forest management. The project establishes and strengthens Village Land and Forest Management Committees (VLFMCs, Output 3.1) in each project village and facilitates the development of Village Forest Management Agreements (ViFoMA), which restrict the commercial use of certain forest areas designated by the PLUP. Following this, the project trains villagers to conduct forest management tasks such as patrolling, fire protection and boundary demarcation, on a cash-for-work (CfW) basis, contributing to the sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems (Outcome 3a), which is expected to reduce deforestation (Outcome 3b). **At impact level,** a reduction in deforestation is expected to contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which the World Bank's FCPF will purchase through results-based payments of up to USD 42 million.

Table: Project objective/areas of intervention

Project objective	Institutional and regulatory systems for low-emission planning and development are strengthened and the management of land and forest areas is improved to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.
Output 1	Creation of an enabling environment for REDD+ implementation
Output 2	Market solutions for agricultural drivers of deforestation – Implementation of sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural practices
Output 3	Climate change mitigation and adaptation through forestry

Assessment according to DAC criteria

Relevance

The **project is highly relevant to the Lao Government's forestry, climate and development policies, as well as Germany's development cooperation objectives**. The project's targets for forest management, livelihood and emission reduction strongly support Laos' 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and its Forestry Strategy and national REDD+ Strategy. Moreover, the project is part of BMZ's REDD+ strategy and contributes to the implementation of Germany's forest action plan for sustainable development, published by BMZ for German development cooperation. The project is well **aligned with the needs and requirements of government institutions** at national level, as well as their agencies at provincial and district levels, and the training measures are perceived as helpful and as

addressing capacity gaps. At village level, **the project addresses critical needs of beneficiaries**, including the lack of alternative income sources, low agricultural productivity, limited access to finance and markets, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

The **project design was assessed as appropriate**, addressing multiple governance levels. It includes three interlinked and reinforcing project components that are well integrated into the overall framework for emission reductions through forest protection. The project's extensive geographic coverage and large number of villages addressed underscore its potential to achieve large-scale emission reductions, contributing to the NDCs of Laos. However, weaknesses were identified due to the project being commissioned under three different reporting requirements (CliPAD, Project 1, Project 2), resulting in some inconsistencies in results frameworks and indicators. The project demonstrates **strong adaptive management** practices through systematic learning from implementation experiences, resulting in responsive course corrections. The Digital Project Monitoring System (DPMS), along with two household surveys, provides the basis for identifying lessons learned from Project 1 implementation. These lessons are then incorporated into the remaining implementation phase and the design of Project 2.

Coherence

With regards to **internal coherence**, the complementarity and synergies between CliPAD and the two GIZ-implemented projects – Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Laos (ProFEB), and the Southeast Asia Climate and Clean Air Initiative (SEACAI) – were found to be **high**. Both projects leverage the networks, experience and the implementation structure of CliPAD in Laos, by assigning service packages to CliPAD to pilot their approaches in CliPAD villages. KfW's Village Forest Management project was found to be less complementary to CliPAD. While both projects are (co-)funded by BMZ, share a similar approach, and operate in the same districts, they lack a clear division of tasks, leading to redundant implementation structures. With regards to **external coherence**, the evaluation team found a **high level of complementarity** between projects funded by different donors supporting the Laos Emission Reductions Programme within the GCF co-financing framework (JICA, ADB, IFAD). Each project focuses on a different component of REDD+, and there is strong coordination of implementation between the project teams. By design, the projects are interdependent, and their results are expected to reinforce each other to create overarching developmental change. Moreover, CliPAD leverages existing government structures across all governance levels to implement project activities. Forest management, law enforcement and livelihood activities at the provincial, district and village levels are implemented by the respective government agencies, with PAEO and DAEO staff, as well as members of the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and Lao Front for National Development being responsible for fieldwork.

Effectiveness

Project 2 meets all its indicators against mid-term targets, except for CliPAD indicator 2, which is only partially met, indicating that Project 2 **is well on track to achieve its intended objectives**. While the project has already reached large numbers of direct beneficiaries – 85,131 males and 81,736 females – PSAP activities in Project 2 villages experienced a slight delay, which is expected to be resolved during the remaining implementation period. The results of the contribution analysis show that the project's advice and capacity development services to the Lao Government **contributed to increasing the capacity of Lao PDR institutions** to plan and implement climate-related processes and also improved the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance. However, a certain dependence on financial and technical support and guidance from international donors remains evident. Although it was too early to assess the effects of forest management activities in Project 2 villages, the evaluation team found strong evidence that the project's forestry interventions in Project 1 villages reduced the use of slash-and-burn to clear forest land by villagers, suggesting the project **contributed to a decline in deforestation** in the project area. There are some indications in Project 1 villages that PSAP contributes to improved livelihoods, but the direct effects of alternative livelihoods on reducing slash-and-burn

practices and improving forest protection remain unclear. Nevertheless, the evaluation team is convinced that PSAP has indirectly contributed to reducing deforestation, as an important factor in securing villages' participation in forest management activities**.** It is plausible that the interventions in Project 2 villages will have similar effects on forest protection in the future.

Given the extensive geographical coverage and the scale of the interventions, the evaluation team found the **quality of steering and implementation management** to be **high**. The Digital Project Monitoring System (DPMS) and the two household surveys serve as essential sources of information, enabling real-time progress tracking, streamlining budget requests, and facilitating data-driven decision-making. Government counterparts are largely satisfied with the quality of advisory support but noted minor challenges related to coordination and staff turnover within the GIZ team. The project monitors unintended results comprehensively and effectively. The evaluation team did **not observe any substantial unintended negative results** at outcome level.

Table: Achievement of the project's objective indicators (selection)

Indicator	%
Core Indicator 2: Number direct and indirect beneficiaries reached	100
Core Indicator 4: Area under Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP)	100
Outcome Indicator 2.1: Area under sustainable agricultural practices (PSAP)	100
Outcome Indicator 3: Area under improved forest management (ViFoMA/ViFoCA)	100
CliPAD Indicator 2: % of PSAP households confirming their resilience has improved (target to be reached by 2027)	37

Impact

It is too early to assess the impact of Project 2 on emission reductions targets, as forest management activities at village level have just begun to be implemented. However, with regard to **CliPAD**, which includes the implementation of Project 1, the project **reported emission reductions of 6.9 million tCO2eq** for the period 2019–2024 to BMZ, roughly **meeting the target** of 7.1 million tCO2eq for Project 1 villages to be achieved at mid-term. The figure is based on the FCPF monitoring report for the six northern provinces of Laos. While the emission reductions cannot be attributed solely to CliPAD/Project 1 – as other World Bank and KfW projects in the same area have also contributed to it – they nonetheless indicate that **the forest management interventions across the 240 Project 1 villages have been successful** in reducing carbon emissions at scale. It is plausible that Project 2 villages will achieve similar emission reductions in the future, since they follow the same approach as Project 1. The Lao Government has already received a **first tranche of USD 16 million in results-based payments** from the FCPF carbon fund, with **69% of this among allocated for transfer to villages**. The benefit-sharing plan suggests that villages use part of the funds to improve livelihoods. However, since the implementation of the benefit-sharing plan is delayed and disbursements to villages have not yet taken place, it is **too early to assess how villages will use the payments** and whether they will have a positive impact on livelihoods. Several observations suggest that improved capacity within the Lao Government and the country's regulatory frameworks for REDD+ have **increased the government's access to climate finance**. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Lao Government have recently received approval for a USD 61.5 million project proposed to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to implement REDD+ through village forest management in southern Laos. In addition, the Environment and Forest Protection Fund **(EFF) became a GCF-accredited entity** in 2025.[1] At the same time, the **Lao Government's dependence on external technical support** to initiate, develop and manage proposals for

[1] Please note that the former EPF has achieved accreditation with the GCF. The accreditation of the recently formed EFF was not clear at the time of the evaluation. Although the EFF emerged from the former EPF, it may need to undergo certain steps in the accreditation process again to become accredited. However, since the EPF was already accredited, stakeholders expect the EFF to achieve accreditation soon.

international climate finance **remains high**. With regard to unintended impacts, the evaluation team found that the disbursement of bonus payments to villages could risk triggering conflict over the use and distribution of the funds – an issue that has not been sufficiently addressed in the project design so far.

Efficiency

The project demonstrates **strong financial management**. Approximately 60% of the funds (EUR 31 million) are channelled through the EFF to government stakeholders and village-level activities. Despite the complexity of managing funds across multiple governance levels, financial management remains smooth and free of significant irregularities. Overall, the evaluation team found that the scale and quality of outputs delivered represented **good value for money**. In the absence of a benchmark, it did not find any indications to suggest the project could have achieved the same outputs with a lower budget. Co-financing partners contribute to outputs at no additional cost to BMZ/GCF. However, due to implementation delays in the new Project 2 provinces, not all outputs were delivered as planned. Specifically, forest management activities and PSAP investments have not yet been carried out in all villages. The grant-based engagement of government structures for project implementation is considered an efficient solution offering strong co-benefits such as increased ownership, capacity development and sustainability. The **interplay among the various development agencies** within the GCF's co-financing framework has significantly **enhanced the project's allocation efficiency**. At no additional cost to the donors (BMZ/GCF), the outputs of the co-financing partners substantially increased the project's impact. In addition, the project has secured an additional EUR 16 million for Lao Government agencies and village communities to continue REDD+ implementation, enhance forest management and implement livelihood interventions.

Sustainability

By design, the project has **established important preconditions for sustainability**; however, several challenges that threaten the long-term success of forest protection remain. The decision to implement the project's activities through government agencies has significantly contributed to capacity development and firmly established the project approach within the country's institutions. The **Lao Government's capacity to manage REDD+ and climate-related processes in the future has improved**, although reliance on expertise and financial support from development agencies remains high. PAEO and DAEO have sufficient know-how to operate the Provincial Deforestation Monitoring System (PDMS) in the future and JICA is confident that they can hand over the national-level maintenance and oversight of the system to a Lao organisation. At district level, **DAEO staff felt well equipped to continue working with villages on PSAP and forest management**; however, budget availability for field activities, including law enforcement, could pose a challenge in some districts. Villagers demonstrated strong identification with the objective of protecting the forest and were optimistic about continuing to implement forest management activities in the future. Nonetheless, villagers' participation in the project's forest management interventions is currently incentivised by PSAP support, Cash for Work (CfW) and the performance-based bonus payments. Some government stakeholders and GIZ advisers working with the villages have raised **concerns about whether villagers' sense of ownership and motivation to protect forests will continue without further financial incentives** in the future.

Overall rating

The project is assessed as successful at mid-term, because it is on track to effectively support the Emission Reductions Programme for northern Laos under the World Bank's REDD+ framework. Its **holistic approach** – combining policy-level support to strengthen Lao Government's capacity to manage the complex REDD+ processes with province, district and village-level interventions addressing multiple drivers of deforestation to achieve the necessary emission reductions – has proven successful in practice. The **various areas of intervention** are **complementary** and – despite some delays in implementation at village level – have been **rolled out effectively**. These elements come together to form a picture that, combined with the achievements

of Project 1, is poised to make a significant contribution to rural development and climate change mitigation in Laos. The Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices (PSAP) serves as a necessary incentive for villages to join the project and **fosters alternative livelihoods to shifting cultivation**. Observations from Project 1 suggest that the implementation of sustainable **village forest management** will **reduce deforestation,** leading to corresponding **emission reductions**. The co-financing partner JICA provides the necessary satellite-based **forest monitoring (PDMS)** and national MRV systems to **strengthen law enforcement** and measure and **verify emission reductions**. Thanks to the project's extensive policy-level support, the Lao Government is able to and **monetise these emission reductions** as results-based payments under the FCPF carbon fund. Furthermore, the REDD+ **benefit-sharing plan** suggests that these payments will be **redistributed to villages**, potentially contributing to positive environmental and social development impacts in the future.

Since this is a mid-term evaluation, the project's **impacts could not yet be observed**. However, since **Project 1** has already achieved large-scale **emission reductions**, it is plausible that forest management activities in Project 2 villages will **contribute to similar reductions in the future**. Nevertheless, although deforestation in the project villages has stopped, Laos may not receive the full amount of results-based payments from the World Bank, as retaining forest cover outside the project area has fallen short of expectations. While the project and its co-financing partners made great efforts to institutionalise the approaches and interventions within legal frameworks and develop the capacities of government institutions, **the Lao Government remains highly dependent on external expertise and finance** from development organisations to manage REDD+ and other climate-related processes, raising **concerns about the long-term sustainability** of the Emission Reductions Programme. A shift in government priorities away from forests and climate, or concessions granted to foreign investors for natural resource extraction or infrastructure projects, could trigger deforestation and further undermine the impacts of REDD+ in the future. While villagers recognise the benefits of intact forest ecosystems and are motivated to continue sustainable forest management in the future, some stakeholders raised concerns that the **absence of financial incentives** (PSAP, CfW and bonus payments) for villages after the end of the project **could undermine forest protection in the long-term**.

Table: Rating of OECD DAC evaluation criteria

Criteria	Score (Max. 100)	Rating 1 (highly successful) to 6 (highly unsuccessful)	Criteria	Score (Max. 100)	Rating 1 (highly successful) to 6 (highly unsuccessful)
Relevance	94	Level 1: highly successful	Impact	-	<rating>
Coherence	87	Level 2: successful	Efficiency	90	Level 2: successful
Effectiveness	90	Level 2: successful	Sustainability	-	<rating>
Overall				**90**	**Level 2: successful**

Conclusions and factors of success and failure

The following are examples of success factors:

- ☑ The holistic project design, combining efforts to develop the institutional capacity of the Lao Government to manage REDD+ with interventions in village forest management, law enforcement, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. It also features large-scale and geographically diverse coverage of interventions.
- ☑ Deploying provincial and district government agencies for village-level implementation of PSAP and forest management interventions is an efficient approach and contributes to developing capacities within PAEO and DAEO, promoting the long-term sustainability of forest protection.

☑ Government partners report on village-level implementation and budget spending through a DPMS, which enables the GIZ steering unit in Vientiane to monitor real-time implementation of large-scale on-the-ground activities across a wide geographical area. In addition, the project conducted a household survey to gather data on project implementation and its effects from beneficiaries' perspectives. Both data sources are used for adaptive management, gradually refining the implementation approach to maximise results and maintain safeguards, while avoiding negative effects on villages.

The following are examples of constraining factors:

☒ The PSAP budget of EUR 400 per household for agricultural investments was considered insufficient by implementing government staff and some beneficiaries to generate transformative impacts on livelihoods.

☒ The project operates within a generally challenging context for climate finance and forest protection. Structural barriers that constrain the success of capacity development include government staff's capacity to read and understand English, the limited number of technical in-country experts, limited IT infrastructure and technical know-how, including experience with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), weak law enforcement, limited rule of law and understanding of developing and implementing legal frameworks; and substantial budget constraints due to low tax revenues.

☒ The sustainable management and protection of forests require ongoing costs over decades. It is, therefore, a loophole in the REDD+ framework that it does not provide solutions for how countries should cover those ongoing costs while avoiding economic exploitation of forests in the long term, once results-based payments have long been spent. This raises serious questions about sustainability, which, however, are beyond the scope and influence of a single GIZ/GCF project.

Recommendations

- In some villages, PSAP farmers have taken loans from PSAP service providers to finance larger rice fields, rubber plots or fishponds than those covered by the PSAP budget under the project. The project is recommended to monitor debt-taking among villagers and consider appropriate countermeasures before unreasonably high loans increase the vulnerability of many households and undermine the project's impacts on livelihoods.
- Some stakeholders expressed concerns that transferring bonus payments to village bank accounts could cause irregularities or conflicts regarding the use and distribution of the payments. The project is recommended to monitor how Project 1 villages spent the bonus payment and to consider mediation if any conflicts arise. Based on the outcome of Project 1 monitoring, the project could accompany the disbursal of the bonus in Project 2 villages by taking a supportive role in facilitating decision-making on and the operationalisation of payments.
- EFF representatives expressed that they would appreciate it if GIZ invested more in building their institution's capacity, particularly in proposal development for international donors. It is recommended that the project considers supporting the EFF in strengthening its internal capacities for proposal management.
- Constraints in the budget and personnel resources of district government agencies (DAEO) may jeopardise the sustainability of the project. In the context of an exit strategy, it is recommended that the project consult DAEOs on how to prioritise the most important core activities or follow-ups with villages that can still be carried out, considering the limited resources.
- It is recommended that GIZ and GCF consider how the results frameworks of joint projects can be harmonised to increase efficiency and consistency in project monitoring and reporting.
- Sustainability is the criterion assessed as the most critical in this evaluation; however, the timing of the evaluation assessing this criterion was quite early, and data availability was still insufficient. GIZ and GCF are recommended to commission an ex-post evaluation to examine the long-term impacts of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme on institutional capacities, forest protection, rural development and livelihoods.

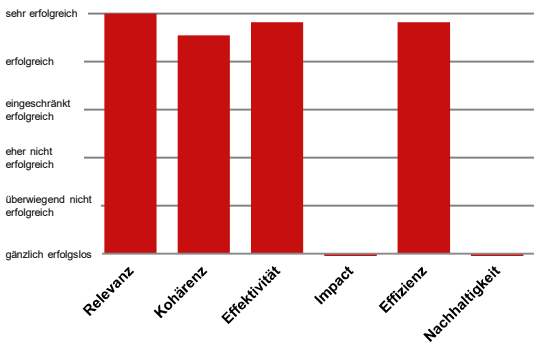
Executive Summary (German)

Titel	Umsetzung des Emissionsminderungsprogramms der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Laos durch verbesserte Regierungsführung und nachhaltige Waldlandschaftsbewirtschaftung
Land/Region/global	Laos
Sektor und Förderbereichsschlüssel	31210 – Forstpolitik und -verwaltung
Projektnummer	FP200 (GCF Project 2), 2018.2092.7 (BMZ, CliPAD IV)
Auftraggeber	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), Green Climate Fund (GCF)
Politischer Träger/Partnerorganisationen	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)
Titel EZ-Programm	Klimafreundliches Umwelt- und Ressourcenmanagement in Laos
Durchführungsorganisationen EZ-Programm	GIZ, KfW
Projektvolumen	FP200 (GCF): EUR 34,947,121; CliPAD IV (BMZ): EUR 11,500,000
Projektlaufzeit	FP200: 03/2023 – 03/2027; CliPAD IV: 07/2019 – 03/2027

Ziele des Projekts

Das Projekt zielte darauf ab, institutionelle und regulatorische Systeme für eine emissionsarme Planung und Entwicklung zu stärken und die Bewirtschaftung von Land- und Waldflächen zu verbessern, um Emissionen aus Entwaldung und Walddegradierung in Laos zu reduzieren.

Gesamtbewertung: erfolgreich (90/100)



Rahmenbedingungen und Einordnung des Projekts

Die Demokratische Volksrepublik Laos ist ein Binnenstaat und eines der am wenigsten entwickelten Länder Südostasiens mit 6,9 Millionen Einwohner*innen und einem Pro-Kopf-Einkommen von 2.270 US-Dollar. Die Wirtschaft des Landes ist stark von natürlichen Ressourcen abhängig, insbesondere von der Forst- und Landwirtschaft, die 16 % zum BIP beitragen und 64 % der Erwerbsbevölkerung beschäftigen. Subsistenzlandwirtschaft ist weit verbreitet, und viele ländliche Gemeinden sind für ihren Lebensunterhalt auf Wälder angewiesen, wobei der Wanderfeldbau nach wie vor eine wichtige Subsistenzstrategie darstellt. Die Verbreitung von *Cash Crops* wie Kautschuk und Maniok hat jedoch zur Entwaldung beigetragen, und die Waldbedeckung des Landes ist von etwa 70 % in den 1960er Jahren auf heute rund 58 % zurückgegangen. Entwaldung und Landnutzungsänderungen verursachen jährlich schätzungsweise 26,6 Mio. t CO2-Äquivalent, wobei der Großteil der Emissionen auf die Forst- und Landwirtschaft entfällt. Das Land gilt als besonders anfällig für den Klimawandel und ist mit Überschwemmungen, Erdrutschen und Waldbränden konfrontiert, wobei marginalisierte Bevölkerungsgruppen am stärksten betroffen sind.

Anhaltende Herausforderungen im Bereich der Regierungsführung, darunter die mangelhafte Umsetzung von Landnutzungsplänen, begrenzte Rechtsdurchsetzung, unklare Grundstücksgrenzen und unzureichendes Monitoring, tragen zu Waldzerstörung und illegalen Rodungen bei, die oft nicht gemeldet werden. Als Reaktion darauf hat die Demokratische Volksrepublik Laos die nachhaltige Waldbewirtschaftung in zentralen politischen Rahmenwerken priorisiert, darunter im Nationalen Sozioökonomischen Entwicklungsplan 2021–2025, in den *National Determined Contributions* (NDC) und in der Forststrategie bis 2035, mit dem Ziel einer Waldbedeckung von 70 % und verstärkten Wiederaufforstungsbemühungen. Seit 2008 beteiligt sich das Land an der

Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) mit einem REDD+-Emissionsminderungsprogramm, das auf sechs nördliche Provinzen abzielt und durch institutionelle und rechtliche Reformen unterstützt wird, die von der nationalen *REDD+-Taskforce* und technischen Arbeitsgruppen entwickelt wurden. Das Projekt unterstützt die laotische Regierung bei der Umsetzung ihres Emissionsminderungsprogramms, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf einer verbesserten Waldbewirtschaftung, der Durchsetzung der Gesetze und der Förderung nachhaltiger und entwaldungsfreier landwirtschaftlicher Praktiken in den sechs Provinzen liegt. Es wird erwartet, dass Laos für die Emissionsminderungen ergebnisbasierte Zahlungen in Höhe von bis zu 42 Millionen US-Dollar erhält, die von der FCPF der Weltbank bereitgestellt werden.

Kurzbeschreibung des Projekts

Das Projekt umfasst drei Komponenten, die sich in den drei Outputs des Projektes widerspiegeln (siehe nachfolgende Tabelle). **Komponente 1** zielt darauf ab, die (institutionellen) Rahmenbedingungen für die Umsetzung von REDD+ zu etablieren. Auf nationaler Ebene bietet das Projekt Beratungsdienste und Kapazitätsaufbau für staatliche Institutionen an, mit dem Ziel, die Kapazitäten der Regierung zur Etablierung und Steuerung von REDD+-Prozessen zu verbessern, einschließlich eines REDD+-Finanzierungsfensters und eines nationalen MRV-Systems (*Monitoring, Verification and Reporting*) zur Berechnung der Emissionsminderungen durch Waldschutz. Auf Dorfebene holt das Projekt die freie, vorherige und informierte Zustimmung (*free, prior and informed consent*, FPIC) der Dörfer zur Teilnahme am Emissionsminderungsprogramm ein, richtet Dorfbankkonten ein und fördert die Entwicklung partizipativer Landnutzungspläne (PLUP) als notwendige Voraussetzungen für die Umsetzung von Aktivitäten in den Bereichen Landwirtschaft (Komponente 2) und Waldbewirtschaftung (Komponente 3). **Komponente 2** konzentriert sich auf die Förderung nachhaltiger landwirtschaftlicher Praktiken (*Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices*, PSAP) mit dem Ziel, den Dörfern wirtschaftliche Alternativen zur Brandrodungslandwirtschaft zu bieten. Eine Gruppe ausgewählter Haushalte in jedem Dorf erhält landwirtschaftliche Betriebsmittel (400 EUR/Haushalt) und Schulungen, basierend auf den Kulturen oder Rohstoffen, die sie aus einer *Whitelist* auswählen können. Es wird angenommen, dass die Anwendung der verbesserten landwirtschaftlichen Praktiken die Qualität und Quantität der Erträge steigert und damit zu einem höheren und diversifizierten Haushaltseinkommen sowie verbesserten Lebensgrundlagen (Ergebnis 2d) beiträgt und die Anfälligkeit gegenüber den Auswirkungen des Klimawandels verringert (Outcome 2c). **Komponente 3** konzentriert sich auf die dörfliche Waldbewirtschaftung. In den Projektdörfern werden Komitees für Land- und Waldbewirtschaftung (*Village Land and Forest Management Committees*, VLFMC, Output 3.1) eingerichtet und geschult, und die Ausarbeitung von Vereinbarungen zur dörflichen Waldbewirtschaftung (*Village Forest Management Agreements*, ViFoMA) gefördert, die die kommerzielle Nutzung bestimmter im PLUP ausgewiesener Waldgebiete einschränken. Im Anschluss daran schult das Projekt Dorfbewohner*innen in der Durchführung von Waldbewirtschaftungsaktivitäten wie Patrouillen, dem Anlegen von Brandschutzschneisen und Grenzmarkierungen, auf der Grundlage von *Cash for Work* (CfW) und mit dem Ziel, zur nachhaltigen Bewirtschaftung und zum Schutz und zur Wiederherstellung von Waldökosystemen beizutragen (Ergebnis 3a), was zu einer Verringerung der Entwaldung führen soll (Ergebnis 3b). **Auf der Impact-Ebene** wird erwartet**,** dass ein Rückgang der Entwaldung zu einer Verringerung der Treibhausgasemissionen beiträgt, die vom FCPF der Weltbank mit ergebnisorientierten Zahlungen von bis zu 42 Millionen US-Dollar vergütet werden.

Tabelle: Projektziel/Interventionsbereiche

Projektziel	Institutionelle und regulatorische Systeme für eine emissionsarme Planung und Entwicklung werden gestärkt und die Bewirtschaftung von Land- und Waldflächen verbessert, um Emissionen aus Entwaldung und Waldde-gradierung zu reduzieren.
Outcome 1	Schaffung eines förderlichen Umfelds für die Umsetzung von REDD+
Outcome 2	Marktbasierte Lösungen für landwirtschaftliche Ursachen der Entwaldung – Umsetzung nachhaltiger und entwaldungsfreier landwirtschaftlicher Praktiken
Outcome 3	Klimaschutz und Anpassung an den Klimawandel durch Forstwirtschaft

Bewertung nach DAC-Kriterien

Relevanz

Das **Projekt ist von hoher Relevanz für die Forst-, Klima- und Entwicklungspolitik der laotischen Regierung sowie für die Ziele der deutschen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit**. Die Projektziele in den Bereichen Waldbewirtschaftung, Lebensgrundlagen und Emissionsminderung unterstützen maßgeblich den 9. Nationalen Sozioökonomischen Entwicklungsplan von Laos, die *Nationally Determined Contributions* (NDC) des Landes sowie dessen Forststrategie und nationale REDD+-Strategie. Darüber hinaus ist das Projekt Teil der REDD+-Strategie des BMZ und trägt zur Umsetzung des deutschen Waldaktionsplans für nachhaltige Entwicklung bei, den das BMZ für die deutsche Entwicklungszusammenarbeit veröffentlicht hat. Das Projekt ist gut **auf die Bedürfnisse und Anforderungen der staatlichen Institutionen** auf nationaler Ebene und ihrer Behörden auf Provinz- und Distriktebene **abgestimmt**, und die Schulungsmaßnahmen werden als hilfreich empfunden und schließen Kapazitätslücken. Auf Dorfebene **geht das Projekt auf die Bedürfnisse der Begünstigten ein**, darunter ein Mangel an alternativen Einkommensquellen, geringe landwirtschaftliche Produktivität, eingeschränkter Zugang zu Finanzmitteln und Märkten sowie Anfälligkeit gegenüber den Auswirkungen des Klimawandels.

Das **Projektdesign wurde als angemessen bewertet**, da es mehrere Verwaltungsebenen abdeckt und drei miteinander verknüpfte und sich gegenseitig verstärkende Projektkomponenten gut in den Gesamtrahmen für Emissionsminderungen durch Waldschutz integriert sind. Die umfassende geografische Abdeckung und die große Anzahl der einbezogenen Dörfer unterstreichen das Potenzial des Projekts, in hohem Maße Emissionsminderungen zu erzielen, die voraussichtlich zu den NDCs von Laos beitragen werden. Kritisiert wird, dass das Projekt in drei verschiedenen Berichtsformaten (CliPAD, Projekt 1, Projekt 2) in Auftrag gegeben wurde, was zu Inkonsistenzen zwischen den Zielsystemen und Indikatoren führt. Das Projekt zeigt **starkes adaptives Management** durch systematisches Lernen aus den Erfahrungen bei der Umsetzung, was zu unmittelbaren Kurskorrekturen führt. Ein digitales Projektmonitoringsystem (DPMS) sowie zwei Haushaltsbefragungen in Projektdörfern liefern wichtige Erkenntnisse, die in die verbleibende Umsetzungsphase und die Konzeption von Projekt 2 einfließen.

Kohärenz

Im Hinblick auf die **interne Kohärenz** wurde festgestellt, dass die Komplementarität und die Synergien zwischen CliPAD und den beiden GIZ-Projekten „Schutz und nachhaltige Nutzung von Waldökosystemen und Biodiversität in Laos“ (ProFEB) sowie der „Southeast Asia Climate and Clean Air Initiative“ (SEACAI) **hoch** sind. Beide Projekte nutzen die Netzwerke, Erfahrungen und die Umsetzungsstruktur von CliPAD in Laos, indem sie Dienstleistungspakete an CliPAD übertragen, um ihre Ansätze in CliPAD-Dörfern zu erproben. Das Dorfwaldmanagement-Projekt der KfW erwies sich als weniger komplementär zu CliPAD. Obwohl beide Projekte vom BMZ (mit-)finanziert werden, einen ähnlichen Ansatz verfolgen und in denselben Distrikten präsent sind, gibt es keine Aufgabenteilung, was zu redundanten Umsetzungsstrukturen führt. Im Hinblick auf **die externe Kohärenz** stellte das Evaluierungsteam **eine hohe Komplementarität** zwischen den Projekten fest, die von verschiedenen Gebern zur Unterstützung des laotischen Emissionsminderungsprogramms im Rahmen der GCF-Kofinanzierung (JICA, ADB, IFAD) finanziert werden. Jedes Projekt konzentriert sich auf eine andere Komponente von REDD+, und die Koordination zwischen den Projektteams verläuft gut. Die Projekte sind von ihrer Konzeption her voneinander abhängig, und es wird erwartet, dass sich ihre Ergebnisse gegenseitig verstärken, um einen übergreifenden Systemwandel zu bewirken. Darüber hinaus nutzt CliPAD bestehende staatliche Strukturen auf allen Verwaltungsebenen zur Umsetzung der Projektaktivitäten. Maßnahmen in den Bereichen Waldbewirtschaftung, Rechtsdurchsetzung und nachhaltige Landwirtschaft auf Provinz-, Distrikt- und Dorfebene werden durch die jeweiligen Regierungsbehörden umgesetzt, wobei Mitarbeiter von PAEO (*Provincial Agrigulture and Environment Office*) und DAEO (*District Agriculture and Environment Office*) sowie die Laotische Frauenunion und die Laotische Front für nationale Entwicklung für die Implementierung in den Dörfern verantwortlich sind.

Effektivität

Projekt 2 erfüllt im Hinblick auf die Zielwerte zum Zeitpunkt der Zwischenevaluierung alle seine Indikatoren (mit Ausnahme des CliPAD-Indikators 2, der nur teilweise erreicht wurde), was darauf hindeutet, dass Projekt 2 **auf dem besten Weg ist, seine angestrebten Ziele zu erreichen**. Während das Projekt bereits die große Zahl von 85.131 männlichen und 81.736 weiblichen direkten Begünstigten erreicht hat, wurden die PSAP-Aktivitäten in den Dörfern von Projekt 2 mit einer leichten Verzögerung umgesetzt, die voraussichtlich in der verbleibenden Umsetzungsphase aufgeholt werden kann. Die Ergebnisse der Kontributionsanalyse zeigen, dass die Beratungs- und Kapazitätsaufbauleistungen des Projekts für die laotische Regierung **dazu beigetragen haben, die Kapazitäten der Institutionen** zur Planung und Umsetzung klimabezogener Prozesse **zu stärken** und den regulatorischen Rahmen für REDD+ und Klimafinanzierung zu verbessern, wobei jedoch eine gewisse Abhängigkeit laotischer Regierungsorganisationen von finanzieller und technischer Unterstützung durch internationale Geber weiterhin offensichtlich ist. Zwar war es noch zu früh, um die Auswirkungen der Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen in den Dörfern von Projekt 2 zu bewerten, doch fand das Evaluierungsteam starke Hinweise darauf, dass die forstwirtschaftlichen Maßnahmen des Projekts in den Dörfern von Projekt 1 den Einsatz von Brandrodung zur Rodung von Waldflächen durch die Dorfbewohner verringern, was darauf hindeutet, dass das Projekt **zu einem Rückgang der Entwaldung** im Projektgebiet **beigetragen hat**. In den Dörfern von Projekt 1 gibt es auch Anzeichen dafür, dass PSAP zu einer Verbesserung der Lebensverhältnisse beiträgt, doch die direkten Auswirkungen alternativer Lebensgrundlagen auf die Verringerung von Brandrodung und einen verbesserten Waldschutz bleiben unklar; das Evaluierungsteam ist jedoch überzeugt, dass PSAP indirekt zur Verringerung der Entwaldung beigetragen hat, da es für die Dorfbewohner der ausschlaggebende Anreiz für die Teilnahme an Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen ist**.** Es ist plausibel, dass die Maßnahmen in den Dörfern von Projekt 2 in Zukunft ähnliche Auswirkungen auf den Waldschutz haben werden.

Angesichts der großen geografischen Reichweite und des Umfangs der Maßnahmen bewertete das Evaluierungsteam die **Qualität der Steuerung und des Umsetzungsmanagements** als **hoch**. Das *Digital Project Monitoring System* (DPMS) und die beiden Haushaltsbefragungen dienen als wichtige Informationsquellen, die ein Monitoring in Echtzeit ermöglichen, Budgetanträge der Partner vereinfachen und eine datengestützte Projektsteuerung erlauben. Die staatlichen Partner sind mit der Qualität der Beratung und Unterstützung durch das Projekt weitgehend zufrieden und stellen lediglich geringfügige Herausforderungen bei der Koordination mit dem GIZ-Team fest. Das Projekt monitorte nicht intendierte Wirkungen umfassend und effektiv. Das Evaluationsteam stellte dahingegen **keine negativen Effekte** auf der Outcome-Ebene fest.

Tabelle: Erreichung der Zielindikatoren des Projekts (Auswahl)

Indikator	%
Core-Indikator 2: Anzahl der direkt und indirekt erreichten Begünstigten	100
Core-Indikator 4: Fläche, die unter die partizipative Landnutzungsplanung (PLUP) fällt	100
Outcome-Indikator 2.1: Fläche unter nachhaltigen landwirtschaftlichen Praktiken (PSAP)	100
Outcome-Indikator 3: Fläche unter verbesserter Waldbewirtschaftung (ViFoMA/ViFoCA)	100
CliPAD-Indikator 2: Anteil der PSAP-Haushalte, die bestätigen, dass sich ihre Resilienz verbessert hat (Ziel soll bis 2027 erreicht werden)	37

Übergeordnete entwicklungspolitische Wirkungen (Impact)

Es ist noch **zu früh, um die Auswirkungen von Projekt 2 auf die Emissionsminderungsziele zu bewerten**, da die Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen auf Dorfebene gerade erst begonnen haben. Was jedoch CliPAD betrifft, das die Umsetzung von Projekt 1 miteinschließt, meldete das Projekt dem BMZ Emissionsminderungen von 6,9 Mio. tCO2eq für den Zeitraum 2019–2024, was in etwa dem Ziel von 7,1 Mio. tCO2eq entspricht, das für die Dörfer von Projekt 1 bis zur Halbzeit erreicht werden soll. Die Zahl basiert auf dem FCPF-Monitoringbericht für die sechs nördlichen Provinzen von Laos. Zwar lassen sich die Emissionsminderungen nicht ausschließlich CliPAD/Projekt 1 zuschreiben, da auch andere Projekte der Weltbank und der KfW in

demselben Gebiet dazu beigetragen haben, doch deuten sie dennoch auf den **Erfolg der Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen in den 240 Projekt-1-Dörfern** bei der Reduzierung von CO2-Emissionen in großem Maßstab hin. Es ist plausibel, dass die Dörfer des Projekts 2 in Zukunft ähnliche Emissionsminderungen erzielen werden, da sie denselben Ansatz wie Projekt 1 verfolgen. Die laotische Regierung hat bereits eine **erste Tranche von 16 Millionen US-Dollar an ergebnisorientierten Zahlungen** aus dem FCPF-Kohlenstofffonds erhalten, von denen **69 % für die Weiterleitung an die Dörfer vorgesehen sind**. Der Plan zur Aufteilung der Mittel sieht vor, dass die Dörfer einen Teil der Gelder zur Verbesserung der Lebensverhältnisse verwenden. Da sich die Umsetzung des Plans jedoch verzögert hat und die Auszahlung an die Dörfer noch nicht erfolgt ist, ist es **noch zu früh, um zu beurteilen, wie die Dörfer die Zahlungen nutzen** und ob sie sich positiv auf die Lebensverhältnisse auswirken. Beobachtungen deuten darauf hin, dass verbesserte Kapazitäten innerhalb der laotischen Regierung und die regulatorischen Rahmenbedingungen des Landes für REDD+ **den Zugang der Regierung zu Klimafinanzierungen verbessert** haben. JICA und die laotische Regierung haben kürzlich den Zuschlag für ein vom GCF mit 61,5 Millionen US-Dollar gefördertes Projekt erhalten, um REDD+ durch dörfliche Waldbewirtschaftung im Süden von Laos umzusetzen. Darüber hinaus wurde der **EFF** (*Environment and Forest Protection Fund*) im Jahr 2025 **als GCF-akkreditierte Entität anerkannt**[2]. Gleichzeitig **ist die Abhängigkeit der laotischen Regierung von externer technischer Unterstützung** bei der Initiierung, Entwicklung und Verwaltung von Projektanträgen für internationale Klimafinanzierung **nach wie vor hoch.** Im Hinblick auf nicht intendierte Wirkungen stellte das Evaluierungsteam fest, dass die Auszahlung von Bonuszahlungen an Dörfer das Risiko bergen könnte, Konflikte über die Verwendung und Verteilung der Mittel auszulösen, was in der bisherigen Projektkonzeption nicht angemessen berücksichtigt wurde.

Effizienz

Das Projekt zeichnet sich durch **ein solides Finanzmanagement** aus. Etwa 60 % der Mittel (31 Mio. EUR) werden über den EFF an staatliche Akteure und für Aktivitäten auf Dorfebene weitergeleitet. Trotz der Komplexität der Mittelverwaltung über mehrere Verwaltungsebenen hinweg verlief das Finanzmanagement bisher reibungslos und ohne nennenswerte Unregelmäßigkeiten. Insgesamt stellte das Evaluierungsteam fest, dass Umfang und Qualität der erzielten Ergebnisse **ein gutes Preis-Leistungs-Verhältnis** aufweisen. Da keine Vergleichswerte vorliegen, fanden sich keine Anhaltspunkte dafür, dass das Projekt die gleichen Ergebnisse mit einem geringeren Budget hätte erzielen können. Kofinanzierungspartner tragen zu den Ergebnissen bei, ohne dass dem BMZ/GCF zusätzliche Kosten entstehen. Aufgrund einiger Verzögerungen bei der Umsetzung in den neuen Projekt-2-Provinzen werden jedoch nicht alle Ergebnisse wie geplant erzielt. Insbesondere wurden die Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen und die PSAP-Investitionen noch nicht in allen Dörfern umgesetzt. Die zuschussbasierte Einbindung staatlicher Strukturen in die Projektumsetzung wird als effiziente Lösung mit starken positiven Effekten hinsichtlich der Eigenverantwortung und des Kapazitätsaufbaus bei den lokalen Partnern angesehen. Das **Zusammenspiel der verschiedenen Entwicklungsorganisationen** innerhalb des Kofinanzierungsrahmens des GCF hat **die Effizienz der Mittelverwendung des Projekts** erheblich **verbessert**. Ohne zusätzliche Kosten für die Geber (BMZ/GCF) steigern die Ergebnisse der Kofinanzierungspartner die Wirkung des Projekts erheblich. Darüber hinaus hat das Projekt zusätzliche 16 Mio. EUR an ergebnisorientierten Zahlungen für laotische Regierungsbehörden und Dorfgemeinschaften mobilisiert, um die REDD+-Umsetzung fortzusetzen, die Waldbewirtschaftung zu verbessern und Maßnahmen zur Sicherung der Lebensgrundlagen umzusetzen.

[2] Bitte beachten Sie, dass der ehemalige EPF die Akkreditierung durch den GCF erhalten hat. Der Status der Akkreditierung des kürzlich gegründeten EFF war zum Zeitpunkt der Evaluierung noch unklar. Obwohl der EFF aus dem ehemaligen EPF hervorgegangen ist, muss er möglicherweise bestimmte Schritte des Akkreditierungsverfahrens erneut durchlaufen, um akkreditiert zu werden. Da der EPF jedoch bereits akkreditiert war, gehen die Beteiligten davon aus, dass der EFF die Akkreditierung bald erhalten wird.

Nachhaltigkeit

Das Projekt hat von vornherein **wichtige Voraussetzungen für die Nachhaltigkeit geschaffen**, doch bestehen weiterhin einige Herausforderungen, die den langfristigen Erfolg des Waldschutzes gefährden. Die Entscheidung, die Aktivitäten des Projekts über Regierungsbehörden umzusetzen, hat erheblich zur Kapazitätsentwicklung beigetragen und den Projektansatz in den Institutionen des Landes verankert. **Die Fähigkeit der laotischen Regierung, REDD+ und klimabezogene Prozesse in Zukunft zu steuern**, **hat sich verbessert**, doch die Abhängigkeit von Fachwissen und finanzieller Unterstützung durch internationale Organisationen ist weiterhin hoch. PAEO und DAEO verfügen über ausreichendes Know-how, um *das Provincial Deforestation Monitoring System* in Zukunft zu betreiben, während JICA zuversichtlich ist, die Wartung und Überwachung des Systems auf nationaler Ebene an eine laotische Organisation übergeben zu können. Auf Distriktebene **fühlten sich die DAEO-Mitarbeiter gut gerüstet**, **um die Zusammenarbeit mit den Dörfern im Bereich PSAP und Waldbewirtschaftung fortzusetzen**, doch die Verfügbarkeit von Haushaltsmitteln für Aktivitäten vor Ort, einschließlich der Rechtsdurchsetzung, könnte in einigen Distrikten eine Herausforderung darstellen. Die Dorfbewohner*innen zeigten ein starkes Gefühl der Identifikation mit dem Ziel des Waldschutzes und waren optimistisch, die Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen auch in Zukunft umzusetzen. Die Beteiligung der Dorfbewohner*innen an den Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen des Projekts wurde jedoch durch PSAP-Unterstützung, „Cash for Work"-Programme und leistungsabhängige Bonuszahlungen gefördert. Einige staatliche Akteure und GIZ-Berater, die mit den Dörfern zusammengearbeitet haben, äußerten **Bedenken, ob die Ownership der Dorfbewohner*innen für das Projekt und ihre Motivation zum Schutz der Wälder ohne weitere finanzielle Anreize** in Zukunft **bestehen bleiben werden**.

Gesamtbewertung

Das Projekt wird zum Zeitpunkt der Zwischenevaluierung als erfolgreich bewertet, da es das Emissionsminderungsprogramm für Nordlaos im Rahmen des REDD+-Programms der Weltbank wirksam unterstützt. Der **ganzheitliche Projektansatz**, der politische Unterstützung für die laotische Regierung zur Stärkung ihrer Kapazitäten bei der Steuerung der komplexen REDD+-Prozesse mit Maßnahmen auf Provinz-, Distrikt- und Dorfebene kombiniert, um die vielfältigen Ursachen der Entwaldung anzugehen und die erforderlichen Emissionsminderungen zu erreichen, hat sich in der Praxis bewährt. Die **verschiedenen Interventionsbereiche ergänzen sich und werden effektiv umgesetzt.** Zusammen ergeben sie ein Gesamtbild, das einen wesentlichen Beitrag zur ländlichen Entwicklung und zum Klimaschutz in Laos leistet: Die Förderung nachhaltiger landwirtschaftlicher Praktiken fungiert als notwendiger Anreiz für die Dörfer, sich dem Projekt anzuschließen, und **fördert alternative Lebensgrundlagen zum Wanderfeldbau**; die Umsetzung einer nachhaltigen **Dorfwaldbewirtschaftung** führt zu einem **Rückgang der Entwaldung** und damit zu entsprechenden **Emissionsminderungen**; der Kofinanzierungspartner JICA ermöglicht die erforderliche satellitengestützte Waldüberwachung (PDMS) und das nationale MRV-System, um **die Rechtsdurchsetzung zu stärken** sowie **Emissionsminderungen** zu messen und **zu verifizieren**; und dank der umfassenden Unterstützung auf politischer Ebene durch das Projekt ist die laotische Regierung in der Lage, **Emissionsminderungen** als ergebnisorientierte Zahlungen im Rahmen des FCPF-Kohlenstofffonds **zu monetarisieren**. Der REDD+**-Plan zur Nutzung der ergebnisbasierten Zahlungen** sieht vor, diese an die Dörfer umzuverteilen, was künftig möglicherweise zu positiven Auswirkungen auf die ökologische und soziale Entwicklung beitragen wird.

Da es sich um eine Zwischenevaluierung handelt, **konnte der Impact** des Projekts **noch nicht beobachtet werden**. Da **Projekt 1** jedoch bereits in hohem Maße **Emissionsminderungen** erzielt hat, ist es plausibel, dass die Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen in den Dörfern von Projekt 2 **in Zukunft zu ähnlichen Minderungen beitragen** werden. Dennoch **wird Laos**, obwohl die Entwaldung in den Projektdörfern gestoppt wurde, **möglicherweise nicht den vollen Betrag der ergebnisbasierten Zahlungen** von der Weltbank **erhalten**, da die Erhaltung der Waldbedeckung außerhalb des Projektgebiets hinter den Erwartungen zurückgeblieben ist. Während das Projekt und seine Kofinanzierungspartner große Anstrengungen unternommen haben, die Ansätze und Maßnahmen innerhalb der laotischen Institutionen zu verankern und die Kapazitäten staatlicher Organisationen auszubauen, **ist die laotische Regierung** bei der Verwaltung von REDD+ und anderen

klimabezogenen Prozessen **nach wie vor in hohem Maße von externem Fachwissen und Finanzmitteln** internationaler Entwicklungsorganisationen **abhängig**, was **Bedenken hinsichtlich der langfristigen Nachhaltigkeit** des Emissionsminderungsprogramms aufkommen lässt. Eine Verlagerung der Prioritäten der Regierung weg von Wäldern und Klima oder Zugeständnisse an ausländische Investitionen in die Rohstoffgewinnung oder Infrastrukturprojekte könnten Entwaldung auslösen und die Wirkungen von REDD+ in Zukunft weiter gefährden. Während die Dorfbewohner die Vorteile intakter Waldökosysteme erkannten und Motivation zeigten, die nachhaltige Waldbewirtschaftung auch in Zukunft fortzusetzen, äußerten einige Interessengruppen Bedenken, dass das **Fehlen finanzieller Anreize** (PSAP, *Cash for Work*, Bonuszahlungen) für die Dörfer nach Projektende **den Waldschutz langfristig gefährden könnte**.

Tabelle: Bewertung der OECD-DAC Evaluierungskriterien

Kriterium	Punktzahl (von 100)	Bewertung 1 (sehr erfolgreich) bis 6 (gänzlich erfolglos)	Kriterium	Punktzahl (von 100)	Bewertung 1 (sehr erfolgreich) bis 6 (gänzlich erfolglos)
Relevanz	94	Stufe 1: sehr erfolgreich	Impact		<rating>
Kohärenz	87	Stufe 2: erfolgreich	Effizienz	90	Stufe 2: erfolgreich
Effektivität	90	Stufe 2: erfolgreich	Nachhaltigkeit		<rating>
Gesamtbewertung				**90**	Stufe 2: erfolgreich

Schlussfolgerungen sowie Erfolgs- und Misserfolgsfaktoren

Im Folgenden sind Beispiele für Erfolgsfaktoren aufgeführt:

- ☑ Das ganzheitliche Projektdesign, die Maßnahmen zum Aufbau der institutionellen Kapazitäten der laotischen Regierung für das REDD+-Management kombiniert mit Interventionen in den Bereichen dörfliche Waldbewirtschaftung, Rechtsdurchsetzung und Förderung nachhaltiger landwirtschaftlicher Praktiken, sowie die großräumige und flächendeckende Ausrichtung der Maßnahmen.
- ☑ Der Einsatz von Behörden auf Provinz- und Distriktebene für die Umsetzung von PSAP- und Waldbewirtschaftungsmaßnahmen in den Projektdörfern ist effizient und trägt zur Entwicklung von Kapazitäten innerhalb der PAEO und DAEO bei, was die langfristige Nachhaltigkeit des Waldschutzes fördert.
- ☑ Regierungspartner berichten über die Umsetzung auf Dorfebene und die Budgetausgaben über ein digitales Projektmonitoringsystem (DPMS), das es dem Projektbüro in Vientiane ermöglicht, die Umsetzung groß angelegter Aktivitäten in einem weitläufigen geografischen Gebiet in Echtzeit zu überwachen. Darüber hinaus führt das Projekt eine Haushaltsbefragung durch, bei der Daten zur Projektumsetzung und deren Auswirkungen aus der Perspektive der Begünstigten erhoben wurden. Beide Datenquellen werden für ein adaptives Management genutzt, um den Umsetzungsansatz schrittweise zu verfeinern, die Ergebnisse zu maximieren und Safeguards einzuhalten, während negative Auswirkungen auf die Dörfer vermieden werden.

Im Folgenden sind Beispiele für einschränkende Faktoren aufgeführt:

- ☒ Das PSAP-Budget von 400 Euro pro Haushalt für Investitionen in die Landwirtschaft wird von den mit der Umsetzung betrauten Regierungsmitarbeiter*innen und einigen Begünstigten als unzureichend angesehen, um transformative Auswirkungen auf die Lebensgrundlagen zu erzielen.
- ☒ Das Projekt wird in einem insgesamt schwierigen Umfeld für Klimafinanzierung und Waldschutz durchgeführt. Zu den strukturellen Hindernissen, die den Erfolg der Kapazitätsentwicklung einschränken, gehören die Fähigkeit der laotischen Regierungsmitarbeiter*innen, Englisch zu lesen und zu verstehen; die begrenzte Anzahl technischer Expert*innen im Land; die begrenzte IT-Infrastruktur und das technische Know-how, einschließlich der Erfahrung mit GIS; die schwache Rechtsdurchsetzung, die begrenzte Rechtsstaatlichkeit und das mangelnde Verständnis für die Entwicklung und Umsetzung rechtlicher Rahmenbedingungen; sowie erhebliche Haushaltsengpässe aufgrund geringer Steuereinnahmen.

☒ Die nachhaltige Bewirtschaftung und der Schutz von Wäldern sind mit laufenden Kosten über Jahrzehnte hinweg verbunden. Es stellt daher eine Schwachstelle des REDD+-Rahmens dar, dass dieser keine Lösungen dafür bietet, wie Länder diese laufenden Kosten decken sollen, während sie langfristig auf die wirtschaftliche Nutzung der Wälder verzichten – insbesondere nachdem die ergebnisbasierten Zahlungen längst aufgebraucht sind. Dies wirft ernsthafte Fragen der Nachhaltigkeit auf, die jedoch außerhalb des Umfangs und des Einflussbereichs eines einzelnen GIZ/GCF-Projekts liegen.

Empfehlungen

- In einigen Dörfern haben Landwirt*innen Kredite von PSAP-Dienstleistern aufgenommen, um größere Reisfelder, Kautschukplantagen oder Fischteiche zu finanzieren, als im PSAP-Budget des Projekts vorgesehen sind. Dem Projekt wird empfohlen, die Kreditaufnahme unter den Dorfbewohner*innen zu beobachten und geeignete Gegenmaßnahmen zu erwägen, falls unangemessen hohe Kredite die Vulnerabilität vieler Haushalte erhöhen.
- Einige Stakeholder äußerten Bedenken, dass die Überweisung von Bonuszahlungen auf die Bankkonten der Dörfer zu Unregelmäßigkeiten oder Konflikten hinsichtlich der Verwendung und Verteilung der Mittel führen könnte. Dem Projekt wird empfohlen, zu beobachten, wie die Dörfer von Projekt 1 die Bonuszahlung ausgeben, und bei auftretenden Konflikten eine Vermittlungsrolle in Betracht zu ziehen. Auf der Grundlage der Ergebnisse der Überwachung von Projekt 1 könnte das Projekt die Auszahlung des Bonus in den Dörfern von Projekt 2 begleiten, indem es eine unterstützende Rolle bei der Entscheidungsfindung über die Verwendung und Verteilung der Ausgaben innerhalb der Dörfer übernimmt.
- Vertreter des EFF würden es begrüßen, wenn die GIZ mehr in die Kapazitäten ihrer Institution investieren würde, insbesondere im Bereich der Antragstellung bei internationalen Gebern. Dem Projekt wird empfohlen, zu prüfen, ob es den EFF beim Aufbau interner Kapazitäten für das Angebotsmanagement unterstützen kann.
- Einschränkungen bei den Haushalts- und Personalressourcen der Bezirksbehörden (DAEO) könnten die Nachhaltigkeit des Projekts gefährden. Im Rahmen einer Exit-Strategie wird empfohlen, dass das Projekt die DAEOs berät, wie die wichtigsten Kernaktivitäten oder Folgemaßnahmen in den Dörfern priorisiert werden können, die angesichts knapper Ressourcen noch umsetzbar sind.
- Der GIZ und dem GCF wird empfohlen, zu prüfen, wie die Ziel- und Indikatorensysteme gemeinsamer Projekte harmonisiert werden können, um die Effizienz und Konsistenz des Projektmonitorings und der Projektberichterstattung zu steigern.
- Nachhaltigkeit ist das Kriterium, das in dieser Evaluierung als am kritischsten bewertet wurde, wobei der Zeitpunkt der Evaluierung zur Beurteilung dieses Kriteriums recht früh war und die Datenverfügbarkeit noch unzureichend war. GIZ und GCF wird empfohlen, eine Ex-post-Evaluierung in Auftrag zu geben, um die langfristigen Auswirkungen des Emissionsminderungsprogramms in Laos auf institutionelle Kapazitäten, Waldschutz, ländliche Entwicklung und Lebensgrundlagen zu untersuchen.

The project at a glance

Laos: Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management

Project number	FP200 (GCF project 2) 2018.2092.7 (BMZ, CliPAD IV)
Creditor reporting system code(s)	31210 – Forestry policy and administrative management
Project objective	FP200: • Governance and the implementation of low-emission and climate-informed planning is strengthened, and sustainable financing sources are accessed • Vulnerabilities of villagers are reduced and their livelihoods are improved by being able to engage in climate-resilient, deforestation-free value chains and access to markets • Sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems is improved CliPAD IV: • Emissions from land use change and forestry are reduced in northern Laos
Project term	FP200: 03/2023 – 03/2027 CliPAD IV: 07/2019 – 03/2027
Project value	FP200 (GCF): EUR 34,947,121 CliPAD IV (BMZ): EUR 11,500,000 Co-finance FP200: • Asian Development Bank (ADB): EUR 13,074,314 • IFAD: EUR 2,526,900 • KfW: EUR 2,248,300 • FCPF/World Bank: EUR 15,640,000 • Government of Laos: EUR 6,905,561
Commissioning party	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Green Climate Fund (GCF)
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)
Implementing partner organisations (in the partner country)	Department of Forestry (DoF), Provincial Agriculture and Environment Offices (PAEO), District Agriculture and Environment Offices (DAEO), Environmental and Forest Protection Fund (EFF)
Target group(s)	Rural population in the six northern provinces of Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Luang Prabang, Sayabouri, Houaphan. Staff of implementing partners as listed above.
Development cooperation (DC) programme	Climate-friendly management of the environment and natural resources in Laos (BMZ programme)
Implementing organisations of the DC programme	GIZ, KfW
Organisation responsible for implementing and coordinating the DC programme	
Reporting Year of CPE	2026
Sample Year of CPE	This CPE is not part of the random CPE sample, but required as per funding agreement by the GCF.

1 Evaluation objectives and questions

This chapter aims to describe the purpose of the evaluation, the standard evaluation criteria and additional stakeholders' knowledge interests and evaluation questions.

1.1 Evaluation objectives

Central project evaluations of projects commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) fulfil three basic functions: they support evidence-based decisions, promote transparency and accountability, and foster organisational learning within the scope of contributing to effective knowledge management. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH structures the planning, implementation and use of evaluations so that the contribution the evaluation process and the evaluation findings make to these basic functions is optimised (GIZ, 2022).

Evaluations of projects cofinanced by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) follow the methodological standards set by the central project evaluations (CPE) system. The project 'Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme' was selected for a mid-term evaluation as an integral part of the GCF project cycle.

A major limitation of this evaluation was that its qualitative approach and small sample size were not suitable for assessing the impact of project interventions on livelihoods and forest cover across more than 500 villages. Therefore, the evaluation team triangulated insights from qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with the project's monitoring data and findings from a quantitative household survey commissioned by the project in 2023. Moreover, as the project is commissioned by GCF and GIZ under three different funding proposals and project numbers (see Chapter 2.1 for a detailed explanation), another limitation arose from the limited alignment between the objectives and indicators across the three results frameworks. The evaluation team responded to this challenge by developing an overarching Theory of Change (ToC) to integrate and harmonise the differing objectives of all three projects. However, the fact that this report had to cover indicators for both Project 2 and CliPAD IV hampered the ability to provide a concise assessment of goal achievement in the Effectiveness and Impact chapter.

1.2 Evaluation questions

The project was assessed based on standardised evaluation criteria and questions to ensure comparability by GIZ. This is based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria (updated 2020) for international cooperation and the evaluation criteria for German bilateral cooperation (BMZ, 2021): **relevance, coherence, efficiency**, **effectiveness**, **impact** and **sustainability**.

Specific assessment dimensions and evaluation questions have been derived from this given framework by BMZ. These assessment dimensions and evaluation questions were the basis for all central project evaluations (CPE) in GIZ and can be found in the Annex. In addition, contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its principles were also considered as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender, the environment, conflict sensitivity and human rights. Furthermore, the **guiding evaluation questions from the GCF** have been integrated into the evaluation matrix (Annex).

Table 1: Knowledge interests by main evaluation stakeholder groups

Evaluation stakeholder group	Particular subjects of interest in evaluation/ additional evaluation questions	Relevant section in this report
BMZ	How does the Government of Laos contribute to the success of the project?	Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability
BMZ	How sustainable is the project in the context of climate change? Are the villagers able to manage the forest areas sustainably despite more frequent droughts/floods/shifting monsoon seasons?	Effectiveness, Sustainability
BMZ	Do agricultural products also contribute to income generation?	Effectiveness
BMZ	How far have the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's (FCPF) results-based payments progressed?	Impact
GIZ FMB	How sustainably are features such as the Provincial Deforestation Monitoring System (PDMS) anchored within the district-level government agencies? Are there approaches to acquire sustainable funding sources to replace cash-for-work at the local level?	Sustainability

2 Object of the evaluation

This chapter aims to define the evaluation object, including the theory of change, and results hypotheses.

2.1 Definition of the evaluation object

The **object of this evaluation** is the project 'Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management'. The project is cofinanced by BMZ and the GCF. Due to the differing administrative funding requirements of BMZ and the GCF, the project is commissioned under different names and project numbers. The BMZ commissioned the project under the name 'Climate Protection through Avoided Deforestation and Implementation of the Governance, Forest Landscapes and Livelihoods (CliPAD IV)', starting in July 2019 and ending in May 2027, with a commissioning value of EUR 11,500,000. The GCF commissioned the same overall project as two separate projects: 'Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management (FP117)', starting in May 2020 and ending in May 2026 with a budget of EUR 16,141,896; and 'Scaling up the implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management (FP200)', starting in March 2023 and ending in March 2027, with a budget of EUR 34,947,121. The two GCF projects will be referred to as Project 1 (FP117) and Project 2 (FP200) hereafter. The two GCF projects and the BMZ project are implemented by the same project team and are based on the same Theory of Change (ToC) (see Chapter 2.2), but each has an individual results framework for reporting that is aligned with the respective commissioner's procedures and preferences. Project 2 is an extension of Project 1, scaling up the approach by expanding the interventions to an additional 290 villages and across 12 new districts, with a timeline that overlaps with and extends beyond that of Project 1. Under the BMZ commission, CliPAD mirrors the duration and geographical area of both GCF projects.

This evaluation combined the final evaluation for Project 1 and the mid-term review for Project 2. **This report covers the mid-term review for Project 2**. The final evaluation for Project 1 is documented in a separate report.

The Government of Laos supported the implementation of Project 2 with in-kind contributions of EUR 6,905,561. Several other (development) agencies also supported the project with their own contributions. Within the GCF framework, these contributions are referred to as **co-finance:**

- ADB: EUR 13,074,314
- IFAD: EUR 2,526,900
- KfW: EUR 2,248,300
- FCPF/World Bank: EUR 15,640,000
- Government of Laos: EUR 6,905,561

This co-finance is not recorded through the project's' accounts. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), KfW and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed loan agreements with the Lao Government to channel funds to the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)[3] and then onwards to the departments within the ministry and to sub-national agencies. Subsequently, funds are deployed by government partners to support project implementation or disbursed at the village level in the form of Village Development Funds (VDF), Cash for Work (CfW), or matching grants for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). JICA's contribution consists of providing technical assistance to government departments to support law enforcement and establish the MRV system. The contributions of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) are Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation + enhancing forest carbon stocks (REDD+) results-based payments, which are expected to become unlocked during project implementation. In summary, although not recorded in the project's accounts, these contributions are used by the development agencies providing them to implement activities that are aligned with the project's results framework and support the achievement of its indicators.

Framework context and core problem: Lao PDR is a landlocked, least developed country in Southeast Asia with a population of 6.9 million and a per capita income of USD 2,270. Its economy heavily relies on natural resource sectors, particularly forestry, agriculture, hydropower and mining. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries account for 16% of GDP and employ 64% of the country's workforce. Subsistence farming is widespread, and many rural communities rely on forests for their livelihoods, with shifting cultivation remaining an important subsistence strategy. However, the expansion of cash crop production, particularly rubber and cassava, has contributed to deforestation. Forest cover has declined from approximately 70% in the 1960s to around 58% today, with an estimated loss of 680,000 hectares over the past 15 years. Deforestation and land use changes generate 26.6 million tCO2eq annually, with forestry and agriculture accounting for 95% of emissions. The country is considered highly vulnerable to climate change, facing floods, landslides and wildfires, with marginalised groups being the most affected (UNIQUE 2019, GCF 2019).

Governance challenges persist, including weak implementation of land use plans and inadequate law enforcement. Many areas lack integrated spatial planning, and top-down approaches limit local participation. Unclear land boundaries and weak law enforcement have led to the encroachment of forests. Monitoring of forest cover is also inadequate, and illegal clearing often goes unreported. National initiatives such as the National Forest Monitoring System aim to improve forest management and regulatory oversight to overcome these challenges (UNIQUE 2019, GCF 2019).

Lao PDR prioritises sustainable forest management in key policies, including the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021–2025 (Government of Lao PDR 2021), the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, Government of Lao PDR 2021a), and the Forestry Strategy to 2035 (Government of Lao PDR 2024), aiming for 70% forest cover and enhanced rehabilitation efforts. The National REDD+ Strategy and Vision 2030 guide the

[3] Former Ministry of Agriculture (MAF). MAF and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) have been merged into the Ministry for Agriculture and Environment (MAE) in 2025. The same accounts for the Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFO/DAFO), which have been merged with the Provincial/Distirct Offices for Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE/DONRE) into Provincial/District Agricultural and Environmental Offices (PAEO/DAEO).

implementation of REDD+, calling for active participation from all stakeholders to curb deforestation and promote reforestation. Since 2008, Laos has engaged in the FCPF, with its Emission Reductions Programme targeting six provinces. Institutional frameworks such as the National REDD+ Task Force and Technical Working Groups, support implementation by reforming forest conservation through logging restrictions and land management policies. The project supports the Government of Laos in implementing its Emission Reductions Programme, with a focus on improved forest management, law enforcement and the promotion of sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural practices in the six provinces. Emission reductions are expected to unlock results-based payments of USD 42 million issued by the World Bank's FCPF.

2.2 Results model including hypotheses

Due to the project being commissioned with different results frameworks by GCF and BMZ, the **project objectives** of Project 1, Project 2 and CliPAD IV also differ:

Project 1 (FP117):

- Strengthened institutional and regulatory systems for low emission planning and development (Outcome area M5.0)
- Improved management of land or forest areas contributing to emissions reductions (Outcome area M9.0)

Project 2 (FP200):

- Governance and the implementation of low-emission and climate informed planning is strengthened, and sustainable financing sources are accessed (Outcome 1)
- Vulnerabilities of villagers are reduced and their livelihoods are improved by being able to engage in climate-resilient, deforestation-free value chains and access to markets (Outcome 2)
- Sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems is improved (Outcome 3)

CliPAD IV (BMZ reporting):

- Emissions from land use change and forestry are reduced in northern Laos (project objective).

CliPAD IV is part of the **BMZ programme** 'Climate-friendly management of the environment and natural resources in Laos' which is linked to the European Joint Programming for the Lao People's Democratic Republic 2016–2020. The programme objective is stated as follows: 'Ensure effective, equitable and sustainable management of natural resources through accountable and transparent public institutions for the benefit of the entire population of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and in particular rural and poor communities and their natural environment'.

During the inception mission, the evaluation team worked with the project staff to develop a comprehensive results model that reflects the results framework of all three projects. The existing results model from Project 2 was used as a starting point and adapted to align with all three results frameworks. Additionally, the outcomes of Project 2 included several target dimensions, which were broken down into individual outcomes to ensure methodological consistency in testing the hypotheses. Co-benefits 1 and 2 of Project 2 are presented at the impact level because the evaluation team considers them to be methodological impacts. The model is shown in Figure 1 (p.10). The following description of the results model and hypotheses is based on the project proposals (GCF 2019, 2023; GIZ 2019a) and discussions with project staff during the inception workshop.

Component 1: Creation of an enabling environment for REDD+ implementation (flagged as an output in Project 1 but methodologically located at outcome level). Four outputs of the project are expected to contribute to strengthening the capacity of Lao Government institutions to plan and implement climate-related processes (Outcome 1a). These include: The development of a functioning Provincial Deforestation Monitoring System (PDMS), to support the Provincial and District Agriculture and Environment Offices (PAEO & DAEO) in

monitoring forest cover within the project area, detecting illegal land clearing activities, supporting law enforcement (Output 1.1); the mainstreaming of REDD+ in socio-economic development plans (Output 1.2); the strengthening of the organisational structure and capacities of financial institutions (Output 1.3) and the establishment of institutional requirements for REDD+, such as the implementation of a REDD+ funding window (Output 1.4). The strengthening of institutional capacities and the establishment of REDD+ institutional requirements are also anticipated to facilitate the accreditation of government institutions by international donors, for access to climate finance (Outcome 1b). If government institutions are accredited and their capacity to manage climate-related processes is increased, the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance is expected to be strengthened (Outcome 1d).

Activities at village level begin with consultations and discussions to receive the villages' free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to participate in the REDD+ programme. If villages agree to join the project and the Village Forest Management Programme (VFMP, Output 1.6), the process continues with setting up Village Forestry and Agriculture Grants (VFAGs) by forming VFAG committees, approving VFAGs by law and opening VFAG bank accounts, and developing villages' Participatory Land Use Plans (PLUP). Once the bank accounts and VGAG committees are successfully established (Output 1.5) and the PLUP is developed (Output 1.7), the villages are expected to be ready to receive investment payments or cash-for-work to support sustainable agricultural and forestry activities, as well as results-based payments (Outcome 1c). This is seen as a prerequisite for villagers to receive training and funding for climate-smart investments, by developing investment plans (see Component 2, Outputs 2.2 and 2.4) and sustainable village forest management activities (see Component 3, Output 3.4) by developing village forest management plans (VFMPs). The participation of villagers in the development of the PLUP is also expected to help increase their awareness of climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources (Outcome 1–2). Increased awareness among villagers may contribute to the sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems (Outcome 3a).

Component 2: Market solutions for agricultural drivers of deforestation – Implementation of sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural practices (on 17,400 ha) (flagged in Project 1 as an output but methodologically located at outcome level). At village level, it was planned to continue selecting households for participation in the agricultural support measures and developing investment plans with them. If investment plans are created (Output 2.3), villagers are expected to receive funds for climate-smart investments through the project (Output 2.4). In addition, they are expected to receive training from government staff on sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices (PSAP, Output 2.2). Based on the funding and training provided, villagers are expected to apply improved agricultural practices to their land and production sites (Outcome 2a). It is anticipated that adopting improved and climate-smart farming practices will enhance the quality and quantity of yield, which will translate into increased and diversified household income, improving livelihoods (Outcome 2d) and reducing vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change (Outcome 2c). The products resulting from improved agricultural practices are also expected to improve villagers' access to markets (Outcome 2e) and help strengthen climate-resilient and deforestation-free value chains (Outcome 2f). In addition, the projects also planned to provide selected micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) trading or processing agricultural products with training (Output 2.6) and access to matching grants (Output 2.7). It is expected that MSMEs will use the training and access to matching grants to invest in deforestation-free and climate-resilient agricultural value chains, which is intended to strengthen these value chains (Outcome 2f) and improve villagers' access to markets (Outcome 2e). The underlying rationale of project component 2 is that the agricultural support measures provide villagers with economic alternatives to practices linked to deforestation and forest degradation, such as shifting cultivation and the expansion of agricultural land into forest areas. Hence, it is expected that Outcome 2c (vulnerabilities of villagers are reduced) and Outcome 2b (livelihoods of villagers are improved) will contribute to the sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems (Outcome 3a).

Component 3: Climate change mitigation and adaptation through forestry (flagged in Project 1 as an output but methodologically located at outcome level). Alongside providing households with economic alternatives, the project aimed to improve the management of forests at village level. This process should begin with establishing and building the capacities of Village Land and Forest Management Committees (VLFMC, Output 3.1), followed by the training of village communities by government staff who have undergone training themselves (Output 3.3). Subsequently, villages located within National Protected Areas (NPAs) are expected to receive support in developing NPA management plans (Output 3.6), while other villages will be guided through the process of developing Sustainable VFMPs (Output 3.4). Following this, it is foreseen that trained villagers will conduct tasks such as patrolling, fire protection, boundary demarcation and forest restoration to implement the VFMP or conservation agreements, based on a CfW system. If forest management plans and conservation agreements are successfully implemented and enforced (Outputs 3.5 and 3.7), they are expected to contribute to the sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems (Outcome 3a), which is expected to reduce deforestation (Outcome 3b). If villages manage to protect their forest, they are expected to receive a bonus payment from the project. This payment can then be used to continue forest management activities, compensate families who did not receive PSAP support or cover other expenses for the common good of the community.[4]

At impact level, a decrease in deforestation (Outcome 3b) is expected to contribute to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (Impact 1, GCF fund-level objective and, at the same time, BMZ project objective).[5] If greenhouse gas emissions are reduced in the six provinces, it is expected that the World Bank will purchase respective reduction certificates, contributing to the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme (Impact 4). Since these results-based payments are expected to be redistributed to villages to finance forest management, climate-smart agriculture and other livelihood activities, they are expected to contribute to improved food security and increased income (Co-Benefit, Impact 6). A reduction in deforestation is also expected to have a positive effect on wildlife, contributing to SDG 15: Life on Land. The strengthening of the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance (Outcome 1d) is expected to increase Laos' access to climate funding (Impact 3). Moreover, the decreasing vulnerability of villagers (Outcome c) is expected to improve climate change adaptation in the project villages (Impact 2). Finally, Impact 3 – Laos' access to climate funding, Impact 2 – increased adaptation to climate change of villages, and Impact 1 – the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, are supposed to contribute to the achievement of SDG 13: Climate Action (Impact 5).

System boundary/sphere of responsibility: The outputs and outcomes as presented in this ToC fall within the project's sphere of responsibility. The impacts are deemed to extend beyond the project's sphere of responsibility. This means that their achievement also depends on external factors that cannot be directly influenced by the project partners, such as the involvement of public and private actors not part of the project (e.g. impact 3) and/or biological processes and climate developments (e.g. impact 1 or 2). It is essential to recognise that, based on this rationale, the project objective of CliPAD (BMZ project), which usually refers to the methodological outcome level, will be considered in this evaluation as the methodological impact. This means that emission reductions from land use change and forestry in northern Laos (CliPAD project objective) align with the GCF's fund-level impact objective of Project 1.

The **direct target group** of the project comprises government institutions and their agencies at the National, provincial, district and village level. The political partner of the project is the MAE, which is politically and operationally responsible for REDD+. At national level, the REDD+ Division of the Department of Forestry (under the

[4] Note that there are two different types of performance-based payments villages can receive. The bonus payment is a fund that villages receive directly from the project (via Village Forest Agricultural Grants (VFAGs)) if they protect their projects for 2 years following the introduction of Village Forest Management Agreements/ Village Forest Conservation Agreements (ViFoMA/ViFOCA). Bonus payments are issued from the project budget. Results-based payments (see paragraph on impact below) are issued by the World Bank under the REDD+ framework if emission reductions across all six provinces can be verified. A share of these results-based payments is also supposed to be channelled to villages, based on a benefit-sharing plan, but the process of benefit-sharing is not facilitated by the project and not limited to project villages.

[5] Please note that despite being chosen as project objective of CLIPAD (BMZ project), emission reductions from land use change and forestry in northern Laos are here in line with GCF's fund-level impact objective (Project 1) considered as methodological impact. This is required for a methodologically consistent analysis.

MAE) is responsible for the coordination and implementation of all REDD+ activities and acts as the secretariat for the REDD+ working groups as well as for the REDD+ Task Force. The main partner of the project for the implementation of activities at village level are the Provincial and District Agricultural and Environment Offices (PAEO &DAEO). The Lao Front for National Development Office (LFND) and the Lao Women's Union (LWU) are foreseen to implement the FPIC process, while the LWU is further responsible for the implementation of the gender action plan and participates in VFAG activities. The PAEO and DAEO are foreseen to implement the PLUP process, to facilitate the development of VFMP and conservation agreements, conduct the PSAP activities and contribute to project monitoring. For this purpose, it is planned that DAEO's extension and forestry staff will receive extensive capacity development from the project. The EFF[6], managed under the MAE, is foreseen to host the REDD+ funding window channelling results-based payments to the village level. **Indirect target groups** (final beneficiaries) are the population of the villages supported by the project, as well as local MSMEs trading or processing agricultural products. Direct beneficiaries (in line with GCF terminology) are the population of the project's target villages. The whole population of the target districts is referred to as indirect beneficiaries (in line with GCF terminology), as it is expected that they will indirectly benefit from economic development in the target villages, strengthened agricultural value chains and improved forest management.

The government organisations that are part of the direct target group are also the **main stakeholders** of the project. Other important stakeholders include the development agencies co-financing the project, such as ADB, IFAD, KfW, JICA and the FCPF. The stakeholder map (Figure 2) below displays the roles of different stakeholders and how they are involved in the project.

The funding proposals for Project 1 and 2 list the following **risks to achieving the central project results:**

- Loss of capacities and knowledge due to turnover among project-related government staff.
- Weak forest law enforcement and corruption.
- Insufficient demand from MSMEs for matching grants and limited participation of private sector actors in the implementation of project activities.
- Promoted investments implemented by villagers and MSMEs could become more financially attractive and create perverse incentives that could accelerate deforestation and forest degradation.
- Sub-optimal cross-sectoral coordination and potential conflicting interests may limit the adoption and effectiveness of REDD+ and related measures.
- Participating households may not comply with land use plans that are developed and approved and undertake illegal harvesting activities to generate income.

A comprehensive set of **social and environmental safeguards** is built into the project design. Safeguards cover areas such as labour and working conditions, community health, safety and security, land acquisition and involuntary resettlement, biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources, indigenous peoples and cultural heritage. A gender action plan ensures the **mainstreaming of gender aspects** in all project activities.

There were **no major changes to the project design** during implementation that required an adaptation of the results framework. Objectives and indicators were, however, changed between Project 1 and Project 2, due to the GCF updating its general guidelines for results frameworks and indicators.

[6] Former Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). As part of the merger of MAF and MONRE, the EPF and the Forest Protection Fund (FPF) are currently being merged into the Environment and Forest Fund (EFF). At the time of the evaluation, the merger had not completed and the interview partners were still representing the EPF. To maintain consistency, the term EFF is used throughout this report, even though the text refers to a time when the fund was still called EPF.

Table 2: Results level terminology

Terminology	Definitions
Results	GIZ understands results as the intended or unintended, positive or negative changes in a situation or behaviour as the direct or indirect consequence of an intervention. Results are mapped in a systemic GIZ results model and implicitly include impacts, outcomes and outputs. The OECD DAC and BMZ also define results as the overall term for impacts, outcomes and outputs. The BMZ definition is in line with OECD DAC.
Impacts	Impacts are the [...] higher-level development results (is in line with OECD DAC).
Outcomes	Outcomes are the […] changes that occur as a consequence of the use of an intervention's outputs. They correspond more or less to the achievement of the […] project objective and include both the use of the outputs delivered by the project by the intermediaries and target groups, and the direct benefit.
Outputs	Outputs describe the changes and conditions achieved by the project's activities, such as products, goods, services, acquired technical skills and knowledge, institutions and regulations.

Figure 1: Current results model (May 2025), adapted during evaluation

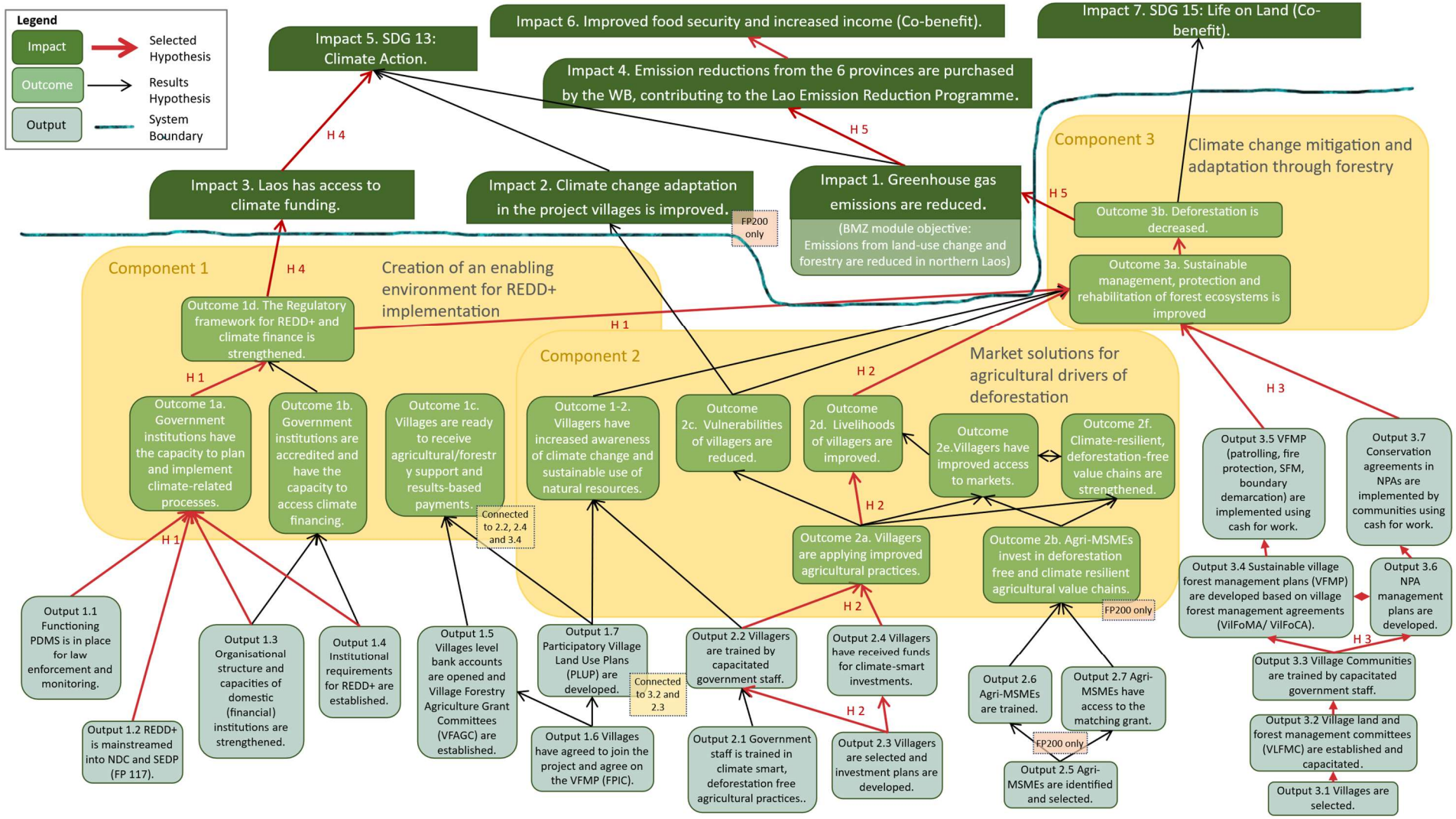
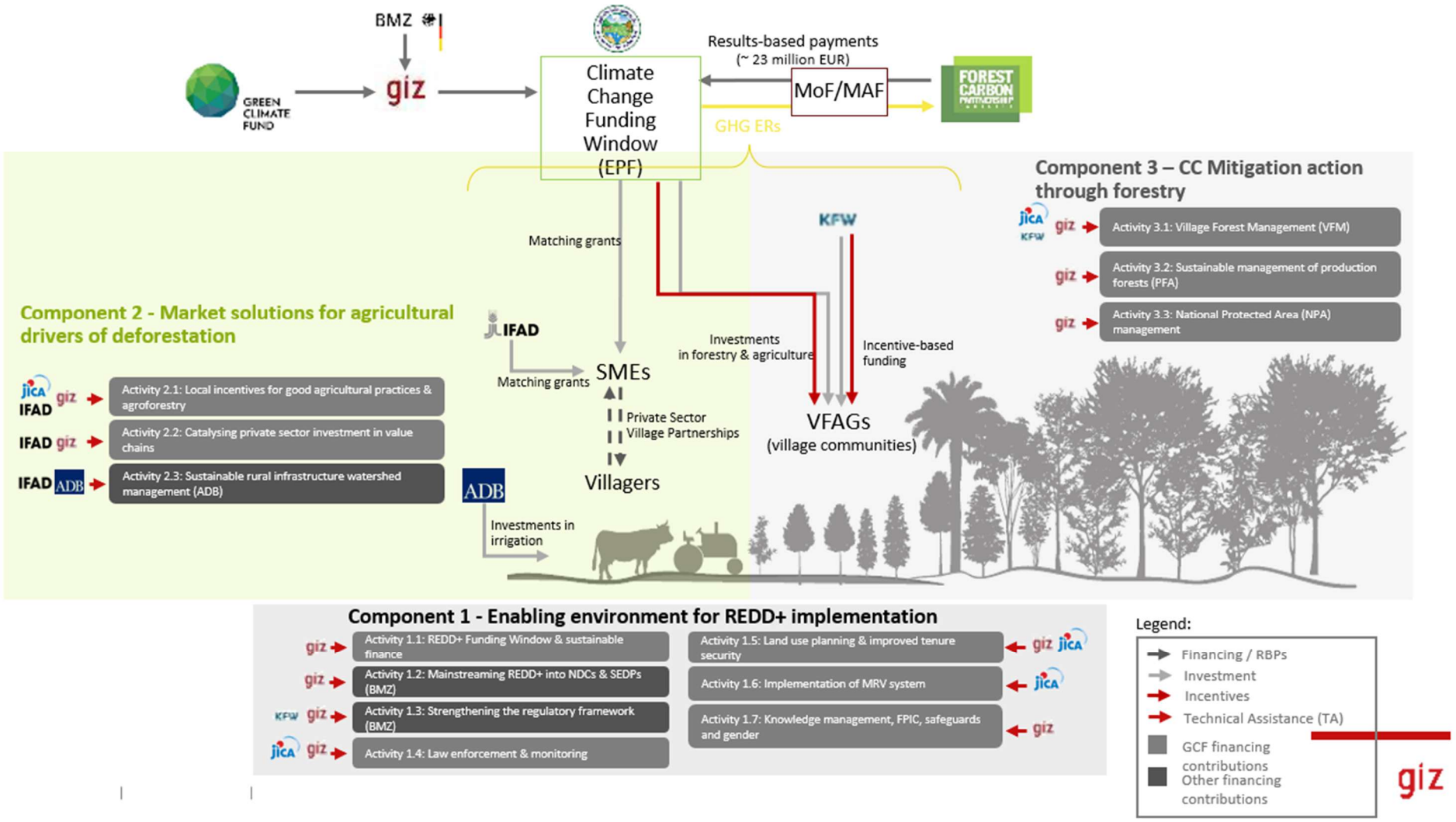


Figure 2: Flow of funds and contributions of co-finance partners.



3 Evaluability and evaluation process

This chapter aims to clarify the availability and quality of data and the process of the evaluation.

3.1 Evaluability: data availability and quality

This section covers the following aspects:

- availability of essential documents,
- monitoring and baseline data including partner data, and
- secondary data.

Availability of essential documents

The evaluation team was provided with all applicable and relevant documents necessary for this evaluation. As listed under references, this includes the BMZ and GCF project proposals, modification offers, and annual progress reports/annual performance reports. All documents were up to date and of sufficient quality.

Monitoring and baseline data including partner data

The project is monitored using a **Digital Project Monitoring System (DPMS)**, an online database for collecting and managing data from various sources. All implementation partners have access to the system and fill out data sheets whenever they request for budget to carry out an activity. Data sheets request relevant information to monitor the outputs and outcomes of activities, such as the number and characteristics of beneficiaries, or the forest or agricultural areas under management plans or sustainable agricultural practices. The respective data is used to calculate most of the project's indicator values. Activity codes and templates are harmonised with government accounting systems. The DPMS interface and data entry sheets are displayed in both English and Lao. Data can be exported as Excel files for analysis purposes. All **social and environmental safeguards** of the project are mainstreamed into the DPMS. For monitoring purposes, safeguards are operationalised using indicators, which are included in the data sheets for all project activities. Additionally, the projects' Gender Action Plans outline **specific gender-related indicators** for each project activity. The DPMS features more than 100 indicators, including safeguards and gender. Each data sheet undergoes an initial quality check by government M&E staff, followed by a second check by the project's monitoring team. Any inconsistent data is verified through on-the-ground checks. According to the project team, the DPMS enables real-time tracking and oversight of project implementation and progress towards indicators, as well as continuous monitoring of safeguards across all project activities. Safeguard monitoring is complemented by a **grievance mechanism** that offers villagers different channels for submitting complaints.

While the DPMS delivers comprehensive data on project implementation and indicator achievement, the data is mainly generated by the implementing partners. To gain a better understanding of the beneficiaries' perspectives on the project's implementation and its effects at village level, the project conducted two **household surveys**. The first survey was in 2023. The sample comprised interviews with 304 households from 54 villages (out of a total of 240 villages addressed by Project 1 at that time), as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with village authorities and VFAG/VLFM committees. The mixed-method questionnaires combined standardised closed-ended questions with open questions. Topics covered were the inclusion of villagers in project activities, villagers' understanding and views of concepts such as FPIC, PLUP, VFAG, VFMP and PSAP, and the perceived benefits and impacts of the interventions. Household survey 2 used a qualitative approach to take a

deep dive into selected topics and questions that could not be answered by the first survey. Survey 2 addressed 18 villages with interviews/FGDs with village authorities, VFAG/VLFM committees, households (six per village) and district-level government staff. Interview guidelines covered 18 topics with around 200 questions covering aspects such as the enforcement of VFMP, conflicts over land, and the use of the grievance mechanism. In summary, both surveys delivered data to examine the underlying hypothesis of the project concept and featured questions to **monitor risks and unintended impacts**.

Baseline data is available depending on the type of indicator. The Project 1 feasibility study outlines baseline data on emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in northern Laos, based on data from the Emission Reductions Programme Document, submitted by the Lao Government to the FPCP in 2018. This data is used to set the baseline for indicators relating to emission reductions. The Project 1 study also includes a baseline assessment of the drivers of deforestation in the project area, identifying the expansion of agricultural land for cash crop production and shifting cultivation as the main drivers. This was crucial for integrating the agriculture component into the project concept. The Project 1 funding proposal further outlines a business-as-usual scenario for deforestation in the project area (also based on data from the Emission Reductions Programme Document), serving as a baseline for indicators relating to avoided deforestation. For indicators relating to strengthening institutional and regulatory systems, qualitative assessments of the institutions, policies and regulations in place (or not in place) before the start of the projects serve as the baseline.

Secondary data

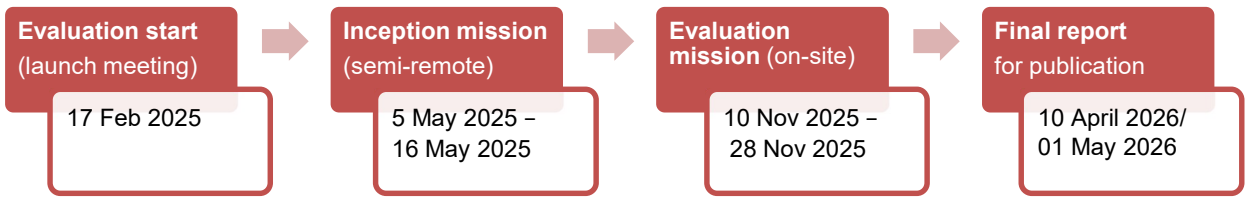
No relevant secondary data was identified.

3.2 Evaluation process

This section covers the following aspects:

- milestones of the evaluation process,
- involvement of stakeholders,
- selection of interviewees,
- data analysis process,
- roles within the evaluation team,
- (semi-)remote evaluation (inception), and
- context and conflict sensitivity within the evaluation process

Figure 3: Milestones of the evaluation process



Involvement of stakeholders

Relevant stakeholders have been or will be involved in all phases of the evaluation process:

Inception phase

- The project team participated in a three-day (online) inception workshop to refine the results model, map stakeholders and target groups and discuss indicators and data sources.
- Representatives from the GCF, BMZ and the GIZ Sectoral Department held online consultations to introduce them to the evaluation process, gain a better understanding of their role in the project and give

them the opportunity to express their knowledge interests concerning the evaluation (see additional evaluation questions, Chapter 1).

Evaluation Phase

- All stakeholder groups were involved in interviews and focus group discussions (see chapter below on the selection of interviewees).
- Project staff and partners in Laos were involved in the logistical preparation of the on-site data collection.
- Project staff and partners were involved in briefing and debriefing meetings at the beginning and at the end of the field mission. The debriefing included a presentation of preliminary results.

Post evaluation phase

- Project staff and donors will participate in a reflection meeting ('Evaluated – what next?').

Selection of interviewees

During the three-week field mission, the evaluation team spent one week in Vientiane interviewing the project team, co-financing partners, and national government representatives. The team subsequently spent one week in Luang Prabang (Ponthong district) and one week in Oudomxay province (Xay and Beng districts). PAEO was interviewed in each province, and, at the district level, the team interviewed DAEO staff, the Lao Women's Union, and the Lao National Front for Development. The team visited three villages in Ponthong District, one village in Xay District, and one village in Beng District. In each village, the team conducted three focus group discussions: one with the village authorities and the VFAG and VLFM committees, and two separate groups with women and men (mixed with PSAP and non-PSAP households).

Table 3: List of evaluation stakeholders and selected participants

Organisation/company/ target group	Overall number of persons involved in evaluation (including gender disaggregation)	No. of interview participants	No. of focus group participants	No. of workshop participants	No. of survey participants
Donors	**3**	**3 (M)**	-	-	-
BMZ, German Embassy in Vientiane					
GIZ	**48**	**40 (31M, 9F)**	**-**	**8 (5M, 3F)**	**-**
FMB, LMI Laos, Unit A300, GIZ project team in Vientiane, and CliPAD team in Luangprabang and Oudomxay provinces					
Partner organisations (direct target group)	**63**	**63 (43M, 20F)**	**-**	-	-
Government counterparts: REDD+ Division of DoF/ MAE, EFF, PAEO in Luangprabang and Oudomxay provinces and DAEO in four districts					
Other stakeholders (e.g. public actors, other development projects)	**12**	**12 (9M, 3F)**	**-**	-	-
Other development projects and implementers: F-REDD/JICA, FAO, IFAD PICSA Project, ADB SRIWSM Project, World Bank Office Vientiane, KfW, RECOFTC					
Civil society and private sector actors	**18**	**18 (8M, 10F)**	**-**	**-**	**-**
LWU and Lao National Front for Development at district level					
Final beneficiaries/ indirect target groups (sum)	**288**	**-**	**288 (173M, 115F)**	**-**	**-**
Village authority, including village committees and households in five villages					
M = male, F = female					

Data analysis process

All interviews and focus group discussions were structured by interview guidelines tailored to the individual stakeholder group. The guidelines were based on the questions from the evaluation matrix. The evaluation team took notes during the interviews to record the content and then transferred the notes into individual protocols (Word documents) for each interview. The analysis of interview and focus group protocols, along with all relevant documents, was conducted using a qualitative content analysis approach. The evaluation team developed a category scheme based on the evaluation matrix. Subsequently, the protocols and documents were segmented, and the text segments were allocated to the appropriate categories. Further categories were developed throughout the analysis process to cover all relevant findings that emerged from the data. Finally, text segments within categories were compared and summarised to inform the assessment of the evaluation questions and dimensions. The software MAXQDA was used to conduct the qualitative data analysis.

Roles within the evaluation team

The evaluation team consisted of one team leader, one international evaluator, and one national evaluator. The team leader was responsible for coordinating the evaluation process and communicating with the GIZ evaluation unit. He took the lead in developing the evaluation design. The international evaluator brought in experience in evaluating GCF-funded projects delivered by GIZ and supported the development of the evaluation design. The team jointly developed the data collection instruments, and the national evaluator contributed to the design of interview questions, ensuring they were adapted to the local context and translated into Lao. The team leader carried out the field mission in Laos together with the national evaluator, who was responsible for the planning and logistical preparations of the interviews and the on-site visits to the project villages. The project team assisted in coordinating with project counterparts, including government agencies and local authorities to facilitate the evaluation activities.

Researcher triangulation was carried out throughout the data collection and analysis process. During the field mission, both evaluators jointly shared their observations and insights at the end of each field day. As regards data analysis, all three evaluators discussed the intermediary findings from coding the interview protocols and together interpreted the results and developed conclusions and recommendations. Report writing and the presentation of results were shared among the team.

(Semi-)Remote evaluation

The inception mission was conducted remotely. The evaluation team organised an online inception workshop with the project team and conducted online interviews. As regards the evaluation mission, the evaluation team collected data on-site in Laos. The on-site mission was complemented by several online interviews to include stakeholders who could not be reached during the field mission.

4 Assessment according to OECD DAC criteria

4.1 Impact and sustainability of predecessor projects

This section analyses and assesses the impact and sustainability of the predecessor project CliPAD III, commissioned by BMZ. There is no predecessor project commissioned by the GCF.

Summarising assessment of predecessor project

With a significantly smaller budget and shorter duration, CliPAD III laid the foundation for the design and implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme. Core achievements include supporting the Lao Government with REDD+ Readiness, with the Laos Emission Reductions Programme Document (ERPD) submitted to the FCPF in 2018, and facilitating the development of provincial-level REDD+ action plans. Additionally, the project proposals for Project 1 and Project 2 (originally designed as one project) were prepared and submitted to the GCF in 2019, and the village forest management approach was also piloted in 70 villages in two districts in northern Laos. The impact and sustainability of CliPAD III are inseparably intertwined with those of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme, which will be discussed in the Sustainability and Impact chapters of this report.

Analysis and assessment of predecessor project

CliPAD III started in June 2017 and ended in June 2019. With a lifespan of only two years and a budget of EUR 3,100,000, it was significantly smaller in scope than CliPAD IV. It focused on preparing the ground for the implementation of REDD+ in Laos in the following areas:

- Capacity development and ERPD preparation: CliPAD advisers provided technical advice and training to the Government of Laos' REDD+ office and REDD+ task forces, focusing on three working groups (the establishment of a regulatory framework, social and environmental safeguards, and the development of a benefit-sharing plan). The project contributed to the development of the national REDD+ strategy and the finalisation of the ERPD, which was submitted to and accepted by the FCPF in 2018. The ERPD was an important foundation for the Government of Laos in its negotiations with the World Bank on emission reductions and results-based payments.
- To secure finance for the implementation of the Emission Reductions Programme and REDD+ provincial action plans, CliPAD III supported the DoF with the development of the project proposal for Project 1 and Project 2 (originally designed as one project). This proposal was submitted to the GCF and endorsed by the Lao National Designated Authority (NDA) with a no-objection letter in 2019. CliPAD III also began work with the EFF, supporting the fund towards becoming a GCF-accredited entity.
- CliPAD III supported the development of provincial REDD+ action plans in three northern provinces. Provincial REDD+ task forces and offices were guided in the process of involving the district authorities in developing action plans that are in line with the socio-economic development plans, and which outline all policies and measures that provinces must implement in the next five years to achieve the forestry sector emission reductions agreed on with the World Bank.
- CliPAD III piloted the development and implementation of Village Forest Management Agreements (ViFoMAs) in 70 villages across two districts in northern Laos and established the necessary legal conditions for the recognition of ViFoMAs at district, province and national levels, with the DoF and other relevant government agencies.

In summary, the main impact of CliPAD III was to lay the foundation for the design and implementation of the Laos Emission Reduction Programme, facilitated by CliPAD IV/Projects 1 and 2. The impact of CliPAD III on objectives such as emission reductions and Laos' access to climate finance is therefore inseparable from the

impact of CliPAD IV/Projects 1 and 2 and will be discussed in the Impact chapter of this report. Similarly, it is no longer relevant to assess the sustainability of CliPAD III, as all its activities were continued and scaled up by CliPAD IV/Projects 1 and 2. The sustainability of the Laos Emission Reductions Programme will be assessed in the Sustainability chapter of this report.

Methodology for assessing predecessor project

Table 4: Evaluation matrix for the assessment of predecessor projects

Predecessor project: assessment dimensions	Basis for Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
Impact of predecessor project(s)	Extent to which outcomes achieved in the predecessor project CliPAD III have transformed into impacts since the predecessor project ended. Extent to which CliPAD III laid the foundation for the Laos Emission Reductions Programme	**Evaluation design:** No specific evaluation design applied, Triangulation of methods and sources, pre-post comparison with current situation. **Empirical methods and data sources:** Document analysis of CliPAD III project proposal and progress reports	Since CliPAD III laid the foundation for the Laos Emission Reductions Programme, which was implemented during CliPAD IV/Project 1, the impacts of the project phases overlap significantly and cannot be separated. A detailed discussion can be found in the Impact chapter of this report. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate
Sustainability of outcomes of predecessor project(s)	The activities of CliPAD III resulted in and were continued by CliPAD IV/Project 1. Consequently, the observation that results of CliPAD III stayed stable since the end of the project does not say much about their sustainability as such, but reflects the ongoing implementation of CliPAD IV. The sustainability of the Laos Emission Reductions Programme after the end of CliPAD IV and Project 2 will be discussed in the Sustainability chapter of this report.	**Evaluation design:** No specific evaluation design applied, Triangulation of methods and sources, pre-post comparison with current situation. **Empirical methods and data sources:** Document analysis of CliPAD III project proposal and progress reports.	The activities of CliPAD III resulted in and have been continued by CliPAD IV/Projects 1 and 2. The sustainability of the Laos Emission Reductions Programme will be discussed in the Sustainability chapter of this report. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate

Photo 1: Mountainous area in the Phontong district, Luang Prabang province, northern Laos (Source/©: 2025/Janis Wicke)



4.2 Relevance

This section analyses and assesses the relevance of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions specified by the BMZ (see Annex).

Summarising assessment and rating of relevance

Table 5: Rating of OECD DAC criterion relevance

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Relevance	Alignment with policies and priorities	30 out of 30 points
	Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	28 out of 30 points
	Appropriateness of the design	16 out of 20 points
	Adaptability – response to change	20 out of 20 points
Relevance total score and rating		Score: **94 out of 100 points** Rating: Level 1: highly successful

The **project is highly relevant to the Lao Government's forestry, climate, and development policies, and to Germany's development cooperation objectives**. The project's forest management, livelihood and emission reductions targets strongly support Laos' 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and its Forestry Strategy and National REDD+ Strategy. Moreover, the project is part of BMZ's REDD+ strategy and contributes to the implementation of Germany's forest action plan for sustainable development, which BMZ has published for German development cooperation. The project is well **aligned with the needs and requirements of government institutions** at national level, as well as their agencies at provincial and district levels. The training measures are viewed as helpful and addressed capacity gaps. At village level, **the project addresses the critical needs of beneficiaries**, including a lack of

alternative income sources, low agricultural productivity, limited access to finance and markets, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

The **project design was assessed as appropriate**, addressing multiple governance levels, and with three interlinked and reinforcing project components that are well integrated into the overall framework for reducing emission reductions through forest protection. The extensive geographic coverage and the large number of villages addressed underscore the project's potential to achieve large-scale emission reductions, which are expected to contribute to Laos' NDCs. However, weaknesses were identified due to the project being commissioned under three different reporting requirements (CliPAD, Project 1, Project 2), leading to some inconsistencies in results frameworks and indicators. The project demonstrates **strong adaptive management** practices through systematic learning from implementation experiences, resulting in responsive course corrections. The DPMS and the two household surveys provide the basis for identifying lessons learned from Project 1 implementation. These are incorporated into the remaining implementation phase and the design of Project 2.

In total, the relevance of the project is rated as highly successful (level 1), with 94 out of 100 points.

Analysis and assessment of relevance

Relevance – Dimension 1: Alignment with policies and priorities

The project's alignment with policies and priorities was assessed with reference to the Lao Government's forestry, climate and development strategy documents, as well as Germany's development policies. Interviews with government stakeholders in Laos also provided important insights.

The integrated approach – combining institutional strengthening, participatory village-level implementation, forest management and protection, and livelihood improvement – addresses Laos' critical challenge of deforestation, which generates 26.6 million tCO_2eq annually (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2021). The project's large-scale geographic coverage targeting 572 villages across six northern provinces, covering 247,000 ha and reaching 273,700 direct beneficiaries, reflects the scale of intervention needed to achieve the Government of Laos' strategic objectives. These include the priorities outlined in the **9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021–2025**, for 'reducing poverty in rural and remote areas through sustainable natural resource management' and 'strengthening climate change adaptation and mitigation capacities' (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2021); commitments in the **NDC** to 'reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 through REDD+ activities' and 'enhancing forest carbon stocks through participatory forest management' (Government of Lao PDR, 2021); objectives of the **Forestry Strategy to 2035** to 'increase forest cover to 70% of total land area' and 'strengthen community-based forest management systems' (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019); and the goals of the **National REDD+ Strategy** to 'establish sustainable financing mechanisms for forest conservation' and 'build institutional capacity for MRV systems at national and sub-national levels' (REDD+ Office, 2020). Representatives from the Lao Government confirmed the project's strong alignment with their strategic goals and policies. Officials from the MAE, the EFF and the PAEO emphasised that the project is supporting the ministry's efforts to retain the country's forest cover, reduce emissions from deforestation and improve the livelihoods of the rural population (Int_7, 11, 15.18).

The project operationalises these commitments through its integrated approach that targets the 28% of the population living below the poverty line, combined with participatory village-level implementation via FPIC and PLUP processes, Village Forest Management Committees with CfW activities, real-time PDMS, and results-based payment architecture linking USD 42 million in FCPF funding to verified emission reductions. Interviewed government stakeholders at all governance levels confirmed the project's strong alignment with Lao strategic priorities and its responsiveness to institutional needs. Representatives from the PAEOs, for instance, confirmed that the project's support across the target villages directly addresses two critical development priorities – sustainable forestry management and rural livelihood improvement. This work thereby operationalises

objectives outlined in the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), the Forestry Strategy to 2035, and the National REDD+ Strategy (Int_7, 11, 15, 18).

The project's approach is also closely aligned with the policies and priorities of German development cooperation. BMZ's REDD+ strategy (2015) explicitly mentions CliPAD as an example of a bilateral REDD+ intervention that implements Germany's REDD+ policy in Laos. Moreover, the project is contributing to the implementation of Germany's forest action plan for sustainable development (BMZ 2017), which BMZ has published for German development cooperation, supporting seven out of twelve fields of action, including 'protect more forest', 'restore more forest', 'promote good governance', 'build institutions and strengthen tenure rights, implement the Paris Climate Agreement', and 'broaden international alliances and secure international climate finance'. More broadly, the project is also in line with the German development policy with Asia (2023), supporting one of the policy's cornerstones of 'preserving biodiversity and ecosystems; preventing resource conflicts', with a focus on 'providing support for the protection, use and restoration of forests'.

In summary, the project is aligned with and supportive of all relevant policy frameworks of the Lao Government and Germany's development policies.

Relevance dimension 1 – Alignment with policies and priorities – scores **30 out of 30 points.**

Relevance – Dimension 2: Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders

This section assesses the extent to which the project's activities and objectives were aligned with the needs and requirements of the target groups. The analysis draws on interviews and focus group discussions with different groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The evaluation team found that the project is well aligned with the needs and requirements of government institutions at the national level, as well as their agencies at provincial and district levels. Multi-level capacity building helps address institutional gaps. Representatives from PAEO confirmed that project-supported training, such as the use of PDMS, is based on needs assessments, directly addresses identified capacity gaps, and equips staff with essential tools for project management and law enforcement (Int_15, 18). At the district level, GIZ advisers are working 'shoulder-to-shoulder' with government counterparts, building, for instance, specialised GIS capabilities among DAEO personnel (Int_16, 17, 19, 21). District staff successfully apply the skills acquired in PLUP facilitation, PSAP household selection, procurement consultation and delivery, and forest management throughout project implementation at village level, demonstrating the relevance and usefulness of the training. Minor shortcomings were identified in training methodologies that do not always accommodate staff's varying educational levels, requiring repeated explanations (Int_15).

At village level, where 28% of the programme area's population lives below the poverty line and 55% belong to ethnic minorities facing higher vulnerability (UNIQUE 2019), villagers identified financial incentives through PSAP support and bonus payments as their primary motivation for participation in the project. This confirms the programme's relevance in providing economic alternatives to deforestation-driven livelihoods. The project addresses critical needs, including a lack of alternative income sources, low agricultural productivity, limited access to finance and markets, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (FGD 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13). PAEO and DAEO staff and beneficiaries deemed the 'Whitelist' – representing the selection of crops or agricultural commodities that villagers can choose for PSAP support – to be comprehensive and well suited to the environmental and social context (Int_15, 16, 18, 20. 21). Similarly, the capacity development provided to villagers by GIZ advisers and DAEO staff, such as training on sustainable agricultural practices and forest management, was perceived as helpful and easy to understand (FGD 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 13). From the project's perspective, the approaches of activities such as village forest management and PSAP are participatory, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of villagers are considered throughout implementation.

Household surveys conducted by the project (GIZ 2024a, b) show that the project achieved high acceptance rates during the FPIC process. In the five villages visited by the evaluation team, respondents reported that most or all villagers voted in favour of participating in the project. In addition to the economic benefits mentioned above, some villagers expressed multiple intrinsic motivations for forest protection, including desires for a greener landscape, cleaner air, better water resources and rich biodiversity. This demonstrates that the project's objectives resonate with community values (FGD 1, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 15).

Relevance dimension 2 – Alignment with the needs and capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders – scores **28 out of 30 points.**

Relevance – Dimension 3: Appropriateness of the design

This section analyses the quality of the project design, including how well the project's activities align with its objectives, the plausibility of the underlying hypotheses, and the handling of complexity. The analysis is based on GCF and GIZ project documents.

The project design is characterised by a holistic approach that addresses multiple governance levels and delivers interventions at scale, in terms of geographical coverage and the number of beneficiaries. The three project components are well integrated into the overall framework of reducing emissions through forest protection, and the outputs and outcomes are designed to reinforce one another and target higher-level developmental change. At village, district and provincial levels, the project addresses multiple drivers of deforestation. The interlocking of awareness-raising, village forest management and the provision of economic alternatives to shifting cultivation through agricultural support interventions in villages – combined with efforts to strengthen law enforcement through the implementation of the PDMS – are expected to halt agricultural expansion into forested land. At national level, these interventions are embedded in the REDD+ framework to unlock World Bank results-based payments, creating an additional incentive for government agencies and villages to work towards preserving forests. The holistic approach was also valued by government stakeholders, who described the profound integration of forestry, climate and livelihood components – combining policy-level and on-the-ground activities – as a particular strength of the project compared to other development interventions (Int_7, 19).

The project's extensive geographical coverage and the large number of villages addressed underscore its claim to achieve high emission reductions, and is expected to contribute to Laos' NDCs. To keep costs reasonable and build the capacity of province- and district-level government agencies – while ensuring sustainability and future maintenance of forest management and community facilitation – village-level interventions are largely planned and implemented by the staff of the DAEOs. A sound monitoring system, complemented by the two household surveys, enables the project to manage the complexity of steering and backstopping on-the-ground implementation by various government counterparts across a vast geographical area.

The evaluation team found the underlying results hypotheses of the Theory of Change to be plausible, and the planned interventions are generally appropriate and reasonable for achieving the expected outcomes. Indicators are generally SMART (see Effectiveness, Dimension 1). However, commissioning the project under three different reporting requirements and results frameworks (CliPAD, Project 1, Project 2) – each with different indicators that measure the same outcomes and refer to the same data – is neither efficient nor helpful for project implementation, monitoring, or for this evaluation. As a result, indicators are used to report to donors but are of limited use for project management and steering. In addition, the evaluation team found that the allocation of objectives and indicators to the different results levels (output, outcome, impact) is often not methodologically sound, and not consistent across the different results frameworks of CliPAD, Project 1 and Project 2.

Relevance dimension 3 – Appropriateness of the design – scores **16 out of 20 points.**

Relevance – Dimension 4: Adaptability – response to change

Dimension 4 assesses how the project responded to challenges and contextual changes that arose during project implementation and draws on project documents and interviews with the project team and stakeholders.

The project demonstrated strong adaptive management practices through systematic learning from implementation experiences, resulting in responsive course corrections. The DPMS and the findings from two household surveys are important sources of information for identifying bottlenecks and lessons learned. The project uses these insights to continuously improve the project design and the implementation strategy. In particular, learnings from Project 1 were incorporated in the design of Project 2, thereby enhancing the programme's effectiveness in providing targeted technical support to beneficiary households. For illustration, a few examples are provided below.

Adjustments include creating a position for a monitoring and safeguard adviser at provincial level to strengthen DAEO's safeguard teams and support consistent application of the DPMS. Additionally, during early implementation of FP117, the PSAP whitelist contained 35 agricultural commodities, which overstretched DAEOs' capacity, as they had to provide technical support for a high number of crops and livestock, making it difficult to streamline training curricula and the provision of agricultural inputs. In response to this challenge, the project reduced the whitelist from 35 to 12 agricultural commodities, allowing the DAEO staff to streamline the training and procurement of agricultural input efforts, enhancing the programme's effectiveness in providing targeted technical support to beneficiary households (Int_8, 24). Making the household budgets for PSAP support more flexible was another adjustment made by the project in response to emerging challenges in the field. During early FP117 implementation, a fixed number of households in each village received a fixed budget amount. However, this setup posed challenges when the number of poor households in the villages exceeded the number of households that could be supported. Greater flexibility in budget allocation, in terms of the number of households supported and the size of the budget allocated to each household, enabled the project to respond more effectively to the individual sizes and contexts of the villages, as well as to the community's preferences (Int_8, 17, 19, 24).

Besides these gradual adaptations based on field observations, the project did not experience any fundamental changes in context that would have required substantial changes to the project design. According to the team, COVID-19 slowed project implementation in 2020/21 but did not require significant adaptation of the project design and did not cause delays that jeopardised the achievement of objectives (Int_24, 28).

In summary, the project demonstrated a high level of adaptability and responded effectively to challenges. The evaluation team found no deficits in this regard.

Relevance dimension 4 – Adaptability – response to change – scores **20 out of 20 points.**

Methodology for assessing relevance

Table 6: Evaluation matrix for OECD DAC criterion relevance

Relevance assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
Alignment with policies and priorities	Alignment of the project's concept and objectives with:	**Evaluation design:** The analysis follows the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix (see Annex); no specific evaluation design was applied. **Empirical methods and data sources:**	• Relevant strategy documents were available • Access to interview partners was good • No limitations **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** strong

Relevance assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
	• BMZ strategies and policies (German development policy with Asia (2023), Germany's forest action plan for sustainable development (2017), REDD+: Protecting forests and climate for sustainable development (2015)) • Lao Government strategies and policies (9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025), NDC (2021), Forestry Strategy (2020), National REDD+ Strategy (2021), National Green Growth Strategy till 2030)	• Document analysis: Strategies listed (left) compared to project proposal (incl. results matrix). • Semi-structured interviews: Project team, BMZ, Lao Government representatives, international organisations representatives and experts	
Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	Alignment of the project's activities (such as capacity development measures) and objectives with the formulated needs of • Government agencies (EFF, FDRRF, MAE, PAEO, DAEO) • Village representatives • MSME	**Evaluation design:** same as dimension 1 **Empirical methods:** • Semi-structured interviews and FGD with direct and indirect target groups • M&E data (household survey)	• All stakeholder groups and beneficiaries were reached via online calls or on-site interviews and FGD • No limitations **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** strong
Appropriateness of the design*	Assessment of the ToC and project concept regarding: • Adequacy of activities and outputs in relation to the project objective • Plausibility and consistency of the underlying results hypotheses • Dealing with complexity/strategic focusing regarding the integration of the different project components	**Evaluation design:** same as dimension 1 **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis (proposal, progress reports, results matrix) • Semi-structured interviews with project staff	• Project proposal, the Results Matrix and the project team offered detailed information on the project's Theory of Change • No limitations **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** strong
Adaptability – response to change	Extent to which the project identified significant changes in the context and how the project responded to these changes: • Response of the project to Covid-19 related restrictions • Further changes to be identified during evaluation mission.	**Evaluation design:** same as dimension 1 **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews with project staff, implementing partners	• Project staff, BMZ and partners were available and open to reflect on framework changes and their response strategies • No limitations **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** strong

* The project design encompasses the project's objective and ToC (GIZ results model, graphic illustration and narrative results hypotheses) with outputs, activities, instruments and results hypotheses as well as the implementation strategy (e.g. methodological approach, capacity development strategy).

4.3 Coherence

This section analyses and assesses the coherence of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions specified by the BMZ (see Annex).

Summarising assessment and rating of coherence

Table 7. Rating of OECD DAC criterion coherence

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Coherence	Internal Coherence	40 out of 50 points
	External Coherence	47 out of 50 points

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Overall score and rating		Score: **87 out of 100 points** Rating: **Level 2: successful**

With regards to **internal coherence**, the complementarity and synergies among CliPAD and the two GIZ-implemented projects, Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Laos (ProFEB), and the Southeast Asia Climate and Clean Air Initiative (SEACAI), were found to be **high**. Both projects leverage the networks, experiences and implementation structure of CliPAD in Laos, as they assigned service packages to CliPAD to pilot their approaches in CliPAD villages. KfW's Village Forest Management project was found to be less complementary to CliPAD. While both projects are (co-)funded by BMZ, share a similar approach, and operate in the same districts, they do not have a clear division of tasks, which results in redundant implementation structures. With regards to **external coherence**, the evaluation team found a **high level of complementarity** among projects funded by different donors supporting the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme in the GCF co-finance framework (JICA, ADB, IFAD). Each project focuses on a different component of REDD+, and coordination of implementation among the project teams is high. By design, the projects are interdependent, and their results are expected to reinforce each other to create overarching developmental change. Moreover, CliPAD leverages existing government structures across all governance levels to implement project activities. Forest management, law enforcement and livelihood activities at provincial, district and village levels are implemented through respective government agencies, with PAEO and DAEO staff, as well as LWU and Lao Front for National Development responsible for fieldwork.

In total, the coherence of the project is rated as successful (level 2), with 87 out of 100 points.

Analysis and assessment of coherence

Coherence – Dimension 1: Internal Coherence

This dimension assesses the extent to which the project is designed to complement other GIZ and KfW interventions, coordinates its activities to avoid duplication, and creates synergies within Germany's development cooperation portfolio.

The ProFEB project operates at policy level, advising the Lao Government on addressing bottlenecks in forestry governance. One GIZ adviser works 50% for CliPAD and 50% for ProFEB, ensuring smooth coordination between the policy-level activities of both projects. Moreover, ProFEB has recently initiated forest landscape restoration activities in CliPAD villages. Instead of establishing its own implementation structure at district and village levels, ProFEB has commissioned CliPAD to roll out its activities, leveraging CliPAD's longstanding partner network, experience and presence in villages. CliPAD villages were selected based on their performance and the availability of suitable forested areas, and are guided through forest landscape restoration, a component that was beyond the scope of CliPAD's forest management activities prior to ProFEB's involvement (Int_28).

The project 'Financing Green Recovery in ASEAN – Integrated approaches to climate protection and air quality improvement in Mekong riparian states' (also known as SEACAI, the Southeast Asia Climate and Clean Air Initiative) is based in Bangkok and advises ASEAN working groups on transboundary haze. Since forest fires are the primary source of haze in Laos, SEACAI has a strong thematic overlap with CliPAD, which focuses on reducing slash-and-burn shifting cultivation. Since SEACAI does not have a project team in Laos, it has engaged CliPAD to implement several service packages in the country. This includes advising the Lao delegation of the ASEAN working group on transboundary haze and implementing pilot measures in CliPAD villages. CliPAD

has hired two additional team members (one at 100% and one at 20% full-time equivalent) to work on these tasks. Like ProFEB, SEACAI benefits from CliPAD's networks and experience, as well as from its on-the-ground presence and implementation structure in districts and villages (Int_28).

KfW is implementing the Village Forest Management project in Laos with a budget of EUR 4.7 million. The project has a similar implementation period to CliPAD (2019–2026) and is funded by BMZ. The KfW project is part of the GCF FP117/FP200 co-finance framework and is expected to result in emission reductions through improved forest management, which are accounted for in the national MRV (GCF 2019a, Int_14, 28). Whereas other co-finance partners such as JICA and ADB focus on different components of REDD+ (monitoring and irrigation; see Dimension 2 below), the evaluation team could not identify a similar division of tasks between GIZ and KfW. Both projects coordinate their interventions and operate in different villages; however, from a donor perspective, it is questionable whether commissioning two projects with two implementing agencies essentially doing the same work in the same provinces and districts is efficient and necessary, as it results in redundant project management structures and limits the potential for leveraging synergies.

In summary, complementarity and synergies among the GIZ projects CliPAD, ProFEB and SEACAI were found to be high. The use of synergies between the two GIZ and KfW forest management projects shows room for improvement.

Coherence dimension 1 – Internal Coherence – scores **40 out of 50 points**.

Coherence – Dimension 2: External Coherence

This dimension assesses the extent to which the project is complementary to interventions by other donors, and utilises existing systems and structures in the partner country.

The evaluation team found a high level of coherence between different development agencies collaborating in GCF's Project 2 co-finance framework. ADB, IFAD and JICA are implementing individual projects that are designed to be highly complementary and to jointly support the implementation of the Laos Emission Reduction Programme. Like pieces of a puzzle, none of the projects can stand alone, but together they form a coherent picture. While CliPAD/Project 2 facilitates forest management and livelihood support at village level to achieve emission reductions, JICA is implementing the PDMS, enabling the Lao Government to monitor forest cover and emission reductions and strengthen law enforcement. ADB and IFAD contribute to the agricultural development component to create economic alternatives to deforestation. The overall approach is embedded in the World Bank's REDD+ framework, reimbursing emission reductions achieved with results-based payments that are channelled down to the village level. In practice, project management teams are well connected and meet regularly to coordinate activities. All representatives interviewed emphasised the trustworthiness of the working relationship between the four organisations and viewed complementary project implementation as a success (Int_4, 5, 6, 12, 14). Government counterparts at national level found it somewhat challenging to work simultaneously with different donors due to differing timelines, reporting requirements and technical guidelines. However, they also emphasised that the projects are well coordinated, with their staff advising the government on different aspects and REDD+ working groups, avoiding overlap and enhancing the complementarity of the support provided (Int_7, 9).

Laos is regarded as a least developed country by the United Nations, which corresponds to a high presence of international development organisations, NGOs and bilateral development agencies implementing rural agriculture and livelihood projects throughout the country. With regard to activities at district and village levels, some stakeholders in Vientiane were concerned about a lack of coordination between Project 2/CliPAD and other development agencies' agricultural and forestry projects outside the Laos Emission Reduction Programme framework. According to them, this absence of coordination could result in different donors targeting the same village without proper alignment of activities, and in DAEO staff being absorbed by different development

agencies, limiting the time and resources available to focus on a single project approach and its activities (Int_8, 12, 22). However, the villages visited during the field mission presented a different picture. While other development agencies had previously worked in these villages, CliPAD/FP117 was the only active project by the time of the visit. The DAEO staff interviewed worked only with GIZ and did not report any coordination issues with other projects. At provincial level, PAEO officials reported that they effectively coordinate with development agencies to avoid projects overlapping at village level. They did not mention any challenges regarding the complementarity and coherence of those projects. This picture might, however, be biased by the small number of districts and villages visited. Moreover, since development projects typically provide budget support to government agencies, financial incentives might motivate government staff to attract multiple projects simultaneously, which could explain their reluctance to report coordination problems to an evaluation team. In summary, this evaluation could not obtain a clear picture of coordination at district and village levels and therefore refrains from making a final judgement in this regard.

On a different note, the project facilitates the implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reduction Programme and is perceived as well embedded in the country's government structures at all governance levels. As explained in Chapter 2.2 and further discussed in the Effectiveness chapter (Dimension 2), the project supports Lao Government institutions in managing REDD+ and the EFF in becoming a GCF-accredited entity. Forest management, law enforcement and livelihood activities at the provincial, district and village levels are implemented through the respective government structures, with PAEO and DAEO staff responsible for fieldwork. The LFND and the LWU are in charge of the FPIC component.

Given the high complementarity among projects funded by different donors supporting the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme, and the effective use of government structures for local project implementation, the external coherence of the project is assessed as very high.

Coherence dimension 2 – External Coherence – scores **47 out of 50 points.**

Methodology for assessing coherence

Table 8: Evaluation matrix for OECD DAC criterion coherence

Coherence assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
Internal coherence	Extent to which the project is designed in a complementary manner with other GIZ and KfW projects. Extent to which the project coordinates its activities with other GIZ and KfW interventions to avoid duplications and use synergies. Quality and quantity of synergies created among the interventions.	**Evaluation design:** The analysis follows the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix (see Annex); no specific evaluation design was applied. **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews with projects listed in basis for assessment	• Good availability of interview partners. • Triangulation of sources limited, as GIZ is the main data source. Assessment will be based on the self-assessment of GIZ staff. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good
External coherence	Extent to which the project is designed and implemented in a complementary manner with interventions of other countries and donors. Realisation of synergies and avoidance of duplications with the interventions of other donors. Complementarity and coherence with the interventions of other donors in the co-financing framework (see Chapter 2.1): JICA, IFAD, ADB. Extent to which the project supports partners' own efforts and	**Evaluation design:** The analysis follows the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix (see Annex); no specific evaluation design was applied. **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews with organisations listed in basis for assessment, with government agencies and the German embassy in Vientiane.	• Good availability of interview partners. • To reduce bias and support triangulation, donor coordination was also discussed with Lao Government officials and the German embassy. • Sample of districts and villages visited was too small to obtain a clear picture of district- and village-level donor coordination. Feedback from government office might be biased due to interests in attracting many donors.

Coherence assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
	uses existing systems and structures.		**Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good

4.4 Effectiveness

This section analyses and assesses the effectiveness of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions specified by the BMZ (see Annex).

Summarising assessment and rating of effectiveness

Table 9. Rating of OECD DAC criterion effectiveness

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Effectiveness	Achievement of the (intended) objectives	28 out of 30 points
	Contribution to achievement of objectives	26 out of 30 points
	Quality of implementation	18 out of 20 points
	Unintended results	18 out of 20 points
Overall score and rating		Score: **90 out of 100 points** Rating: Level 2: successful

Project 2 met all its indicators against mid-term targets, except for CliPAD indicator 2, which was only partially met, indicating that Project 2 **is well on track to achieve its intended objectives**. While the project has already addressed the high numbers of 85,131 male and 81,736 female direct beneficiaries, PSAP activities were implemented with a slight delay in Project 2 villages, but this is expected to be overcome during the remaining implementation period. The results of the contribution analysis show that the projects' advice and capacity development service to the Lao Government **contributed to increasing the Lao PDR's institutions' capacity** to plan and implement climate-related processes and improved the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance, whereas a degree of dependency on financial and technical support and guidance from international donors remains evident. While it was too early to assess the effects of forest management activities in Project 2 villages, the evaluation team found strong evidence that the project's forestry interventions in Project 1 villages reduce the use of slash-and-burn practices to clear forest land by villagers, suggesting the project **contributed to a decline in deforestation** in the project area. There are some indications in Project 1 villages that PSAP contributes to improved livelihoods, but the direct effects of alternative livelihoods on reducing slash-and-burn and improved forest protection remain unclear. However, the evaluation team is convinced that PSAP has indirectly contributed to reducing deforestation, as an important factor in securing villages' participation in forest management activities. It is plausible that the interventions in Project 2 villages will have similar effects on forest protection in the future.

Given the extensive geographical coverage and scale of interventions, the evaluation team found the **quality of steering and implementation management** to be **high**. The DPMS and the two household surveys serve as critical information sources enabling real-time progress tracking, streamlining budget requests, and facilitating data-driven decision-making. Government counterparts are largely satisfied with the quality of advisory support but noted minor challenges in coordination with and staff turnover within the GIZ team. The project

monitors unintended results comprehensively and effectively. The evaluation team did **not observe any substantial unintended negative results** at outcome level.

In total, the effectiveness of the project is rated successful (level 2), with 90 out of 100 points.

Analysis and assessment of effectiveness

Effectiveness – Dimension 1: Achievement of the (intended) objectives

Table 10 below lists the GCF core indicators and outcome indicators for Project 2.[7] Table 11 shows the CliPAD IV module objective indicators.[8] A summary assessment of indicator achievement is provided below, while full descriptions and detailed figures for each indicator (baseline, targets, current values) are listed in Tables 10 and 11.

Core Indicator 2 refers to the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries the project reaches, disaggregated by gender. The term direct beneficiaries refers to the entire population in the target villages, as it is expected that the whole village benefits from land use planning, improved forest management and bonus payments. Figures reported are based on official census data. Reaching 85,130 male and 81,736 female direct beneficiaries, the project has overachieved its mid-term targets, already meeting the final targets for 2025. The same applies to the number of indirect beneficiaries (the entire population in the project districts), with figures totalling 173,203 male and 173,203 female indirect beneficiaries in 2025, already exceeding the final targets.

Project 2 features **four indicators** that measure the **project area successfully brought under different types of improved land management**. The project has exceeded the mid-term targets for all four indicators. For Core Indicator 4 and Outcome Indicator 3, the final targets were already reached in 2025:

- **Core Indicator 4** (overachieved, final target already met): area under PLUP, including NPA; reaching 1,363,373 ha in 2025.
- **Outcome Indicator 1** (overachieved): area under PLUP only (overlapping with Core Indicator 4); reaching 996,223 ha in 2025.
- **Outcome Indicator 2.1** (overachieved): Area under PSAP; reaching 6,898 ha in 2025.
- **Outcome Indicator 3** (overachieved, final target already met): Area under improved forest management (ViFoMA/ViFoCA); reaching 905,406 ha in 2025.

Outcome Indicator 2.2 measures the percentage of beneficiaries who report an increase in overall climate resilience. The 2025 annual progress report cites a figure from the first household survey: 91% of villagers self-reported improved climate resilience (sample of 304 households in 54 villages; GIZ 2024b). However, the survey was conducted in Project 1 villages, meaning that the figure does not represent the self-reported resilience of Project 2 villagers. While it is too early to assess the effects of PSAP on resilience in Project 2 villages (see the discussion of CliPAD Indicator 2 below), it is plausible that effects similar to those observed in Project 1 villages will emerge in the future.

CliPAD Indicator 2 measures the number of beneficiaries receiving PSAP support, as well as the percentage of beneficiaries who self-report an increase in overall climate resilience. The reported figures stem from Project 1 households. Since the distribution of PSAP inputs has not been implemented in Project 2 villages (as of August 2025, the date of the last CliPAD progress report), the respective targets for PSAP beneficiaries have not yet been met. This indicates that Project 2 is experiencing some delays in implementing PSAP in the new Project 2 villages. However, as of April 2026, the project reported that the distribution of PSAP inputs had been

[7] Core Indicator 1, 'GHG emissions reduced, avoided or removed/sequestered', is discussed in the impact chapter as the evaluation team conceptualised emission reductions as results at impact level.

[8] Module objective indicator 1, 'An emission reduction of 11.7 million tons of CO_2 has been verified', is discussed in the impact chapter as the evaluation team conceptualised emission reductions as results at impact level.

completed in 78 villages, indicating that delays are about to be overcome and PSAP implementation was commencing. The share of beneficiaries who self-reported climate resilience was overachieved in Project 1 villages, but it is much too early to observe the effects of PSAP on resilience in Project 2 villages. In summary, the **indicator is partly achieved and reflects minor delays in project implementation in Project 2 villages,** which will soon be overcome.

CliPAD Indicator 3 refers to project villages meeting the criteria for results-based payments. Since all Project 1 villages have received results-based payments, the indicator has been achieved at mid-term. Project 2 villages are expected to meet the criteria for results-based payments in 2028.

CliPAD Programme Objective Indicator 2.4.1 measures one of the outcomes of the project: the 'status of the accreditation process with the GCF of the Environmental Protection Fund' corresponds to Outcome 1b ('government institutions are accredited'). Since the EFF has achieved accreditation[9] with the GCF, the indicator has been achieved.

The evaluation team concludes that Project 2 achieved all its indicators against mid-term targets, with the exception of CliPAD indicator 2, which was only partly achieved.
Effectiveness dimension 1 – Achievement of the (intended) objectives – scores **28 out of 30 points.**

Table 10: Project objectives and objective indicators (outcome level) of Project 2 (FP200, GCF reporting)

Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	Assessment according to SMART* criteria	Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
Core Indicator 2: Direct and indirect beneficiaries 2.1 Direct male beneficiaries Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 41,055 Target value (end, 3/2027): 76,850 Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 85,131 Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachievement) 2.2 Direct female beneficiaries Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 41,055 Target value (end, 3/2027): 76,850 Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 81,736 Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachievement) 2.3 Indirect male beneficiaries Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 119,358 Target value (end, 3/2027): 166,496 Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 173,203 Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachievement)	The indicator is partly smart. The number of reached beneficiaries is typically an output, as it does not measure any effect or change. Since it is a GCF core indicator, it is nevertheless listed here.	No adjustment required.

[9] Please note that the former EPF has achieved accreditation with the GCF. The accreditation of the recently formed EFF was not clear at the time of the evaluation. Although the EFF emerged from the former EPF, it may need to undergo certain steps in the accreditation process again to become accredited. However, since the EPF was already accredited, stakeholders expect the EFF to achieve accreditation soon.

Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	Assessment according to SMART* criteria	Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
2.4 Indirect female beneficiaries Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 119,358 Target value (end, 3/2027): 166,496 Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 173,203 Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachievement) Source: Annual progress report 2025		
Core Indicator 4: Hectares of natural resource areas brought under improved low emission and/or climate-resilient management practices Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 580,000 ha Target value (end, 3/2027): 1,202,000 ha Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 1,363,373 ha Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachievement) Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is SMART. The indicator overlaps with outcome indicator 1, 2.1 and 3 'Natural resources areas brought under improved low emission/climate-resilient management practices' include village agriculture and forest areas under PLUPs and NPAs. Outcome indictor 1, 2.1 and 3.1 are basically a disaggregation of core indicator 4 by type of land/management practice.	No adjustment required.
Outcome 1: Governance and the implementation of low-emission and climate-informed planning are strengthened, and sustainable financing sources are accessed. **Outcome indicator 1:** Area (ha) of village agricultural and forested land covered by PLUPs and under more sustainable and climate-resilient management. Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 370,000 ha Target value (end, 3/2027): 1,180,000 ha Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 996,223 Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachieved) Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is SMART. The indicator overlaps with core indicator 4 and outcome indicator 2.1.	No adjustment required.
Outcome 2: Vulnerabilities of villagers are reduced and their livelihoods are improved by being able to engage in climate-resilient, deforestation-free value chains and access to markets. **Outcome indicator 2.1:** Area (ha) under sustainable, deforestation-free and climate-resilient agricultural practices Base value (3/2023): 0 ha Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 4,350 ha Target value (end, 3/2027): 17,400 ha Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 6,598 ha Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachieved) Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is not fully SMART**,** as it is not directly measuring the target (reduced vulnerabilities) but rather a prerequisite, therefore reflecting a lower results level. It does not address the hypothesis that improved agricultural practices decrease villagers' vulnerabilities. The indicator overlaps with core indicator 4 and outcome indicator 1.	No adjustment required.
Outcome indicator 2.2: % of beneficiaries that report an increase in overall climate resilience. This will be measured based on household survey results from households participating in PSAP. Base value (3/2023): 0%	The indicator is partly SMART. The term climate resilience is not sufficiently operationalised.	No adjustment required.

Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	Assessment according to SMART* criteria	Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 18% of participating households in the survey report an increase in their resilience. Target value (end, 3/2027): 75% Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 91% Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachievement) Source: Annual progress report 2025		
Outcome 3: Sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems is improved **Outcome Indicator 3: Area (ha) under more resilient and sustainable forest practices across forest categories (village forestry and protected areas)** Base value (3/2023): 0 Target value (mid-term, 3/2025): 247,800 ha Target value (end, 3/2027): 569,800 ha Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 905,406 ha Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (against mid-term target): 100% (overachieved) Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is SMART. The indicator overlaps with core indicator 4 and outcome indicator 1, and 2.1. **The indicator includes the area under ViFoMA and ViFoCA.**	No adjustment required.

Table 11: Project objective and objective indicators (outcome level) of CliPAD IV (BMZ commission)

Project's objective according to the (last modification) offer: Emissions from land use change and forestry in northern Laos are reduced.

Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	Assessment according to SMART* criteria	Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
Indicator 2: 75% of the 12,750 households (9,560 – including 75% of the 850 households headed by women) that have introduced low emission, climate-resilient agricultural practices under the PSAP (Participatory Sustainable Agricultural Planning) have confirmed, based on defined criteria, that their resilience to the effects of climate change has improved. Base value (7/2019): 15% of the 9,560 households or 1,450 households Target value (5/2027): 75% of the 12,750 households or (including 75% of the 850 households headed by women) Current value as assessed by evaluation team (8/2025): Of the 4,910 households in 170 villages that registered to participate in PSAP activities (i.e. 28 households per village), 91% (4,463 households) confirmed increased resilience to the impacts of climate change. 6% (290 households) are headed by women. Of the 290 PSAP households headed by women, 80% (232 households) confirmed increased resilience to the effects of climate change. Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team: 37% (see column 'Operationalisation of indicator') Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is partly SMART. The target values for the indicator mix absolute figures (number of households participating in PSAP) and percentage figures (75% confirm they have increased their resilience). It remains unclear if only the % or also the absolute figure needs to be reached. If both figures are deemed to be the target, the indicator confuses output and outcome level, as the number of PSAP participants is an output-level objective, while the percentage of participants confirming climate resilience refers to the outcome level as it points to an effect of the intervention (climate resilience). The indicator further lacks a definition of the criteria ('defined criteria' (festgelegte Kriterien)) of climate resilience. The absolute figure of the base value (9,560) seems to be incorrect/unreasonably high.	We calculate the achievement based on the percentage of the total number of households indicated by baseline and target. Base value (7/2019): 1,450 households Target value (5/2027): 9,563 households Current value as assessed by evaluation team (3/2025): 4,468 households Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team (3/2025): 37% Source: Annual progress report 2024

Project's objective according to the (last modification) offer: Emissions from land use change and forestry in northern Laos are reduced.		
Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	**Assessment according to SMART* criteria**	**Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation** (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
Indicator 3: 500 villages meet all criteria for results-based payments. Base value (7/2019): 70 villages Target value (5/2027): 500 villages Current value as assessed by evaluation team (8/2025): 240 villages Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team: 39.5% Source: Annual progress report 2024	The indicator is SMART.	No adjustment required.
BMZ programme objective indicator 2.4.1: Status of the accreditation process with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) (NDICI 17). Base value (7/2019): 0 Target value (5/2027): Complete documentation submitted to the GCF online portal Current value as assessed by evaluation team (8/2025): Support for documentation is ongoing. Achievement in % assessed by the evaluation team: 0 Source: Annual progress report 2024	The indicator is partly SMART. Base and target value are not sufficiently specified. The target is not reflecting the outcome (Outcome 1b. Government institutions are accredited and have the capacity to access climate financing.)	
* SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound		

Effectiveness – Dimension 2: Contribution to achievement of objectives

Three hypotheses were selected from the Theory of Change to assess the project's contribution to the achievement of objectives. Hypotheses describe how outputs resulting from the project's activities are theoretically expected to cause positive change at outcome level. In this dimension, the plausibility of the three selected hypothesis is assessed empirically, based on data collected during the field mission and other secondary data (monitoring data, household surveys, etc.). The hypotheses are described in Table 12, Table 14 and Table 13. Regarding the quantitative score, each hypothesis can achieve a maximum of 10 points. Because the discussion of hypothesis 2 relies on conclusions from hypothesis 3, hypothesis 3 is presented before hypothesis 2.

Table 12: Effectiveness – Assessment of results hypothesis 1

Results hypothesis 1 (activity – output – project objective)	If a functioning PDMS for monitoring and law enforcement is in place (Output 1.1), REDD+ is mainstreamed into the NDC and the socio-economic development plan (Output 1.2), the organisational structure and capacities of domestic (financial) institutions are strengthened (Output 1.3), and the institutional requirements for REDD+ are established (Output 1.4), it is expected that government institutions will have the capacity to plan and implement climate-related processes (Outcome 1a). The increased capacities of government institutions are expected to contribute to strengthening the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance in Laos (Outcome 1d).
Main assumptions and necessary contextual factors	• REDD+ and climate finance is of high priority to the Lao Government. Government agencies allocate sufficient staff and resource to work on climate-related processes.
Risks and unintended results	• A lack of cross-sectoral coordination and potentially conflicting interests between ministries limits the government's ability to implement REDD+ and climate-related processes. • High staff turnover in government institutions undermines effective capacity development.
Alternative explanation(s)	• Interventions of other donors contribute to increased capacity of government institutions.
Assessment of hypothesis	rather confirmed

Hypothesis 1 refers to the creation of an enabling environment for REDD+ implementation. One important feature of such an enabling environment is the PDMS, **Output 1.1**). The implementation of the PDMS at national and provincial levels was facilitated by the co-finance partner, JICA, during the implementation of Project 1. Under Project 2, the PDMS was successfully extended to three additional provinces. When the evaluation team visited the Project 2 province Oudomxay, the PDMS was operational. The PAEO staff reported comparing satellite images on a weekly basis to detect potential deforestation activities. Suspect cases are passed on to district level, where DAEO staff are responsible for ground checks, law enforcement activities and reporting their findings to the national database. PAEO staff confirmed that they have received training from JICA, have deployed staff to continuously monitor satellite images, and can operate the system independently (Int_18). **Output 1.2,** the mainstreaming of REDD+ into the Social Economic Development Plans and the inclusion of Forestry Sector and REDD+-based emission reductions in Lao PDR's NDCs was already achieved during Project 1 (GCF 2024a, Int_1, 5).

With regard to **Output 1.3** (Organisational structure and capacities of domestic (financial) institutions are strengthened) and **Output 1.4** (Institutional requirements for REDD+ are established), support to the EFF in establishing and managing a Climate Change Funding Window to receive and channel project funds to project stakeholders at the province, district and village levels, which had already started under Project 1, was continued.[10] Similar to Project 1, the two finance managers continued to visit the EFF office twice per week to develop the fund's capacity and ensure alignment with GCF and GIZ commercial due diligence. The EFF confirmed that the project's advisory support had substantially strengthened the institution's capacity. In fact, the EFF successfully became a GCF-accredited entity in July 2025 (Int_1, 11).[11] Project 1 has already successfully advised the Lao Government on revising national forestry law to fulfil REDD+ requirements and on developing a national REDD+ strategy and Technical Guidelines on Village Forest Management and Planning (GCF 2021b, 2022a, 2024a). Likewise, under Project 1, JICA facilitated the establishment of a national MRV system under the FCPF as the main tool for national-level carbon accounting required to prepare the REDD+ monitoring reports (GCF 2024a). Project 2 advisers continued to work closely with the MAE, whose representatives also reported that the capacity of their staff has improved. The project has also financed the establishment of a national training centre for MAE staff to institutionalise capacity development (Int 1, 7, 9, 11).

Interviewed stakeholders suggested that the functional PDMS in place, the mainstreaming of REDD+ into NDCs and development plans, the increased institutional capacity of the MAE and the EFF, as well as PAEOs and DAEOs, the revision of the forestry law, and the establishment of a national MRV system have together contributed to increasing Lao PDR's institutions' capacity to plan and implement climate-related processes (**Outcome 1a**) and improved the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance (**Outcome 1d**). MAE representatives emphasised that their staff's understanding of REDD+ and related processes, such as carbon accounting, data collection and reporting, has improved substantially. Other development agencies, such as the World Bank, KfW and JICA, also observed that the government's capacity to manage REDD+ has increased. The formal institutional requirements for REDD+ have been met, as confirmed by the World Bank's recent transfer of a first tranche of results-based payments to the Lao Government (Int_1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11; World Bank 2024).

However, government representatives and development projects alike noted that, although the government's capacity has improved, ministries remain highly dependent on financial and technical support and guidance

[10] Based on Forestry Law and according to the GoL's decision, the Forest Protection Fund (FPF) (under the former MONRE) should become the designated REDD+ Fund in Lao PDR. Since the FPF lacked the capacity to manage larger funds of international donors, it was foreseen in the original project concepts of Project 1 and Project 2, that funds would be channelled through the EPF until the capacity of the FPF was ready to meet international due diligence requirements. However, despite support from the project and the World Bank, the FPF was not able to develop the necessary institutional capacity and operational structure, and did not pass World Bank due diligence. Hence, the EPF became the main funding window for the project. Due to the recent merger of the FPF and the EPF into the EFF, managed under the new MAE (see footnote 1 and 4), the original plan to establish a REDD+ funding window hosted by the FPF became obsolete.

[11] Please note that the former EPF has achieved accreditation with the GCF. The accreditation of the recently formed EFF was not clear at the time of the evaluation. Although the EFF emerged from the former EPF, it may need to undergo certain steps in the accreditation process again to become accredited. However, since the EPF was already accredited, stakeholders expect the EFF to achieve accreditation soon.

from international donors when it comes to managing climate-related processes and REDD+, as well as applying for new climate funding. Staff turnover in government institutions remains a concern, as do limited capacity in financial management and a lack of resource persons to train new staff. While the EFF valued GIZ's support, they also reported that the Project 1 finance managers were primarily responsible for managing the GIZ/GCF project funds but had limited time to develop the capacity of the EFF's in-house staff. EFF representatives noted that they would have appreciated it if GIZ had provided additional budget for their administration and invested more in their institution's capacity, particularly in proposal development for international donors. The project noted that the two GIZ finance managers spent two days a week at the EFF office working closely with staff to develop capacity, and that proposal writing was not yet a focus, as the EFF had only recently become accredited by the GCF. Furthermore, the EFF does yet employ in-house staff for proposal management, and writing GCF proposals is a highly specialised task typically outsourced to specialised consultants by other organisations as well (Int_1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14).

Some stakeholders pointed out that, while the efforts of Project 1 and its co-finance partners to prepare the Lao PDR government for REDD+ have been tremendous, structural barriers have constrained their success and explain why the Lao PDR government's capacity to manage REDD+ remains limited and dependent on ongoing donor support. Barriers include limited education levels and the capacity to read and understand English among government staff; limited IT infrastructure and technical know-how, including experience with Geographic Information Systems (GIS); limited rule of law and understanding required to develop and implement legal frameworks; and substantial budget constraints due to low tax revenues (Int_4, 5, 7, 12).

In summary, the project contributed to the development of the government's capacity and to the improvement of the regulatory framework for REDD+, while dependence on external expertise and guidance for managing climate-related processes remains high. **Hypothesis 1 is assessed as rather confirmed, scoring 8 out of 10 points.**

Table 13: Effectiveness – Assessment of results hypothesis 3

Results hypothesis 3 (activity – output – project objective)	After villages are selected (Output 3.1) and VLFMC are established and trained (Output 3.2), it is planned that village communities would then be trained by already trained government staff (Output 3.3). Subsequently, villages located within NPAs would receive support to develop NPA management plans (Output 3.6), whereas other villages shall be guided in the process of developing Sustainable VFMPs, Output 3.4). Following this, it is foreseen that the trained villagers conduct tasks such as patrolling, fire protection and boundary demarcation to implement VFMP or conservation agreements, based on CfW. If forest management plans and conservation agreements are successfully implemented and enforced (Output 3.5, 3.7), they should contribute to the sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems (Outcome 3a), which is expected to decrease deforestation (Outcome 3b).
Main assumptions and necessary contextual factors	• Villagers have economic alternatives to shifting cultivation and expanding their agricultural land into forest areas. • Land ownership and tenure in the village are clear. • Villagers accept and comply with PLUP. • Government staff are committed to improving planning processes in a participatory manner with local communities.
Risks and unintended results	• High staff turnover in government agencies and a lack of qualified staff, particularly IT/GIS specialists, limit the capacity of extension and forestry staff to carry out the facilitation of community training and VFMP development at village level. • Corruption compromises VFMP implementation and effective law enforcement.
Alternative explanation(s)	• Macroeconomic developments or government policies affect the rate of deforestation (e.g. decreasing demand for timber or certain cash crops on the world market or a ban on timber exports).
Assessment of hypothesis	confirmed

Hypothesis 3 states that the project's village forest management activities contribute to decreased deforestation. At the time of this report, the project has established VLFMC in 250 out of 290 Project 2 villages (**Output**

3.2). Training for villagers and committee members, as well as the development and signing of a Village Forest Management Agreement (ViFoMA), (or Village Forest Conservation Agreement (ViFoCA) in villages bordering a NPA across the Project 2 villages, was still ongoing throughout 2025 **(Output 3.4)**. Project 2 villages visited had not yet started to implement CfW forest management activities, such as patrolling, boundary demarcation and establishing firebreaks. Therefore, it is **too early to assess** the extent to **which these interventions** will **contribute to improved forest management and to stopping deforestation** in the area of the Project 2 villages. The plausibility of the hypothesis can only be assessed based on the visible effects similar interventions have in Project 1 villages.

All Project 1 villages have signed a Village Forest Management Agreement (ViFoMA), or Village Forest Conservation Agreement (ViFoCA) in villages bordering NPAs, **Output 3.4,** GCF 2025b). Two of the five villages visited were unable to present the signed ViFoMA document to the evaluators, suggesting that the document may have been lost or that there were issues with printing and distribution. FGDs, however, indicated that villagers were generally aware of the agreement with the government and that it was no longer permitted to cut or burn forest in protected areas designated by the PLUP. Members of the CfW teams reported that DAEO training in carrying out these activities was effective, as they understood the tasks and encountered few challenges during implementation. Activities were carried out by groups of men composed of VLFMC members and other volunteers earning between 60,000 and 100,000 Lao Kip (EUR 2-4) per day from the CfW funds previously transferred to the villages' bank account (FGD_1-9). This suggests that forest management and protection in village areas have improved (**Outcome 3a**).

Moreover, the project's monitoring data indicate that deforestation has ceased in Project 1 villages (**Outcome 3b,** GCF 2025b). All villages visited by the evaluation team reported that villagers have stopped practising slash-and-burn (FGD_1-15). The household survey confirms these observations: 80% of village authorities in the 54 surveyed Project 1 villages reported that shifting cultivation was practised in their communities prior to the start of the project. 84% of them reported that shifting cultivation had 'decreased a lot' during project implementation, while more than 70% explained this primarily with the new rules in place (GIZ 2024b). As the new rules were established and are enforced through improved forest management (PLUP, ViFoMA, boundary demarcation, and patrolling), these findings strongly indicate that the project's land planning and forest management activities have a causal effect on reduced use of slash-and-burn practices for the clearing of village forest land.

The evaluation team concludes that it is very likely that the village forest management interventions to be implemented in the Project 2 villages will significantly contribute to a decline in deforestation, comparable to that observed in Project 1 villages. **Hypothesis 3 is assessed as confirmed, scoring 10 out of 10 points.**

Table 14: Effectiveness – Assessment of results hypothesis 2

Results hypothesis 2 (activity – output – project objective)	If villagers are selected and have prepared investment plans (Output 2.3), they are supposed to receive promotion of sustainable agricultural practices training from capacitated government staff (Output 2.2) and funds for climate-smart agriculture investments (Output 2.4). Based on the funds and training provided, it is expected that villagers will apply improved agricultural practices to their land (Outcome 2a). It is assumed that the application of improved, climate-smart farming practices will increase quality and quantity of yield, which will translate into increased and diversified household income contributing to improved livelihoods (Outcome 2d). If villagers benefit from improved economic opportunities based on existing agricultural land it is expected that they will refrain from clearing forest for shifting cultivation or expansion of their holdings, which is foreseen to contribute the sustainable management, protection and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems (Outcome 3a) and decreased deforestation (Outcome 3b).
Main assumptions and necessary contextual factors	• Land ownership and tenure in the village are clear. • Villagers have available land to participate in PSAP. • Effective law enforcement prevents villagers from illegally clearing the forest for the expansion of agricultural land. • Strategies and policies of the national and provincial government for agricultural development are in line with PSAP.

Risks and unintended results	• Falling or volatile market prices for agricultural commodities undermine the positive effect of PSAP on livelihoods. • Unforeseen weather conditions compromise the effects of PSAP. • The selection of households receiving PSAP support instigates conflicts within village communities. • The success of PSAP increases the return on land, which creates incentives for villagers to expand their holdings into forest areas. • In some districts, government policies may promote agricultural commodities or practices that are inconsistent with the PSAP whitelist.
Alternative explanation(s)	• Positive macroeconomic developments in the project regions, such as the emergence of new income opportunities or increasing commodity prices, contribute to improved livelihoods. • Favourable weather conditions have a positive effect on yields.
Assessment of hypothesis	rather confirmed

Hypothesis 2 posits that implementing PSAP to support alternative livelihoods will reduce reliance on income sources associated with deforestation. Project 2 villages visited by the evaluation team had completed the selection of PSAP households, and the respective households had developed investment plans (up to EUR 400 per household; **Output 2.3**). However, they had not yet received the agricultural inputs. Therefore, it is **too early to assess** the extent to **which PSAP** will **contribute to improved livelihoods in Project 2 villages**. The plausibility of the hypothesis can only be assessed based on the effects that PSAP investments have in Project 1 villages.

Project 1 villages confirmed that DAEO staff visited them for several days to deliver training, which they perceived as helpful and easy to understand. Most FGD participants could recall and explain the training content relevant to them. They further confirmed receipt of PSAP inputs aligned with their investment plan, including the extension or establishment of rice fields, fishponds or rubber plots, as well as the procurement of barbed wire for cattle fencing. While most households had experience with rice and cattle, fish breeding and rubber cultivation were new to many of them. However, they expressed confidence in applying the new agricultural practices thanks to guidance from DAEO staff and peer learning within their community. FGDs with households indicated potential increases in yields through PSAP activities; some reported already harvesting fish from newly established ponds, higher rice yields from extended paddy fields, and faster-growing cattle due to effective forage management with barbed wire fencing (FGD_2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9). These qualitative observations align with the household survey, which found that 83% of respondents were satisfied with the yields they achieved on their PSAP lands.[12] 80% reported a very positive (24%) or somewhat positive (56%) effect on their income, suggesting improved livelihoods (**Outcome 2d,** GIZ 2024b).

However, the impact of PSAP on livelihoods was a subject of controversial debate among project stakeholders. Implementing DAEO staff, PAEO representatives, and some GIZ advisers found the PSAP budget of EUR 400 per household to be too small to really make a difference (Int_15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21). Some villagers also complained that the budget was too small to increase their income, as it would not be sufficient to establish a fishpond or a rubber field of reasonable size. As a consequence, many of them used their own savings or borrowed money to increase the size of the pond or field established by the service providers (FGD_1, 3, 11, 12, 14, 15). Certainly, not everyone has sufficient savings, and taking on debt may entail unpredictable risks. However, from a project management perspective, increasing the PSAP budget per household would either mean decreasing the number of households supported in each village or reducing the number of project villages. When the evaluation team asked PAEO and DAEO staff to reflect on these options, they quickly discarded the idea of reducing the number of PSAP households in a village because many villages have a large number of poor households that should be addressed, and reducing the number of supported families would increase competition and potential conflict in the selection process. Likewise, they did not express a strong preference

[12] 80% refers to the 57 households in the sample who had already harvested after receiving PSAP support.

for reducing the number of project villages to increase PSAP budgets per household, as they wanted the project to reach as many villages as possible in their district to maximise overall coverage (Int_15, 19, 20, 21). In summary, the qualitative approach used in this evaluation is not suitable for robustly measuring the livelihood impacts of PSAP. Additionally, household survey findings on PSAP outcomes, and stakeholder perspectives on the adequacy of the PSAP budget, present a mixed picture.

The extent to which improved livelihoods based on PSAP support have a positive effect on forest conservation **(Outcome 3a)** remains unclear. In theory, it reduces households' reliance on slash-and-burn agriculture and other income sources that harm forests when they are provided with alternative livelihoods. Empirical evidence shows that the projects' forestry activities (PLUP, ViFoMA, CfW, as discussed for Hypothesis 3) lead to the observed improvements in forest management and reduced deforestation, but it remains difficult to assess the contribution of PSAP and livelihood improvements, as villagers mainly refer to forestry activities and new rules when asked about their motivation for protecting the forest (in our FGDs, but also in the household survey, as outlined for Hypothesis 3 above). Nevertheless, PSAP is regarded as an essential component of the package the village receives, as it was cited as the primary reason for villages to join the project (FGD_1-15). Although the magnitude of PSAP's contribution could not be assessed by the evaluation, PSAP proves to be a necessary feature that enables effective forest management interventions in villages.

In summary, there are some indications that PSAP contributes to improved livelihoods in Project 1 villages but the direct effects of alternative livelihoods on the reduction of slash-and-burn practices and improved forest protection remain unclear. However, the evaluation team is convinced that PSAP has indirectly contributed to reducing deforestation, as an important factor in securing villages' participation in forest management activities**.** It is plausible that Project 2 villages will show similar performance in the coming years. **Hypothesis 2 is assessed as rather confirmed, scoring 8 out of 10 points.**

Effectiveness dimension 2 – Contribution to achievement of objectives – scores **26 out of 30 points.**

Spotlight on gender and ethnic minorities

While the project encourages women to participate in training and activities, actual participation and understanding of the project varied across the villages visited by the evaluation team. Whereas in some villages, women reported participating in land-use planning, in others women said they sent their husbands to meetings and activities. Women could recall the criteria for selecting PSAP households in most villages, and some also reported that they made decisions on household investment plans and the choice of PSAP support together with their husbands. Women could mostly explain the reasons for protecting the forest, indicating that they had participated in or followed consultations and training related to FPIC and village forest management.

Villages in the mountainous region of northern Laos, populated predominantly by ethnic minorities, are characterised by lower levels of education and higher poverty rates. The evaluation team visited villages in the remote Phontong district inhabited by the Hmong ethnic group. The general understanding of the project among households was lower compared to other villages. Not all women have completed primary education, and some don't understand Lao language, making it difficult for them to follow the project activities. The FPIC team of the local DAEO included a Hmong-speaking woman who could address the villagers directly. The other DAEO teams (PLUP, PSAP and forestry) did not have members who spoke Hmong, necessitating translation that was not always effective in reaching women in the villages. However, these villages have benefited from PSAP support and managed to retain their forest cover, thereby qualifying for the upcoming bonus payment.

Effectiveness – Dimension 3: Quality of implementation

Dimension 3 refers to the quality of steering and project management, the consistency of project monitoring, and the appropriate involvement of relevant stakeholders.

The project grounds steering and decision-making in two main data sources: The DPMS and the household survey. All implementing parties report on the implementation of activities and respective budget spending in real time via the DPMS. Government counterparts such as PAEO or DAEO request a budget for individual activities via the system and upload details on the output of respective activities (such as the number of participants in training or ha of land under a newly introduced PLUP or ViFoMA) after completion (for a detailed description of the DPMS, see Chapter 3.1). This provides the central project steering unit in Vientiane with a comprehensive, real-time picture of implementation status and budget spending across the provinces and districts. Since the DPMS includes reporting on safeguards and complaints from villagers (if reported to government staff), the system is also helpful to the steering unit in addressing grievances and identifying implementation bottlenecks. The feedback from government staff regarding the DPMS was generally positive. They confirmed that it is easy to apply, and PAEO highlighted that it is a useful tool for overseeing district staff activities. Interviewees expressed interest in using the DPMS post-project, demonstrating institutional ownership and recognition of the system's value for monitoring and steering. Minor complaints were raised by government officials regarding access regulations, which are currently restricted to the jurisdiction of the staff member responsible, and some expressed interest in accessing data on thematic and geographical areas for which they are currently not authorised (Int_15, 18, 20, 21, 24, 28). However, the project noted that access restrictions were not initiated by the project but were introduced at the request of the central government.

The two household surveys conducted in 2024 form another key data source relevant for steering and decision-making. While the DPMS provides output-based data from the perspective of the implementing government counterparts, the household surveys provide a better understanding of how the project is implemented from the beneficiaries' perspective. The sample of 304 households across 54 villages (survey 1) was sufficiently large to ensure reasonable representativeness, and the survey questions covered a broad thematic spectrum, including FPIC, PLUP development, PSAP and village forest management. The project team used both the DPMS and the household survey data to adapt and refine the implementation strategy throughout Project 1 and to inform the design of Project 2. Some examples of adaptations and course corrections have already been discussed in the Relevance chapter of this report (Dimension 4). In addition to the DPMS and household survey, the project conducted a safeguard survey, donor mapping, an investment survey and a staffing survey to support project steering.

The evaluation team found the project's implementation structure in the provinces to be well suited. A team of GIZ advisers in each province is responsible for preparing government staff to implement the FPIC, PLUP, PSAP and forest management interventions at village level. DAEO representatives confirmed that they were well prepared for their tasks. Initially, GIZ advisers accompany government teams to villages for on-the-job training. The district-level government teams found working closely with the GIZ advisers particularly helpful for learning from them in practice and for receiving direct support when engaging with the village communities (Int_15, 19, 21). A frequently mentioned challenge was that separate land and forestry teams conducted PLUP activities and VFMP development at different times within the same villages, thereby causing inconsistencies in boundary demarcations. After learning about this challenge, the project team gradually streamlined PLUP and VFMP development during the implementation of Project 2 (Int_10, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24),

Government stakeholders spoke largely positively about coordination and collaboration with GIZ teams at national and provincial levels. Only a few challenges were mentioned. PAEO representatives noted that central management of contracts for provincial-level GIZ advisers created some coordination gaps with the PAEO office, as advisers planned their travel and leave schedules with the GIZ office in Vientiane and did not always discuss or harmonise them with the PAEO offices. National-level government stakeholders noted that some

GIZ advisers or technical experts were junior staff with limited field experience, and that some of them lacked the confidence and capacity to interact effectively with training recipients and adapt their materials to the local context. It was also mentioned that staff turnover within the GIZ team was high, meaning that common understanding, working relationships and coordination mechanisms had to be re-established with new personnel, occasionally causing challenges and delays (Int_9, 15).

In summary, given the extensive geographical coverage and scale of interventions, the evaluation team found the quality of steering and implementation management to be high, with only minor challenges in coordination with government counterparts.

Effectiveness dimension 3 – Quality of implementation – scores **18 out of 20 points.**

Effectiveness – Dimension 4: Unintended results

In this dimension, the evaluation team assesses the extent to which the project contributed to positive or negative unintended results at outcome level and whether the project effectively monitored such unintended effects.

The two household surveys are one tool the project uses to monitor unintended results, as they enable the project to observe and understand the effects of all interventions at village level. In addition, the project established several channels for stakeholders and beneficiaries to file complaints related to project activities: 1) They can solve grievances through traditional village mediation mechanisms; 2) they can report complaints to the implementing project teams (government staff or GIZ advisers); 3) they were provided with a phone number to directly contact the GIZ team in Vientiane. The number is prominently displayed on a poster provided to each village. However, the evaluation team found that this poster was not consistently displayed across the villages visited. When asked, villagers referred to traditional methods of conflict resolution (mediation through village authorities and the elderly) or the involvement of DAEO staff for mediation. The provincial safeguard teams document instances of traditional grievance resolution during village visits, enabling the central steering unit to monitor and follow up on these cases.

The evaluation team examined the following potential sources of negative unintended results:

- Conflict over land in the context of PLUP development: Some households were negatively affected by the PLUP because what they claimed as their land fell into the designated protected village forest area, restricting it from future agricultural use. While disputes, discussions and negotiations over land boundaries are inherent to the PLUP process, villages tend to resolve conflicts and achieve widespread acceptance of the final version of the PLUP by the end of the negotiation process. People negatively affected by the PLUP are typically compensated either by relocating other parcels of land to them or by including them in the households receiving PSAP support. Conflicts were reported to be resolved through traditional community mediation mechanisms. When a settlement was not reached, government staff (DAEO) were called in to mediate and resolve the issue. The evaluation team is not aware of any cases of severe conflicts or ongoing tensions in the communities (Int_8, 16, 19, 20, 21, FGD_1-15).
- Effects of the PLUP/ViFoMA on customary land use: The Hmong people of northern Laos have strong cultural ownership of their lands, which they link to their ancestors. Stakeholders interviewed and FGD participants reported that, in general, PLUP development accommodates traditional land ownership. In some cases, individuals were reluctant to endorse the relocation of their land. However, these cases could mostly be resolved through compensation, as described above (Int_16, 17; FGD_4-9).
- Conflicts within villages over PSAP support: Within each village, an average of 27 households are selected to receive up to EUR 400 per household for PSAP activities. The selection of households is based on a set of primary criteria (e.g. If household needs land and labour to implement PSAP activities) and secondary criteria (preferential selection of poor, women-headed and young family households, as well as households

negatively affected by the PLUP). The DAEO teams implementing PSAP in the villages explained the nature of resource constraints and the rationale of the selection criteria. During the evaluation, most villagers participating in FGDs could recall at least some of these criteria. They also mentioned that their village plans to compensate households excluded from PSAP with bonus payments the village will receive upon successfully protecting the forest area. While some households that did not receive PSAP support still felt treated unfairly, this was not reported as a source of severe conflict in the villages (Int_8, 16, 20, 21, FGD_1-15).

- Villagers take on debt: In some of the villages visited, farmers reported having taken (or planned to take) credit from the service provider for financing a bigger rice field, rubber plot or fishpond than covered by the PSAP budget provided by the project. It was also reported that service providers were actively offering loans to villagers to expand PSAP services. While credit-based investments can enhance farmers' economic success, they also carry the risk of indebtedness. In one village visited during the evaluation, some of the interviewed women were concerned that their households would be unable to repay the loans due to low rice yields associated with adverse weather conditions in 2025, resulting in lower income than expected. Although the service providers are private enterprises operating outside the project's control, the project initiates their provision of agricultural extension services to the villages in the context of PSAP. While the fear of being unable to repay loans was not widespread and was only expressed in one village, it could become a source of negative unintended results in the future (Int_8, 19, FGD_1, 3, 11, 12).
- Exposure to unexploded ordnance: There were no reported cases of villagers encountering unexploded ordnance (FGD_1-15).

The evaluation team identified no positive unintended results.

In summary, the project monitored unintended results comprehensively and effectively. The evaluation team did not observe any substantial negative results at outcome level. A degree of risk remains that villagers who borrowed money to expand PSAP investments may be unable to repay them in the event of external shocks, potentially leading to future indebtedness.

Effectiveness dimension 4 – Unintended results – scores **18 out of 20 points.**

Photo 2: The evaluation team conducting a focus group discussion in a village in the Beng district, Oudomxay province, Laos (Source/©: 2025/Janis Wicke)



Methodology for assessing effectiveness

Table 15: Evaluation matrix for OECD DAC criterion effectiveness

Effectiveness assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
Achievement of the (intended) objectives	Extent to which module objective indicators are being achieved (see tables 10 and 11 above).	**Evaluation design:** Analysis follows the evaluation questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources (see below). **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis (progress reports) • Assessment of monitoring data • Semi-structured interviews and FGDs with all stakeholders	• Majority of indicators are SMART, high-quality monitoring data is available. No major limitations expected. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** strong

Effectiveness assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
Contribution to achievement of objectives	Extent to which it is plausible that the project's activities and outputs contributed to the achievement of outcomes, looking in particular at the three results hypotheses outlined in tabels 12, 13, and 14.	**Evaluation design:** Contribution analysis **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews/FGD with all stakeholders • Observations during site visits (pilot projects) • Monitoring data (household survey)	• Good availability of interview partners • The small sample (number of villages) and qualitative nature of the data collected during the evaluation mission limits conclusions on the effects of PSAP or village forest management • Household survey provides comprehensive and representative data to support primary data collected by the evaluation team **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good
Quality of implementation	Assessment of • the quality of steering and project management • the quality of project monitoring.	**Evaluation design:** Analysis follows the evaluation questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of sources. **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews with project staff and implementation partners	• Possibilities for triangulation limited. Assessment is based on project documents and interviews with the project staff and partners. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good
Unintended results	Extent to which unintended results at (output and) outcome level have been observed/can be anticipated, what benefits and risks emanate from them. Extent to which the project monitored unintended effects and responded to them.	**Evaluation Design:** Analysis follows the evaluation questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of sources. **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews with all stakeholders	• Representatives of all stakeholder groups were reached via online calls or on-site interviews and FGDs • Monitoring and household survey data give insights into potential unintended results • Potential limitations from social desirability: Stakeholders may be reluctant to disclose negative effects associated with the project **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good

* SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound

4.5 Impact

This section analyses and assesses the project's impact. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions specified by the BMZ (see Annex).

Since this is a mid-term review report, impact will not be assessed with a quantitative score.

Summarising assessment of impact

It is too early to assess the impact of Project 2 on emission reduction targets, as forest management activities at village level have only just begun to be implemented. However, with regard to **CliPAD**, which includes Project 1 implementation, the project **reported emission reductions of 6.9 million tCO2eq** for the 2019–2024 period to BMZ, roughly **meeting the target** of 7.1 million tCO2eq for Project 1 villages to be achieved at mid-term. The figure is based on the FCPF monitoring report for the six northern provinces of Laos. While the emission reductions cannot be attributed solely to CliPAD/Project 1, as other World Bank and KfW projects in the same area have also contributed to it, they nevertheless suggest the **success of the forest management interventions across the 240 Project 1 villages** in reducing carbon emissions at scale. It is plausible that Project 2 villages will achieve similar emission reductions in the future, since they follow the same approach as Project 1. The Lao Government has already received a **first tranche of USD 16 million in results-based payments** from the FCPF carbon fund, of which **69% is designated for transfer to villages**. The benefit-

sharing plan suggests that villages will use part of the funds to improve livelihoods. However, since the implementation of the benefit-sharing plan is delayed and disbursements to villages have not yet taken place, it is **too early to assess how villages will use the payments** and whether they have a positive impact on livelihoods. Several observations suggest that improved capacity within the Lao Government and the country's regulatory frameworks for REDD+ have **increased the government's access to climate finance**. JICA and the Lao Government have recently received approval for a USD 61.5 million project proposed to the GCF to implement REDD+ through village forest management in southern Laos. In addition, the **EFF became a GCF-accredited entity** in 2025.[13] At the same time, the **Lao Government's dependence on external technical support** to initiate, develop and manage proposals for international climate finance **remains high**. With regard to unintended impacts, the evaluation team found that the disbursement of bonus payments to villages could risk triggering conflict over the use and distribution of the funds, something which has not been adequately addressed in the project design to date.

Analysis and assessment of impact

Impact – Dimension 1: Higher-level (intended) development changes/results

The pivotal impact of the Implementation of the Laos Emission Reduction Programme is the reduction of emissions through improved forest management and the prevention of deforestation. Emission reductions in the project area are subject to Project 2 core indicator 1 and to the CliPAD project objective and programme objective indicators listed in Table 16. One CliPAD programme indicator also refers to the amount of results-based payments Laos has received.

Table 16: Impact indicators of Project 1

Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	**Assessment according to SMART* criteria**	**Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation** (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
FP200 Core Indicator 1: GHG emissions reduced, avoided or removed/sequestered Base value (3/2023): 0 tCO2eq Target value (mid-term): 1,000,000 tCO2eq Target value (end): 4,600,000 Current value as assessed by evaluation team (12/2025): 0 Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team: 0 Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is SMART.	No adjustment required.
CliPAD/BMZ project objective indicator 1: An emission reduction of 11.7 million tonnes of CO_2 has been verified. Base value (7/2019): 0 Target value (5/2027): 11.7 million. tCO2eq Current value as assessed by evaluation team (8/2025): 6.9 million tCO2eq (4.4 million. tCO2eq for 2019–2021 (first FCPF monitoring report) and 2.5 million tCO2eq for 2022–2024 (second FCPF monitoring report))	The indicator is partly SMART. High overlap with programme objective indicator 2.4.2. It is not clear why the target values between the two indicators differ, as they both refer to the same emission reductions.	No adjustment required.

[13] Please note that the former EPF has achieved accreditation with the GCF. The accreditation of the recently formed EFF was not clear at the time of the evaluation. Although the EFF emerged from the former EPF, it may need to undergo certain steps in the accreditation process again to become accredited. However, since the EPF was already accredited, stakeholders expect the EFF to achieve accreditation soon.

Project's objective indicator according to the (last modification) offer	**Assessment according to SMART* criteria**	**Operationalisation of indicator in evaluation** (esp. if necessary for measurement or understanding)
Achievement in % as assessed by evaluation team: 59% Source: Annual progress report 2025		
BMZ programme objective indicator 2.4.2: Level of GHG emissions from deforestation and degradation in the northern provinces of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (SDG 13.2.2 / NDICI 7) Base value (7/2019): Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) for Emission Reductions Payment Agreement (ERPA) with the FCPF Target value (5/2027): 5.6 million tCO2 Current value as assessed by evaluation team (8/2025): 6.9 million tCO2eq (4.4 million. tCO2eq for 2019–2021 (first FCPF monitoring report) and 2.5 million tCO2eq for 2022–2024 (second FCPF monitoring report)) Achievement in % assessed by the evaluation team (3/2025): 100% (overachieved) Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is partly SMART. The difference to project objective indicator 1 is not clear. It is not clear why the target values between the two indicators differ, as they both refer to the same emission reductions.	No adjustment required.
BMZ programme objective indicator 2.4.3: Extent to which the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has received results-based financing for verified ER and is available for adaptation and mitigation measures (leverage effect through initiatives supported by projects financed by European partners) (NDICI 17) Base value (7/2019): 0 Target value (5/2027): EUR 42 million Current value as assessed by evaluation team (8/2025): USD 16 million Achievement in % assessed by the evaluation team: 38% Source: Annual progress report 2025	The indicator is partly SMART. The meaning of 'and is available for adaptation and mitigation measures' is not clearly defined. Results-based payments are issued in USD, not in EUR.	Change of target value to USD.
* SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound		

As forest management activities have only just begun to be implemented in Project 2 villages, the corresponding emission reductions will emerge only in the future. Therefore, the reported emission reduction figure for Project 2 (**GCF FP200 Core Indicator 1)** remains zero at the end of 2025. The **CliPAD indicators (project indicator 1 and programme indicator 2.4.2)** do not just refer to Project 2, but also include the impacts of Project 1. The project reported emission reductions of 6.9 million tCO2eq for the 2019–2024 period to BMZ, roughly meeting the target of 7.1 million tCO2eq for Project 1 villages to be achieved at mid-term (the final target of the indicator is 11.7 million tCO2eq, which includes another 4 million tCO2eq from Project 2 villages to be achieved by 2027). The figure reported is based on the first and second Emission Reductions Monitoring Report published by the FCPF for the Northern Laos Emission Reductions Payments Project (FCPF 2023, 2025). While the figure is regarded as a success, there are two aspects that require consideration: First, the FCPF report covers the entire area of the six northern provinces. Several other World Bank and KfW projects are implementing forest management activities in the same area and have also contributed to the reported

emission reductions.[14] Hence the reported figure can only be partly attributed to the forest management activities in Project 1 villages. However, it can be argued that Project 1 has indirectly contributed to Emission Reductions delivered by the other projects, as it has laid the foundation for the Laos Emission Reductions Programme at institutional level (REDD+ readiness, PDMS, increased capacities of government agencies, etc.). Second, the FCPF subtracts an Uncertainty Buffer and a Reversal Buffer from the calculated Emission Reductions, resulting in only 5,042,000 tCO2eq (3,204,000 tCO2eq for 2019–2021 and 1,838,000 tCO2eq for 2022–2024) being reported to the FCPF carbon fund and receiving results-based payments. Based on the first reporting period, the Lao Government has already received the first tranche of result-based payments amounting to USD 16 million. However, the final target of the Northern Laos Emission Reductions Payments Project to be achieved by the end of 2025 is 8,400,000 tCO2eq. The Emission Reductions reported for the 2022–2024 period fell short of expectations, and different stakeholders noted to the evaluation team that the Lao Government would not fully achieve its REDD+ emission reduction targets of 8.5 million tCO2eq by the end of 2025, due to the national MRV indicating ongoing deforestation in the six northern provinces (though taking place outside the village forest area of Project 1; Int_1, 5, 7, 22).

Since the World Bank has transferred the first tranche of USD 16 million in results-based payments to the Lao Government, the **CliPAD programme indicator 2.4.3** is partly achieved. A second tranche is expected, but might fall behind the target if REDD+ emission reduction targets are not met.

Impact – Dimension 2: Contribution to higher-level (intended) development results/changes

This dimension analyses the extent to which the project contributed to the intended higher-level results or changes, drawing on the contribution analysis of the two selected impact-level hypotheses.

Table 17: Impact – Assessment of results hypothesis 4

Results hypothesis 4 (project objective – impact)	If the regulatory framework for REDD+ and climate finance is strengthened (Outcome 1d), it is expected that Laos will have access to climate funding (Impact 3). Subsequently, it is expected that the Government of Laos will use acquired funds to implement policies or projects that contribute to reducing the country's carbon emissions or strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards (Impact 5).
Main assumptions and necessary contextual factors	• Climate action is a high priority for the Lao Government. Government agencies allocate sufficient staff and resources to work on climate-related processes. • Lao institutions become accredited by international donors. • The purpose and structure of international climate funds meet the requirements and capacities of Lao Government institutions.
Risks and unintended results	• A lack of cross-sectoral coordination and potentially conflicting interests between ministries limit the government's ability to apply for climate funding and implement climate-related policies. • Inefficient management or corruption undermines the use of climate finance.
Alternative explanation(s)	• Other development partners support the Lao Government in accessing climate funding.
Assessment of hypothesis	rather confirmed

Hypothesis 4 posits that the improved regulatory framework for REDD+ increases Laos' ability to access international climate funding. The assessment of Hypothesis 1 (see Effectiveness chapter, Dimension 2) demonstrated that the project's (including its co-finance partners') comprehensive support in preparing the Lao Government for REDD+ implementation improved the government's capacity to plan and manage climate-related processes (Outcome 1a), and the regulatory framework for REDD+ implementation in the country (Outcome

[14] Other projects active in the six northern provinces are: The Governance of Forest Landscapes and Livelihoods (GFLL) Project by the WorldBank; The Village Forest Management Project (VFMP) by KfW; The Lao Landscapes and Livelihoods (LLL) Project by World Bank; The Integrated Conservation of Biodiversity and Forests (ICBF) Project by KfW (until 2022); The Second Lao Environment and Social Project (LENS2) by the World Bank (until 2021).

1d). Several observations suggest that improved capacities and regulatory frameworks have increased the government's access to climate finance **(Impact 3)**.

First, as mentioned in Dimension 1 above, the World Bank has released a first tranche of REDD+ results-based payments (EUR 16 million) to the Lao Government, and a second tranche is expected to follow in the coming years. Result-based payments are calculated through the national MRV system, which was established with support from JICA. The infrastructure for calculating emission reductions from forest cover is an important pre-requisite for accessing other sources of climate finance in the future.

Second, JICA and the Lao Government recently received approval for a USD 61.5 million GCF-funded project to implement REDD+ through village forest management in southern Laos, with JICA as the GCF-accredited entity. This upcoming project builds on CliPAD/Project 1 and 2, as the GCF provides the budget as a results-based payment for the emission reductions achieved in northern Laos (with the contribution of CliPAD/Projects 1 and 2 villages) to extend the Emission Reduction Programme to six provinces in the south of the country (GCF 2025c). Third, with support from CliPAD/Projects 1 and 2, the EFF became a GCF-accredited entity in 2025,[15] enabling the fund to independently prepare proposals and apply for GCF funding in the future. Since all sources of climate finance mentioned here are used for projects that integrate climate change measures into national policies and support mitigation and adaptation efforts, a contribution to SDG 13, Climate Action, is highly plausible (**Impact 5**).

However, the Lao Government's dependence on external technical support remains high (See Effectiveness chapter, Dimension 2). Although government agencies are now in a better position to apply for climate funding from international organisations than they were five years ago, they still rely on support from development agencies for proposal initiation and preparation. The proposal for the new GCF-funded project mentioned above was thus prepared by JICA. Representatives from the EFF reported that, although the fund became a GCF-accredited entity, it lacks the technical expertise to prepare project proposals and has already requested additional capacity development support from GIZ for its in-house staff. While GIZ pointed out that drafting GCF proposals is a task typically outsourced to specialised external consultants, the evaluation team has the impression that proposal development in Laos is still predominantly donor-driven, and the capacity of the EFF to initiate and manage proposals is still limited.

In summary, access of Laos to climate finance has improved, although challenges remain regarding its reliance on external donors to prepare proposals and implement projects. **Hypothesis 4 is assessed as rather confirmed.**

Table 18: Impact – Assessment of results hypothesis 5

Results hypothesis 5 (project objective – impact)	A decrease in deforestation rates in the project regions is expected to translate into a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (Impact 1). The World Bank is supposed to compensate for respective emission reductions with results-based payments to the Government of Laos (Impact 4). Subsequently, the EFF is foreseen to channel payments to village level, where they are supposed to contribute to village forest agricultural grants. The latter are supposed to be used for development activities in the villages, which is expected to increase income and food security (Impact 6).
Main assumptions and necessary contextual factors	• The functioning PDMS generates accurate data that meets the requirements to calculate emission reductions within the REDD+ framework. • The EFF has the capacity to manage payments and channel funds to village level. • Structures at village level allow the disbursement of funds to beneficiaries.

[15] Please note that the former EPF has achieved accreditation with the GCF. The accreditation of the recently formed EFF was not clear at the time of the evaluation. Although the EFF emerged from the former EPF, it may need to undergo certain steps in the accreditation process again to become accredited. However, since the EPF was already accredited, stakeholders expect the EFF to achieve accreditation soon.

Risks and unintended results	• Inefficient management or corruption undermines the transfer of funds to village level and disbursement to beneficiaries. • Disbursement at village level leads to conflict over the use or distribution of funds.
Alternative explanation(s)	• Positive macroeconomic developments in the project regions, such as the emergence of new income opportunities, or increasing commodity prices, contribute to increased income and food security.
Assessment of hypothesis	rather confirmed

Hypothesis 5 states that emission reductions achieved through reduced deforestation will be purchased by the World Bank via results-based payments, ultimately contributing to social development. As forestry activities in Project 2 villages have just started, a positive impact on forest protection and associated emission reductions can only be extrapolated from Project 1 results. The evaluation confirmed that deforestation has decreased substantially in the Project 1 area (see Effectiveness chapter, Dimension 2). As outlined in Dimension 1 of this chapter, the World Bank has verified emission reductions of 3.2 million tCO2eq and released a first tranche of USD 16 million to the Lao Government in 2024. It is plausible that avoided deforestation in the Project 1 villages has contributed to that achievement. The government has developed a benefit-sharing plan that specifies how results-based payments are planned to be distributed among stakeholders, provinces and districts.[16] While 18% of the grant is used by the government as operational costs for REDD+ implementation, about 69% is expected to be disbursed to villages. It is expected that the development of community action plans will guide spending of up to USD 45,000 per village. Alongside the financing of forest management activities, villages can use the funds for climate-smart agriculture and other livelihood support linked to forest protection (GoL 2025). This suggests that results-based payments potentially contribute to rural development and livelihood improvements, reflecting a contribution to **Impact 6** 'Improved food security and increased income (Co-benefit)'.

However, the benefit-sharing process is complex and has been delayed, so no funds from World Bank results-based payments have yet been channelled to the villages by the Lao Government. Representatives from the MAE, PAEO and the World Bank confirmed that the implementation of benefit-sharing is a big challenge and has not yet started. They expect that the first 97 villages will receive payment in June 2026. It was not clearly communicated to the evaluation team whether the villages of CliPAD/Project 1 and 2 would receive payments, or whether other villages under a current World Bank village forest management project – which also aims to contribute to REDD+ in northern Laos – would receive payments first. As mentioned above, stakeholders were concerned that the Lao Government would not receive the full amount of the second tranche of the payments, as the MRV still shows ongoing deforestation and the REDD+ emission reduction target would not be met (Int_1, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 22).

The evaluation team concludes that Project 1 very likely contributed to emission reductions in northern Laos, which were funded by the World Bank. Since Project 2 follows the same approach, it is plausible that Project 2 villages will achieve emission reductions in the future, which will be recognised by the World Bank and contribute to the second tranche of results-based payments expected in 2026. Although the Lao Government's benefit-sharing plan suggests that villages will use part of the funds they receive for livelihood promotion, disbursement to villages has not yet taken place. Hence, it is too early to assess how villages will use the payments and whether they will have positive impacts on livelihoods. Since the project contributed to establishing the preconditions, and because a positive impact of results-based payments on livelihoods in villages is plausible, the **hypothesis is assessed as rather confirmed.**

[16] Note that there are two different types of performance-based payments villages can receive. Results-based payments (see paragraph on impact below) are issued by the World Bank under the REDD+ framework if emission reductions across all six provinces can be verified. A share of these results-based payments is supposed to be channelled to villages, based on a benefit-sharing plan, but the process of benefit-sharing is not facilitated by the project and not limited to project villages. By contrast, the bonus payment is a fund that villages receive directly from the project if they protect their projects for two years following the introduction of ViFoMA/ViFOCA. Bonus payments are issued from the project budget via the EFF and VGAGs. This section discusses the disbursement of results-based payments from the World Bank as this is subject to hypothesis 5/Impact 4. For bonus payments, see the Sustainability Chapter, Dimension 3.

Photo 3: The white list of agricultural commodities supported by PSAP displayed in a village in Phontong district, northern Laos (Source/©: 2025/Janis Wicke)



Impact – Dimension 3: Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes

This dimension assesses whether any unintended positive or negative impact-level results were observed and how the project monitored and addressed them.
As discussed in the Effectiveness chapter, the project systematically and effectively monitors unintended outcomes. The evaluation team examined whether the disbursement of bonus payments to villages could be a source of unintended negative impacts. Bonus payments (on average EUR 10,000 per village) are covered by the project budget and will be transferred to a village's bank account through the EFF if the village has protected its forest area for two consecutive years. The project has developed guidelines for villages on the use of the bonus, whereby villages can allocate a budget to compensate households that did not receive PSAP support or that lost land during PLUP development. They can use it for forest management activities and other common goods, such as improving public infrastructure, providing loans to families in crisis, and/or establishing a village development fund (village revolving fund). However, the project did not plan to facilitate or follow up on intra-village decision-making regarding how to spend the funds. Some stakeholders raised concerns that the comparatively large amount of money to be transferred in a single tranche to a village's bank account could be susceptible to fraud or could incite conflicts over its distribution (Int_8, 10, 15, 17). While villages should have the right to decide how to use bonus payments, the evaluation team agrees that the decision-making and distribution processes carry a risk of unintended negative consequences that have not been adequately addressed in the project design to date.

Neither the project monitoring nor the evaluation team identified any unintended positive results at impact level.

Methodology for assessing impact

Table 19: Evaluation matrix for OECD DAC criterion impact

Impact assessment dimensions	Basis of Assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and limitations
Higher-level (intended) development changes/results	Extent to which impact-level indicators are being achieved (tabel 16 above).	**Evaluation design:** The analysis follows the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix (see Annex); no specific evaluation design was applied.) **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews and FGDs with all stakeholders	• Quantitative data on emission reductions in project village forest areas were not available at the time of evaluation. • **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate
Contribution to higher-level (intended) development results/changes	Extent to which it is plausible that the project outcome has contributed or will contribute to impacts: Assessment of the two results hypotheses outlined in 16 and 17 above.	**Evaluation design:** Contribution analysis **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews with all stakeholders	• Contribution of results-based payments to livelihoods cannot be assessed, as payments have not been channelled to villages yet. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate
Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes	Extent to which the project monitored unintended effects and responded to them. Extent to which the project contributed to unintended development changes at impact level.	**Evaluation design:** The analysis follows the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix (see Annex); no specific evaluation design was applied.) **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews and FGDs with all stakeholders	• All stakeholder groups were available for interviews and FGDs • Monitoring and household survey data give insights into potential unintended results • Potential limitations from social desirability: Stakeholders may be reluctant to disclose negative effects. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good

4.6 Efficiency

This section analyses and assesses the efficiency of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions specified by the BMZ (see Annex).

Summarising assessment and rating of efficiency

Table 20. Rating of OECD DAC criterion efficiency

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Efficiency	Production efficiency (Resources/Outputs)	60 out of 70 points
	Allocation efficiency (Resources/Outcome)	30 out of 30 points
Efficiency score and rating		Score: **90 out of 100 points** Rating: **Level 2: successful**

The project demonstrates **strong financial management**. Approximately 60% of funds (EUR 31 million) are channelled through the EFF to government stakeholders and village-level activities. Despite the complexity of managing funds across multiple governance levels, financial management remains smooth without significant irregularities. Overall, the evaluation team found that the scale and quality of outputs delivered were **good value for money**. In the absence of a benchmark, it did not find any indications that the project could have achieved the same outputs with a lower budget. Co-financing partners contribute to outputs at no additional cost to BMZ/GCF. However, due to some implementation delays in the new Project 2 provinces, not all outputs are delivered as planned. In particular, forest management activities and PSAP investments have not yet been carried out in all villages. The grant-based engagement of government structures for project implementation is deemed an efficient solution with strong co-benefits regarding ownership, capacity development and sustainability. The **interplay among the various development agencies** within the GCF's co-finance framework has significantly **enhanced the project's allocation efficiency**. Without any additional cost to the donors (BMZ/GCF), the outputs of the co-finance partners substantially increase the project's impact. In addition, the project has leveraged an additional EUR 16 million for Lao Government agencies and village communities to continue REDD+ implementation, enhance forest management and implement livelihood interventions.

In total, the efficiency of the project is rated successful (level 2), with 90 out of 100 points.

Analysis and assessment of efficiency

Efficiency – Dimension 1: Production efficiency

Production efficiency refers to the use of resources in relation to achieved outputs. For this purpose, GIZ's efficiency tool was applied, based on the CliPAD financial report, which encompasses the budget of Project 1 and Project 2. The efficiency tool displays the budget spent for the different project components alongside the achievement of output and outcome indicators. Since the CliPAD financial report reflects the implementation period of both GCF projects, the CliPAD indicators were used to apply the efficiency tool.

The total budget for CliPAD, booked under the project's accounts, amounts to EUR 53.7 million. According to Figure 6, 19.5 million has already been spent, whereas there are EUR 34.2 million in residual costs that remain to be spent over the next two years. However, according to the project team, the majority of the budget is already disbursed to government partners, but has not yet been recorded as spent in the financial report for administrative reasons, mainly because reports and documentation from the partner organisations are still pending. The financial management reported no major delays and does not expect significant residual funds towards the end of project implementation. A large share of the project budget (roughly 60%, or EUR 31 million) is provided as a grant to the EFF, which channels funds to the various government stakeholders implementing the project in the provinces, as well as to the project villages (VFAGs) for CfW, PSAP investments and bonus payments. While the project had to invest significantly in capacity development for the EFF, including the introduction of a digital accounting system, financial management was, by and large, described as smooth by both the project and the EFF, with no indications of significant irregularities (Int_9, 11, 19, 24, 28). Given the size of the grant, the project's geographical coverage, and the large number of government offices and villages receiving funds through the EFF, this is regarded as a success.

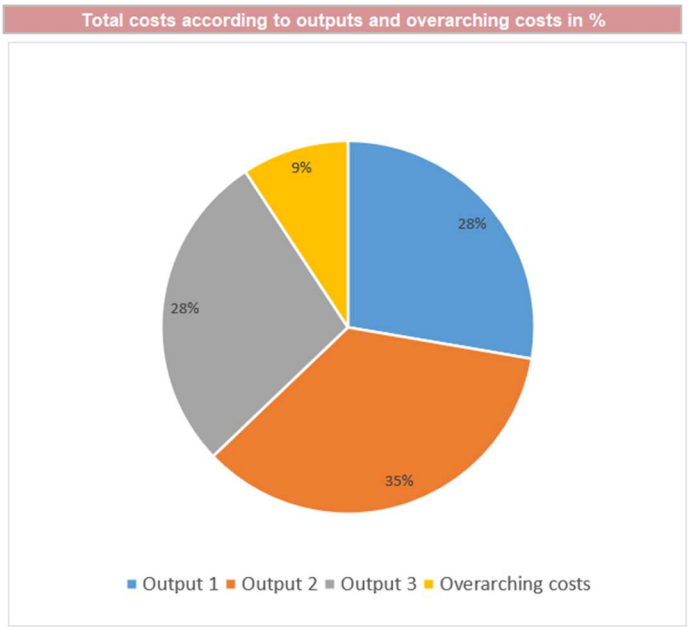
Figure 4 shows the distribution of resources spent across the three outputs and the overarching cost. However, as the project's residual costs remain high (34.2 million), the figure does not accurately reflect the real distribution of the budget across the outputs. The achievement of output indicators displayed in Figure 5 is mixed and reflects ongoing project implementation; the target values are expected to be met towards the end of CliPAD in 2027. As outlined in the effectiveness chapter, regarding component 1, all activities supporting the REDD+ readiness of the Lao Government – including the mainstreaming of REDD+ in Social Economic Development Plans, capacity development for the EFF, and advice to the MAE regarding the revision of the national forestry law – have been implemented as planned. At village level, the project successfully facilitated the establishment of Village Forest and Agriculture Grant Committees (VFAGCs) and the development of

PLUPs in all 572 project villages. However, Project 2 experienced implementation delays in the new provinces, so CfW activities had not started and agricultural inputs for PSAP had not yet been distributed in the villages at the time of the field mission (November 2025). A main reason for the delay is that, in the Project 2 provinces, the project approach is new to the government counterparts, and implementation structures need to be established first. The current merger of the two ministries and their offices at provincial and district levels, staff turnover in government units, and difficulties reaching remote villages during the rainy season were cited as further reasons for the mentioned delays.

Beyond these implementation delays, the evaluation team found that the scale and quality of the outputs delivered were good value for money. In the absence of a benchmark, the evaluation team did not find any indications that the project could have achieved the same outputs with a lower budget. Co-financing partners are contributing to outputs at no additional cost to BMZ/GCF. The rollout of the project in villages is predominantly implemented by the Lao Government agencies, which complements the grants received from the project with EUR 6.9 million of in-kind contributions.[17] The grant-based engagement of government structures for project implementation is deemed a highly efficient solution, offering strong co-benefits regarding ownership, capacity development and sustainability. The application of the DPMS supports the efficient oversight and steering of on-the-ground implementation by various government offices across six provinces. It is very likely that establishing an implementation structure based solely on in-house project staff across all districts would have been substantially more costly, with none of the aforementioned co-benefits.

Efficiency dimension 1 – Production efficiency – scores **60 out of 70 points**.

Figure 4: Efficiency Tool: Costs per output



[17] The in-kind contribution of the Government of Laos was 6.9 million for Project 2 and EUR 11.8 million for Project 1.

Figure 5: Efficiency Tool: costs and achievements per output

	Output 1	Output 2	Output 3	Overarching costs
Outputs	The conditions for results-based REDD+ payments are met.	Deforestation-free production systems and supply chains are established.	Management plans for sustainable for-est management and protection are implemented.	
Actual sum of individual costs	€5,393,463.96	€6,843,853.35	€5,429,277.07	€1,803,043.24
Partner inputs	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Sum of individual costs and partner inputs	**€5,393,463.96**	**€6,843,853.35**	**€5,429,277.07**	**€1,803,043.24**
Sum in %	**27.70%**	**35.15%**	**27.89%**	**9.26%**

Additional residual costs	€6,576,796.47	€16,653,650.13	€9,903,612.41	€1,098,059.13

Output indicators	1.1.The three outstanding instruments and guide-lines for operationalizing the emission reduction program have been finalized.	2.1. Sustainable agricultural management (according to "white list" criteria) is practiced on 14,000 hectares of land.	3.1. 530 village forest management agreements signed in accordance with applicable guidelines.
Achievement	67%	52%	37%

Output indicators	1.2. 530 land use plans recognized by the district administration have been agreed upon.	2.2. Sustainable agroforestry management on 1,500 hectares of restored land , with special involve-ment of women's groups (on 50% of the land).	3.2. 500,000 hectares of forest in 530 villages and 1,000,000 hectares of forest in six NPAs (90% of the total area) are managed in an ecologically (in terms of biodiversity conservation) and eco-nomically sustainable manner.
Achievement	41%	0%	94%

Efficiency – Dimension 2: Allocation efficiency

Allocation efficiency examines whether the budget was spent in the most effective way to achieve results at both the outcome and impact levels.

The interplay among the various development agencies within the GCF's co-finance framework is significantly enhancing the project's allocation efficiency. Without any additional cost to the donors (BMZ/GCF), the outputs of the co-finance partners are substantially increasing the project's impact. The best example is the JICA project, which facilitated the establishment of the PDMS and the national MRV system. The PDMS significantly strengthens law enforcement in the districts, which is very likely to have contributed to the observed decrease in deforestation in Project 1 villages. Moreover, the national MRV is an incremental part of REDD+ and is necessary to measure and verify the emission reductions emanating from the project's village forest management interventions. Emission reductions reported by the MRV system have been the basis for the tranche released by the FCPF to the Lao Government. In this way, the project has leveraged an additional EUR 16 million for Lao Government agencies and village communities to continue REDD+ implementation, enhance forest management and implement livelihood interventions.

Efficiency dimension 2 – Allocation efficiency – **scores 30 out of 30 points**.

Figure 6: Efficiency Tool: Overall costs and module indicator achievements

Module objective	Emissions from land use change and forestry in northern Laos are reduced.
Actual sum of individual costs	€19,469,637.62
Partner inputs	€0.00
Sum of individual costs and partner inputs	**€19,469,637.62**
Additional residual costs	€34,232,118.14

Module objective indicators	1. An emission reduction of 11.7 million tons of CO2 has been verified.	2. 75% of the 12,750 households under the PSAP have confirmed, that their resilience to the effects of climate change has improved.	3. 500 villages meet all criteria for results-based payments.
Achievement	38%	37%	23%

Methodology for assessing efficiency

Table 21: Evaluation matrix for OECD DAC criterion efficiency

Efficiency: assessment dimensions	Basis of assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and Limitations
Production efficiency (Input/Outputs)	• The extent to which inputs were translated into high-quality outputs (value for money, absorption rate, commitments vs. disbursements). • The extent to which outputs could be maximised through alternative use of inputs. • Extent to which costs per output could have been minimised while achieving the same outputs. • The extent to which outputs are achieved in a timely manner.	**Evaluation design:** The analysis is based on the follow-the-money approach and follows the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix (see Annex); triangulation of methods and sources. **Empirical methods:** • Document analysis (GIZ KOMP report for CliPAD) • Semi-structured interviews with project staff and implementing partners	• Relevant financial reports were available and of good quality. • To the best of the knowledge of the evaluation team, there is no valid external benchmark data available to compare cost per output. • Triangulation of data is not possible. Assessment is largely based on the project's reporting and the (self-)perception of the project staff. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate
Allocation efficiency (Input/Outcome)	• Extent to which the costs of the project were appropriate for the achieved results at outcome and impact level. • Extent to which the outcome could have been maximised with the given amount of resources (by alternative approaches, different outputs, activities, TC instruments, shifting resources, adapting project design). • Extent to which the project costs could have been minimised while achieving the same outcome.	**Evaluation design:** No specific evaluation design applied; the analysis follows the evaluation questions from the evaluation matrix. Triangulation of methods and sources. **Empirical methods:** • document analysis • semi-structured interviews	• Same limitations as dimension 1 above. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate

4.7 Sustainability

This section analyses and assesses the sustainability of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions specified by the BMZ (see Annex).

Since this is a mid-term review report, sustainability will not be assessed with a quantitative score.

Summarising assessment and rating of sustainability

By design, the project has **established important preconditions for sustainability**, while several challenges that jeopardise the long-term success of forest protection remain. The decision to implement the project's activities through government agencies has significantly contributed to capacity development and embedded the project approach within the country's institutions. The **Lao Government's capacity to manage REDD+ and climate-related processes in the future has improved**, but reliance on expertise and financial support from development agencies continues to be high. PAEO and DAEO have sufficient know-how to operate the PDMS in the future, while JICA is confident that they can hand over national-level maintenance and oversight of the system to a Lao organisation. At district level, **DAEO staff felt well informed and trained to continue working with villages on PSAP and forest management**, but budget availability for field activities, including law enforcement, could pose a challenge in some districts. Villagers demonstrated a strong sense of identification with the objective of protecting the forest and were optimistic about continuing to implement forest management activities in the future. However, villagers' participation in the project's forest management interventions is currently incentivised by PSAP support, CfW and performance-based bonus payments. Some government stakeholders and GIZ advisers who have been working with the villages raised **concerns about whether villagers' project ownership and motivation to protect forests will persist without further financial incentives** in the future.

Analysis and assessment of sustainability

Sustainability – Dimension 1: Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders

Dimension 1 examines the extent to which stakeholders have the technical capacity, financial resources and ownership to ensure the sustainability of the project's results.

Increasing the capacity of national-level government institutions to manage REDD+ and climate-related processes is an objective of the project (Outcome 1a) and was already discussed in the Effectiveness and Impact chapters (hypotheses 1 and 4). The capacity of the MAE and the EFF has improved, but reliance on expertise and financial support from development agencies remains high.

At district level, the performance of DAEO staff is crucial to sustainability, as they implement on-the-ground activities and can visit villages in their district after the project ends to follow up on forest management and PSAP activities. In discussions with the evaluation team, DAEO staff confirmed that their capacity has increased through their work with the project and expressed confidence in continuing to visit project villages after the project ends. However, in the Pontong district of Luang Prabang province, DAEO staff were uncertain whether they would have sufficient budget for fuel and other expenses to do this in the future. In Oudomxay province, PAEO and DAEO reported that the provincial government has allocated a budget for follow-up activities. The perspectives of GIZ advisers and PAEO representatives on whether district staff are sufficiently trained and informed was mixed, pointing out that the level of education and understanding of the tasks varies across DAEO teams. Staff turnover remains a problem but was not reported to be excessive, and some DAEO teams reported that they had effectively onboarded and transferred knowledge to new staff (Int_8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

From a technical perspective, PAEO and DAEO have sufficient know-how to operate the PDMS in the future. However, whether ground checks for law enforcement will be conducted upon detecting irregularities in forest cover depends on the available time, transport and budgets of DAEO staff, which vary across districts and provinces, as discussed above. The PDMS is based on an IT infrastructure and database at national level, which requires long-term maintenance and oversight currently provided by JICA. The development agency reported that it is seeking an IT company in Laos to undertake this task in the long term. The maintenance of the system comes at a cost, but since the PDMS is the backbone of the national MRV, the political commitment of

the Lao Government to sustain the system is there. Since JICA will implement the new GCF-funded REDD+ project in southern Laos, they will remain present in the coming years and were optimistic about facilitating the sustainable anchoring of the national-level PDMS unit within a Lao institution (Int_4, 15, 16, 18, 21).

Villagers demonstrated a strong sense of identification with the objective of protecting the forest and saw it as their duty to continue to implement forest management activities, even without future financial remuneration. They clearly referred to the benefits of intact forest ecosystems, mentioning better air quality and climate, improved water circulation and humidity, and the sustainable use of non-timber forest products. CfW was a project-based incentive, but forest management tasks such as patrolling or firebreak maintenance are not necessarily reliant on external finance and can be carried out by villagers using their own means (FGD1-15).

In summary, the ownership and capacity of all stakeholder groups to continue the project activities were moderate to high, while challenges related to budget constraints and reliance on expertise and funding from development agencies remain.

Sustainability – Dimension 2: Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities

This dimension assesses the extent to which the project has contributed to partners and stakeholders having the capacity, resources, and ownership to sustain the results achieved over time.

The capacities described in Dimension 1 are largely attributable to the project's interventions. Capacity development for all government counterparts and in villages is an incremental component of the project approach. As already discussed in the relevance, effectiveness, and impact chapters, training and advice meet the needs of the respective target groups and are perceived as helpful, easy to understand, and can be implemented in practice quite well. Capacity development measures included:

- At the national level, training and workshops for the MAE and the DoF, as well as on-the-job training for EFF staff were delivered. The latter still expressed the need for further capacity development of their staff to be able to manage and develop proposals for accessing international climate finance.
- PAEO and DAEO staff have received extensive training. GIZ provincial teams initially accompanied DAEO staff during activities in the villages for on-the-job training, which DAEO referred to as very effective.
- From PFPIC, PLUP development, PSAP, and forest management, villagers received training to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the different packages of the project. Levels of understanding vary between villagers, villages and districts due to differences in cultural and educational backgrounds.

In summary, the project's contribution to sustainable capacities is assessed as high, with some minor room for improvement.

Sustainability – Dimension 3: Durability of results over time

Dimension 3 discusses the long-term durability of the project's results, with a focus on forest protection and emission reductions. The central question is whether the project villages will continue to protect their forests, thereby securing emission reductions over time.

By design, the project has established important preconditions for sustainability. First, the decision to implement the project's activities through government agencies has significantly contributed to capacity development and embedded the project approach within the country's institutions. Hence, after the project concludes, the actors who facilitated PLUP development, PSAP and forest management activities (DAEO, LFND, LWU) will remain in place and may continue to visit their villages for follow-up meetings to support the sustainability of the results. Second, the project has worked towards grounding results in laws and regulations. REDD+ and forest protection are incorporated into the forestry law and social development plans of districts and provinces. Villages have agreed with ViFoMA/ViFoCA to protect their forest areas, making forest clearance and slash-and-

burn activities illegal on village forest land. Third, the PDSM, established with JICA support, is a powerful tool for the government to monitor changes in forest cover and could, in the long term, strengthen law enforcement at the district level if the local government prioritises and finances corresponding ground checks to investigate cases. Fourth, as outlined in Dimension 1 above, villagers' understanding of the benefits of retaining forest ecosystems was high in the project villages, indicating that the extensive training and education activities have had a positive effect. Fifth, PSAP interventions, though not a major game changer for livelihoods, have introduced villagers to deforestation-free agriculture and income possibilities.

While all these aspects suggest a sustainable anchoring of the project in local structures that support the long-term protection of forests, a range of challenges and limitations remain. First, government structures in rural Laos remain weak and are often poorly resourced. There is no guarantee that the central and provincial governments will maintain a focus on REDD+ and sustainable forest management and provide DAEOs with sufficient budget and personnel resources to conduct follow-up visits and support PSAP and forest management. The same applies to PDMS-based law enforcement, which relies on political will and a sufficient budget for ground activities. REDD+ results-based payments are expected to fill resource gaps, as they will be partly allocated to the government's operational structure. However, these are one-time payments that do not secure long-term financing. Moreover, due to ongoing deforestation, the Lao Government might not receive the full payments. Some government officials and development partners have raised concerns that a reduction in results-based payments will constrain the government's budget for forest management and could disincentivise any prioritisation of future REDD+ implementation (Int_1, 5, 7, 22). A shift in government priorities away from forests and climate, or concessions to foreign investments in agribusiness, mining or infrastructure projects, could trigger deforestation and further jeopardise the impacts of REDD+ in the long term. Second, PSAP, CfW and bonus payments are significant financial incentives for villages to participate in forest management and refrain from slash-and-burn practices. This, in particular, accounts for the bonus payments to the villages as a whole, as they are performance-based and linked to the retention of forest cover. In other words, villagers know that cutting down forest jeopardises the bonus payment for the whole village. It is therefore difficult to anticipate how ownership and motivation to protect the village forest will develop in the absence of any financial incentives in the future. This also accounts for the long-term implementation of forest management activities (patrolling, fire protection, etc.), which are incentivised by CfW during project implementation. While village representatives were confident about continuing forest protection, villages remained strongly influenced by the project's education and facilitation activities when visited by the evaluation team. Some government stakeholders and GIZ advisers who have been working with the villages raised concerns about whether villagers' ownership and motivation to protect forests will persist without future financial incentives (Int_15, 16, 17, 22).

In summary, it is difficult to make a final assessment of durability. On the one hand, the project has done a lot to anchor REDD+ and sustainable forest management in laws, government institutions and villages, but on the other hand, the overall system remains somewhat fragile and vulnerable to risks. Unable to predict the future, the evaluation team values the project's systematic approach to sustainability and offers a moderately positive prognosis for the sustainability of the results.

Photo 4: A rubber plot in a village in Xay district, Oudomxay province, northern Laos (Source/©: 2025/Janis Wicke)



Methodology for assessing sustainability

Table 22: Evaluation matrix for OECD DAC criterion sustainability *(max. 2 pages)*

Sustainability: assessment dimensions	Basis of assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and Limitations
Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	Extent to which partners and stakeholders have the capacity, resources and ownership to sustain the results achieved.	**Evaluation design:** No specific evaluation design applied; the analysis follows the evaluation questions from the evaluation matrix. Triangulation of methods and sources. **Empirical methods:** • document analysis • semi-structured interviews with stakeholders mentioned in basis for assessment	• All stakeholder groups and beneficiaries were expected to be reached via online calls or on-site interviews and focus groups. • Interviews may provide a positively biased picture; the evaluation has to rely on (self-)perceptions of interviewees and cannot carry out sound capacity assessments. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good
Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities	Extent to which the project has contributed to partners and stakeholders having the capacity, resources and ownership to sustain the results achieved over time.	**Evaluation design:** same as dimension 1 **Empirical methods:** • document analysis • semi-structured interviews with the project team, partners and stakeholders	• Same limitations as dimension 1 above. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** good

Sustainability: assessment dimensions	Basis of assessment	Evaluation design, empirical methods and data sources	Data quality and Limitations
	Assessment of strategies and measures of the project to build the capacities of partners and stakeholders.		
Durability of results over time	Extent to which the results achieved will be durable over time (prognosis): • Regulatory/institutional framework for REDD+ and climate finance. • PDMS and law enforcement. • Livelihood improvements of villagers. • VFMP implementation.	**Evaluation design:** same as dimension 1 **Empirical methods:** • document analysis • semi-structured interviews and FGDs with stakeholders involved in the durability of results mentioned in basis for assessment.	• Same limitations as dimension 1 above. • Durability is dependent on future developments that are volatile and cannot be foreseen. Only the plausibility of durability can be assessed, based on information and data available today. **Overall data quality for this assessment dimension:** moderate

4.8 Key results and overall rating

The project is assessed as successful at mid-term because it is on track to effectively facilitate the Emissions Reduction Programme for northern Laos under the World Bank's REDD+ framework. The holistic project approach – combining policy-level support to help the Lao Government increase its capacity to manage the complex REDD+ processes with province, district and village-level interventions addressing multiple drivers of deforestation to achieve the necessary emission reductions – has proven successful in practice. The various areas of intervention are complementary and – despite some delays in implementation at village level – have been rolled out effectively. They come together to form a picture that, combined with the achievements of Project 1, are set to make a significant contribution to rural development and climate change mitigation in Laos. The PSAP functions as a necessary incentive for villages to join the project and fosters alternative livelihoods to shifting cultivation. The observation from Project 1 suggests that the implementation of sustainable village forest management will result in a decrease in deforestation, producing corresponding emission reductions. The co-financing partner JICA facilitates the necessary satellite-based forest monitoring (PDMS) and national MRV to strengthen law enforcement and measure and verify emission reductions, and because of the project's extensive policy-level support, the Lao Government is able to and monetise emission reductions as results-based payments under the FCPF carbon fund. The REDD+ benefit-sharing plan suggests that these payments will be redistributed to villages, potentially contributing to positive environmental and social development impacts in the future.

Since this is a mid-term evaluation, the project's impacts could not yet be observed. However, since Project 1 has already achieved large-scale emission reductions, it is plausible that forest management activities in Project 2 villages will contribute to similar reductions in the future. Nevertheless, although deforestation in the project villages has stopped, Laos may not receive the full amount of results-based payments from the World Bank, as retaining forest cover outside the project area has fallen short of expectations. While the project and its co-financing partners made great efforts to institutionalise the approaches and interventions within legal frameworks and to develop the capacities of government institutions, the Lao Government remains highly dependent on external expertise and finance from development organisations to manage REDD+ and other climate-related processes, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of the Emission Reduction Programme. A shift in government priorities away from forests and climate, or concessions to foreign investment in natural resource extraction or infrastructure projects, could trigger deforestation and further jeopardise the impacts of REDD+ in the future. While villagers recognise the benefits of intact forest ecosystems and are motivated to continue sustainable forest management in the future, some stakeholders have raised concerns that

the absence of financial incentives (PSAP, CfW, bonus payments) for villages after the end of the project could undermine forest protection in the long-term.

Photo 5: A fish pond set up as a PSAP investment in a village in Phontong district, Luang Prabang province, northern Laos (Source/©: 2025/Janis Wicke)



Table 23: Overall rating of OECD DAC criteria and assessment dimensions

Evaluation criteria	Dimension	Max	Score	Total (max.100)	Rating
Relevance	Alignment with policies and priorities	30	30	**94**	Level 1: highly successful
	Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	30	28		
	Appropriateness of the design*	20	16		
	Adaptability – response to change	20	20		
Coherence	Internal Coherence	50	40	**87**	Level 2: successful
	External Coherence	50	47		
Effectiveness	Achievement of the (intended) objectives	30	28	**90**	Level 2: successful
	Contribution to achievement of objectives	30	26		
	Quality of implementation	20	18		
	Unintended results	20	18		
Impact	Higher-level (intended) development changes/results	30	-	-	No rating
	Contribution to higher-level (intended) development results/changes	40	-		
	Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes	30	-		
Efficiency	Production efficiency	70	60	**90**	Level 2: successful
	Allocation efficiency	30	30		
Sustainability	Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	20	-	-	No rating
	Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities	30	-		
	Durability of results over time	50	-		
Mean score and overall rating		100	90		**Level 2: successful**

Table 24: Rating and score scales

100-point scale (score)	6-level scale (rating)
92–100	Level 1: highly successful
81–91	Level 2: successful
67–80	Level 3: moderately successful
50–66	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
30–49	Level 5: unsuccessful
0–29	Level 6: highly unsuccessful

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Key findings and factors of success and failure

Factors of success

Internal

- The holistic project design, combining efforts to develop the institutional capacity of the Lao Government to manage REDD+ with interventions in village forest management, law enforcement and PSAP, as well as the large-scale and geographical coverage of the interventions, are the main structural factors contributing significantly to rural development and climate change mitigation in Laos.
- The decision to deploy provincial and district government agencies for village-level implementation of PSAP and forest management interventions is efficient and contributes to developing capacities within PAEO and DAEO, facilitating the long-term sustainability of forest protection.
- The implementation structure of the project features teams of GIZ advisers at provincial level who train PAEO and DAEO staff and facilitate the smooth implementation of the project. On-the-job capacity development through GIZ advisers accompanying government staff implementing village activities was perceived as highly effective by all stakeholders.
- Government partners report on village-level implementation and budget spending through a DPMS, which enables the GIZ steering unit in Vientiane to monitor real-time implementation of large-scale on-the-ground activities over a wide geographical area. In addition, the project conducted a household survey that collected data on project implementation and its effects from beneficiaries' perspectives. Both data sources are used for adaptive management, gradually refining the implementation approach to maximise results and maintain safeguards while avoiding negative effects on villages.
- Project 1 and 2 have together channelled EUR 31 million to government partners and villages via the EFF, the largest grant GIZ has ever provided to a single entity. Given the complexity of this operation – in terms of grant size, number of recipient government agencies, and the channelling of funds down to the village level at the scale of more than 500 villages – the evaluation team found financial management to be exceptionally smooth. Having two GIZ finance managers working in the EFF office alongside its staff for two days a week significantly contributes to the success of this operation and strengthens the fund's institutional capacity.

External

- Co-finance partners provide important contributions to overall project results, increasing its effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

Constraining factors

Internal

- The PSAP budget of up to EUR 400 per household for agricultural investments was considered insufficient by implementing government staff and some beneficiaries for generating transformative livelihood impacts, with some villagers resorting to risky loans from service providers to expand their investments.
- The project is commissioned by the GCF and GIZ under three different results frameworks, each with different indicators measuring similar outcomes drawing on the same data. In addition, the assignment of objectives and indicators to results levels (output, outcome, impact) is often neither methodologically sound nor consistent across the different results frameworks. This creates significant inefficiencies in monitoring and reporting, and complicated this evaluation.

External

- Despite the large-scale capacity development interventions of the project and its co-financing partners, the Lao Government still heavily relies on the expertise and finance of development agencies for the management of REDD+ and other climate-related processes.
- The project operates in an overall challenging context for climate finance and forest protection. Stakeholders pointed to structural barriers that constrain the success of capacity development, explaining why the Lao PDR government's capacity to manage REDD+ remains limited and reliant on external support. These barriers include a limited ability among government staff to read and understand English; a limited number of technical in-country experts; insufficient IT infrastructure and technical know-how, including experience with GIS; weak law enforcement; limited rule of law and understanding of the development and implementation of legal frameworks; and substantial budget constraints due to low tax revenues.
- Constraints in the budget and personnel resources of district government agencies (DAEO) may limit their capability to engage with villages for follow-up activities on sustainable agriculture and forest management.
- The concept of REDD+ is grounded in results-based payments that incentivise emission reductions achieved through avoided deforestation over a relatively short period of time. However, if emission reductions are intended to contribute to climate change mitigation, countries need to protect their forests for 100 years or more (if not indefinitely). The sustainable management and protection of forests come with ongoing costs over decades. It is, therefore, a loophole in the REDD+ framework that it does not provide solutions for how countries should cover ongoing costs while refraining from the economic exploitation of forests in the long term, after results-based payments have been fully spent. This raises serious questions of sustainability, which, however, fall outside the scope and influence of a single GIZ/GCF project.

Findings regarding innovativeness

The project is not particularly innovative as it works within the existing REDD+ framework. However, the deployment of existing frameworks can contribute to climate change mitigation just as much as new innovations. The evaluation team does not regard the absence of innovation as a weakness of the project. The project unlocked additional climate finance from the FCPF carbon fund through results-based payments for emission reductions. A first tranche of EUR 16.5 million was released in 2024. The Government of Laos' benefit-sharing plan foresees that 69% of the payments will be channelled to village bank accounts to foster sustainable forest management and rural development.

Findings regarding coherence in climate finance

The evaluation team found a high level of coherence among projects funded by different donors supporting the Laos Emission Reduction Programme within the GCF co-finance framework (JICA, ADB, IFAD). The projects are designed in a complementary manner, with each focusing on a different component of REDD+ implementation, facilitating an effective and efficient division of tasks. Coordination of implementation among the project teams is strong. The partnership with JICA plays a particularly important role, as the Japanese development agency facilitates the establishment of the PDMS and the national MRV system, which are instrumental in strengthening law enforcement and in monitoring and quantifying the project's emission reductions to unlock the respective results-based payments from the FCPF carbon fund. Moreover, the project supports the Government of Laos' own efforts to achieve its climate and forestry development goals across all governance levels. Forest management, law enforcement and livelihood activities at the provincial, district and village levels are implemented through respective government agencies, with PAEO and DAEO staff responsible for fieldwork.

Findings regarding gender equity

The project's social and environmental safeguards are mainstreamed into the DPMS and operationalised with indicators included in the data sheets used by implementing staff to report on all project activities. Additionally, the project's Gender Action Plans outline specific gender-related indicators for each activity. Safeguard monitoring is complemented by a grievance mechanism, providing villagers with different channels to submit complaints. In this way, project steering is based on gender-disaggregated data, allowing the steering unit to refine the implementation strategy when gender objectives are not met. At village level, the project encourages women to participate in all project activities and implements mandatory quotas for women members in VFAGs (one in three members must be a woman) and in the VLFMC (at least 30% of women in the committee, in 67% of the Project 1 villages). Whenever these quotas were not met during the first two years of implementation, the project sent province-based safeguard teams to villages to raise awareness among village authorities about the inclusion of women. Women-headed households are prioritised for the selection of PSAP support. The evaluation team also found that women are involved in intra-household decision-making regarding PSAP investments. Women's participation in project activities and their understanding of the project varied across the villages and districts visited by the evaluation team, due to different cultural environments and educational backgrounds. Overall, the evaluation team found that the project's benefits are felt by women as much as by men.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations to the project for the ongoing implementation of Project 2:

- Several stakeholders have expressed a desire to access data from the DPMS, which they are currently restricted from. The project team is recommended to review whether access rights for different stakeholders should be augmented.
- In some villages, PSAP farmers have taken loans from PSAP service providers to finance bigger rice fields, rubber plots or fish ponds than those covered by the PSAP budget under the project. Some households were concerned about being unable to repay the debt in the future if the return on investment falls short of expectations. The project is recommended to monitor debt-taking among villagers and consider appropriate countermeasures before unreasonably high loans increase the vulnerability of many households and undermine the project's impact on livelihoods.
- Separate land and forestry teams conducted PLUP activities and VFMP development at different times within the same villages, causing inconsistencies in boundary demarcations. DAEO teams in Oudomxay province have reportedly already begun streamlining PLUP and VFMP development. It is recommended that this harmonised approach is rolled out in all Project 2 districts.
- Some stakeholders raised concerns that the transfer of bonus payments to village bank accounts could cause irregularities or conflicts over the use and distribution of the payments. It is recommended that how Project 1 villages spend the bonus payment is monitored, and engaging in mediation should be considered if conflicts arise. Based on the outcome of Project 1 monitoring, the project could accompany the disbursement of the bonus in Project 2 villages by taking a supportive role in facilitating decision-making on and the operationalisation of spending payments.
- EFF representatives noted that they would appreciate it if GIZ invested more in their institution's capacity, particularly in the area of proposal development for international donors. The project is recommended to consider whether it can support the EFF in developing internal capacities for proposal management.
- Constraints in the budget and personnel resources of district government agencies (DAEO) may jeopardise the sustainability of the project. In the context of an exit strategy, the project is advised to consult DAEOs on how to prioritise the most important core activities or follow-ups with villages that can still be carried out, given the scarce resources.

Recommendations to GIZ and GCF:

- It is recommended that GIZ and the GCF consider how results frameworks of joint projects can be harmonised to increase efficiency and consistency of project monitoring and reporting.
- Sustainability has been the criterion assessed as most critical in this evaluation, although the timing of the evaluation to assess this criterion was quite early, and data availability was still insufficient. It is recommended that GIZ and the GCF commission an ex-post evaluation to examine the long-term impacts of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme on institutional capacities, forest protection, rural development and livelihoods.

Recommendations to GIZ:

- It is recommended that GIZ raise BMZ's awareness about the operational inefficiencies of having two similar GIZ and KfW projects on village forest management, which results in financing a redundant implementation structure. Consideration of pooling funds on a single project in the future is suggested.

List of references

Note: Due to data source and data protection, interviews are not listed here in detail as sources. An overview of the number and type of interviews and surveys conducted can be found in chapter 3.

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Annex: Evaluation criteria, dimensions, and questions

Relevance

OECD DAC Criterion Relevance – Is the intervention doing the right things?

The **'relevance'** criterion focuses on the intervention's design. It refers to the extent to which the objectives and design of a development intervention are consistent with the (global, country and institution-specific) requirements, needs, priorities and policies of beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups, organisations and development partners). It also identifies the ability of the intervention's design to adapt to a change in circumstances. "Relevance" is assessed in relation to 1) the **time of the intervention design**[1] and 2) from **today's perspective**[2].

Assessment dimensions	Question Type	Application in this evaluation	Evaluation questions	Clarifications	GCF Evaluation Questions
Alignment with policies and priorities	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent are the intervention's objectives aligned with the (global, regional and country specific) policies and priorities of the BMZ and of the beneficiaries and stakeholders and other (development) partners? To what extent do they take account of the relevant political and institutional environment?	• Orientation at BMZ country strategies and BMZ sector concepts • Strategic reference framework for the project (e.g. national strategies including the national implementation strategy for Agenda 2030, regional and international strategies, sectoral and cross-sectoral change strategies, in bilateral projects especially partner strategies, internal analytical framework e.g. safeguards and gender[4] • Orientation of the project design at the (national) objectives of Agenda 2030 • Project contribution to certain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) • Explanation of a hierarchy of the different policies, priorities (especially in case of contradictions) • For global and sector projects please use CPE factsheet on GV	• Were the context, problem, needs and priorities well analysed and reviewed during project initiation? • To what extent is the project aligned with national development plans, national plans of action on climate change, or sub-national policy as well as project and priorities of national partners?
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	To what extent was the (conflict) context of the project adequately analysed and considered for the project concept?	• Key documents: (Integrated) Peace and Conflict Assessment (I)PCA, Safeguard Conflict and Context Sensitivity documents	
Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent are the intervention's objectives aligned with the development needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders involved (individuals, groups and organisations)?	• Also: consideration of stakeholders such as civil society and private sector in the design of the measure	
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	How were deescalating factors/ connectors[5] as well as escalating factors/ dividers[6] in the project context identified and considered for the project concept (please list the factors)?[7]	• e.g., see column I and II of the (Integrated) Peace and Conflict Assessment	
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	To what extent were potential (security) risks for (GIZ) staff, partners, target groups/final beneficiaries identified and considered?		

Note: The evaluation matrix, including methodology, is included in the individual chapters on the OECD DAC criteria in this report.

Note: Questions in *italic* are descriptive 'learning and help questions' specified by BMZ that are relevant for the analysis but not for the final assessment. Standard questions are defined in 'Evaluation criteria for German bilateral cooperation' (BMZ, 2021)

	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent are the intervention's objectives geared to the needs and capacities of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups and organisations)? With respect to groups, a differentiation can be made by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.?	• Reaching particularly disadvantaged groups (in terms of Leave No One Behind, LNOB) • Consideration of potential for human rights and gender aspects • Consideration of identified risks	Does the project account in activities and planning for local power dynamics and how project interventions affect different marginalised groups as beneficiaries?
Appropriateness of the design[3]	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent is the intervention's design appropriate and realistic (in terms of technical, organisational and financial aspects)?	• Realistic project goal from today's perspective and in view of the available resources (time, finances, partner capacities) • Consideration of potential changes in the framework conditions • Dealing with the complexity of framework conditions and strategic reference frameworks and with possible overloading • Strategic focusing	Are the planned project objectives and outcomes relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent is the intervention's design sufficiently precise and plausible (in terms of the verifiability und traceability of the system of objectives and the underlying assumptions)?	Assessment of the (current) results model and results hypotheses (Theory of Change, ToC) of the actual project logic: • Adequacy of activities, instruments and outputs in relation to the project objective to be achieved • Plausibility of the underlying results hypotheses • Clear definition and plausibility of the selected system boundary (sphere of responsibility) • Appropriate consideration of potential influences of other donors/ organisations outside the project's sphere of responsibility • completeness and plausibility of assumptions and risks for the project results • How well is co-financing (if any) integrated into the overall concept of the project and what added value could be generated for the ToC/project design?	• Is the project TOC and intervention logic coherent and realistic? Does the TOC and intervention logic hold or does it need to be adjusted? • Do outputs link to intended outcomes which link to broader paradigm shift objectives of the project? • Are the identified, planned inputs and strategies realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve the results? Were they sequenced sufficiently to efficiently deliver the expected results? • How realistic are the risks and assumptions of the project?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent is the intervention's design based on a holistic approach to sustainable development (interaction of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability)?	• Presentation of the interactions (synergies/trade-offs) of the intervention with other sectors in the project design – also regarding the sustainability dimensions in terms of Agenda 2030 (economic, ecological and social development)	
Adaptability – response to change	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention responded to changes in the environment over time (risks and potentials)?	• Reaction to changes during project including modification offers (e.g., local, national, international, sectoral changes, including state-of-the-art sectoral know-how)	How has been the project's ability to adapt and evolve been based on continuous lessons learned and the changing development landscape? Please account for factors both within the AE and EE and external

(1) The 'time of the intervention design' is the point in time when the offer/most recent modification offer was approved.
(2) In relation to the current standards, knowledge and framework conditions.
(3) The design of an intervention is usually assessed by evaluating its intervention logic. The intervention logic depicts the system of objectives used by an intervention. It maps out the systematic relationships between the individual results levels. At the time an intervention is designed, the intervention logic, in the form of a logical model, is described in the offer for the intervention both as a narrative and generally also based on a results framework. The model is reviewed at the start of an evaluation and adjusted to reflect current knowledge. Comprehensive (re)constructed intervention logics are also known as "theories of change". In GIZ the 'project design' encompasses project objective (outcome) and the respective theory of change (ToC) with outputs, activities, TC instruments and especially the results hypotheses as well as the implementation strategy (e.g., methodological approach, Capacity Development (CD) strategy). In GIZ the Theory of Change is described by the GIZ results model as graphic illustration and the narrative results hypotheses.
(4) In the GIZ Safeguards and Gender system risks are assessed before project start regarding following aspects: gender, conflict, human rights, environment and climate. For the topics gender and human rights not only risks but also potentials are assessed. Before introducing the new safeguard system in 2016 GIZ used to examine these aspects in separate checks.
(5) Deescalating factors/connectors/peace needs: e.g., peace-promoting actors and institutions, structural changes, peace-promoting norms and behaviour. For more details on 'connectors' see: GIZ (2007): 'Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA). Ein methodischer Rahmen zur konflikt- und friedensbezogenen Ausrichtung von EZ-Maßnahmen', p. 55/135 and the iPCA Writing Template.
(6) Escalating factors/ dividers: e.g., destructive institutions, structures, norms and behaviour. For more details on 'dividers' see: GIZ (2007): 'Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA). Ein methodischer Rahmen zur konflikt- und friedensbezogenen Ausrichtung von EZ-Maßnahmen', p. 135 and the iPCA Writing Template.

		(7) All projects in fragile contexts, projects with FS1 or FS2 markers and all transitional development assistance projects should weaken escalating factors/dividers and must mitigate risks in the context of conflict, fragility and violence (and human rights). Projects with FS1 or FS2 markers should also consider how to strengthen deescalating factors/ connectors and how to address peace needs in its project objective/sub-objective.

Coherence

OECD DAC Criterion Coherence – How well does the intervention fit?

This criterion refers to the intervention's compatibility with other interventions in a country, sector or institution as well as with international norms and standards. Internal coherence addresses the synergies and division of tasks between the intervention and other interventions of German development cooperation and also the intervention's consistency with the relevant international norms and standards to which German development cooperation adheres. External coherence considers the intervention's complementarity, harmonisation and coordination with the interventions of other partners, donors and international organisations. The "coherence" criterion relates both to the intervention's design as well as to the results it achieves.

Assessment dimensions	Question Type	Application in this evaluation	Evaluation questions	Clarifications	GCF Evaluation Questions
Internal coherence	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	Within German development cooperation, to what extent is the intervention designed and implemented (in a sector, country, region or globally) in a complementary manner, based on the division of tasks?	• Also, analysis of whether the project takes the necessary steps to fully realise synergies within German development cooperation	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent are the instruments of German development cooperation (Technical and Financial Cooperation) meaningfully interlinked within the intervention (in terms of both design and implementation)? Are synergies leveraged?	• if applicable, also consider projects of different German ressorts/ministries	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent is the intervention consistent with international and national norms and standards to which German development cooperation is committed (e.g., human rights)?		
External coherence	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent does the intervention complement and support the partner's own efforts (principle of subsidiarity)?		• Who are the partners of the project and how strategic are they in terms of capacities and commitments? • Is there coherence and complementarity by the project with other actors for other local climate change interventions? • To what extent has the project complimented other on-going local level initiatives on climate change adaptation or mitigation?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention's design and implementation been coordinated with other donors' activities?	• Also: To what extent could synergies be achieved through co-financing (where available) with other bilateral and multilateral donors and organisations and how did co-financing contribute to improved donor coordination?	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention's design been designed to use existing systems and structures (of partners/other donors/international organisations) for implementing its activities? To what extent are these systems and structures used?	• Also, analysis of whether the project is taking the necessary steps to fully realise synergies with interventions of other donors at the impact level	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent are common systems (together with partners/other donors/international organisations) used for M&E, learning and accountability?		To what extent are country-level systems for project management or M&E utilised in the project?

Effectiveness

OECD DAC Criterion Effectiveness – Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

'Effectiveness' refers to the extent to which the intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives (at outcome level), including any differential results across beneficiary and stakeholder groups. It examines the achievement of objectives in terms of the direct, short-term and medium-term results.

Assessment dimensions	Question Type	Application in this evaluation	Evaluation questions	Clarifications	GCF Evaluation Questions
Achievement of the (intended) objectives[1]	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention achieved, or is the intervention expected to achieve, the (intended) objectives as originally planned (or as modified to cater for changes in the environment)?	• Assessment based on the project objective indicators (agreed with BMZ) • Check whether more specific or additional indicators are needed to adequately reflect the project objective	• Are the outputs being achieved in a timely manner? Is this achievement supportive of the TOC and pathway identified? • What and how much progress has been made towards achieving the overall outputs and outcomes of the project (including contributing factors and constraints)? How strong is the evidence base for the achievement of outcomes, and to what extent are they based on the application of a well-defined method? • To what extent did the design of the project help or hinder achieving its own goals? • To what extent is the project able to demonstrate changes against the baseline (assessment in approved funding proposal) for the GCF investment criteria (including contributing factors and constraints)?
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	For projects with FS1 or FS2 markers: To what extent was the project able to strengthen deescalating factors/ connectors/ capacities of peace?[2, 4]		
Contribution to achievement of objectives	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*To what extent have the intervention's outputs been delivered as originally planned (or as modified to cater for changes in the environment)?*		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent have the delivered outputs and increased capacities been used and equal access (e.g., in terms of physical, non-discriminatory and affordable access) guaranteed?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to the achievement of objectives?	• Assessment based on the activities, TC instruments and outputs of the project (contribution analysis as focus of this assessment dimension and minimum standard, see annotated reports) • What would have happened without the project? (Usually qualitative reflection)	To what extent has the project contributed to an enabling environment? What is the strength of evidence for this finding based on the scorecard assessment?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to the achievement of objectives at the level of the intended beneficiaries?		To what extent are the beneficiaries satisfied with the project's results?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to the achievement of objectives at the level of particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of beneficiaries and stakeholders? (These may be broken down by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.)?		• Do all groups of beneficiaries know their rights and/or benefits from project activities/interventions? • How do the results for women compare to those for men? • Is the decision-making process transparent and inclusive of all relevant marginalised groups? • Did the project sufficiently address cross-cutting issues, including gender?

	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*Which internal factors (technical, organisational or financial) were decisive for achievement/non-achievement of the intervention's intended objectives?*	• Internal factors = within the project's sphere of responsibility / system boundary. The project is implemented jointly by GIZ and the official partner(s).	What are project's lessons learned, failures/lost opportunities to date? What might have been done better or differently?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*Which external factors were decisive for achievement/non-achievement of the intervention's intended objectives (considering the anticipated risks)?*	• External factors = outside the project's sphere of responsibility / system boundary. The project is implemented jointly by GIZ and the official partner(s).	
Quality of implementation	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	What assessment can be made of the quality of steering and implementation of the intervention in terms of the achievement of objectives? What assessment can be made of the quality of steering and implementation of, and participation in, the intervention by the partner/executing agency?	Capacity Works considerations: - **Results-oriented monitoring (RoM / WoM)** is established and used, e.g., for evidence-based decisions, risk management. Data are disaggregated by gender and marginalised groups. unintended positive and negative results are monitored. Conflict-sensitive monitoring and explicit risk-safety monitoring are particularly important for projects in fragile contexts. - A bindingly communicated **strategy** agreed with the partners is pursued - Involvement and **cooperation** of all relevant actors (including partners, civil society, private sector) - **Steering**: decisions influencing the project's results are made in time and evidence-informed. Decision processes are transparent. - **Processes**: Relevant change processes are anchored in the cooperation system; project-internal processes are established and regularly reflected and optimised. - **Learning and innovation**: There is a learning and innovation-friendly work culture that promotes the exchange of experience; learning processes are established; context-specific adjustments are possible	• How well is country ownership reflected on the project governance, coordination and consultation mechanisms or other consultations? • To what extent did project deal with issues and risks in implementation in an efficient manner? • To what extent was the M&E tools such as the TOC and log frame used in performance management and progress reporting? • To what extent did the project's M&E data and mechanism(s) contribute to achieving project results? • Were there clear baseline indicators and/or benchmark for performance measurements? How were these used in project management? • To what extent and how did the project apply adaptive management? • To what extent has the project relied on and goes beyond sex-disaggregated data per population statistics? • Are the project governance mechanisms functioning efficiently?
Unintended results	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent can unintended positive/negative direct results (social, economic, environmental and among vulnerable beneficiary groups) be observed/anticipated?	• The focus is on the outcome level, but for the analysis the unintended effects can also be included on the output level	• Can any unintended or unexpected positive or negative effects be observed as a consequence of the project's interventions? • What factors have contributed to the unintended outcomes, outputs, activities, results? •
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	To what extent was the project able to ensure that escalating factors/ dividers[3] have not been strengthened (indirectly) by the project[4]? Has the project unintentionally (indirectly) supported violent or 'destructive' actors (also regarding human rights violations)?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	What potential benefits/risks arise from the positive/negative unintended results? What assessment can be made of them?	• also check whether the risks were already mentioned and monitored in the design phase	
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	To what extent have risks and unintended negative results in the context of conflict, fragility and violence[5] been monitored (context and/or conflict-sensitive monitoring) in a systematic way?		

(1) The first and second assessment dimensions are interrelated: If the project's contribution to achieving the objective is small (2nd assessment dimension), this must also be considered when evaluating the first assessment dimension.
(2) Deescalating factors/ connectors/ peace needs: e.g., peace-promoting actors and institutions, structural changes, peace-promoting norms and behaviour. For more details on 'connectors' see: GIZ (2007): 'Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA). Ein methodischer Rahmen zur konflikt- und friedensbezogenen Ausrichtung von EZ-Maßnahmen', p. 55/135 and the iPCA Writing Template.
(3) Escalating factors/ dividers: e.g., destructive institutions, structures, norms and behaviour. For more details on 'dividers' see: GIZ (2007): 'Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA). Ein methodischer Rahmen zur konflikt- und friedensbezogenen Ausrichtung von EZ-Maßnahmen', p. 135.
(4) All projects in fragile contexts, projects with FS1 or FS2 markers and all transitional development assistance projects should weaken escalating factors/dividers and must mitigate risks in the context of conflict, fragility and violence (and human rights). Projects with FS1 or FS2 markers should also consider how to strengthen deescalating factors/ connectors and how to address peace needs in its project objective/sub-objective.
(5) Risks in the context of conflict, fragility and violence: e.g., contextual (e.g., political instability, violence, economic crises, migration/refugee flows, drought, etc.), institutional (e.g., weak partner capacity, fiduciary risks, corruption, staff turnover, investment risks) and personnel (murder, robbery, kidnapping, medical care, etc.). For more details see: GIZ (2014): 'Context- and conflict-sensitive results-based monitoring system (RBM). Supplement to: The 'Guidelines on designing and using a results-based monitoring system (RBM) system.', p.27 and 28.

Impact

OECD DAC Criterion Impact (higher-level development results) - What difference does the intervention make?

Based on recognisable higher-level development changes (at impact level), the criterion of "higher level development results (at impact level)" relates to the extent to which the intervention has already produced significant positive or negative, intended or unintended results at the overarching level (contributions to the observed changes) or is expected to do so in the future. This includes any differential results across different stakeholders and beneficiaries. This criterion refers to the results of the development intervention.

Assessment dimensions	Question Type	Application in this evaluation	Evaluation questions	Clarifications	GCF Evaluation Questions
Higher-level (intended) development changes[1]	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent can the higher-level development changes (social, economic and environmental dimensions and the interactions between them) to which the intervention will/is designed to contribute be identified/foreseen)? (Specify time frame where possible.)	• Consider module proposal for suggested impact and program objective indicators (program proposal), if it is not an individual measure • Potential basis for assessment: program objective indicators, identifiers, connection to the national strategy for implementing 2030 Agenda, connection to SDGs	• How has the project contributed to achieving stronger and more coherent integration of shift to low emission sustainable development pathways and/or increased climate-resilient sustainable development (GCF RMF/PMF Paradigm Shift objectives)? Please provide concrete examples and make specific suggestions on how to enhance these roles going forward? • To which extent has the project contributed or will be contributing to the desired paradigm shift? What is the strength of evidence for this based on the scorecard approach? • Which role has the project played in the provision of "thought leadership", "innovation" or "unlocked additional climate finance" for climate change adaptation/mitigation in the project and country context? Please provide concrete examples and make specific suggestions on how to enhance these roles going forward.
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent can the higher-level development changes (social, economic, environmental dimensions and the interactions between them) be identified/foreseen at the level of the intended beneficiaries? (Specify time frame where possible.)		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent can higher-level development changes to which the intervention will/is designed to contribute be identified/foreseen at the level of particularly disadvantaged/vulnerable groups of beneficiaries and stakeholders? (These may be broken down by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.) (Specify time frame where possible.)		
Contribution to higher-level (intended) development changes	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention actually contributed to the identified and/or foreseeable higher level development changes (social, economic, environmental dimensions and their interactions, considering political stability) that it was designed to bring about?	• Contribution analysis (evaluation design) as minimum standard and focus of this assessment dimension, further approaches are possible and welcome, see also annotated reports • Evaluation of the project's contribution to impacts based on an analysis of the results hypotheses from outcome to impact level	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention achieved its intended (original and, where	• This question can already be assessed in Dimension 1 Question 1, the contribution to impact is assessed in Dimension 2, Question 1	

			applicable, revised) development objectives?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention achieved its (original and, where applicable, revised) development objectives at the level of the intended beneficiaries?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to higher-level development changes/changes in the lives of particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of beneficiaries and stakeholders that it was designed to bring about? (These may be broken down by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.).		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*Which internal factors (technical, organisational or financial) were decisive for achievement/non-achievement of the intervention's intended development objectives?*	• Internal factors = within the project's sphere of responsibility / system boundary. The project is implemented jointly by GIZ and the official partner(s)	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*Which external factors were decisive for the achievement/non-achievement of the intervention's intended development objectives?*	• External factors = outside the project's sphere of responsibility / system boundary. The project is implemented jointly by GIZ and the official partner(s). • Consider the activities of other actors or other policies, framework conditions, other policy areas, strategies or interests (German ministries, bilateral and multilateral development partners)	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention achieved structural or institutional changes (e.g., for organisations, systems and regulations)?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent did the intervention serve as a model and/or achieve broad-based impact?	• Scaling-up is a consciously designed process to anchor changes in organisations and cooperation systems (e.g., concepts, approaches, methods) to generate broad impact • There is vertical scaling-up, horizontal scaling-up, functional scaling-up or a combination of these[2] • also analyse possible potential and reasons for not exploiting it	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*How would the situation have developed without the intervention?*	• usually qualitative reflection, quantitative approaches welcome	
Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development changes	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent can higher-level, unintended development changes (social, economic and environmental dimensions and their interactions, considering political stability) be identified/foreseen? (Specify time frame where possible.)		• Can any unintended or unexpected positive or negative effects be observed as a consequence of the project's interventions? • What factors have contributed to the unintended outcomes, outputs, activities, results?
	Context / Conflict Sensitivity (fragility)	Not applicable	To what extent did the project have (unintended) negative or escalating effects on the conflict, context of fragility or human rights (e.g., conflict dynamics, violence, legitimacy of state and non-state actors/institutions)? To what extent did the project have positive or deescalating effects on the conflict, context of fragility or human rights (e.g., conflict dynamics, violence,		

			legitimacy of state and non-state actors/institutions)?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention brought about foreseeable/identifiable unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results?	• Analyse whether the risks were already known in the design phase • Check how the assessment of risks in connection with (unintended) negative or (not formally agreed) positive results at the impact level in the monitoring system has been carried out (e.g. use of 'compass') • measures taken to avoid or counteract the risks/ negative effects/ trade-offs[3] • Determine relevant framework conditions for negative results and the project's reaction to them • Examine to what extent potential (not formally agreed) positive results and synergies between the ecological, economic and social development dimensions have been monitored and exploited	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to foreseeable/identifiable unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results at the level of particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of beneficiaries and stakeholders? (These may be broken down by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.)		

(1) The first and second assessment dimensions are interrelated: If the project's contribution to achieving the objective is small (2nd assessment dimension), this must also be considered when evaluating the first assessment dimension.
(2) See GIZ 2016 'Guidelines on scaling-up for programme managers (AV) and planning officers'
(3) Risks, negative effects and trade-offs are separate aspects that should be discussed individually at this point.

Efficiency

OECD DAC Criterion Efficiency – How well are resources being used?

This criterion describes the extent to which the intervention delivers results in an economic and timely way (relationship between input and output, outcome and impact level). The evaluation dimension "production efficiency" refers to the appropriateness of the relationship between inputs and outputs. The evaluation dimension "allocation efficiency" refers to the appropriateness of the relationship between the inputs and the results achieved (project/development objective; outcome/impact level) by the intervention. The "efficiency" criterion relates both to the intervention's design and implementation and to the results it achieves.

Assessment dimensions	Question Type	Application in this evaluation	Evaluation questions	Clarifications	GCF Evaluation Questions
Production efficiency	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*How are the intervention's inputs (financial, human and material resources) distributed (e.g.by instruments, sectors, sub-interventions, considering the cost contributions of partners/executing agencies/other beneficiaries and stakeholders etc.)?*	• Description of the data: Costs per output, type of costs, agreed and provided partner contributions • Description of the deviations between original planned costs and actual costs (with comprehensible justification, changes are certainly desirable for increased efficiency)	Are financial resources/project activities explicitly allocated to enable women, youth, people with disability, indigenous people and other marginalised groups to benefit from project interventions?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent have the intervention's inputs (financial, human and material resources) been used economically in relation to the outputs delivered (products, investment goods and services)? If possible, refer to data from other evaluations in a region or sector, for instance.	• Use of 'Efficiency tool' including instructions and use of the follow-the-money approach as evaluation design (may be combined with other high-quality approaches) • Output level: Analysis of approaches and activities as well as TC instruments (personnel instruments, financing, materials and equipment)[1] compared to possible alternatives with a focus on the minimum principle (use of comparative data if available) • The project is oriented on internal or external benchmarks in order to achieve its effects economically • Regular reflection of the resources used by project with focus on economically use of resources / cost risks • The overarching costs of the project are in an appropriate proportion to the costs of the outputs	Have project resources been utilised in the most economical, effective and equitable ways possible (considering value for money; absorption rate; commitments versus disbursements and projected commitments; co-financing, etc.)
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent could the intervention's outputs (products, investment goods and services) have been increased through the alternative use of inputs (financial, human and material resources)? If possible, refer to data from other evaluations of a region or sector, for instance. (If applicable, this question adds a complementary perspective*) * This case is always applicable in the technical cooperation (TC), please answer the question bindingly	• Use of 'Efficiency tool' including instructions and use of the follow-the-money approach as evaluation design (may be combined with other high-quality approaches) • Output level: Analysis of approaches and activities as well as TC instruments (personnel instruments, financing, materials and equipment)[1] compared to possible alternatives with focus on output maximisation (use of comparative data if available) • Analysis of alternative options for allocating resources and shifts between outputs for output maximisation • saved resources can and should be used to maximise outputs • Reflection of the resources during the design phase and regularly during the implementation of the project with focus on output maximisation (with comprehensible justification, changes are certainly desirable for increased efficiency) • 'maximising outputs' means with same resources, under same conditions and with same or better quality	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	Were the outputs (products, investment goods and services) produced on time and within the planned time frame?		
Allocation efficiency	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*By what other means and at what cost could the results achieved (higher-level project objective) have been attained?*		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent – compared with alternative designs for the intervention – could the results have been attained more cost-effectively?	• Outcome level: Analysis of approaches and activities as well as TC instruments in comparison to possible alternatives with focus on minimum principle (use of comparative data if available) • Regular reflection in the project of the input-outcome relation and alternatives as well as cost risks	What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project objectives?

				• The partner contributions are proportionate to the costs for the outcome of the project	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent – compared with alternative designs for the intervention – could the positive results have been increased using the existing resources? (If applicable, this question adds a complementary perspective*) * This case is always applicable in the technical cooperation (TC), please answer the question bindingly	• Outcome level: Analysis of applied approaches and activities as well as TC instruments compared to possible alternatives with focus on maximising the outcome (real comparison if available) • The project manages its resources between the outputs in such a way that the maximum effects in terms of the module objective are achieved • Regular reflection in the project of the input-outcome relation and alternatives • Reflection and realisation of possibilities for scaling-up • If additional funds (e.g. co-financing) have been raised: Effects on input-outcome ratio (e.g. via economies of scale) and the ratio of administrative costs to total costs • Losses in efficiency due to insufficient coordination/complementarity within German DC sufficiently avoided	

(1) see GIZ 2015: 'Integration of TC Instruments – Key Elements', based on BMZ 2014: 'Handbuch der bilateralen TZ Verfahrensinformation Nr. VI0362014 'Eckpunkte zur Instrumentenintegration'

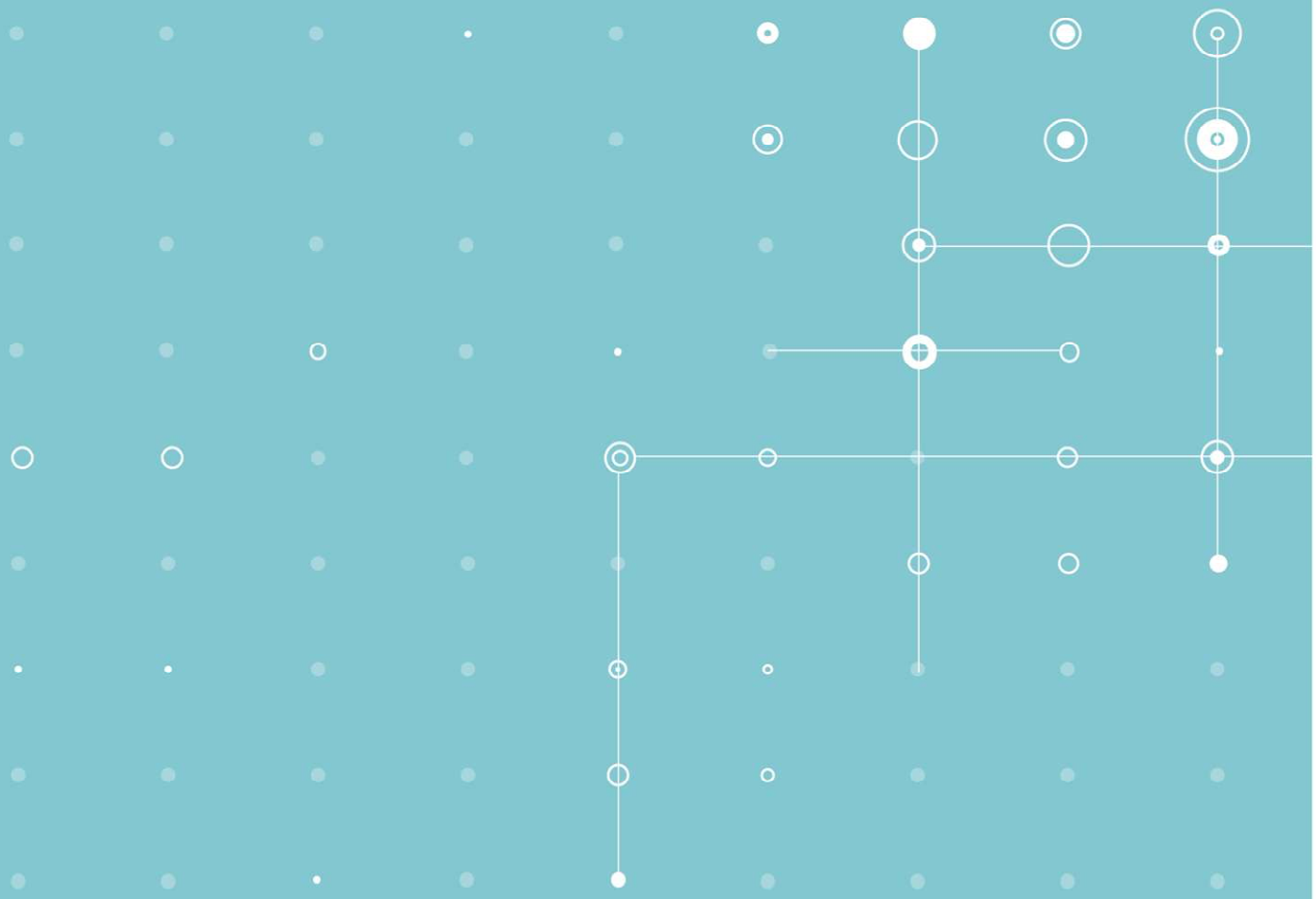
Sustainability

OECD DAC Criterion Sustainability – Will the benefits last?

The 'sustainability' criterion relates to continued long-term benefits (at the outcome and impact level) or the probability of continued long-term benefits – taking into account observed or foreseeable risks – over time, particularly after assistance has ended.

Assessment dimensions	Question Type	Application in this evaluation	Evaluation questions	Clarifications	GCF Evaluation Questions
Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent do the beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups and organisations, partners and executing agencies) have the institutional, human and financial resources as well as the willingness (ownership) required to sustain the positive results of the intervention over time (once assistance has drawn to a close)?	• Transitional Development Assistance (TDA) projects primarily address final beneficiaries, whose resilience to crises and recurring shocks is to be strengthened. The focus for TDA projects is thus often on the resilience of final beneficiaries and/or at least the continuity of the measure (see explanation in dimension 3) (clarification in the inception phase of the evaluation).	Are the actions and results from project interventions likely to be sustained, ideally through ownership by the local partners and stakeholders?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent do the beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups and organisations, partners and executing agencies) have the resilience to overcome future risks that could jeopardise the intervention's results?		
Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to the beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups and organisations, partners and executing agencies) having the institutional, human and financial resources as well as the willingness (ownership) required to sustain the intervention's positive results over time and to limit the impact of any negative results?	• Analysis of the preparation and documentation of learning experiences • Description of the anchoring of contents, approaches, methods and concepts in the partner system • Reference to exit strategy of the project • If there is a follow-on project, check to what extent the results of the evaluated project are taken up; the anchoring of the effects in the partner's organisation should be pursued independently of a follow-on project, since sustainability should be achieved even without donor funds • Transitional Development Assistance (TDA) projects primarily address final beneficiaries, whose resilience to crises and recurring shocks is to be strengthened. The focus for TDA projects is	• Were the modes of deliveries of the outputs appropriate to build essential/necessary capacities, promote national ownership and ensure sustainability of the result achieved? • How effective were the exit strategies and approaches to phase out assistance provided by the project including contributing factors and constraints?

				thus often on the resilience of final beneficiaries and/or at least the continuity of the measure (see explanation in dimension 3) (clarification in the inception phase of the evaluation).	
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to strengthening the resilience of the beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups and organisations, partners and executing agencies)?		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent has the intervention contributed to strengthening the resilience of particularly disadvantaged groups? (These may be broken down by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.)		
Durability of results over time	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*How stable is the context in which the intervention operates?*		
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory descriptive learning question	*To what extent is the durability of the intervention's positive results influenced by the context?*	• Consideration of risks and potentials for the long-term stability of the results and description of the reaction of the project to these	• Which factors of the project achievements are contingent on specific local context or enabling environment factors? • What are the key factors that will require attention in order to improve prospects of sustainability, scalability or replication of project outcomes/outputs/results?
	BMZ Standard	Mandatory	To what extent can the positive (and any negative) results of the intervention be deemed durable?	• Consideration of the extent to which continued use of the results by partners and beneficiaries can be foreseen • Reference to conditions and their influence on the durability, longevity and resilience of the effects (outcome and impact) • In the case of projects in the field of Transitional Development Assistance (TDA), at least the continuity of the measure must be examined: To what extent will services or results be continued in future projects (of GIZ or other donors/organisations) or their sustainability ensured? (Clarification in the inception phase)	



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