



Midterm Review of the Development Fund's Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods Programme

Final Report

**Future
Horizons**

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List of acronyms

BRAC	Building Local Resilience and Adaption to Climate Change
CARD	Climate Adaptation and Rural Development
CAV	Climate Adaptive Villages
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CRGE	Climate Resilient Green Economy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DF	Development Fund
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK)
HH	Household
HQ	Headquarters
IGA	Income Generation Activity
MAMO	Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods in Malawi and Mozambique
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee
PWD	Person With Disability
RF	Results Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

This mid-term review assesses the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the Development Fund's Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods Programme during its first three years of implementation (2021-2023). The Development Fund, a Norwegian aid organisation, implements the programme across six countries, focusing on integrating rural development with climate adaptation and natural resource management: Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal and Somalia. Among these, Mozambique was not included in the scope of this review. Data for the review was collected through a sequential mixed-methods approach combining multiple sources of information, including fieldwork in the other five programme countries.

The review assessed the **relevance** of the programme to national and local needs, development plans, and priorities. It found that the programme's integrated approach to nutrition, agricultural diversity and productivity, climate resilience, economic empowerment, and policy frameworks is highly relevant to smallholders and their communities in partner countries. The programme has appropriately adapted its interventions to suit local contexts and preferences through locally anchored implementation partners. However, challenges in inclusivity persist, especially regarding youth and PWDs, calling for a more targeted approach.

The review examined the programme's **coherence** with Norwegian development strategies with other global and country-level initiatives. The programme notably aligns with Norway's strategies for promoting food security and climate change adaptation. It fully supports Norway's ambition to transition towards more resilient food systems based on local and national production, directly addressing objectives such as promoting local production, increasing small-scale producers' incomes, and expanding access to healthy food. Additionally, it aligns with Norway's Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Fight Against Hunger, particularly focusing on climate-resilient food production.

Furthermore, the program demonstrates coherence with the objectives of other key donors and development actors, particularly in food security and climate-smart agriculture. DF and its partners have contributed significantly to international agenda-setting on agro-biodiversity and farmers' rights. However, there is room for improvement in coordinating with other development actors on the ground. Strengthening communication and collaboration with agencies working with implementing partners could enhance synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. Additionally, expanding advocacy efforts beyond agro-biodiversity and exploring innovative cooperation with humanitarian actors could further enhance the program's impact and sustainability.

The **effectiveness** of the programme was assessed through a comprehensive review of its objectives, indicators, and outcomes across various areas. The programme generally succeeds in achieving its objectives, although weaknesses are identified in specific domains. Nutrition and food safety outcomes have aligned with targets across countries, with positive impacts observed in modifying knowledge and attitudes towards nutrition and hygiene practices. However, challenges persist in improving government services and access to resources due to factors such as armed conflict, political unrest, and institutional restructuring.

The programme has made very significant strides in economic empowerment, particularly through support for community-based organisations and savings groups. These structures provide crucial access to finance and resources for smallholders, enabling them to invest in agricultural enhancement and income-generating activities. However, limitations exist in scaling up these initiatives and facilitating access to markets for surplus production.

The programme's Climate Adaptive Villages plans play a vital role in enhancing climate resilience and sustainable resource management. These plans engage communities in identifying vulnerabilities and implementing mitigation measures, leading to tangible benefits such as improved land and water management and increased agricultural productivity. However, challenges persist in securing government financing and sustaining implementation, particularly in areas affected by conflict or political instability.

The programme's efforts to promote inclusiveness and empower marginalised groups, particularly women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWD), and other disadvantaged groups, have yielded varying degrees of success across different countries.

Positive outcomes have been observed in supporting women, including enhancing their understanding of rights, leadership skills, and participation in value chains. Women's increased presence in community-based groups and organisations, along with improvements in living standards, autonomy, and self-esteem, underscore the programme's impact. However, challenges remain in engaging youth, particularly in areas with strong migration trends for work, although successes have been noted in generating economic opportunities for youth in some regions.

Engagement with PWDs has been particularly challenging, with difficulties in identifying and mobilising them for programme activities. However, efforts to integrate PWDs have shown improvement following methodological workshops and partnerships with specialised organisations.

The programme's targeted interventions for specific marginalised groups, such as indigenous people, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and caste-discriminated groups, have started to address underlying inequalities. However, a lack of specific data hampers precise assessment of outcomes for these groups.

Communication and collaboration between the Development Fund and the Norwegian Development Cooperation Agency Norad have faced challenges, particularly due to delayed grant disbursements and issues related to financial management. Despite these challenges, collaborative efforts among the project implementers have demonstrated resilience and innovation in addressing external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, rising input prices, currency fluctuations, and conflict.

The review appraised **efficiency** in the programme's implementation through various aspects including cost-effectiveness, procurement necessity, and implementation methods. In terms of cost-effectiveness, the programme exhibited significant underspending compared to the initial budget, with reductions primarily attributed to challenges in Ethiopia due to conflict and COVID-19. Budget expenditures across all countries were lower than planned in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions and delayed activities. However, in 2022, spending aligned more closely with the initial budget.

The programme's costs were also influenced by international commodity price surges and currency fluctuations, leading to adjustments in activities and cost-cutting measures. Despite challenges, the programme demonstrated efficiency gains, particularly in capacity-building activities which saw reduced delivery costs and increased enrolment in training sessions. Delays in fund release were a common inefficiency across countries, impacting implementation timelines and causing adjustments in planning.

The **sustainability** of the programme was assessed across three dimensions: institutional, technical, and financial. Efforts to strengthen implementing partners and grassroots organisations, embed new practices within local communities, and promote reliance on local resources contribute to sustainability. The programme has fostered cooperation with actors best suited to sustain activities and results, from implementing partners and community-based organisations to national and local authorities, in accordance with each country's context. In doing so, the programme has nurtured institutional channels for the representation of poor rural communities and the defence of their rights, thereby contributing to the strengthening of civil society in partner countries.

Most interventions have a strong base for sustainability, enabling participants to generate benefits based on their own resources. However, a few interventions generate costs for certain actors unmatched by direct benefits, posing a risk of disruption in ongoing cooperation upon program phasing out. The review has identified risks regarding stakeholder ownership, particularly concerning government institutions. While cost-sharing models minimize discontinuity for farmers, the level of ownership by government institutions presents higher risks. Efforts to reinforce cooperation links between communities and government institutions are necessary to mitigate these risks.

Assessment of the programme's **quality of reporting** reveals both strengths and weaknesses in the results framework and data collection methodologies. The framework is comprehensive but lacks certain indicators and fails to capture disparities in individual results. Data collection methodologies, particularly household surveys, are time and resource-intensive and subject to biases. Regular training and quality assurance mechanisms can strengthen reporting quality, but more streamlined reporting templates and comprehensive training manuals may be needed.

On the basis of these findings, the review team has formulated a set of recommendations for further strengthening the programme and securing lasting benefits for the participating communities. Generic recommendations are presented here, while country-specific recommendations are provided in the annexed country notes.

Nutrition and care practices:

1. The programme should focus on making nutritious food more accessible and cost-effective through measures such as targeted subsidies, community gardens, or partnerships with local producers to ensure a sustainable supply of affordable, healthy food.
2. The programme should ensure that participants have access to economic resources to implement recommended practices, from soap to wood-saving stoves.

Agricultural productivity and income generation:

3. DF and partners should selectively upscale access to finance, equipment and livestock in support of agricultural enhancement and income generation activities, and ensure that training in these areas is tightly coupled with access to production means.
4. DF and its partners should explore collaborations with institutions for technical assistance and alternative financing models for larger investments in areas such as irrigation.
5. DF and implementing partners should intensify their work with local authorities to strengthen access to market through the establishment of farmers' markets and the organisation of fairs.

Strengthening of community organisations:

6. DF and its partner should provide additional impetus and support to existing cooperatives in marketing farming products, including by training farmers in order to generate a reliable supply in terms of product quantities, varieties, and quality throughout the year.

Empowerment of marginalised groups:

7. Women and youth should be further supported in entering the formal sector through official business registration.
8. The programme should work on a holistic strategy to counter the pull of migration towards the youth in dialogue with implementing partners and government institutions.

Improvement of policy frameworks:

9. Advocacy efforts should be streamlined with a focus on local government levels and stricter selection of areas of work with national-level authorities.

Risk management:

10. Consider the establishment of a contingency fund within the programme budget in order to accommodate for negative financial shocks. In case of positive developments (such as an appreciation of the Norwegian kroner), financial gains could be contributed into the fund. At the end of the implementation period, unused resources of the fund could finance additional (possibly exit) activities.
11. Account for the effects of international price developments and local inflation on partners' budget allocations and planned expenditures in a more systematic and proactive manner.

Exit strategy:

12. In dialogue with its implementing partners, DF should now further elaborate its exit strategy, in particular by (1) defining criteria for assessing the level of maturity of communities, and (2) determining an appropriate level of partner engagement in function of the target group's maturity.

Quality of reporting:

13. Consider the inclusion of additional results indicators in areas such as the level of agricultural production and income generation of participants, the support to marginalised groups other than women, youth and PWDs, or the development of community-based structures in terms of scope and scale of activity. In doing so, allow for variations between countries for indicators at output and immediate outcome level, within a unified results structure at intermediate outcome and impact level, in order to better measure country-specific results.

Communication with Norad:

14. Enhance communication and cooperation with Norad, with a specific focus on delays in grant disbursements and opportunities for exchange and learning.

Cooperation with other development actors:

15. Strengthen exchange information with agencies and organisations working with implementing partners in the programme's intervention areas, with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and seeking to enhance synergies.
16. Enhance outreach efforts to cooperate with other actors in areas of mutual interest, such as policy advocacy work in partner countries, and explore options to jointly open new ground in the support to smallholders.

Communication with partners:

17. Foster an environment for open dialogue with the partners, with particular attention to smaller organisation; ensure DF's presence in the field through regular visits and frequent communication, with a view to deepening the understanding of implementation conditions and challenges.
18. In addressing areas of underachievement following this MTR, provide platforms for partners to deliberate on areas for improvement and detailed agendas for action. Ensure regular monitoring and adaptive management based on these insights.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Development Fund's Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods Programme. The MTR was conducted by a team from Future Horizons between September 2023 and February 2024. The review team was led by Reza Lahidji and comprised Selam Ayalew (Ethiopia and Somalia), Adriana Smith (Guatemala), Elisabeth Fosseli Olsen and Chimwemwe Chilenga (Malawi). Knut Lakså provided quality assurance for the MTR process and report.

1.1. Scope and objectives of the Mid-Term Review

The MTR sought to appraise and document the headway made towards realising the programme's objectives during its first three years of implementation (2021-2023) by identifying and analysing initial indications of success or shortcomings across the range of programmatic activities.

The MTR serves a dual purpose of ensuring accountability to Norad, the donor, as well as the programme participants, and providing inputs to DF and its collaborative partners to effect essential adaptations to the programme. In alignment with the latter objective, the review sought to be forward looking in nature and generate evidence, lessons, and recommendations that could strengthen the implementation and operationalization of DF interventions across various contexts for the remainder of the programme timeframe.

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), the MTR gauged progress against the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. To assess the programme's realisations and avenues for improvement at global level, the MTR drew from detailed analyses of DF's interventions under the programme in five countries: Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Nepal and Somalia. The work undertaken in Mozambique was not covered in the MTR as per the ToR.

1.2. Structure of the Report

The remainder of this draft report summarises the methodology, findings and conclusions of the MTR.

Section 2 presents an overview of the MTR methodology, specifically its data sources, data collection methods, and the step-wise construction of the evidence base. The section closes by discussing the limits of the approach.

Section 3 provides a general overview of the programme, its objectives and its implementation context in each of the reviewed countries.

Section 4 exposes the findings of the review, structured in accordance with the OECD-DAC criteria and the review questions. The section focuses on programme-level findings, which it illustrates with country-specific examples. The latter draw from five detailed country findings notes which are annexed to the report.

Section 5 concludes by summing up the lessons learned from the review, which are considered ripe for adding to the knowledge base about the programme and about similar interventions, and actionable recommendations that could help steer the programme towards its envisioned impact.

A traffic light analysis of the programme's results in 2022, the list of interview and focus group discussion (FGD) carried out during the MTR, the list of the documentation, the review matrix, and the interview and FGD guidelines used by the MTR team are presented as appendices to the report.

The five country findings notes, the MTR ToR and the MTR inception report are provided as separate annexes.

2. Methodology

This section provides a general overview of the MTR's methodological approach. The first subsection describes the data sources and data collection methods. The second subsection presents the review matrix associating the MTR's guiding questions to assessment criteria and data sources. The third subsection explains how the review matrix was used to systematically build the evidence base for the review findings. The final subsection discusses the main limitations of the approach.

2.1. Data collection methods

Data for the MTR was collected through a sequential mixed-methods approach combining multiple sources of information for triangulation of data:

1. A series of **initial scoping interviews** were conducted with key DF staff during the inception phase in order to further clarify the scope and objectives of the MTR and to better capture relevant programmatic and organisational dynamics.
2. **Desktop research** was carried out to review and analyse all documents relevant to the scope of the assignment. The analysis provided qualitative and quantitative insights into the programme, its implementation and results, and also into its economic and policy context. Sources included:¹
 - Project documents from DF and its project partners, including reports against the results framework (RF)
 - Reports and policy documents from national authorities in intervention countries
 - Reports from relevant international organisations and other sources.
3. **In-depth interviews** were conducted with a large selection of identified stakeholders, including DF staff at headquarters and in country offices, staff of partner organisations, representatives of donor agencies, government officials, NGOs, representatives of communities and community-level organisations. The approach to the interviews was participatory and inclusive, and generated rich empirical data from a range of stakeholder standpoints. The interviews were based on interview guides elaborated during the inception phase² and informed by evidence gaps identified in the desk study. The guides were structured to include key questions that address the assignment's main objectives as stated in the ToR and designed according to the review matrix.
4. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were conducted with beneficiaries in selected programme locations. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to select communities and recruit beneficiaries of DF projects in each intervention country. Samples of 5 to 10 programme locations/communities were selected in each country (depending on accessibility conditions) on the basis of the following criteria: (1) the sample should be representative of programmatic activities carried out in the country (and cover all activities); (2) the sample should be representative of the relative contributions of implementing partners (and cover all partners); (3) the sample should reflect the socioeconomic, environmental, ethnic and cultural diversity of target communities in the country.

The FGDs were primarily used as a means to consult participating communities in a culturally sensitive manner and to collect evidence on the programme's strengths and weaknesses from their

¹ See full documentation list in Appendix 3.

² See Appendix 5.

standpoint. In addition, the FGDs provided a source of triangulation of information reported in the programme's documentation and in interviews.

5. **Extraction and analysis of quantitative data** from relevant documentation, including reported results, helped assess quantitative aspects of the programme's implementation (efficiency) and results (achievement of immediate and intermediate outcomes).
6. Analysis of **country- or regional-level data** informed the assessment of contextual factors (whether social, economic, environmental or political) and their influence on intervention results.
7. After all of the above data collection activities were completed, the review team held a **debriefing meeting** with DF teams and partners in each intervention country in order to share preliminary findings, to collect feedback and to identify possible gaps.
8. In addition, at the end of the data collection phase, the team conducted a data gap analysis and a series of **follow-up interviews** to address any identified gap in the MTR evidence base.
9. Finally, on the basis of the present draft MTR report, the team will also present its initial findings, conclusions and recommendations to DF, its partners and other relevant stakeholders during a **validation workshop**. This will provide an ultimate source for data verification and triangulation.

2.2. Building the evidence base

1. During the inception phase, the review team developed a matrix associating each review question – as suggested in the MTR ToR and elaborated by the team – with one or more detailed assessment criteria and data sources, indicating how the team would seek to collect evidence and inform findings in response to the question.³ The data collection methodology for the MTR was elaborated with the aim of providing more than one source and type of data for the review of each guiding question and ensuring systematic triangulation.
2. The review matrix was used as a roadmap throughout the course of the MTR to systematically collect and triangulate evidence in response to each question. Using the matrix ensured that the MTR's scope and objectives were covered in a systematic manner and that all relevant aspects of implementation, results and prospects would be investigated.
3. The team structured five findings notes in accordance with the review questions and assessment criteria: one at programme level and one for each reviewed country. At each step of the sequential collection of data, the team reported its findings in the notes under the relevant questions and assessment criteria. The team systematically linked each finding with its underlying evidence, using a referencing method to indicate the sources of evidence for each key finding. Programme-level findings were similarly related to supporting country-level findings and evidence.
4. The team internally examined the evidence base included in the findings notes at the end of the desktop review, after the fieldwork, and after all data collection was completed:
 - The analysis of evidence at the end of the desktop review highlighted areas in need of further information and helped refine the interview and FGDs guides for the fieldwork, as well as the search for external data and statistics.
 - At the end of the fieldwork, the analysis helped identify the remaining gaps that the team covered through follow-up interviews and additional research.

³ See Appendix 4.

- Finally, after the completion of data collection, the analysis of the evidence base helped the team examine the quality of the evidence underlying its findings and conclusions.

2.3. Limitations

The MTR inevitably has methodological limitations, of which the following are arguably the most prominent:

- The programme builds on the results and lessons from its first phase (2017-2020) and more broadly on DF's prior work in most implementation countries. In addition, the programme benefits from synergies with other interventions that DF currently carries out in some countries. Although the MTR makes passing references to this work, it was outside of its scope to review and assess the programme's interlinkages with DF's other engagements, whether past or present.
- Certain programme locations in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Nepal and Somalia were inaccessible to the review team due to security, time or resource constraints. Although the team still managed to cover a wide range of implementation conditions through its fieldwork in all countries, it is possible that specific programme realisations or challenges in certain localities were overlooked.
- A particular feature of DF's results framework for the programme, which is discussed at length in the report, is the relative paucity of data on physical outcome measures such as crop volumes and yields, surfaces under cultivation or irrigation, income levels, etc. To appraise such outcomes, the MTR had to rely to a large extent on interviews with beneficiaries and on anecdotal observations during site visits, which it sought to triangulate to the extent possible.

3. The Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods Programme

Amidst the escalating challenges posed by global climate issues and food security crises, it has become an absolute imperative to work at fortifying the climate resilience of rural communities, particularly in low-income and lower middle-income countries. The convergence of climate resilience and sustainable food systems plays a pivotal role in ensuring enduring ecological stability, societal well-being, and economic progress.

The Development Fund (DF) is a Norwegian aid organization whose interventions are focused on improving the living conditions of poor rural communities by promoting agricultural methods that are better adapted to their environment, more resilient to climate change and more respectful of the preservation of natural resources. The Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods Programme is a flagship initiative through which DF supports over 100,000 households and over 400 communities in six low- and lower middle-income countries, in conjunction with local, national, and international partners.

This section first presents the main lines of the programme, then provides a short overview of the context in which programme activities are being implemented in the five reviewed countries, namely Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Nepal, and Somalia.⁴

3.1. The programme's objectives

The programme, which runs from 2021 to 2025, seeks to augment the resilience of rural communities and contribute to the establishment of sustainable food systems by integrating rural development with climate adaptation and natural resource management. The programme's defining feature is that it seeks to develop synergies between interventions in agriculture, nutrition, climate adaptation, gender equality and the empowerment of marginalised groups, strengthening of community-based organisations, and improvement of the policy framework. For this, the programme draws from a range of partnerships, intervention approaches and technical methods, which it adapts to the specific conditions of each community.

The programme is financed through a Norad grant of NOK 365.5 million equally distributed over the implementation period.⁵

As formulated in the programme's Theory of Change (ToC) and results framework, programme activities are oriented towards seven output categories: awareness raising provided by partners and community leaders to improve nutrition and care practices (OP1); support provided to smallholder farmers and pastoralists on sustainable agriculture, seed systems and livestock production (OP2); support provided to rural communities to develop CAV plans and manage/restore land and water resources (OP3); support provided to women, youth and marginalized groups to develop income generation opportunities and businesses (OP4); support provided to promote inclusive rural communities and grassroots organizations (OP5); support provided to communities and grassroots organizations to advocate for good government services and legal frameworks (OP6); and

⁴ As explained in the introduction, one of the intervention countries, namely Mozambique, is not included in the scope of this review.

⁵ Norad grant application, September 2020.

implementing partners are provided capacity building and knowledge exchange opportunities based on identified needs (OP7).

These outputs are expected to generate five immediate outcomes: rural households have improved nutrition and care practices (IM1); increased diversity and productivity of smallholder farmers' and pastoralists' food production (IM2); rural communities have enhanced access to sustainably managed land and water resources (IM3); rural women, youth and marginalized groups have improved capacity to generate income (IM4); and increased capacity of grassroots organizations to advocate for good government services and legal framework (IM5).

In turn, the immediate outcomes are expected to lead to four intermediate outcomes: improved food security and nutrition for rural households (IO1); increased economic empowerment for rural households, especially women, youth and marginalized groups (IO2); improved government services and legal frameworks in line with rural communities' needs, rights and priorities (IO3); and that rural women and marginalized groups have increased influence and recognition within their households, grassroots organizations and communities (IO4).

Finally, the intermediate outcomes are expected to combine their effects in gradually increasing the climate resilience and well-being of rural communities in intervention countries, the programme's objective at impact level.

The programme has an extensive results framework, with up to four indicators for each of the above result categories (see Annex 2).

3.2. Implementation context: Ethiopia

Ethiopia is DF's first country of engagement, both historically and in terms of its share of the organisation's current intervention budget. The project under the Norad grant agreement is entitled Climate Adaptation and Rural Development (CARD) and is currently in its second phase, building on the results of CARD I (2017-2020). Four implementing partners⁶ carry out project activities encompassing climate adaptation, the promotion of biological diversity in agriculture, natural resource management, microloan and credit schemes, the advancement of equality and participation, and the strengthening of civil society. Within the framework of CARD II and other projects (such as Food Security and Livelihoods), DF actively supports climate adaptation in agriculture, providing training in improved agronomic practices, soil and water conservation, development of small-scale irrigation systems, and water management to enhance food production in moisture constrained areas. Furthermore, DF has established community seed banks to protect agricultural biodiversity and offer farmers access to a variety of seed types.

A majority of the Ethiopian population relies on climate-sensitive activities like rain-fed agriculture and livestock farming for their livelihoods. In Ethiopia, agriculture contributes approximately 37.6% of the Gross Domestic Product and 63.7% of total employment – to which one should add numerous people who are indirectly dependent on agriculture.⁷ Any adverse change in climate, such as recurrent droughts and heavy rainfall in various regions of the country, have the potential to reduce available arable land and crop productivity and thereby affect the livelihoods of large groups of population. Given the reliance on rain-fed techniques, agriculture is highly susceptible to weather fluctuations and future climate change impacts. Additionally, future climate change is expected to significantly affect the productivity of forests.

⁶ iDE, Helevetas, REST, WeAction.

⁷ World Bank, [World Development Indicators](#).

Frequent and extensive droughts in Ethiopia also have a considerable impact on livestock due to reduced water resources, leading to decreased grassland and rangeland productivity in agro-pastoral and pastoral areas. In 2020, the Food and Agriculture Organization reported that up to three million cattle, calves, and milking cows perished due to drought. Even drought-resistant animals like camels were not spared in the drought-affected agro-pastoral and pastoral communities in eastern and southern Ethiopia, with mortality rates varying from 5-10 percent for camels and 10-20 percent for sheep.

In response to the growing threats of climate change, including frequent droughts, flooding, and rising temperatures, Ethiopia has made addressing vulnerability and food insecurity induced by climate change a development priority. The Government of Ethiopia launched the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE)⁸ strategy in 2011, with the goal of achieving no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 2010 levels by 2025. As part of the CRGE strategy, the Agriculture and Forestry Resilience Strategy was developed⁹, and an essential institutional arrangement for its implementation and fund allocation is the CRGE Facility¹⁰.

In recent years, food security has also been adversely affected by several internal conflicts and crises that have significantly impacted the country's stability and security. The most significant of these opposed the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the ruling party of the Tigray region, from November 2020 onwards. The conflict has resulted in a humanitarian crisis, with thousands of people displaced and in need of assistance. Reports of human rights abuses and atrocities have emerged from the region, drawing international concern.

Despite the ongoing conflict in the northern regions of Tigray and Amhara, DF has strived to link its development activities in these affected areas with rehabilitation efforts to facilitate community development.

3.3. Implementation context: Guatemala

DF supports three projects in Guatemala implemented by its three local partners¹¹ in rural communities in largely indigenous areas of Guatemala. Actions promote food and economic security as well as sustainable management of natural resources through training in nutrition, advocacy, small business, and community organization; offering resources for agricultural and animal production initiatives; supporting access to financial services and public resources; and promoting technologies for better natural resource management.

Guatemala is characterized by some of Latin America's lowest social development indicators, with high levels of corruption, inequality and entrenched poverty, as well as violence and recorded criminality.¹² 43% of the population identifying as Indigenous has endured historic discrimination and social exclusion.¹³ Guatemala is Latin America's youngest nation, with a median age of 22, and its youth face barriers to education, training, and employment.¹⁴

⁸ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2011), [Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Green Economy](#).

⁹ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2011), [Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Green Economy – Climate Resilience Strategy: Agriculture and Forestry](#).

¹⁰ Ministry of Finance of Ethiopia, [Climate Resilient Green Economy Facility](#).

¹¹ Asociación de Forestería Comunitaria de Guatemala Utz Ché (Utz Ché), the Asociación de Organizaciones de los Cuchumatanes (ASOCUCH), and Asociación Maya-Mam de Investigación y Desarrollo (AMMID).

¹² World Bank, [Guatemala Overview](#); Global Organized Crime Index, [Guatemala](#).

¹³ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, [Indigenous People in Guatemala](#).

¹⁴ U.S. State Department Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet, [U.S. relations with Guatemala](#).

In addition, the country is susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change, including more frequent and severe droughts, flooding, and unpredictable weather patterns, which directly affect the agricultural sector that employs a significant portion of the population.¹⁵ These climate-related pressures are compounded by deforestation, soil degradation, and the over-exploitation of water resources, all of which threaten the country's ecological balance.¹⁶ These harsh circumstances fuel irregular migration to the United States, primarily by young Indigenous individuals seeking economic stability. Economic opportunity deficits are the foremost incentive for Guatemalans to migrate, followed by insecurity and family separation concerns.¹⁷

To address many of these issues, the Guatemalan government has included the following priorities within the National Development Plan which extends to 2023: social protections and poverty reduction, access to water and natural resources, employment and investment, sustainable use of natural resources, and food security and nutrition.¹⁸ In addition, the National Climate Change Action Plan incorporates mitigation and adaptation priorities, including agriculture, livestock, and food security, and integrated water resources management.¹⁹

3.4. Implementation context: Malawi

The Malawian component of the programme is entitled Climate Resilient Rural Livelihoods in Malawi and Mozambique (MAMO) and covers both countries. In Malawi, DF works with four implementing partners²⁰ in four rural districts (Machinga, Ntchisi, Mzimba and Rumphu) to deliver the entire range of programme activities and outputs. Interventions focus on agricultural sector transformation by targeting both changes in material conditions (food, income) and broader normative changes (social, governance) that are important for climate resilience and well-being. Particular emphasis is placed on vulnerable groups including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and persons with HIV/AIDS.

Malawi's multi-pronged development challenges include vulnerability to external shocks, such as climate change, illness and natural disasters, as well as high population growth, environmental degradation and rapid and unsustainable urbanization. Energy shortages are pervasive, with only 11% of the population having access to electricity. Although Malawi has progressed in building its human capital, defined as the knowledge, skills and health people accumulate, poverty and inequality remain stubbornly high.²¹ Poverty is driven by low productivity in the agriculture sector, volatile economic growth, rapid population growth, high unemployment, and limited coverage of safety net programs and targeting challenges. Impoverished communities are also vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and, more recently, to the negative impact of COVID-19.

Malnutrition remains an important challenge in the country, particularly for women and children. The causes of undernutrition are manifold: repeated infections, suboptimal infant and child feeding practices, inadequate dietary diversity, food insecurity, gender inequality, poor hygiene practices and lack of safe water and sanitation. The main drivers of food insecurity include infestations of the Fall Armyworm, high prices for staple foods and high input prices – but most of all, in recent years, climate shocks. Malawi is vulnerable to climate change and a wide range of extreme weather events, including

¹⁵ USAID, [Guatemala Climate Change Country Profile](#).

¹⁶ U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, [Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans – Guatemala](#).

¹⁷ Migration Policy Institute (2020), [Migration from Huehuetenango in Guatemala's Western Highlands: Policy and Development Responses](#).

¹⁸ Guatemalan Government, Executive Secretariat for Planning and Programming, [Prioridades Nacionales de Desarrollo](#).

¹⁹ Government of Guatemala, [Plan de Acción Nacional de Cambio Climático](#).

²⁰ BCI, CEPA, Heifer and NFYD.

²¹ World Bank, [Macro Poverty Outlook for Malawi: April 2023](#).

intense rainfall, floods, seasonal droughts, multi-year droughts, dry spells, cold spells, strong winds, thunderstorms, landslides, hailstorms, mudslides, and heat waves.²² Exposure to these climate change risks further undermines the ability of smallholder farmers in Malawi to produce enough food for their families, much less a marketable surplus.

3.5. Implementation context: Nepal

DF's interventions in Nepal are concentrated in the western part of the country, from the Indian border in the south to the China-Tibet border in the north. The only exception, a project in the north-east that originated in the response to the 2015 earthquake, is currently being phased out. DF works with six contractual partners²³ and nine subcontracted partners to support small community groups of typically 20 to 35 households. Interventions focus on food security through training on nutrition, the use of bio-pesticides and bio-fertilisers, livestock rearing and livestock health, as well as the provision of equipment (tools, tractors) or inputs (seeds, goats, buffalos). CAV projects deploy a holistic approach to building climate resilience, with a strong focus on sustainable irrigation. Interventions also seek to support democratic decision-making and participation, rights awareness and empowerment to uphold rights.

Smallholder farmers and rural communities in Nepal face significant challenges due to climate change and the over-exploitation of natural resources. Nepal's agriculture-dependent economy and rural livelihoods are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including erratic rainfall patterns, increased temperatures, and more frequent extreme weather events. These changes have disrupted traditional farming practices and reduced agricultural productivity. Smallholder farmers, who make up the majority of the population, often lack access to resources and technology to adapt to these changes, further exacerbating their vulnerability.

Additionally, the over-exploitation of natural resources, such as deforestation and unsustainable land use practices, has led to soil erosion, reduced water availability, and habitat degradation. This has a cascading effect on agriculture and rural communities, as they rely heavily on these resources for their sustenance and income. Efforts are being made to address these challenges through initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture, reforestation, and the adoption of climate-resilient practices. However, the government of Nepal and various stakeholders face ongoing challenges in building the capacity of smallholder farmers, improving infrastructure, and ensuring sustainable management of natural resources in the face of a changing climate.

Nepal's long-term development plans and government policies have increasingly focused on sustainability and climate resilience in agriculture and food security to address the challenges posed by climate change and the over-exploitation of natural resources. Nepal has developed a National Adaptation Plan that outlines strategies to adapt to climate change, including those related to agriculture and food security. The plan emphasizes the need for climate-resilient agricultural practices and the promotion of sustainable resource management. The government has also implemented a Agricultural Development Strategy that includes promoting crop diversification, introducing drought-resistant crop varieties, and improving irrigation infrastructure to enhance the resilience of the agriculture sector to climate change. While these policies and initiatives are in place, challenges remain in implementation due to limited resources, capacity constraints, and the remoteness of many rural areas.

²² Irish Aid (2018), [Malawi Country Climate Risk Assessment Report](#).

²³ Community-Based Organization Development Centre (CBODC), Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO), Janajagaran Samaj (JJS), Local Initiatives for Biodiversity Research and Development (LIBIRD), Namsaling Community Development Centre (NCDC), Sahakarmi Samaj (SS).

3.6. Implementation context: Somalia

The Somali component of the programme is entitled Building Local Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change (BRAC). It combines interventions to improve food security and nutrition, enhance community climate adaptive capacities, increase social inclusion and strengthen community-based organisations for improved government services and legal frameworks that address the needs of the communities. BRAC interventions are concentrated in the two northern states of Somaliland and Puntland and implemented by six partners operating in these regions²⁴.

Somalia has faced multiple crises that have increased food insecurity in recent years, including conflict, droughts, floods, and desert locust. Between January 2021 and the end of September 2022, 1,170,842 people had been displaced (out of total of 3.8 million currently displaced²⁵) by drought in Somalia, with 68,393 people displaced in September 2022 alone²⁶. As of April 2023, approximately 8.3 million people across Somalia were expected to face crisis or more acute food insecurity outcomes, due to five consecutive seasons of poor rainfall, coupled with high food prices related to conflict, insecurity and disease outbreaks.

The country has been in a state of conflict for the past 30 years, and though fighting has eased somewhat compared to the apex of the civil war, it is still considered a fragile state and is vulnerable to multiple militias vying for power. The challenges are compounded by the tensions between the Federal State of Somalia and the states of Somaliland and Puntland. Since its declaration of independence from the rest of Somalia in 1991, Somaliland has operated as a self-declared sovereign state with its own government, constitution, and security forces. However, notwithstanding its de facto independence, Somaliland has not been internationally recognized as a separate state and the Somali Federal Government has maintained its claims of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Puntland is also a semi-autonomous region with its own government and security forces, although it is formally part of the federal system of Somalia. Puntland has sometimes expressed concerns about the distribution of power and resources within the federal system and has sought to strengthen its autonomy.

Somaliland and Puntland have also been competing and occasionally fighting over control of the regions of Sool and Sanaag. In the latest episode of conflict in this region, centred around Laas Caanood, fierce clashes between Somaliland forces and the separatist entity SSC-Khaatumo lasted for almost 8 months in 2023 and resulted in almost total destruction of basic amenities and services, especially water services and health facilities. Over 200,000 people were displaced from Laas Caanood town and surrounding villages. The majority of the displaced fled to the Puntland side due to clan affiliations.

As one of the priority countries receiving assistance through the global humanitarian appeal process, several frameworks, policies, and coordination mechanisms have been developed in country to address food insecurity and sustainable livelihoods. These include the National Development Plan 9 (2020-2024) which prioritizes addressing food insecurity under the social protection objective, the National Durable Solutions Strategy 2020-2024 which mainstreams national early warning/food security systems, and the UN Cooperation Framework (2021-2025) addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including SDG 2 “Zero Hunger”. The amount received annually by the Federal State of Somalia has considerably increased in the past two decades, from USD 150 million in 2002 to over USD 2.1 billion in 2020 and USD 1.8 billion in 2021²⁷. Most sources consider, however,

²⁴ ADO, Candlelight, HAVOYOCO, KAAALO, NAFIS, NODO.

²⁵ OCHA Somalia - CCCM Cluster (September 2023).

²⁶ ReliefWeb, 2023.

²⁷ OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database.

that a large majority of this support is channelled to the central and southern parts of the country and that only a limited share reaches the states of Somaliland and Puntland.

4. Findings at programme level

This section provides an overview of the findings of the MTR, drawing from the assessment of the programme's implementation and results in the five review countries, as well as an appraisal of management and operations at programme level.²⁸

The section is organised in accordance with the six overall criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and quality of reporting, and the 20 review questions. Each subsection presents the review's findings in response to one question in a cross-country perspective, followed by country-specific observations and illustrations in bullet points.

4.1. Relevance

4.1.1. To which degree have DF and its partners been able to ensure that the programme aligns with national and local needs, development plans, and priorities?

The programme seeks to support rural communities in intervention countries through a holistic approach addressing nutrition, agricultural diversity and productivity, climate resilience, economic empowerment, and the national and local policy frameworks, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women, youth and PWD.

The review has found that the programme is fully relevant to the needs of smallholders, their families and communities in all partner countries. Thanks to the careful selection of locally anchored implementation partners, DF has been able to adapt its approaches to the priorities and preferences of target groups in their particular contexts. DF partners have, among others, considered cultural norms and practices when determining how to implement programme activities.

DF has also tailored its approach to the capacity and priorities of its partners in each country. All partners express a strong alignment between their organisational objectives and those of DF and in multiple cases, their own programmatic structure closely mirrors that of the programme. Admittedly, this is also the result of the prominence of the programme in the activity of most partners and the fact that some of them have developed new competences in order to provide the full range of interventions included in the programme.

Insofar as they contribute to food security and climate change adaptation, the program's goals are also aligned with the current development strategies and priorities of these countries, with specific reference to SDG 2. Advocacy work undertaken by programme partners has contributed to the development of (and in some cases substantial improvements in) national policy frameworks on agrobiodiversity.

By contrast, the programme's focus on vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth and PWD is not entirely echoed in current national priorities and policies of partner countries. Partly as a consequence, the programme has experienced challenges in inclusivity, especially regarding youth and PWDs, which called for a more focused approach. In some countries (in particular Guatemala), there is also room

²⁸ Document sources are referenced with full name and, where relevant, page numbers; individual sources are entirely anonymised and referred to as GEN-INT-zz for interview nr. zz carried out as part of general data collection for the MTR. Data sources at country level are provided in the detailed country review findings presented in Annexes 1 to 5.

for enhancement engagement with local government actors, with a view to leveraging their support to the benefit of smallholder communities.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, participants from different Woredas (districts) value different interventions, demonstrating that the CARD II programme has been able to adapt to socioeconomic and environmental differences to respond to the specific needs of target populations, from gender equality and social inclusion capacity building to the supply of potable water, irrigation supply and watershed development activities.
- In Guatemala, DF's implementing partners have, in dialogue with CBOs, tailored their implementation approach to community needs and requirements, for example by adapting to local language and cultural practices. The partners have however experienced inclusivity challenges, particularly regarding people with disabilities (a common difficulty in most partner countries). DF partner ASOCUCH has taken part in the national policy forum on agrobiodiversity, including networks of NGOs and other stakeholders that have blocked previous efforts to introduce policies limiting farmers' rights to seeds.
- In Malawi, smallholder farmers are particularly exposed to climate-related disasters such as cyclones and droughts. The MAMO programme seeks to respond to their needs by promoting sustainable agriculture and climate change resilience, in alignment of aligns with key national policies. The review has however identified opportunities to better integrate the humanitarian/ development nexus and respond to the occurrence of climate shocks. DF and its partners have also been engaged in the Malawi Agrobiodiversity Network, whose inputs have been instrumental in improving the government's draft seed policy in order to better protect the rights to use, exchange and sell seeds from traditional varieties.
- In Nepal, the programme cooperates with village-level groups that have existed and organised cooperation and mutual help between their members (in particular women) for up to 25 years. These groups have been instrumental in communicating their members' needs to DF and the implementing partners from the onset of the project, particularly regarding the economic empowerment of women. At policy level, DF partner LI-BIRD has been instrumental in amendments to the seed act, including provisions facilitating the registration of local/ traditional varieties and the recognition of community ownership of traditional varieties.
- In Somalia community priorities primarily revolve around agricultural sustainability, water access, and community development. Beneficiaries consistently highlighted that DF's and partners interventions align well with community needs and priorities, particularly in improvement of crop production, agricultural water conservation, construction and rehabilitation of water reservoirs and creating nutritional awareness. DF and its partners have also worked jointly to influence the development of seed policies in Somaliland and Puntland as to ensure compliance with farmers' rights to seeds.

4.2. Coherence

4.2.1. To what extent have DF and Norad been able to effectively coordinate and ensure global and country-level coherence of Norwegian development strategies, Norwegian funded programmes and initiatives in relevant sectors and in relation to cross-cutting issues?

The programme is well aligned with Norwegian development strategies, in particular in the key areas of food security and climate change adaptation.

A key objective of the DF programme, food security has been addressed most recently by Norway's Strategy for Promoting Food Security in Development Policy.²⁹ The programme fully aligns with the ambition of transitioning, in the Strategy's words, from the current "large-scale food systems that feed much of the world's population but at the same time create major societal challenges" to "more resilient food systems based to a greater extent on local and national production". The programme directly serves the Strategy's objectives of promoting local production of nutritious food, increasing the incomes of small-scale food producers, stimulating local job creation throughout the value chain, and expanding access to healthy food. In addition, the programme seeks to support the three groups of people that are specifically targeted by the Strategy, namely women, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and the youth.

The programme is also coherent with Norway's Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction and the Fight Against Hunger,³⁰ in particular on climate-resilient food production, one of the Strategy's four focus areas. However, the review noted in Malawi that the programme could enhance its ability to tackle climate shocks by including early warning mechanisms to save lives and livestock during a natural disaster. Early warning systems are another focus area in the Strategy.

In 2018, in an effort to streamline Norwegian development cooperation policy and make it more efficient, Norway's White Paper for Development Cooperation introduced two concepts of partner countries in international development: partners for long-term development cooperation and partners for stabilisation and conflict prevention.³¹ Among the DF's programme's intervention countries, three are long-term development cooperation partners for Norway (Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal) and one is a partner for stabilisation and conflict prevention (Somalia). Only Guatemala is not recognised by Norway as a key partner for development cooperation.

Finally, the programme also places appropriate emphasis on the four cross-cutting issues that Norway seeks to systematically address in its development cooperation interventions:³²

- **Women Rights and Gender Equality:** The programme specifically targets women as one of the key vulnerable groups to support among rural communities. Women are the principal beneficiaries of economic empowerment activities in all intervention countries; in some cases, the programme has sought to strengthen its results in terms of gender equality through women-only initiatives, such as Young Women Can Do It Clubs in Malawi. According to this review's findings, the programme has succeeded in enabling participating women to increase their influence and recognition within their households, grassroots organisations and communities. The programme's result framework integrates multiple sex-disaggregated indicators. Additionally, DF has included within its whistleblowing policy a statement encouraging people to report any case of sexual abuse or harassment and strengthened the capacity of its implementing partners in gender equality and social inclusion.
- **Human Rights:** In addition to women, the programme seeks to support the youth and PWDs as vulnerable groups across the intervention countries, with specific reporting for several results indicators. Some programme activities also target country-specific vulnerable groups, such as cast-segregated persons in Nepal, persons living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi and

²⁹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Combining forces against hunger – A policy to improve food self-sufficiency. Norway's strategy for promoting food security in development policy. November 2022.

³⁰ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Climate change, hunger and vulnerability – Strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger. January 2023.

³¹ Meld. St. 17 (2017-2018). Report to the Storting – White Paper on Partner Countries in Norway's Development Policy.

³² Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016), Common Responsibility for Common Future: The Sustainable Development Goals and Norway's Development Policy.

indigenous people in Guatemala. More broadly, the programme's overarching objective is to improve the well-being of smallholding farmers, which are among the most deprived groups of population in the intervention countries. The programme places particular emphasis on the rural communities' right to adequate food, economic empowerment, and capacity to uphold their rights in their interactions with local and central government authorities. DF's advocacy for the implementation of Farmer Rights as enshrined in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Article 9), as well as its support to community-based seed banks, are cases in point, in full alignment with Norway's positions.

- Climate Change: A key dimension of the programme's overall objective is to enhance smallholder farmers' resilience to climate change. The programme's effort to build local capacities for the design and implementation of CAVs is an exemplary case of climate adaptation approaches rooted in the rights, needs, priorities and active participation of local communities. The program promotes climate-smart agriculture through farming methods that reduce carbon emissions, such as minimum tillage, afforestation, and carbon sequestration in soils. The programme also cooperates with local and/or national government authorities in their climate adaptation endeavours in Ethiopia, Malawi and, in a less systematic way, Nepal.
- Anti-Corruption: DF applies a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and has carried out capacity building in this area with its implementation partners; most partners also have adopted anti-corruption policies.³³ DF's risk analysis for the programme identifies the mismanagement of funds and corruption as its first risk area and formulates risk mitigation measures.³⁴ DF has guidelines for raising complaints and concerns, and a whistleblowing system in place through which any stakeholder can at any time notify the Norwegian MFA's Central Control Unit. A whistleblower report was received in November 2022 concerning the programme's operations in Malawi. This led Norad to mandate audits of DF's financial management, which did not find any evidence of corruption but led to financial management reinforcement measures.³⁵

4.2.2. To what extent are the programme's approach and objectives coherent and complementary with those of other key donors and development actors?

The programme is coherent with the intervention logic and objectives of multiple development actors intervening in the area of food security, climate-smart agriculture and/or climate change adaptation in low- and lower middle-income countries. The programme's implementing partners testify of such convergence of approaches in their own work with other donors and development agencies, which enables them to develop synergies and share good practices across projects.

The programme has also made significant contributions to international agenda-setting on agrobiodiversity and to the defence of farmers' rights in that context. DF and its partners have actively participated in negotiations and inter-sessional processes of the International Plant Treaty, with the aim to promote and strengthen the implementation of farmers' rights to seeds. DF has also been a member of international networks promoting farmers' rights, including within plant variety protection legislation, such as the Association for Plant Breeding for the Benefit of Society.

When it comes to the implementation of the programme on the ground, DF itself has taken limited initiatives in order to communicate and coordinate with other development actors. DF has taken part in networks of Norwegian development actors working in Guatemala and Nepal for multiple years, but the focus of these networks has been more on joint advocacy efforts than exchange of information

³³ The Development Fund's Partnership Policy.

³⁴ Risk Analysis for Norad Application.

³⁵ See references and detailed discussion under subsection 4.3.8.

and coordination on programming. Other interactions have been anecdotal at best.³⁶ This is therefore an area with potential for improvement.

A first step in outreach to and coordination with other actors would consist for DF to exchange information with agencies and organisations working with its implementing partners in the programme's intervention areas, with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and seeking to enhance synergies. DF could also seek to replicate in all partner countries the interesting initiative taken by its Malawi office, which consists in comparing its approach to those of key development actors intervening in food security and climate resilience by mapping their activities and objectives against to the IOs of the programme.

Further, DF could seek to expand its international and national advocacy efforts beyond the area of agro-biodiversity and explore options to open new ground in the support to smallholders jointly with other development actors. The former could include concerted efforts to draw the attention of national and regional authorities on the importance of access to market, which is bound to become a bottleneck to income generation activities in most countries participating in the programme,³⁷ and to advocate for cost-effective solutions such as the organisation of farmers' markets and fairs. An example of innovative cooperation would be to join forces with humanitarian actors in improving the resilience of smallholders to harmful climate events in disaster-prone countries such as Malawi, for instance by securing humanitarian funding for response packages targeting farmers affected by crises.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the programme is well aligned with the government's strategies for climate change adaptation and food security, which also draw on contributions from other major bilateral and multilateral agencies, including the World Bank, USAID, FCDO and WFP, thereby ensuring coherence of their approaches.
- In Guatemala, DF partners work with multiple donors and development actors – such as Oxfam, the Rainforest Alliance, the World Bank, and the governments of Belgium and the Netherlands, and private foundations in the case of DF partner ASOCUCH – to implement projects that are clearly aligned on the DF programme in the areas of household animal and vegetable production, technification of agricultural practices, and support to farmers' groups and cooperatives.
- In Malawi, as demonstrated by the devastating impact of cyclone Ana in 2022, better coordination across the development-humanitarian nexus is of critical importance, including from the standpoint of the DF programme's sustainability. DF's contribution to the response to cyclone Ana was hampered by exceptional challenges in the aftermath of the whistleblowing report. Still, DF has not been traditionally active as a humanitarian responder and does not have ongoing links with humanitarian actors in Malawi.
- In Nepal, some of DF's partners (LIBIRD, NCDC, SS, DWO) cooperate with multiple other donors and have had the opportunity to inform them about their work with DF – including Oxfam, FCDO, the government of Finland and TC Global. Some partners share methodologies and lessons learned across projects and jointly implement interventions from different donors (including DF) within the same geographic areas in order to maximise synergies.

³⁶ GEN-INT-07.

³⁷ See subsection 4.3.3.

4.3. Effectiveness

4.3.1. To what extent is the programme successful in achieving desired results in line with the programme's IOs and IMs?³⁸

Appendix 1 presents the programme's indicators at impact, intermediate outcome, immediate outcome and output level, together with a traffic light analysis of the achievement of targets in 2022. It should be noted that the RF did not include any measurement for indicators at impact level and about half of the indicators at outcome level in 2021 and 2022 – including on nutrition and food security (IO1.1, IO1.2, IM1.1), income generation and agricultural diversification (IO2.2, IM2.1, IM2.2, IM2.3), and the empowerment of women and marginalised groups (IO4.2). Most of these indicators are planned to be measured through a household survey to be conducted between March and July 2024 (see Section 4.6).

As captured by the RF – and therefore leaving apart areas in which results have not been measured, the programme has overall succeeded in attaining its objectives, with weaknesses in certain areas.

On nutrition and food safety, the only available data relates to outputs from programme activities (number of people trained, of awareness-raising campaigns, and of local leaders and religious leaders engaged). These have been in line with targets in all countries.

On agricultural productivity enhancement and diversification, partners have generally managed to achieve their targets at output level, although support to livestock production has slightly lagged behind in comparison to support to crops. Support from the programme has enabled successful income generation activities (IGAs), as the share of recently established SMEs that are making profit has exceeded objectives in all countries. Results are more nuanced, however, concerning the number of new businesses established and the number of people trained in IGAs, which partners blame on budgetary delays and shortfalls in several countries.

Partners have experienced more challenges in their efforts towards improved government services and better access to land and water resources, particularly when this involved close cooperation with local authorities. In particular, the organisation of awareness-raising and capacity-building events with government institutions (Guatemala, Malawi, Nepal) and, to a lesser extent, the training of communities on rights and advocacy (Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal) and the construction or rehabilitation of water infrastructures (Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi) have proven more difficult than expected. The development of CAV action plans and their adoption by the communities, as well as the extension of sustainable land management, have been positively oriented. However, it has been more difficult to generate requests from communities (particularly successful requests) for implementation support by government institutions (Ethiopia, Guatemala and Malawi). As a caveat to the programme's underperformance in these areas, the availability and responsiveness of government institutions in 2022 was hampered by armed conflict in Ethiopia, political unrest and challenging relations with some indigenous groups in Guatemala, and institutional restructuring and elections in Nepal.

Finally, activities to empower victimised or marginalised groups have been particularly fruitful for women, while youth and PWDs have proven more challenging to engage, as testified by the underachievement of targets on business development and income generation training in nearly all countries (with the exception of Ethiopia). Two common issues in this regard have been the prevalence

³⁸ This subsection provides an overview of programme results as reported to DF by partners. The following sections provide further details by programme component, drawing also on the data collected specifically for the MTR.

of migration among the youth and the lack of prior knowledge and processes to identify and work with PWDs.

The MTR's overall assessment is that the programme has in large part succeeded in achieving its objectives to date but could have better anticipated challenges in introducing new themes of work (e.g., inclusion of PWDs) or in triggering change in policy frameworks (particularly at national level) – even though these challenges also stemmed in part from the exceptional accumulation of unfavourable events at international and national scale during the implementation period.³⁹ In the case of Malawi, DF established unrealistic targets for the programme's reach in terms of both numbers of beneficiaries and geographic scope - a weakness was not observed in other countries and seems entirely circumstantial.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, programme results have been positive, particularly considering the national context in 2022. Requests submitted to government bodies to support CAV action plans and community forestry initiatives (IM5.2) and the implementation of such plans and initiatives with funds from government institutions (IO3.2) have been particular problem areas. Support to livestock production (OP2.2), to sustainable land and water resource management practices (OP3.2), and to CBOs in the areas of gender equality and social inclusion (OP5.2) and rights and advocacy (OP6.1), as well as the construction and rehabilitation of water infrastructures (OP3.3), and the establishment of SMEs (OP4.2) have also been below initial expectations.
- Results have been very positive in Guatemala, with only two underachieved targets at outcome level (IO 3.2 on CAV action plans implemented with funds from government institutions and IO 4.1 on the share of grassroots organisations with at least 20% of decision-making positions held by women) and a handful at output level: the number of people trained to strengthen livestock production (OP2.2), the number of water infrastructures constructed or rehabilitated (OP3.3), the number of people trained in business development or IGAs (OP4.3) and the number of awareness-raising and capacity-building events organised with government institutions (OP6.2).
- Malawi has been by far the country in which the completion of output targets has been most difficult in 2022, as nearly all objectives of support to the development of CAV plans and management of land and water resources (OP3), to income generation by women, youth and marginalised groups (OP4), to the promotion of inclusive communities and CBOs (OP5), and to advocacy for good government services and legal frameworks (OP6) have been missed by significant margins. This is explained by both organisational issues within the country office and what appears to be an excessive level of ambition in setting the year's targets.
- In Nepal, implementation has been more challenging regarding the support to smallholders and pastoralists (OP2), the promotion of inclusiveness among communities and grassroots organisations (OP5), and support to advocacy activities (OP6). A general trend throughout activities has been the successful support to and integration of women, which contrasts with the challenges experienced in reaching out to the youth and, especially, to PWDs.
- In Somalia, the programme's performance has been positive in community awareness and involvement in nutrition-related activities, support for agro-pastoralists and crop diversification, CAV plan development and support to community-based organisations; but challenges have been experienced in providing training in inclusiveness, orienting the use of savings and loans groups towards income generation, establishing the expected number of SMEs, and obtaining support for CAV plan implementation from public authorities.

³⁹ See Section 4.3.9.

4.3.2. Is the programme contributing to improved nutrition and care practices in rural households? If yes, how? If no, what needs to be improved?

The review has collected numerous testimonies of the programme's contributions to improved nutrition and care practices among rural households in partner communities. In all reviewed countries, participants reported that programme activities had modified their knowledge of nutrition principles, their attitudes towards the nutrition of babies, infants, sick people or pregnant women, and their daily diets and hygiene practices, as well as those of their families. In some cases, they also mentioned improvements in health outcomes, such as the weight and health of babies.

One of the programme's key strengths in this area is that participants, in addition to gaining new knowledge, are empowered to implement it through the programme's support to home gardening, meat and poultry production, and income generation. Nutrition training therefore provides additional incentives for engaging in productive activities, and these activities offer the means to actually change nutrition and care practices. This is one example of the strong synergies between the programme's components.

Challenges are reported in two areas: first, the accessibility and affordability of home-grown food compared to processed alternatives (specifically in Guatemala); and second, limitations experienced in agricultural enhancement, due to the lack of irrigation equipment, the labour-intensive nature of water projects, etc.⁴⁰

The review's findings in this area have to be analysed with caution, as they derive to a large extent from participant's reporting on their own behaviours, which can be subject to multiple biases. The same weakness affects the programme's outcome indicators on nutrition, food security, and care practices, which draw from a household survey to be carried out in April 2024.⁴¹ In future stages of the programme, it would be an advantage to triangulate this data with factual evidence such as physical or physiological observations.⁴²

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, participants in FGDs reported that dissemination of seeds of vegetable and potato improved consumption of diversified food by household members, and confirmed the trainings helped them to gain knowledge that helped them to improve breastfeeding practices, complementary feeding practices, WASH practices, and access available maternal and child health care services in the nearest health posts and health centres. Training on improved livestock management have contributed to improvement in livestock productivity, especially on milk as it is among the selected high-value commodities of the project communities.
- In Guatemala, partners reported that among the biggest results for this objective was improved changes in household hygiene (handwashing), family gardens that support healthier nutrition and nutritional preparation, food demonstrations with the Ministry of Agriculture, and uptake in prenatal visits. strengths include close collaboration with the local health centre and public bodies for food security, as well as workshops, nutritional monitoring and educational sessions on household hygiene, which contribute positively to the causal pathway. However, challenges exist, particularly regarding the accessibility and affordability of healthier food options compared to readily available junk food. Discontent with the distribution of wood-saving stoves and the labour-intensive and costly nature of water system projects are additional weaknesses identified.

⁴⁰ Sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 further elaborate on these limitations.

⁴¹ Average dietary diversity score for women of reproductive age (IO1.1), Average household consumption coping strategy index (IO1.2), % of households who practice recommended nutrition and care practices (IM1).

⁴² See subsection 4.6.1 for a detailed discussion.

- In Malawi, the review has found that participants in the programme have significantly increased their knowledge of nutrition. In all five implementation areas, participants demonstrate awareness of the six food groups and have enhanced their ability to create nutritious meals using locally available vegetables. Communities assert that they now have access to a more diverse range of foods, have become mindful of their food consumption, and have altered their eating habits. Consequently, they argue that cases of malnutrition have decreased. This change is primarily attributed to training on local seed varieties, including millet, beans, maize, and pumpkin, and their role in improving nutrition.
- In Nepal, community members also provided details on the transformation of their nutrition practices following their participation in programme activities. Diets, which used to be mainly based on rice and lentils, now include a variety of vegetables, as well as eggs, all produced in home gardens throughout the year. Also, families manage to consume meat on a regular basis thanks to the income generated through sales of farm products. According to one participant, when making food, the aim has been traditionally to fill the family's stomachs so that nobody is hungry; after the nutrition training, the focus has shifted on the type of food that is consumed. According to a representative of a mothers' group, changes in diets have had a positive impact on the health of babies and infants. Finally, participating groups report that they and their families have adopted new hygiene and sanitation practices, such as regular handwashing.
- In Somalia, partners have adapted their approaches to socioeconomic and environmental differences in programme locations. For instance, in the arid areas of Puntland, the emphasis has been on behavioural change regarding child nutrition, breastfeeding, hygiene, and childcare practices. By providing training and support, the programme has helped women gain knowledge and skills in agricultural practices, food processing, and nutrition education. This has not only improved agricultural productivity but has also led to increased diversity in diets, resulting in improved nutritional outcomes for families in Somaliland. Additionally, the programme has challenged harmful norms and practices that hindered food security and care, such as gender inequalities and discriminatory practices.

4.3.3. [Is the programme managing to improve rural households' economic empowerment, in particular by enhancing diversity and productivity in food production?](#)

There is strong evidence that through its multi-pronged interventions, the programme has generated a host of new economic opportunities and significant life standard improvements for rural communities, all the while promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The combination of agricultural enhancement and income generation training, access to new seeds and vegetable varieties, and support to community structures and savings group has succeeded in engaging participating farmers into surplus production and commercialisation as well as adjacent income-generating activities (shops, food processing).

One of the programme's key strengths in its economic empowerment efforts has been to channel its support towards or through community-based organisations, savings and loans groups and/or cooperatives. These community-based structures are usually the first and unique access to finance for the smallholders, enabling them to invest in small equipment or livestock (swine, goats) and to respond to emergency needs. In some cases, the structures operate in associations or networks, with district-level entities federating village-level groups, both to mutualise their resources (e.g., to finance larger investments) and strengthen their advocacy capacity.

In general, the programme has not directly subsidised the community groups and cooperatives. Implementing partners have rather supported these structures through targeted training (e.g., in bookkeeping, training of trainers), equipment (e.g., laptops, software), generation of new activities (e.g., seed banks) and support in their interactions with local authorities (from formalities such as registration to application for funding and advocacy work). Partners have also used the groups and

cooperatives to channel subsidised inputs (such as improved seeds) and training (e.g., in agricultural methods) to their members. As the farmers have gradually increased their surplus production and market income, they have in turn managed to pay higher contributions to these structures, providing funding for larger operations or investments.

The review has identified three areas for further improvement of the programme's impact on smallholders' economic opportunities and livelihoods.

First, as in the case of nutrition, the programme's effectiveness rests in large part on synergies between its different components. In particular, training in income-generating activities has to be closely connected to the actual opportunities offered to farmers through access to finance, new equipment and/or agricultural enhancement activities. When there has been a mismatch between these components, as observed in cases in Guatemala and Malawi, training activities are less effective and can even generate frustration among participants.

Second, an important factor enabling economic empowerment from the productive activities promoted by the programme is access to markets, which is often limited in most of the programme's intervention areas. Farmers who produce surplus quantities or engage in processing and marketing have to limit their supply to what they can carry on foot or a bicycle, or what they can sell within the confines of their village. Barriers to market access, whether physical (distance) or economic (cost), thereby hamper the development of income-generating activities and create a disincentive to develop farming and businesses beyond a certain scale.

Third, the programme does not always succeed in effectively supporting communities beyond the initial stage of diversification and productivity enhancement. Farmers who have successfully engaged in income generation often express upscaling needs (access to irrigation, motorised equipment such as tillers and small tractors, larger plastic tunnels, etc.) that implementing partners and CBOs are not always equipped to satisfy.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, despite the impact of the conflict, the programme has strived to diversify and enhance income sources by supporting crop and livestock productivity and creating more economic opportunities through IGAs and value chain activities. The programme has also strengthened Village Savings and Loan Associations, which have increased their savings and lending capacities. The involvement of target groups such as women and youth in the project has helped them to engage in different IGAs of their own, like poultry farming, livestock fattening and vegetable crops production.
- In Guatemala, the programme's impact is underscored by the utilisation of green credit for income-generating activities and the establishment of formal business networks, reflecting a holistic approach to economic development. Demonstrated strengths include collaborating with central and local government institutions to support community groups in registering as cooperatives, facilitating coffee exportation, and enhancing local sales. Some participants question the relevance of technical training, such as baking or cake making, when lacking access to necessary supplies like ovens. Challenges related to formal registration and technical training supplies are also acknowledged.
- In Malawi, the main strength of the programme has been to develop farmers' capacity on new and smarter agriculture techniques, and to combine the surplus from increased production with income-generating activities. Farmers attribute increased yields to the programme's training in new agricultural practices, with particularly positive feedback on the training in production of organic fertilisers. The programme has also improved farmers' capacity in water management. The primary weakness in the intervention lies in ensuring that training and capacity building are accompanied by the necessary equipment and resources for farmers to implement their newfound skills. Current loans from saving groups are insufficient for

investing in productive assets, and there is a need to explore ways to better support farmers in income generation. It appears that resources have been scattered across a geographical area and a number of households that are larger than the programme can optimally afford.⁴³

- In Nepal, income generation from fruit and vegetable farming and access to finance through community-level funds are the two results that are most frequently cited by groups of beneficiaries and community representatives as the most significant change brought about by the programme. Numerous groups testify that before being trained in new farming methods, they were not aware that vegetables could be grown outside of the monsoon season. They say that the income earned through their work has enabled them to buy clothes for their children and to send them to boarding schools.
- In Somalia, the programme has successfully helped beneficiaries, particularly women, by providing them with opportunities to improve their economic status. One of the key reported achievements is to have enabled community members to form self-help groups and to have built their capacities in savings, investment and service loan management. The establishment of seed banks, facilitated by implementing partners, has proven successful, providing local farmers with employment opportunities and improving their income. Managing seed banks has not only engaged farmers in seed preservation but has also represented a source of income.

4.3.4. To what extent are Climate Adaptive Villages (CAV) plans contributing to increased climate resilience in rural communities?

The CAV approach is the cornerstone of the programme's support to climate resilience and sustainable water and land resource management, including the use of irrigation, for which unmet needs remain important in intervention areas, and measures against land degradation and soil erosion.

The strengths of the approach lie in community engagement, a holistic vision of sustainable practices, collaboration with a range of stakeholders, integration in legal and policy frameworks and, last but not least, to leverage funding from government sources. Partners have demonstrated considerable expertise in developing initiatives tailored to varying and often challenging circumstances.

A total of 81 CAV plans were under implementation under the programme by end 2022, out of which 37 were financially supported by government institutions. In areas where implementation was sufficiently advanced, the MTR has documented expansions of cultivated areas, transitions to sustainable land management methods, increased use of irrigation e.g., for perennial cultivation of vegetables, and improved waste management, among others.

The main challenge identified by the MTR concerns the time-consuming and uncertain nature of advocacy and collaboration with government authorities, particularly at national level. The programme's targets in terms of CAV plan development by the participating communities have generally been met or exceeded, while implementation with government support has been largely below targets in both 2021 and 2022. Garnering governmental financing for CAV implementation has proven especially difficult in Guatemala and Malawi, as well as in Northern Ethiopia in the context of the armed conflict.

An additional (but less impactful) challenge of the approach lies in the relative complexity of the CAV concept and the fact that it requires a sustained effort from implementing partners to build their expertise, develop effective channels of cooperation with relevant government authorities, and manage the implementation process.

⁴³ The Malawi in annex provides a detailed analysis of the causes and consequences of the programme's overreach and explores options to consolidate efforts in the future.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, in intervention Woredas of Amhara and Oromia Regions, the CAV planning and implementation process has introduced communities to natural resource conservation principles and laid the foundation for improved watershed management. The CAV approach has led to tangible benefits, as described by FGD participants highlighting its instrumental role in identifying vulnerable areas, implementing mitigation measures such as planting suitable seedlings, and addressing soil erosion. The result has been the restoration of previously affected lands, demonstrating the effectiveness of the CAV programme in addressing soil erosion and water scarcity. The programme faced considerable challenges related to the context of civil war, which made it impossible to develop partnerships with national and local government bodies in large parts of the country, as well as budget constraints, which limited coverage. Delays caused by these challenges were nevertheless overcome thanks to the resilience of implementing partners and their experience in watershed management.
- In Guatemala, partners have actively engaged in comprehensive actions in the process of CAV plan development and implementation, resulting in support for women's councils, waste management initiatives, reforestation projects, and increased awareness of natural resource management. The engagement of local leaders, training programs, and the utilization of green credit for income-generation further emphasize the holistic approach of the programme. Challenges have included the changing political landscape, which has impacted advocacy work, difficulties in government advocacy, and sustainability concerns with certain technologies (maintenance costs of drones and surveillance cameras).
- In Malawi, the programme has supported rural communities in developing CAV plans and sustainably managing land and water resources. Progress has been slow: 8 CAV plans have been developed and presented to the government grassroots committees, which have promised to incorporate these in their programming, but are yet to support the implementation of a plan. The MTR found that planting maize in sections has helped preserve water in home gardens and reduce run-offs. The approach has been used by youth clubs to expand cultivation areas and increase yields through small-scale irrigation, thereby boosting the economy of young farmers. The main challenge reported by project field staff is that most climate-adapted activities, such as pit planting, making marker ridges, contraction of water barriers, and establishment of village forests, are labour-intensive and take a long time to be accomplished.
- In Nepal, DF partners have, in certain cases, selected remote villages with compounded problems of water access, soil erosion, very limited farming activity, lack of engagement from local government services, and acute poverty. The development of CAV plans has helped, in the first place, to involve the community groups in the identification of their own development issues and expression of their needs; second, to provide them relevant support from the programme, such as vegetable farming support and animal shed improvement; third, to engage local government and seek their support to implement the CAV plan. 14 CAV projects have received support from local authorities, leading to the adoption of appropriate irrigation methods on a limited yet promising scale and the extension of vegetable farming and crop plantation, including in areas that were previously uncultivated.
- In Somalia, as part of the CAV plan development process, communities identified climate-related risks and developed community adaptation plans and contingency strategies in response to the most common risks. Adaptation measures mainly concern agriculture, livestock, and water infrastructure. The results of these initiatives may not be immediately apparent as climate change adaptation requires long-term engagement with the communities. However, they hold the potential to bring about changes in the long run that help the most vulnerable communities to cope with climate-induced risks.

4.3.5. To what degree does the programme contribute to increased influence and recognition for women and marginalised groups within their households, grassroots organisations and communities?

The programme has specifically targeted women, youth, PWDs and, in some countries, other disadvantaged groups, in its efforts to promote inclusiveness.

Results have been very positive concerning support to women. The programme has worked to enhance women's understanding of their rights, strengthens their leadership and communication skills, and to promote their participation in value chains. Achievements include stronger presence of women in community-based groups and organisations, including in leadership positions; high participation of women in IGAs; improvements in women's living standards, autonomy, social status and self-esteem.⁴⁴

Implementing partners have experienced greater challenges in engaging the youth, particularly in intervention areas that are subject to strong migration for work (Guatemala, Nepal). Countering the appeal of work migration appears to be an important challenge not only for the programme, but also for the communities and families themselves. In other countries, youth groups have positively responded to the opportunities created by programme activities, which has generated a positive economic impulse in their communities (Malawi).

Implementing partners in Guatemala and Nepal have also reported difficulties in identifying and mobilising PWDs to participate in programme activities; some have asked for technical support in adapting certain activities to the needs of PWDs. DF's guidance on the identification and integration of PWDs in the course of 2023 has led to improvements. In Malawi and Ethiopia, work with PWDs has been facilitated by pre-existing groups and policies at local level.

The programme has also targeted country-specific marginalised groups such as indigenous people in Guatemala, persons living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi and cast-discriminated groups in Nepal, which constitute some of the most underprivileged segments of the population of smallholders – itself among the most economically deprived. By focusing some capacity-building and IGA support interventions on these groups, the programme has begun to address the compounded sources of inequality affecting them. While the MTR has collected some qualitative evidence of the beneficial impact of this work, a more precise assessment is hampered by the absence of data specific to these groups in the programme's RF.

More generally, the current RF does not provide adequate data for a detailed appraisal of the programme's effects on the inclusion of women, youth, PWDs and other marginalised groups, as results are reported for these groups only at output level (and, in the case of women, for certain specific outcomes). The inclusion of more complete markers for each group would make it possible to assess not only the effectiveness of its targeting by the programme, but also the extent to which it has been able to overcome initial disadvantages to convert the programme's support into improved living conditions and increased influence within the community.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, training provided through the Social Analysis and Action groups has yielded tangible outcomes at household level, such as increased male support for women, greater family involvement in economic activities, and improved burden-sharing between men and women. Focus group discussions conducted with project beneficiaries found that participation of women and men in division of labour in the house, decision making, control over resources, and benefit sharing has improved. Still, addressing deeply ingrained societal norms may

⁴⁴ Gender dynamics are further discussed under subsection 4.3.6.

necessitate a prolonged awareness-building strategy. Government officials, in particular, stress the importance of ongoing support and advocate for proactive engagement.

- In Guatemala, the "Siempre Viva" training offered by one of DF's partners enhances women's understanding of their rights and strengthens their self-esteem and leadership skills. However, challenges persist as not all women fully grasp their rights, indicating a need for increased awareness. The initiative has sought to encourage men to accompany their female partners to seek healthcare and participate in prenatal visits, which constitutes a positive approach to gender inclusivity. The programme's collaboration with the Municipal Women's Office and advocacy efforts also contribute to increased support for women's development projects.
- In Malawi, the programme has enabled to increase the influence of women in decision making. During the field visits, farmers from all intervention areas underscored the positive impact of gender and awareness training on increased female participation in local committees and organisations, including Village Development Committees and Village Savings and Loans groups. The gender awareness training has also contributed to an increased acceptance of women as decision-makers within households. The programme has also succeeded in involving youth not only as farmers but also as active members of grassroots organisations such as the Village Development Committees. Farmers, project partners, and government staff attest that programme interventions have effectively reached marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and widows.
- In Nepal, most community groups supported by the programme consist in majority, and sometimes exclusively, of women. This is in large part due to the fact that many men migrate to India or to countries of the Persian Gulf for work. Some of the activities promoted by the programme, from nutrition to home gardening, have also been traditionally carried out by women. Women are well represented in the community-based organisations that the programme supports, including in leadership positions. The programme has experienced greater difficulties in mobilising young participants, and most activities targeting the youth have had lower attendance than expected. All partners have also reported difficulties in identifying PWDs to participate in programme activities; some have also asked for technical support in adapting certain activities to the needs of PWDs. After DF's methodological workshop on the identification and integration of PWDs in the fall of 2023, improvements are noted.
- In Somalia, BRAC has also prioritised the empowerment and involvement of women and marginalised groups in decision-making processes. By actively including women and marginalised groups, the programme has ensured that their voices are heard, their needs are addressed, and their perspectives are considered. According to interview with implementing partner HAVAYOCO, the outputs of the programmes are designed in gender-sensitive and disability-responsive manner to ensure inclusion, and the staff is trained to follow a "do no harm" protocol during implementation of the project activities. Such claims were backed in some of the FGDs with community members.

4.3.6. Are there differences in the extent to which women and men are benefitting from programme interventions? If yes, how? If no, what needs to be improved?

Even the programme does not use a gender marker across its results framework, it has defined specific targets in terms of the number of female beneficiaries of nutrition training (OP1.1), support to strengthen crop and livestock production (OP2.1 and 2.2), training in sustainable land and water resource management (OP3.2), loans obtained from community groups (OP4.1), training and support in business development and IGAs (OP4.2), training in leadership skills (OP5.3), training on gender equality and social inclusion (OP5.4), partner staff participating in capacity building and knowledge exchange opportunities (OP7.2).

Targets for female participation have been achieved or surpassed for many of these indicators across countries, even though activities in areas such as natural resource conservation have attracted a majority of men. Levels of female representation in programme activities are influenced by gender-based differences and inequalities – for instance in access to land, which drives many women towards petty business development, or in family responsibilities, which keeps many women within their communities while men migrate for work.

Still, the review has collected evidence of the substantial impact of programme activities on the practices, living standards, status and overall welfare of participating women and women's groups. These changes are largely seen as positive within communities as well as households, underscoring the broader impact of recognizing and empowering women, contributing to greater gender equality and social inclusion. Female participants in FGDs often declare that gender dynamics have improved within their households as a result of the programme.

In most countries, partners nevertheless consider these results with caution, noting that they represent positive but incremental changes in the traditional inequality between men and women, which is deeply rooted at many levels of society. According to them, sustained effort will be necessary over a long period to achieve substantial gender equality.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, open food preparation demonstrations in the intervention areas of North and East Shewa attracted strong participation from women, who predominantly handle household food preparation. In North Shewa, landless women could not receive support for crop-related inputs but were instead assisted with livestock production support. It also proved challenging to secure sufficient female participation in nutrition training targeting development agents, as these are predominantly male. In Amhara and Oromia, women demonstrate a greater interest than men in engaging in the development of small businesses – presumably due to their limited access to land in these areas.
- In Guatemala, some actions targeted more women than men, while others did the opposite. For example, initiatives to support weaving cooperatives and handicraft production are predominantly attended by women who form the majority of these CBOs. By contrast, actions to support forest conservation, agricultural productivity and community leadership involved more men.
- In Malawi, reports indicate that 62% of the project beneficiaries are women, and meetings with beneficiaries were also attended by a majority of women. In addition, the programme has achieved its objectives in terms of female representation in grassroots organisation. Gender roles are deeply rooted in the communities, however, and changing behaviour is a gradual process. Women continue to have unequal access to household resources and to the ownership of assets such as land, businesses and livestock.
- In Nepal, in FGDs, beneficiary women systematically attest that they have derived strong economic, social and psychological benefits from the programme. Many mention the fact that for the first time in their lives, they have acquired the self-confidence and agency to talk to foreigners or to public officials. Those who are married also declare that their husbands have reacted positively to their participation in the programme, particularly as it has led to an increase in the family's resources. The review collected testimonies of the programme's impact on intimate partner violence in two groups, both of which have taken part in the programme for multiple years. In the discussion with members of the Baraya village community, a woman declared: "My husband cannot beat me anymore; I am independent, and he has to respect me".
- In Somalia, gender dynamics at the household and community level play a significant role in shaping the success and impact of the programme. At the household level, traditional gender roles and expectations often influence the division of labour and decision-making processes.

Women are typically responsible for domestic chores and child-rearing, while men are seen as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers. However, the BRAC programme seeks to challenge these gender norms by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The programme also acknowledges the specific challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society, targeting women-led households with tailored interventions. For instance, NAFIS purchased reusable sanitary products as part of the dignity kits that was provided to women and girls.

4.3.7. *Has the programme been successful in including persons living with disabilities? Please provide tangible examples of good practices and, if applicable, how best to strengthen PWD inclusion in the programme.*

As in the case of women, the programme does not use a disability marker across its results framework, but establishes targets related to PWDs at output level, essentially for capacity-building activities.

The inclusion of PWDs in programme activities has been a major challenge for all implementation partners, as all of the above targets have been missed in both 2021 and 2022, often by a wide margin. According to partners, there are multiple causes to these challenges, including their lack of prior knowledge of methods to identify and categorise disability, unwillingness of PWDs to identify themselves as such due to the social stigma attached to disability, the lack of interest of disabled people for the activities that were proposed, and the lack of adapted equipment and support from the programme.

DF provided methodological support to its partners in the course of 2023. Several implementing organisations report that the workshop helped solve some of their difficulties and adjust their approach. However, no results were yet to be reported at the time of this review.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, DF had initially earmarked resources to engage a new implementing partner specialising in support to PWDs, but subsequently decided on an arrangement with the existing partners and at no additional cost. In Menz Mama and Menz Lalo Woredas, the government development agents extended the training to additional PWDs beyond the initially targeted group.
- In Guatemala, partners have found it difficult to accurately identify community members with disabilities. Some partners have opted to count people who are wearing eyeglasses as an indicator for visual disability. ASOCUCH demonstrated a proactive approach by reaching out to an organisation specializing in PWDs and offering support, including eye visits for youth. This highlights a commendable effort to engage with and support PWDs, despite the inherent challenges of identification and potential stigma associated with disclosure.
- In Malawi, although PWDs are formally a target group, the programme does not include activities or approaches that are tailored to their needs. Still, during the field visit it became apparent that the programme is indeed reaching PWDs, mainly because grassroots organisation and village committees already have inclusive policies and practices in place. Farmers, project partners, and government staff all confirmed that programme interventions have effectively reached marginalised groups, including PWDs and widows.
- In Nepal, partner LIBIRD reports learning to work with PWDs in the current programming period – they did not have the experience in identifying and working with disability, but DF's capacity building and gradual learning by doing have recently led to successes. LIBIRD has now integrated PWDs as a target group in its new (2023-2030) strategy.
- In Somalia, the beneficiary selection criteria prioritise individuals with disabilities and special needs, ensuring that they have an equal opportunity to benefit from the programme. According to the 2022 annual report, PWDs are actively engaged in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure that they actively benefit from the

programme. Among the implementing partners, NODO reported that it gives priority to disabled community members while recruiting potential beneficiaries.

4.3.8. How successful has communication/collaboration been between DF and Norad? And between DF and its partners?

Communication and collaboration between DF and Norad have not been satisfactory.

The exchange of information on the programme's achievements and challenges has been very limited outside of formal reporting requirements.

Starting with the delayed signing of the contract between Norad and DF, coordination issues have continually got in the way of smooth implementation, causing delays in the transfer of grant to partners in all countries and affecting the programme's efficiency.⁴⁵

Relations between DF and Norad during the review period have been dominated by the management of a whistleblowing incident and its consequences. DF's whistleblowing mechanism was activated in November 2022 about the programme's financial operations in Malawi, leading Norad to mandate a third-party investigation into DF's financial management both in Malawi and at the Oslo HQ. The audits did not find any evidence of corruption and, more broadly, of misuse of funds, but revealed weaknesses in financial management in Malawi and in oversight, documentation and reporting at the Oslo headquarters.⁴⁶ In response to the incidents, DF, in agreement with Norad, developed an action plan to enhance and harmonise the monitoring of its country offices. DF also decided to strengthen its financial management as well as the reporting of suspected cases of corruption in Malawi. From the standpoint of the implementation of the programme, the episode and its further developments caused further challenges in grant disbursements, but also accelerated organisational changes at the Malawi country office, which have strengthened its capacity to steer programmatic activities.

DF's communication with implementing partners has been generally satisfactory, with a strong emphasis on jointly elaborating responses to implementation challenges. The MTR has however noted specific communication gaps in the elaboration of partners' targets in Malawi targets and in the monitoring of the capacity and implementation challenges of partners and sub-partners in Nepal.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the programme faced significant challenges related to the conflict in the Northern parts of the country, which affected five of its six implementing partners and caused disruptions in project implementation. Despite this setback, the project demonstrated resilience by providing remote support, particularly to implementing partner REST in Tigray, even in the face of lockdowns resulting from the war. The collaborative efforts between partners and the DF country office in Addis during this period exemplified the level of trust between the organisations and resulted in innovative strategies to continue to provide support to afflicted communities.
- In Guatemala, findings suggest a successful and collaborative partnership, marked by open communication, trust, and accessibility, with minor areas identified for potential improvement, such as enhancing feedback mechanisms on reporting. Communication and collaboration between DF and local partners have been generally successful. Partners have specifically appreciated the regular field visits by DF, averaging 3-4 visits per year, fostering a sense of trust and open communication. This distinguishes DF from other donors and contributes to the overall positive collaboration. The partnership is also characterized by

⁴⁵ See subsection 4.4.3.

⁴⁶ Ernst and Young, Report to Norad – Investigation – The Development Fund Norway, March 2023; and Ernst and Young, Report to Norad – Investigation – The Development Fund's Malawi Office, March 2023.

effective issue resolution, reflecting a proactive approach to maintaining clear lines of communication.

- In Malawi, delays in budget disbursements have been a recurrent issue, occasionally extending up to six months, causing planned activities to be postponed and farmers to suspend their plans (e.g., cultivation areas prepared for new seeds). Programme partners note that dialogue with DF was initially erratic but significantly improved with the arrival of the new DF Country Director. During the programme's start-up phase, DF would take lead on design and planning of the programme, whereas partners would be responsible for activity plans and meeting targets. This division of labour and the lack of communication are considered as the root causes of the programme's unrealistic results targets.
- In Nepal, the programme's implementation structure has devolved a significant part of the oversight, coordination and capacity-building of smaller implementing organisations to the larger and more experienced ones, through the partner-sub-partner arrangement. Beyond the burden-sharing element, this organisation has two important advantages: first, it makes better use of the partners' knowledge of their respective fields of expertise and intervention areas to the benefit of sub-partners than a flatter structure; second, it enables smooth responses to changes in local needs, conditions and opportunities, with lesser requirements to coordinate with DF HQ. A potential weakness of the structure is that partners might, on occasions, make decisions concerning sub-partners that are not aligned on the programme's interests and/or on DF's priorities.
- In Somalia, the communication and collaboration between DF and the project team seem to be characterized by a structured approach with periodic meetings and information exchange through email and phones calls. According to interviews, there are quarterly meetings held in Hargeisa, where DF and partners discuss project updates, implementation plans, and address any concerns. Despite the physical distance, partners' project teams actively participate in quarterly meetings, indicating a commitment to communication and collaboration. The semi-annual reports, project implementation plans, and updates on activities serve as mechanisms for sharing information with DF.

4.3.9. Which external factors have influenced the achievement of outcomes, whether positively or negatively?

Programme implementation and results have been influenced by a host of external factors, both positive and negative, in all partner countries. Among these, four factors have had a pervasive impact across countries.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic affected multiple programmatic activities in all countries, generating substantial delays during the first year of implementation. The adaptability of communities and CBOs and the swift recovery from the pandemic in 2022 are however reported as positive influences.

Second, all partner countries have experienced strong increases in input prices, which was initially triggered by the war in Ukraine and persisted throughout the review period. In addition to their impact on production costs, rising food and transport costs have generated economic hardship for households, particularly those belonging to vulnerable groups in remote rural areas.

Third, currency fluctuations have impacted the programme's finances. A depreciation in the exchange rate of the Norwegian kroner has translated into a decrease in budget allocations for partner organisations in local currencies in Guatemala, Nepal and Somalia. In Ethiopia and Malawi, the kroner's

weakness has been offset by an even greater weakness of local currencies, which has aggravated inflationary pressures on communities and implementing partners.⁴⁷

Finally, conflict, political unrest, natural disasters and migration have destabilised rural communities and created a challenge for partners in all countries to engage community members, particularly the youth, in activities and ensure continuity in programme outcomes.

Considering the accumulation of adverse developments, the results achieved during this period demonstrate a remarkable degree of resilience and responsiveness in programme management and implementation.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the programme has operated in a highly challenging environment in the context of protracted conflicts, insecurity, political considerations, as well as competing demands on limited resources. The conflict completely halted programme operations in Tigray and seriously disrupted implementation in other regions, including intervention Woredas of the programme in Waghimra and North Shoa Zones in the Amhara regional state, holding back progress that could have been made otherwise in a large part of the country.
- In Guatemala, external challenges to programme implementation included community conflicts, nationwide protests and political mobilisation, youth migration, weather-related disasters, changes in authorities, and food security crises. However, partners also note positive influences on participation in national roundtables and working groups for advocacy efforts, increased interest from families, coordination with relevant authorities, a donation of stoves, and adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In Malawi, programme implementation has been affected by Covid-19, drought and the cyclone in March 2023, currency fluctuations and inflation. Covid-19 restrictions made it impossible to carry out the Lead Farmers training and considerably reduced face-to-face meetings in 2021. Malawi also experienced drought conditions in November-December 2021. The delayed rainfall for the 2021/2022 agriculture season caused a delay in planting for all crops, resulting in a significant reduction of planted areas and limiting the crop-growing window. Malawi was hit by the tropical cyclone Ana in 2022, resulting in heavy flooding, thousands of homeless and food insecurity. The country also experienced cases of cholera outbreaks, which in turn disrupted training sessions in some EPAs. Finally, The Malawi Government devaluated the Malawi kwacha by 25% in May 2022, and by 44% in November 2023. This led to a sharp rise in the cost of goods and services.
- In Nepal, partners have reported a host of external factors affecting programme implementation in 2021 and 2022. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted multiple activities in 2021, with a gradual return to normal in 2022. Rising commodity prices in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine and the weakening of the Norwegian Krone exchange rate have affected the programme's finances. The programme has, however, also benefitted from favourable developments in Nepal's policy environment, with the adoption of the 2017 territorial reform and Local Government Operation Act. The reform has pushed forward decentralisation by transferring policy-making responsibilities from central to local government in a number of areas, including agriculture and local development. As a result, municipalities have shown strong interest for cooperating with the programme's partners, which can bring them technical expertise, experience in working with the rural communities and knowledge of their practical needs, as well as financial leverage.
- In Somalia, programme implementation has faced significant challenges due to the adverse effects of drought, flood, and other natural disasters in Somaliland in 2021 and 2022. Droughts

⁴⁷ See subsection 4.4.1.

have been recurrent, leading to water scarcity and crop failure, notably in programme intervention areas, exacerbating food insecurity and malnutrition among the local population. Apart from drought, flooding also occurs in villages where BRAC implemented some CAV action plans, causing further disruptions and damage to physical structures built to control soil erosion and land degradation. This constant battle against the adverse effects of drought and flood has been a significant hurdle for the BRAC programme, requiring adaptive strategies and flexibility to navigate these unpredictable conditions.

4.4. Efficiency

4.4.1. To what extent is the programme cost effective? Please assess indirect costs versus direct project activity costs, including per diem, travel costs etc.

The programme's costs were 31% below the initial budget in 2021, and a further 11% below budget in 2022. The bulk of the programme's underspending originates from the Ethiopia component – the programme's largest component, in which implementation was seriously affected the conflict: NOK 15.1 million out of NOK 20.1 million underspending in 2021, and NOK 8.3 million out of NOK 8.5 million underspending in 2022. Outside of Ethiopia, budget expenditures were lower than planned in all countries in 2021 due to the combined effects of COVID-19 restrictions and delays in the start-up of certain activities. In 2022, spending was generally aligned with the initial budget (with still a significant underspend in Malawi).

The programme's costs have been further influenced by price developments and currency fluctuations. International commodity prices surged in the aftermath of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in February 2021, feeding a rise in inflation around the globe which persisted throughout 2022 and 2023. In addition, the Norwegian Kroner's exchange rate lost over 15% of its value against the Guatemalan Quetzal, close to 10% against the Nepalese Rupee and 20% against the Somali Shilling between 2021 and 2023, while it slightly appreciated against the Ethiopian Birr and gained close to 20% against the Malawi Kwacha.⁴⁸

Programme implementation has adjusted to these shocks by reprioritising activities and cutting certain costs. With support from DF, partners have in most countries sought to maintain activities or experiment alternative delivery methods in response to challenging implementation conditions. They have also reduced non-prioritised expenditures in order to contain rising operational costs and, in some countries, lower revenues in local currency terms.

In this context, the high level of achievement of output targets⁴⁹ signal very substantial efficiency gains. Capacity-building activities have been a key source of increased cost-effectiveness, with reductions in delivery costs and extended enrolment in training sessions. The advocacy component, by contrast, has encountered challenges due to disruptions in communication with government authorities and long response times from the latter.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, challenges faced in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict in Northern Ethiopia limited the rate of budget utilisation to 42% in 2021. However, there was a significant improvement in 2022, particularly after the withdrawal of TPLF from Amhara and Tigray regions, leading to intensification of programme activities. The collaboration with TOFI for the

⁴⁸ These figures indicate changes between average annual exchange rates in 2021 and 2023 and are therefore smaller than some of the short-term fluctuations experienced during that period, such as the 44% devaluation in the Malawi Kwacha in November 2023.

⁴⁹ With the notable exception of Malawi, for specific reasons. See subsection 4.3.1 and Appendix 1.

support of existing partners, and subsequent onboarding of a new strategic partner, EBCCF, and the redistribution of unutilised resources among all partners, indicates a responsive approach to financial management and strategic resource allocation.

- In Guatemala, resource constraints related to the depreciation of the Norwegian Kroner have led partners to place additional emphasis on efficiency. Interventions such as the distribution of Eco filters are deemed cost-effective, offering substantial benefits to families in terms of health and wood-saving for water boiling. By contrast, the advocacy component has encountered challenges due to its slow and labour-intensive nature, compounded by the potential disregard of proposals by changing government authorities.
- In Malawi, inflation fuelled by increasing international prices and the strong devaluation in the Malawian Kwacha has been the main cause of overspending on some budget lines. On the other hand, delays in fund transfers have reduced time for implementation by partners and thus led to underspending on other budgetary items.
- In Nepal, the budget for programmatic activities was underspent by 14% in 2021 and had to be reduced by a further 12% to compensate for the increase in other costs in 2022. Partners confirm that they have had to accommodate budget restrictions by cutting on administrative costs and some service costs (such as the budget for stationery and meals provided during training sessions). Despite the reduction in their income (-10% on grant revenues in NPR) and the increase in the price of their inputs (+16% on travel costs, +30% on operational costs), implementation partners maintained – and for the most part achieved – their targets for 2022. This signals that the programme has made significant gains in terms of efficiency.
- In Somalia, partners have effectively managed budgetary resources and surpassed targets across various outputs. The programme has experienced an 11% overall budgetary underspend for the years 2021 and 2022. Underspending in 2021 can be primarily attributed to delays in implementing project activities with a new partner, NAFIS, and the time taken to coordinate activities with other partners. As a result, the implementation of these activities was postponed to 2022. Partners managed to carry out all planned activities in 2022, resulting in only 3% underspend for the year.

4.4.2. Are all costs and procurements necessary? Please provide tangible examples of cost-effective and ineffective measures.

The MTR has not found any evidence of significant waste of resources in the reviewed countries.

Implementing partners generally allocate a significant portion of their budgets to human resources, highlighting a substantial investment in managing personnel-related aspects of the programme. Some partners face issues related to staff rotation and workload distribution, suggesting a need for a more balanced distribution of responsibilities and potentially increased staffing to ensure efficient programme management.

The same observation applies to DF, which has experienced considerable staff turnover both at HQ and in country offices. HQ salary costs have been reduced by close to NOK 1 million in 2022 compared to the initial budget, due in large part to staff vacancies. Audits and measures to strengthen financial management undertaken in the aftermath of the Malawi whistleblowing report have also impacted the budget in 2022.

It should be noted that the programme's responses to external constraints are not necessarily sustainable – even though they can be deemed both flexible and efficient. A case in point is the budget line earmarked for MEAL methodology development, which was essentially not spent in 2021, resulting in NOK 800,000 reduction in costs which was only marginally compensated in 2022 (NOK 196,000

overspending). The MTR team considers that the programme's MEAL activities should be further reinforced in the coming period.⁵⁰

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the project ensures transparency and accountability in expenditures by incorporating all agreed-upon costs at the project's commencement. Capital investments, including the acquisition of vehicles, are meticulously detailed in the budget template, allowing for the verification of actual spending against planned expenditures. This rigorous budgeting approach minimizes the likelihood of unnecessary purchases. Nevertheless, challenges arise from delays in contract signing and fund release from NORAD/DF, impacting partners and causing setbacks in implementing activities aligned with the established work plans.
- In Guatemala, partners consider that financial auditors should not have a mandate to audit programmatic activities and results, as this lies outside of their field of expertise, leading to assessments and recommendations that are not always relevant.
- In Malawi, the delay of transfers has caused rescheduling of several activities, thus negatively affecting the farmers' ability to cultivate. The sudden withdrawal of NCA as partner in the Transform programme also highly affected the operations of the MAMO programme, as the equipment and computers of several partners were taken away without notice, thus hindering their execution of everyday work. The change of partners has also negatively affected continuations from MAMO I to MAMO II. Remaining activities from MAMO I have not been sufficiently followed up in the transition to MAMO II.
- In Nepal, the programme has had to face multiple external challenges. Responses to these challenges have heightened cost-effectiveness in multiple programme activities, although in a manner that is probably not reproducible. The MTR has not found evidence of unnecessary expenditures or wasted resources.
- In Somalia, around two-third of the direct programme cost allocated to partners is used for programme activities. Expenditures made for materials, equipment, vehicles are barely 1% of the total budget leaving limited room for inefficiencies on project spendings. In undertaking programme activities, partners used approaches such as linking grassroots organisations capacity building activities with CAV trainings, both saving costs and reaching more people. One of the biggest challenges related to finance is delays in fund release from Norad which delayed programme implementation.

4.4.3. *Is the programme being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? Are the objectives/outcomes being achieved on time?*

A common source of inefficiency in all countries has been the delayed payment of grants, which has forced partners to make adjustments in the planning of activities. At times, this has come at the cost of delayed or lost income for farmers (Malawi).

There is also evidence of initial weaknesses in the assessment of partners' and sub-partners' capacities at project start-up in Nepal, together with inefficiencies in addressing capacity gaps that point to less-than-optimal communication and coordination between DF and its partners.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, while the project's implementation timelines align with the established plans, a consistent challenge arises from the delay in fund release, typically spanning three months. This delay shortens the overall implementation period, compelling implementing partners to

⁵⁰ See subsection 5.1.6.

adopt accelerated plans to compensate for the time lost during the waiting period for budget approval and fund release. Addressing these delays is crucial to ensure that implementation remains aligned with the intended timelines and objectives.

- In Guatemala, a delay in payment from DF, which originated from the delayed disbursement of the programme budget by Norad, caused temporary disruptions in implementation at the beginning of 2022. Partners also report mediocre efficiency in policy advocacy efforts due to rotation in political/ administrative personal, lack of political will, and other political factors. A strategic shift of focus in advocacy efforts towards local government levels seems warranted, as these offer better prospects of fruitful cooperation with project partners.
- In Malawi, the programme has been given overambitious targets in terms of number of beneficiaries and geographic scope, which have overstretched its resources and generated unnecessary pressure on DF and partners' staff. The programme has also experienced delays in implementing activities primarily due to the delays in financial transfers from DF and Norad. DF Malawi has been facing persistent delays in the MAMO programme since its inception, which has been especially challenging because crucial agricultural activities occur from October to January. During this critical period, MAMO has historically operated without sufficient funding.
- In Nepal, programme implementation has experienced delays in two areas: the development and implementation of CAV plans and the inclusion of PWDs. HQ have also had to undergo unplanned expenses in 2022 in order to provide additional quality control of the work of sub-partners. The delays are in large part due to weaknesses in the assessment of partners' implementation capacity and provision of adequate and targeted guidelines and capacity building at project start-up. DF has sought to adjust its approach and further support its partners through targeted workshops – but only after the gaps had impacted the 2021 and 2022 results. The initial weaknesses in capacity assessments and the delayed response from DF indicate a need for a more detailed and up-to-date understanding of implementation conditions, intensified communications with partners and sub-partners, and strengthened implementation resources within the DF Nepal team. On a separate note, some partners report that delays in contracting and transfer of funds – again due to delayed disbursement of funds by Norad – have forced them to make adjustments in the conduct of programme activities.
- In Somalia, programme implementation has faced considerable challenges arising from both natural and human-made factors but has nevertheless made satisfactory progress across most indicators. While the primary goal of the programme is to mitigate climate-related shocks and enhance community resilience, the extended period of drought, locust infestation, and the outbreak of dengue fever have heightened the vulnerability of communities. These unforeseen circumstances have also presented implementation challenges for partners, diverting their attention and focus. For instance, the displacement of people due to drought has exerted pressure on the programme to deliver sustainable solutions and provide support to affected communities.

4.5. Sustainability

4.5.1. Are the approaches being applied by the programme contributing to the sustainability of the achievements?

The programme has sought to address three dimensions of sustainability: (1) institutional, primarily by strengthening implementing partners and grassroots organisations; (2) technical, by embedding new

practices and techniques within local communities; and (3) financial, by emphasising the generation of and reliance on local resources.⁵¹

The MTR has found that the programme's focus on local resources as the foundation of development and its holistic approach to community resilience make its achievements inherently sustainable. In addition, the programme has adapted its general approach to country contexts in order to foster cooperation with actors that can best contribute to the sustainability of activities and results: government extension services and local government in Ethiopia; CBOs, local health centres, women's municipal offices and technical offices in Guatemala; government local committees and Village Development Committees in Malawi; CBOs and local government in Nepal.

DF has also emphasised sustainability by continually strengthening the capacity of its partners, including in areas (MEAL, formal policies and processes) that enhance their future ability to cooperate with international donors. In Nepal, however, the separation of implementing entities into partners and sub-partners has weakened the direct relations between DF and some of the smaller organisations that have the strongest needs in terms of capacity building (although sub-partners are included in DF's capacity-building workshops).

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the has taken significant steps in trying most of its components to be sustainable. To ensure the longevity of programme activities and results, focus has been placed on empowering communities and local governments with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective implementation. The commitment to training initiatives by implementing partners underscores their recognition of the role that education and skill development play in ensuring sustainability.
- In Guatemala, partners emphasize sustainable agricultural practices by teaching farmers to analyse their soils, encouraging investments in soil improvement actions. They have also promoted collaboration in production, savings, and access to green credits by supporting the creation of cooperatives and strengthening CBOs.
- In Malawi, one of the key strengths of the programme is its close alignment with government strategies, approaches and methodologies. The programme is aligned to government's plans of rolling out Climate Adaptive Villages. The programme's main approach is to empower people through training, including champions who can forward the capacity to others in the community. MAMO utilises the Lead Farmer approach, which is also the key methodology for the government in supporting smallholder farmers. The approach is an efficient way of ensuring that the training is passed forward to more farmers.
- In Nepal, the MTR has found that DF has followed a very sound and consistent approach to sustainability, which appears to be effective from an institutional, technical, and financial standpoint – even though careful exit strategies are called for. To strengthen the sustainability of its partnership strategy, DF could monitor more closely relations between partners and sub-partners and the allocation of programme resources to the latter.
- In Somalia, the programme has implemented a holistic approach to ensure long-term success by actively involving key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture, communities, and grassroots organisations. Through collaborative planning and project implementation, the programme has aligned initiatives with local needs, enhancing community ownership. Emphasizing community engagement, especially through infrastructure projects like water systems, enhances this sense of ownership. Additionally, the programme has promoted sustainability through community-driven resource mobilization, facilitated by Self-Help

⁵¹ Norad grant proposal 2020, pp.55-56.

Groups and awareness sessions. Strategic empowerment of women, addressing gender equality, and building local capacity further set the programme's commitment to lasting impact.

4.5.2. What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the programme outcomes/benefits to be sustained?

The programme makes widespread use of cost-sharing models, whereby it subsidises access to certain inputs or investment in certain pieces of equipment, while leaving a share (generally the majority) of the expenditure to the farmers. In general, the subsidy is gradually phased out. Such practices minimise the discontinuity experienced by farmers at the end of the intervention, and therefore ensure that their practices are based on a high degree of ownership.

Ownership by government institutions probably presents higher risks. At present, national, district and local government units have strong incentives to cooperate with the programme in several countries, to take advantage of learning opportunities and piggyback on some interventions. Reinforcing cooperation links between communities and government institutions, and expectations of accountability from the former, remain important areas for the programme to invest in.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the positive feedback received from beneficiaries, community-based organizations and government institutions underscores the effectiveness of DF's initiatives. The government, recognizing the value of supportive projects like DF, expresses satisfaction and acknowledges its capacity and responsibility to actively collaborate with DF. It is important to continue working closely with the government in creating awareness and enhancing the capacity of the community. Through these proactive measures, the government can play a supportive role in ensuring the long-term success and benefits of the project.
- In Guatemala, stakeholder ownership is evident in the programme's structure and collaborative efforts. For instance, water filter replacements are supported through a cost-sharing model as outlined above, where 75% of the cost remains at the household's expense. Partners report that the majority of HHs consistently replace their filters on time. Additionally, the involvement of the women's municipal office in exchange visits encourage other municipalities to initiate new programmes, emphasising the importance of learning from each other's experiences.
- In Malawi, the programme has successfully engaged and empowered youth and women, enabling their active participation in grassroots organisations and decision-making processes within households and beyond. This inclusive approach is expected to result in more sustainable outcomes from the training sessions. Youth are quick to apply the acquired knowledge, leading to increased production and income-generating activities. A suggestion would be to also empower the youth to take on these training sessions and support their elders.
- In Nepal, the MTR has collected strong expressions of ownership from the farmers and their groups and cooperatives, in particular concerning female participants. Implementing partners and sub-partners also appear to have a high level of ownership of the programme's interventions and concepts. Ownership by government institutions probably presents higher risks. The fact that the programme has so far successfully capitalised on cooperation opportunities does not, by itself, ensure that local government services will continue to devote appropriate attention and resources to community initiatives.
- The risk of insufficient stakeholder ownership seems low in Somalia, as evidenced by factors such as strong community belief in project benefits, positive government engagement, and a financial circulation contributing to a positive atmosphere. However, in the absence of

development partners, the government's limited capacity to take over project implementation is acknowledged, highlighting the importance of continued collaboration. The sentiments expressed by community members, particularly women, underline a deep sense of ownership and belief in the project's sustainability, showcasing tangible outcomes and a shared commitment.

4.5.3. Which key interventions have already a good base for sustainability and which ones lack the base for sustainability?

Most of the programme's interventions have secured a strong base for sustainability by enabling participants – whether individuals, community groups or organisations – to generate monetary and/or non-monetary benefits based on the mobilisation of their own resources.

By contrast, a small number of interventions have generated costs for certain actors (particularly government institutions) that were unmatched by direct benefits and had to be covered by the programme. In these cases, phasing out the programme is likely to lead to a disruption in ongoing cooperation. Examples of such cases are provided in Guatemala, Malawi and Nepal.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the CAV planning and capacity building of beneficiaries and their associations contribute to ensuring local ownership and the sustainability of programme outcomes. However, in the context of protracted conflicts, political and economic insecurity, and competing demands on limited resources, ensuring sustainability is not an easy task. According to FGD participants and local government key informants, support in each of the programme outcomes needs to continue forward to enhance their capacity and ensure sustainability in the long term.
- In Guatemala, numerous interventions offer a strong base for sustainability in areas such as soil improvement, producer cooperatives and savings and loans groups, entrepreneurship and market-based income generation, and training of CBOs in resource mobilisation, among others. Interventions that have provided financial incentives to government services for their cooperation are more fragile. For instance, health centres that make visits to households to monitor growth and provide nutritional advice have declared that they would stop if their transport costs were no longer covered by the programme.
- In Malawi, the close collaboration and joint training sessions with staff from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is ensuring sustainability and government alignment of the programme. However, MAMO II covers fuel and transport costs at present, and if the programme were to end now, the EPA staff would not have sufficient resources (funding) to continue activities at the same scale.
- In Nepal, most stakeholders consulted for this MTR consider that programme results are highly sustainable. Still, careful exit strategies are therefore warranted to ensure that the programme's enhancement of grassroots organisations is fully sustainable. Interventions that have mobilised larger investments, such as solar pumps and irrigation systems, are also inherently more fragile as their maintenance costs might be beyond the communities' capacity and necessitate continued involvement of local government. The strengthening of cooperation between communities, partners and government institutions therefore constitutes an important area for further improvement. The capacity and autonomy of sub-partners is an additional area deserving increased attention and investment from DF.
- In Somalia, the deep involvement and commitment of the communities suggest a high likelihood of the project's sustainability. Female respondents emphasize the practical benefits they have gained, underlining the community's understanding of agricultural practices and the empowerment derived from training, with a commitment to passing on knowledge to others. Additionally, several community members expressed a sense of pride and ownership during

interviews, providing tangible outcomes such as increased productivity and collaborative efforts.

4.5.4. Is the programme applying a sensible exit strategy for the transfer of responsibility and activities to other stakeholders (local government, community institutions)?

By contrast with its comprehensive and robust sustainability strategy, the programme appears to have only sketched its exit plans and left their details for future elaboration. The MTR has collected limited information on any concrete exit and transition measures. Many of the “exit strategies” reported by partners have the nature of sustainability strategies, as they provide arguments on the capacity, ownership and motivation of local stakeholders to take over and continue programme activities rather than they describe practical steps to organise the transfer of responsibilities.

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the programme alignment with national development plans gives significant implementation and ownership responsibilities to the local government units, communities, and community leaders, and embeds key interventions into government systems. However, despite the Development Fund's commitment to working with local partners, communities, and local authorities in capacity building, introducing new approaches, and strengthening systems, there is a lingering concern regarding the readiness of various stakeholders to take over. This apprehension emphasizes the need for focused efforts to ensure a smooth transition and comprehensive preparation among stakeholders for the sustained success of the program.
- In Guatemala, partners strive to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities and activities to other stakeholders, such as households, farmers, cooperatives, local organisations and government entities, fostering long-term impact and community resilience.
- In Malawi, there is a need to develop a programme exit strategy, which currently does not exist. The programme implementation partners have however their own sustainability strategies related to the MAMO II programme. The exit programme should in particular look into how the programme can ensure that local government can continue to deliver the government services and be accountable to legal frameworks when the MAMO II partners are no longer present.
- In Nepal, the initial programme proposal sketches a “context-specific exit strategy for the different programme locations” accounting for the maturity of communities and CBOs – including a “proven track record of functioning independently”. DF and its implementing partners have yet to elaborate more detailed plans to implement this general strategy. In general, the exit strategy section of the partners’ annual reports proposes an overview of the measures they have engaged to strengthen sustainability rather than a proper exit plan.
- In Somalia, development partners recognise external challenges in devising their exit strategies, particularly the impact of drought, emphasizing the need for flexibility and adaptive measures. Strategies for the future must include vigilant monitoring, adaptive planning, and adjustments to collaborations to address these external challenges effectively. Furthermore, it is vital to ensure that empowered groups and communities possess the skills and resources for sustained impact beyond project completion.

4.6. Quality of reporting

4.6.1. Assess the quality of the results framework and sources for data collection. To what extent are the applied methodologies adequate? Do the applied methodologies allow for verification of results, verification of the quality of results, and randomised controls?

The Results Framework (RF) is comprehensive and appropriately maps the key elements of the theory of change, with certain exceptions:

- The RF does not seek to measure the level of agricultural production / productivity and the level of income generation of participants.
- The RF's indicators exclusively measure aggregates and averages and do not delve into the distribution of results among participants, leaving the possibility that favourable aggregates/ averages conceal wide disparities in individual results.
- Even though the programme identifies marginalised groups other than women, youth and PWDs as targets for empowerment activities (e.g., people living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi or cast-discriminated groups in Nepal), the RF does not include any metric for these groups. Further, disaggregated results are reported for women, youth and PWDs only at output level (and for some outcome indicators in the case of women), so that actual improvements in the living conditions and influence of these groups within their communities are not captured by the RF.
- Despite the key role attributed to community-based structures such as cooperatives, the RF does not seek to capture the scope (microfinance, agricultural inputs, marketing) and scale (financial amounts, physical volumes) of their activity.
- The programme places strong emphasis on cooperation with local authorities, which the RF captures through multiple indicators at output and outcome level (IO3.1, IO3.2, IM5.1, IM5.2, OP6.2). Two adjacent aspects of this work are however overlooked by the RF: the magnitude (not only the number) of financial contributions by government institutions (not only to CAV plans, but more generally); and partners' inputs to policy documents and development plans at local, regional and national level.

Partners report that they were consulted in the design of the current RF, which aligns with their work and priorities. Regular training and quality assurance mechanisms further enhance their ability to apply the required templates and methods.

However, some partners face challenges related to their capacity and resources for reporting results, and there are opportunities for improvement in their data collection methods. Reporting often relies on small teams or on single individuals, creating a sustainability risk, as continuity may be compromised if key personnel leave. Some consider that more frequent but lighter reporting would be preferable.

Turning to data collection methodologies, DF and its partners exhibit a commitment to employing diverse and contextually relevant sources and tools. The inclusion of standardised instruments adds a layer of consistency to the data collection process.

However, some of the employed tools have inherent limitations that affect the overall utility and reliability of the RF. That is particularly the case for household surveys, which are instrumental to the measurement of results at impact and outcome level (IMP.1, IMP.2, IO1.1, IO1.2, IM1.1, IO2.2, IM2.1, and IO4.2 indicators).

The first shortcoming of household surveys in a case like this is that their conduct is time and resource intensive. Three surveys were planned within the current programming period – one in 2021 to establish the baseline, one mid-way in implementation in 2023, and a final survey in 2025. In agreement with Norad, the 2023 mid-term survey was postponed to March-July 2024 – so that in practice, DF and its partners will have in large part implemented the programme without being informed by reliable measures on most programme outcomes. Lighter tools could have been more appropriate for data collection during implementation, possibly as a complement to baseline and endline surveys, providing DF and partners precious information in order to optimise the programme's deployment for better outcomes.

The second weakness of the approach is its reliance on self-reporting. The survey will ask programme participants to report changes in their diets, hygiene practices, income, etc. Yet self-reporting has long been known to be potentially subject to multiple biases, particularly when concerning socially

desirable behaviours and achievements.⁵² Outcome- and impact-level results reported through the survey will therefore be potentially exposed to reporting bias and should ideally be complemented with other measures.

Finally, the methodology followed by the RF survey makes its results particularly sensitive to small differences in surveying conditions, which seem difficult to control for throughout the programme's intervention areas. It is therefore possible that differences between surveyors introduce artificial disparities in results across locations and countries.

While the household survey methodology also has advantages e.g., in terms of comprehensiveness and representativeness, it does not appear that these clearly outweigh the weaknesses outlined above. It should be noted, in particular, that although the randomised sampling method used for the survey ensures that its results are representative for the population of programme participants at large, it does not constitute a sufficient basis for causal attribution.⁵³

Findings at country level:

- In Ethiopia, the project management teams as well as the partners' MEAL officers get continuous support from DF MEAL advisors in the form of joint field visits, feedback on submitted reports and/or in-person meetings. The MEAL officers at the partners have enough capacity to handle their tasks, but training of new staff in cases of turnover is reported to take time and resources. The staff considers that there would be benefits in streamlining the reporting templates to enhance simplicity while retaining functionality and depth – if feasible. There is also a call to develop a comprehensive training and onboarding manual for partner MEAL officers, to serve as a resource for both onboarding and refreshing skills whenever necessary.
- In Guatemala, one of the partners expresses a desire to report on ethnicity and provide details on engagement with indigenous communities and rights promotion. This suggests a need for a more nuanced and inclusive reporting framework that considers the cultural and ethnic aspects of the programme's impact.
- In Malawi, there is need to develop a harmonised reporting tool, as partners use different reporting formats at present. It is noteworthy that some reports do not currently respond to the results framework, so that progress cannot be monitored across partners in a consistent and regular manner.
- In Nepal, the requirements of the results framework in both the first and the current phase of the programme have compelled the implementing partners to make substantial investments in their monitoring and reporting competence and systems. Smaller partner organisations, in particular, report having faced serious challenges during the first year of the current programme, but that things had become easier subsequently thanks to DF's efforts to train and support them. However, some partners do not seem entirely certain about their role in the design, planning and conduct of the upcoming mid-term survey of outcomes.
- In Somalia, partners adhere to a reporting schedule encompassing monthly, quarterly, and annual submissions, offering a holistic overview of activities, accomplishments, challenges, and other pertinent details. The reporting mechanism involves regular self-studies, project-

⁵² See Bradburn, N., Sudman, S., Blair, E.A., & Stocking, C.B. (1978), 'Question Threat and Response Bias', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 42, 221-234.

⁵³ Different methodologies can be considered when seeking to identify the causal effects of interventions. They all involve the selection of representative treatment and control groups; preferably, individuals should also be randomly distributed between the two groups (as the case of randomised controlled trials). See Gertler, P. J., Martinez, S., Premand, P., Rawlings, L. B. and C. M. J. Vermeersch (2016), *Impact Evaluation in Practice, Second Edition*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank.

specific evaluation methods, and periodic review reports submitted every few months. While there is not a dedicated impact report mechanism, the use of success stories, pictures, and the results framework itself serves as evidence of the project's impact.

5. Lessons learned and recommendations

This section summarises the lessons learned from the MTR under the six headings of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and quality of reporting, and provides recommendations for the further enhancement of the programme's impact on the livelihoods and climate resilience of rural communities in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Nepal and Somalia.

5.1. Lessons learned

5.1.1. Relevance

The programme is well aligned with the needs and priorities of rural communities, partner organisations, local and national government institutions of participating countries in the critical areas of food security, agricultural development and climate resilience.

Alignment is less complete on programmatic areas such as nutrition or the support to PWDs, which have required greater emphasis on awareness raising and capacity building. A more comprehensive integration of these newly introduced themes could be explored within the organisational objectives of certain partners. A holistic incorporation of these emerging topics would enhance the programme's responsiveness to evolving needs and local priorities.

Moreover, while engagement with national government extension services and local government actors is ongoing, further efforts to deepen these collaborations and foster stronger coordination among stakeholders at local level could amplify the programme's reach and sustainability.

5.1.2. Coherence

The programme appears entirely coherent with the goals and priorities of Norwegian development policy.

The programme is also coherent with the intervention logic and objectives of multiple development actors intervening in the area of food security, climate-smart agriculture and/or climate change adaptation in low- and lower middle-income countries. There is, however, room for improvement of DF's communication and coordination with other development actors.

At a minimum, DF could reach out to and exchange information with agencies and organisations working with its implementing partners in the programme's intervention areas, to avoid duplication of efforts and seek to enhance synergies. Implementing partners could explore more systematically platforms for exchanging best practices and lessons learned with similar projects funded by other donors.

Starting from that basis, DF could explore avenues to cooperate with other actors on initiatives of mutual interest, such as advocacy to national authorities on specific policy issues and bottlenecks. Joint working groups or forums could for instance be used as a channel to share knowledge on strategies and experiences related to food security and resiliency to climate change. This could foster cross-learning and potentially lead to synergies that enhance the overall impact of the programme and minimize duplication of efforts.

An example of innovative and impactful cooperation would be to join forces with humanitarian actors in improving the resilience of smallholders to harmful climate events in disaster-prone countries such

as Malawi, for instance by securing humanitarian funding for response packages targeting farmers affected by crises.

5.1.3. Effectiveness

Programming

The review has collected strong evidence of the programme's effective implementation and of its benefits for target populations in all of its outcome areas. Through its multi-pronged interventions, the programme has improved nutrition and care practices, enhanced agricultural production and improved sustainable farming practices, generated a host of new economic opportunities and significant life standard improvements for rural communities, supported the welfare, status, autonomy and self-esteem of participating women, promoted community-based solidarity and development mechanisms, and contributed to better policies and cooperation between government institutions and rural communities.

The review has also identified specific weaknesses in certain programme areas and/or implementation contexts.

A key challenge to interventions focusing on nutrition and care practices is the accessibility and affordability of healthier food options. Also, while the project effectively trains in household hygiene and nutrition practices, there is a recognition that economic resources to implement these practices, such as purchasing soap for adequate handwashing, may be lacking. Understanding and addressing the discontent with the distribution of wood-saving stoves is also essential, as it indicates a potential gap in communication or implementation.

The labour-intensive and costly nature of water system projects poses a significant challenge. Exploring innovative financing models, seeking additional funding sources, or collaborating with local governments could help address this challenge and support the implementation of water projects.

DF and implementing partners should ensure that training activities remain closely coupled with production and income generation opportunities - for instance that training in agricultural methods is matched with the provision of essential equipment and resources, such as access to livestock to produce organic fertilisers.

Further advancing the overarching goal of economic empowerment would also require scaling up the access to equipment and finance, expanding business creation and registration (in particular for women and youth) and addressing challenges in market linkages.

Farmers who have started to produce larger surplus quantities thanks to the project frequently mention challenges in taking their products to sales points, and it is likely that problems of access to markets are going to increasingly act as a bottleneck as more farmers become interested in extending their income-generating activities and production increases.

Reported achievements on CAV plans underscore the positive impact of the programme on government services, legal frameworks, and community resilience. To further enhance these efforts, DF and implementing partners would have to address ongoing coordination challenges, better adapt the CAV goals to local conditions (in particular the interest and capacity of local government partners), and work towards an upscaling of the approach by identifying like-minded organisations for partnerships.

Challenges to gender equity and social inclusion involve awareness gaps, resource constraints, and societal issues such as migration and violence that hinder participation. To address these weaknesses, continued efforts in awareness campaigns, increased resources, and collaboration with partners are recommended to enhance the influence and recognition of women and marginalized populations. Working with women to enhance leadership opportunities requires increased follow-up and support.

A suggestion for improvement involves conducting a more comprehensive gender analysis at the household, community, and CBO levels.

Recognising the importance of engaging young men at risk for migration is highlighted as a critical area for improvement. This involves developing targeted strategies for economic empowerment and initiatives specifically designed to involve youth, addressing their unique needs and challenges. This work offers opportunities for enhanced collaborations with local government.

The evaluation reveals mixed success in the partners' efforts to identify existing measures and good practices involving persons living with disabilities (PWDs). Implementing partners face challenges in effectively identifying, categorizing, and documenting the involvement of PWDs, indicating a potential gap in the programme's awareness and capacity in addressing the needs of this demographic. The recognition of ongoing challenges by DF in identifying and tracking PWD participants emphasizes the complexity of this issue. DF should closely monitor the results of its capacity-building efforts in this area.

Communication

While the overall collaboration between DF and local partners has been successful, there are opportunities for improvement in coordination and communication. A continuation of regular field visits is important to maintain the face-to-face interactions and deepen the understanding of on-the-ground challenges. Closer interactions would be particularly beneficial to smaller partner organisations (or, in the specific case of Nepal, sub-partners). Overall, fostering an environment for open dialogue, incorporating partner feedback into DF's processes, and providing additional support where needed can contribute to even more effective coordination and communication.

Outside of formal reporting and budget processes, communication with Norad has been dominated by the handling of the Malawi whistleblowing case and the ensuing audits. Moving forward, enhanced dialogue would be necessary to address issues such as payment delays and beneficial for strategic learning.

External factors

Leaving aside the exceptional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme has proven to be particularly exposed to four categories of external factors: rising international prices, currency fluctuations, climate-related disasters, and migration.

The first two factors can be analysed as risks to programme implementation that should be addressed through appropriate mitigation strategies. For instance, a contingency fund could be created within the programme budget in order to accommodate for financial shocks.

The latter two factors are too closely connected to the programme logic to be considered as risks, and seem to call for a strategic response, aiming to place a stronger focus on (1) community resilience, notably through the acceleration of CAV plans; (2) empowerment of community groups at risk of migrating, particularly the youth.

5.1.4. Efficiency

The programme has navigated a period of adverse international developments and devastating events at national scale with remarkable flexibility and resilience and a strong emphasis on maintaining control over implementation conditions and costs.

Delays in the payments of grants has been a source of inefficiency in all countries and has compelled partners to make adjustments in the planning of activities which could have been avoided.

The advocacy component of the programme has encountered challenges due to its slow and labour-intensive nature, compounded by the country-specific political factors. Acknowledging the challenges of advocacy processes, a strategic shift in focus can be made to maximise impact.

Addressing issues related to staff rotation and workload distribution, particularly the overburdening of specific team members, requires a strategic approach. Evaluating the staffing structure, ensuring adequate rotation plans, and potentially hiring additional staff, especially where workload imbalances are identified, can contribute to a more efficient distribution of responsibilities.

5.1.5. Sustainability

The programme has deployed a comprehensive and consistent strategy to address the institutional, technical and financial dimensions of sustainability. The programme's focus on local resources and community structures as the foundation of development, its holistic approach to community resilience and the widespread use of cost-sharing models are the pillars of its sustainability.

The programme's focus on community-based organisations and their dialogue and cooperation with national and local government authorities is possibly the cornerstone of its sustainability. DF has generally selected capable organisations as its implementing partners and has helped them to become respected interlocutors of the government and, in some cases, to gain international visibility and recognition of their expertise – while remaining anchored to their work with communities and their representative structures. By nurturing institutions that represent poor rural communities and are able to defend their rights, including those of the marginalised groups among them, the programme has made a significant contribution to the strengthening of civil society in partner countries and created the basis for long-term sustainability of its key achievements.

Ownership by government institutions nevertheless constitutes a risk to the continuity of some of activities and results. The programme should further invest in reinforcing cooperation links between communities and government institutions and enhancing expectations of accountability from the former.

A small number of interventions still rely on external financing, including subsidies to cover participation costs for certain stakeholders (particularly government institutions) and larger investments in areas such as irrigation. Work on alternative financing models would allow further progress on the sustainability of these measures.

The question of phasing out certain activities and programme locations is a complex one. Even considering a continuation of the programme in a new phase, DF and its partners are faced with a trade-off between further investing in the same communities in order to consolidate and deepen the programme's impact or switching to new communities in order to expand its scale.

In dialogue with its implementing partners, DF should define a clearer strategy to address these choices, as a first step to the development of a detailed exist strategy.

5.1.6. Quality of reporting

The review has found that although the programme's Results Framework is consistent and comprehensive, improvements could be made in order to better assess certain aspects of the results, such as measure the level of agricultural production and income generation of participants, the support to marginalised groups other than women, youth and PWDs, or the development of community-based structures such as cooperatives in terms of the scope as well as the scale of their activity.

Any decision to extend the scope or adjust the methodology of the RF would however have to consider both its benefits in terms of assessment of the programme's results and its costs for DF and its partners' MEAL activities. Clearly, some of the above weaknesses would be more costly to correct than others.

The review has also identified challenges in reporting, which call for partner investments in more robust MEAL systems and exploring technological solutions for data collection and reporting. Regular training and capacity-building initiatives can empower team members to effectively manage reporting requirements, ensuring a more sustainable and streamlined process. More importantly, a simplified and more robust results framework would reduce the cost of reporting for partners while strengthening the reliability of reported results.

Finally, the RF's reliance on household surveys is a source of both fragility and costly implementation. It seems advisable to complement – and possibly replace – the household survey with the use of factual observations and measurements in order to strengthen the reliability of the reported results. It cannot be ruled out that physical and factual indicators highlight the need for complementary and corrective actions to strengthen the programme's impact in the relevant areas.

5.2. Recommendations

On the basis of its findings and lessons learned, the MTR team formulates the following recommendations for further strengthening the programme and securing lasting benefits for the participating communities. In addition, country-specific recommendations are provided in the annexed country notes.

Nutrition and care practices:

19. The programme should focus on making nutritious food more accessible and cost-effective through measures such as targeted subsidies, community gardens, or partnerships with local producers to ensure a sustainable supply of affordable, healthy food.
20. The programme should ensure that participants have access to economic resources to implement recommended practices, from soap to wood-saving stoves.

Agricultural productivity and income generation:

21. DF and partners should selectively upscale access to finance, equipment and livestock in support of agricultural enhancement and income generation activities, and ensure that training in these areas is tightly coupled with access to production means.
22. DF and its partners should explore collaborations with institutions for technical assistance and alternative financing models for larger investments in areas such as irrigation.
23. DF and implementing partners should intensify their work with local authorities to strengthen access to market through the establishment of farmers' markets and the organisation of fairs.

Strengthening of community organisations:

24. DF and its partner should provide additional impetus and support to existing cooperatives in marketing farming products, including by training farmers in order to generate a reliable supply in terms of product quantities, varieties, and quality throughout the year.

Empowerment of marginalised groups:

25. Women and youth should be further supported in entering the formal sector through official business registration.
26. The programme should work on a holistic strategy to counter the pull of migration towards the youth in dialogue with implementing partners and government institutions.

Improvement of policy frameworks:

27. Advocacy efforts should be streamlined with a focus on local government levels and stricter selection of areas of work with national-level authorities.

Risk management:

28. Consider the establishment of a contingency fund within the programme budget in order to accommodate for negative financial shocks. In case of positive developments (such as an appreciation of the Norwegian kroner), financial gains could be contributed into the fund. At the end of the implementation period, unused resources of the fund could finance additional (possibly exit) activities.
29. Account for the effects of international price developments and local inflation on partners' budget allocations and planned expenditures in a more systematic and proactive manner.

Exit strategy:

30. In dialogue with its implementing partners, DF should now further elaborate its exit strategy, in particular by (1) defining criteria for assessing the level of maturity of communities, and (2) determining an appropriate level of partner engagement in function of the target group's maturity.

Quality of reporting:

31. Consider the inclusion of additional results indicators in areas such as the level of agricultural production and income generation of participants, the support to marginalised groups other than women, youth and PWDs, or the development of community-based structures in terms of scope and scale of activity. In doing so, allow for variations between countries for indicators at output and immediate outcome level, within a unified results structure at intermediate outcome and impact level, in order to better measure country-specific results.

Communication with Norad:

32. Enhance communication and cooperation with Norad, with a specific focus on delays in grant disbursements and opportunities for exchange and learning.

Cooperation with other development actors:

33. Strengthen exchange information with agencies and organisations working with implementing partners in the programme's intervention areas, with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and seeking to enhance synergies.
34. Enhance outreach efforts to cooperate with other actors in areas of mutual interest, such as policy advocacy work in partner countries, and explore options to jointly open new ground in the support to smallholders.

Communication with partners:

35. Foster an environment for open dialogue with the partners, with particular attention to smaller organisation; ensure DF's presence in the field through regular visits and frequent communication, with a view to deepening the understanding of implementation conditions and challenges.
36. In addressing areas of underachievement following this MTR, provide platforms for partners to deliberate on areas for improvement and detailed agendas for action. Ensure regular monitoring and adaptive management based on these insights.

Appendix 1. Traffic light analysis of 2022 results

Colour code: ■ Target achieved or exceeded ■ Target underachieved by up to 20% ■ Target underachieved by more than 20%

Result		Indicator	Completion of targets				
			ETH	GTM	MWI	NPL	SOM
Impact	Increased climate resilience and well-being of rural communities	% of target population reporting preparedness to face climate hazards	-	-	-	-	-
		Average life satisfaction score for target population	-	-	-	-	-
IO1	Improved food security and nutrition for rural households	Average dietary diversity score for women of reproductive age	-	-	-	-	-
		Average household consumption coping strategy index	-	-	-	-	-
IO2	Increased economic empowerment for rural households, especially women, youth and marginalized groups	% of small/medium enterprises established for at least 12 months that have net profit	-	-	-	-	-
		Average % increase over baseline in real income from own production and own investment earned by rural households	-	-	-	-	-
IO3	Improved government services and legal frameworks in line with rural communities' needs, rights and priorities	# of issues officially raised by grassroots/CSO representatives in public consultations/advocacy initiatives that were fully addressed by the relevant authorities	-	-	-	-	-
		# CAV/community action plans and community forestry initiatives implemented with funds from government institutions	-	-	-	-	-
IO4	Rural women and marginalized groups have increased influence and recognition within their households, grassroots organizations and communities	% of grassroots organizations with at least 20% of decision-making positions held by women who actively participate	-	-	-	-	-
		% of households with women actively engaged in household economic decisions	-	-	-	-	-

Result		Indicator	Completion of targets				
			ETH	GTM	MWI	NPL	SOM
IM1	Rural households have improved nutrition and care practices	% of households who practice recommended nutrition and care practices	-	-	-	-	-
IM2	Increased diversity and productivity of smallholder farmers' and pastoralists' food production	# of households that have adopted: - one or more new crop varieties - one or more new livestock breeds	-	-	-	-	-
		# of country programmes that have met targets for average yield of all key crops	-	-	-	-	-
		# of country programmes that have met targets for average productivity of all key livestock species	-	-	-	-	-
IM3	Rural communities have enhanced access to sustainably managed land and water resources	Average % of climate adaptation measures from CAV action plans fully implemented by communities	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
		Total # of hectares newly brought under sustainable land management	Green	Green	Red	Green	-
		Average distance (km) women and girls travel to fetch water for human consumption	-	-	-	-	-
IM4	Rural women, youth and marginalized groups have improved capacity to generate income	# of people from self-help, micro-finance and savings and loans groups who used credit/loans for income generation activities	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red
		% small/medium enterprises supported by the programme that have begun selling their products	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
IM5	Increased capacity of grassroots organizations to advocate for good government services and legal frameworks	# proposals for improving legal frameworks or government services officially proposed by target grassroots organizations/CSOs to relevant authorities	-	-	-	Green	-
		# of requests submitted to government bodies to financially support CAV/community action plans and community forestry initiatives	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red

Result		Indicator	Completion of targets				
			ETH	GTM	MWI	NPL	SOM
OP1	Awareness raising provided by partners and community leaders to improve nutrition and care practices	# of people trained on nutrition and care practices					
		# of nutrition awareness-raising campaigns conducted					
		# of local leaders and religious leaders engaged in nutrition awareness					
OP2	Support provided to smallholder farmers and pastoralists on sustainable agriculture, seed systems and livestock production	# people supported to strengthen their crop production					
		# people supported to strengthen their livestock production					
		Average # crop varieties or livestock breeds introduced or disseminated					
OP3	Support provided to rural communities to develop CAV plans and manage/restore land and water resources	# of CAV plans developed or supported					
		# of people trained/supported in sustainable land and water resource management practices					
		# of water infrastructures constructed or rehabilitated					
OP4	Support provided to women, youth and marginalized groups to develop income generation opportunities and businesses	# of people who obtained loans from self-help, micro-finance and savings and loans groups with support from the program					
		# of SMEs established or strengthened with support from the program					
		# of people trained or supported in business development or IGAs					
OP5	Support provided to promote inclusive rural communities and grassroots organizations	# grassroots organizations established or strengthened by the program					
		# grassroots organizations supported in gender equality and social inclusion					
		# people trained in leadership skills					
		# people who participated in trainings aimed at increasing awareness in the broader community on gender equality and social inclusion					

Result		Indicator	Completion of targets				
			ETH	GTM	MWI	NPL	SOM
OP6	Support provided to communities and grassroots organizations to advocate for good government services and legal frameworks	# communities and/or grassroots organizations supported in rights and advocacy	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
		# events, trainings or processes organized by the programme to increase awareness, capacity or accountability of government institutions	Green	Yellow	Green	Red	Green
		# of events where good practices on farmers' rights and climate adaptation are disseminated by DF and/or partners	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
OP7	Implementing partners are provided capacity building and knowledge exchange opportunities based on identified needs	# of capacity building and knowledge exchange opportunities facilitated by DF	-	-	-	Green	Green
		# partner staff who participated in capacity building and knowledge exchange opportunities	-	-	-	Green	Green

Appendix 2. List of interviews and FGDs

The review team carried out the following interviews in the preparation of this Inception Report.

- Audun Husby, Programme coordinator Guatemala, DF
- Elin Ranum, Head of Policy and Information Department, DF
- Gyda Prestvik, Programme coordinator Nepal, DF
- Philip Thega, Country Director Malawi and Mozambique, DF
- Siv Helén Strømmland, Senior Adviser Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning, DF
- Ulf Flink, Country Director Ethiopia and Somalia, DF

The review team has identified the following stakeholders of the MTR with the help of country directors and coordinators and the programme's documentation. Work is still ongoing to complete this list and establish a comprehensive mapping of key stakeholders in each country ahead of the field missions.

1. General
 - DF HQ
 - Head of Policy and Information
 - Head of Finance
 - Senior Advisor MEAL
 - Norad
2. Ethiopia
 - DF country office
 - Country director
 - Country programme coordinator
 - Finance and administration manager
 - Monitoring and evaluation advisor
 - Agriculture advisor
 - Gender and youth advisor
 - Partners
 - iDE
 - Helevetas
 - REST
 - WeAction (Contingent to security situation)
 - Donors / development actors
 - National and local officials
 - Bureau of Agriculture
 - Bureau of Forests and climate Change
 - Beneficiaries and community representatives
3. Guatemala
 - DF coordinator
 - Partners
 - AMMID
 - ASOCUCH
 - Utz Ché
 - Donors / development actors

- National and local officials
 - Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA)
 - Municipal Commission for Health and Food and Nutritional Safety (COMUSAN)
 - Secretariat of Food and Nutritional Security (SESAN)
 - Municipal authorities / councils
 - Commission of economic development, tourism, environment and natural resource (COFETARN)
 - Beneficiaries and community representatives
 - Community Authorities /COCODES (Community Development Councils) and Community leaders
 - Local grassroots organizations (Cooperatives and Associations)
 - Other
 - Local/departmental/municipal media
- 4. Malawi
 - DF country office
 - Country director
 - Country programme coordinator
 - Finance and administration manager
 - Monitoring and evaluation advisor
 - Partners
 - BCI
 - CEPA
 - Heifler
 - NFYD
 - Donors / development actors
 - National and local officials
 - Beneficiaries and community representatives
- 5. Nepal
 - DF coordinator
 - Partners
 - CBODC
 - DWO
 - JJS
 - LIBIRD
 - NCDC
 - SS
 - Subcontracted partners
 - Donors / development actors
 - National and local officials
 - Beneficiaries and community representatives
- 6. Somalia
 - DF country office
 - Country director
 - Country programme coordinator
 - Finance and administration manager
 - Partners
 - ADO
 - CL
 - HAVOYOCO
 - KAALO
 - NAFIS

- NODO
- Donors / development actors
- National and local officials
- Beneficiaries and community representatives

Appendix 3. Documentation

- Initial grant application file
- Initial assessments at country level: Partner assessments, FGD reports on outcome-level reporting, FGD reports on women's economic decision making
- Reporting at programme level: Annual results reports, financial reports, audit reports, 2021 and 2022
- Reporting at country level: Annual partner narrative reports, results reports, project register, CAV register, audit reports, 2021 and 2022
- Reports of investigations into DF Malawi and DF Norway and responses from DF management
- Additional documentation as listed in footnotes

Appendix 4. Review Matrix

Criteria	Review questions	Detailed assessment criteria	Data sources
Relevance	1. To which degree have DF and its partners been able to ensure that the programme aligns with national and local <u>needs</u> , development plans, and <u>priorities</u> ?	1.1. Alignment on the needs of target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs
		1.2. Alignment with priorities and plans of local partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with partners
		1.3. Alignment with the government's priorities and plans in intervention countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of national plans and strategies Interviews with national/local officials
		1.4. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources for 1.1.-1.3.
Coherence	2. To what extent have DF and Norad been able to effectively coordinate and ensure global and country-level coherence of Norwegian development strategies, Norwegian funded programmes and initiatives in relevant sectors and in relation to cross-cutting issues?	2.1. Coherence with Norway's development strategies, particularly on food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme documentation Review of Norwegian plans and strategies Interviews with DF and Norad
		2.2. Coherence with Norway's geographic priorities	
		2.3. Appropriate focus on cross-cutting issues	
		2.4. Effectiveness of DF/Norad cooperation in ensuring coherence with Norwegian development objectives	
		2.5. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
	3. To what extent are the programme's approach and objectives coherent and complementary with those of other key donors and development actors?	3.1. Other key donors/ development actors are aware of the existence of the programme and its main focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme documentation Interviews with DF Interviews with other donors/ development actors Interviews with humanitarian and peacebuilding actors
		3.2. Coherence with development strategies of other key donors/ development actors, esp. on food security	
		3.3. Joint planning and coordination with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors	
		3.4. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	

Criteria	Review questions	Detailed assessment criteria	Data sources
Effectiveness	4. To what extent is the programme successful in achieving desired results in line with the programme's IOs and IMs?	4.1. Analysis of completion of objectives at immediate (IM) and intermediate outcome (IO) level (traffic lights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results reports Interviews with DF and Norad
		4.2. Supporting analysis: Completion of output objectives (OP) (traffic lights)	
		4.3. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
	5. Is the programme contributing to improved nutrition and care practices in rural households? If yes, how? If no, what needs to be improved?	5.1. Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding nutrition and care practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Theory of Change Interviews with national/local officials FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs
		5.2. Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP1>IM1>IO1)	
		5.3. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
	<u>6. Is the programme managing to improve rural households' economic empowerment, in particular by enhancing diversity and productivity in food production?</u>	6.1. Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding economic empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Theory of Change Interviews with partners FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs Interviews with national/local officials
		6.2. Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP2>IM2>IO2 and OP4>IM4>IO2)	
		6.3. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
	7. To what extent are Climate Adaptive Villages (CAV) plans contributing to increased climate resilience in rural communities?	7.1. Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding CAV plans and their contribution to increased resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Theory of Change Interviews with partners FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs Interviews with national/local officials
		7.2. Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP3>IM3>IO3 and OP5+OP6+OP7>IM5>IO3)	
		7.3. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	

Criteria	Review questions	Detailed assessment criteria	Data sources
Effectiveness	8. To what degree does the programme contribute to increased influence and recognition for women and marginalised groups within their households, grassroots organisations and communities?	8.1. Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding influence / recognition of women & marginalised groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme Theory of Change ▪ Interviews with partners ▪ FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs ▪ Interviews with national/local officials
		8.2. Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP4>IM4>IO4)	
		8.3. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
	9. Are there differences in the extent to which women and men are benefitting from programme interventions? If yes, how? If no, what needs to be improved?	9.1. Inclusion of gender markers in program design and reporting of disaggregated data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results framework and reports
		9.2. Analysis of reported results by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results reports
		9.3. Analysis of gender dynamics at household, community and grassroot organisation level confirm that programme benefits equally accrue to women and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with partners ▪ FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs
		9.4. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sources for 9.1.-9.3.
	10. Has the programme been successful in including persons living with disabilities? Please provide tangible examples of good practices and, if applicable, how best to strengthen PWD inclusion in the programme.	10.1. Inclusion of disability markers in program design and reporting of disaggregated data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results framework and reports
		10.2. Identification of existing measures targeting PWDs and analysis of their results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results reports ▪ Interviews with partners ▪ FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs
		10.3. Identification of good practices	
		10.4. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
	11. How successful has communication/collaboration been between DF and Norad? And between DF and its partners?	11.1. Analysis of routine communication and coordination procedures between DF and local partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with DF and partners
		11.2. Identification of practical implementation challenges and analysis of coordination for response	
		11.3. Analysis of DF/Norad communication & coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with DF and Norad
		11.4. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sources for 11.1.-11.3.

Criteria	Review questions	Detailed assessment criteria	Data sources	
Effectiveness	<u>12. Which external factors have influenced the achievement of outcomes, whether positively or negatively?</u>	12.1. Analysis of regional, national, and local context and their influence on results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with DF and partners ▪ FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs ▪ Interviews with national/local officials 	
		12.2. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement		
Efficiency	13. To what extent is the programme cost effective? Please assess indirect costs versus direct project activity costs, including per diem, travel costs etc.	13.1. Assessment of programme costs vs. results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget & financial data ▪ Results reports ▪ Interviews with DF and partners 	
		13.2. Assessment of management costs vs. activity costs		
		13.3. Analysis of implementation resources at DF/partners		
	14. Are all costs and procurements necessary? Please provide tangible examples of cost-effective and ineffective measures.	14.1. Identification of unnecessary expenditure and other sources of inefficiency (delays, wasted resources)		
15. Is the programme being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? Are the objectives/outcomes being achieved on time?	15.1. Analysis of implementation conditions and timelines	15.2. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of cost effectiveness		
	16. Are the approaches being applied by the programme contributing to the sustainability of the achievements?		16.1. Identification of measures taken to ensure sustainability of results and analysis of their effectiveness	
Sustainability	16. Are the approaches being applied by the programme contributing to the sustainability of the achievements?	16.2. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme documentation ▪ Interviews with DF and partners 	
		17. What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the programme outcomes/benefits to be sustained?		17.1. Analysis of ownership for key stakeholder groups considering (1) their capacity, (2) their incentives
	18. Which key interventions have already a good base for sustainability and which ones lack the base for sustainability?	17.2. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with DF and partners ▪ Interviews with national/local officials ▪ FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs 	
		18.1. Analysis of sustainability prospects at intervention level considering (1) local capacity, (2) local ownership, (3) economic context		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with DF and partners ▪ Interviews with national/local officials ▪ FGDs and interviews with beneficiary communities / CBOs ▪ National or sector statistics
		18.2. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement		

Criteria	Review questions	Detailed assessment criteria	Data sources
Sustainability	19. Is the programme applying a sensible exit strategy for the transfer of responsibility and activities to other stakeholders (local government, community institutions)?	19.1. Analysis of exit strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme documentation ▪ Interviews with DF and partners ▪ Interviews with national/local officials
		19.2. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	
Quality of reporting	20. Assess the quality of the results framework and sources for data collection. To what extent are the applied methodologies adequate? Do the applied methodologies allow for verification of results, verification of the quality of results, and randomised controls?	20.1. The results framework is comprehensive and consistent with the Theory of Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme documentation ▪ Interviews with DF and partners
		20.2. Partners have adequate capacity and resources to report results and their data collection methods conform to the requirements of the results framework	
		20.3. The indicators and data collection methods of the results framework are robust, verifiable and adapted to the local context	
		20.4. Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement	

Appendix 5. Interview / FGD guides

The following themes for interviews and FGDs are derived from the detailed assessment criteria of the review matrix (see Table 1) for each group of stakeholders. Review team members in charge of data collection will use these guides to develop detailed questionnaires for interviews and focus group discussion, taking into account the specificities of DF's interventions and the context in each country.

1. DF (programme level)

- Coherence
 - Coherence with Norway's development strategies, particularly on food security (2.1.)
 - Coherence with Norway's geographic priorities (2.2.)
 - Appropriate focus on cross-cutting issues (2.3.)
 - Effectiveness of DF/Norad cooperation in ensuring coherence with Norwegian development objectives (2.4.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of coherence with Norwegian development objectives (2.5.)
 - Coherence with development strategies of other key donors/ development actors, esp. on food security (3.2.)
 - Joint planning and coordination with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors (3.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of coherence with the approaches of other key donors/ development/ humanitarian actors (3.4.)
- Effectiveness
 - Analysis of completion of objectives at immediate (IM) and intermediate outcome (IO) level (4.1.)
 - Analysis of completion of output objectives (OP) (4.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of effectiveness in completing objectives (4.3.)
 - Analysis of communication and coordination procedures between DF and Norad (11.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of DF / Norad communication and coordination (11.4.)
- Efficiency
 - Assessment of programme costs vs. results (13.1.)
 - Assessment of management costs vs. activity costs (13.2.)
 - Analysis of implementation resources at DF and among partners (13.3.)
 - Identification of unnecessary expenditure and other sources of inefficiency (e.g. delays, wasted resources) (14.1.)
 - Analysis of implementation conditions and timelines (15.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of cost-effectiveness (15.2.)
- Sustainability
 - Analysis of exit strategies (19.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of exit strategies (19.2.)
- Reporting
 - The results framework is comprehensive and consistent with the Theory of Change (20.1.)

- Partners have adequate capacity and resources to report results and their data collection methods conform to the requirements of the results framework (20.2.)
- The indicators and data collection methods of the results framework are robust, verifiable and adapted to the local context (20.3.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the results framework and sources for data collection (20.4.)

2. Norad

- Coherence
 - Coherence with Norway's development strategies, particularly on food security (2.1.)
 - Coherence with Norway's geographic priorities (2.2.)
 - Appropriate focus on cross-cutting issues (2.3.)
 - Effectiveness of DF/Norad cooperation in ensuring coherence with Norwegian development objectives (2.4.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of coherence with Norwegian development objectives (2.5.)
- Effectiveness
 - Analysis of completion of objectives at immediate (IM) and intermediate outcome (IO) level (4.1.)
 - Analysis of completion of output objectives (OP) (4.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of effectiveness in completing objectives (4.3.)
 - Analysis of communication and coordination procedures between DF and Norad (11.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of DF / Norad communication and coordination (11.4.)

3. DF (country level)

- Coherence
 - Coherence with development strategies of other key donors/ development actors, esp. on food security (3.2.)
 - Joint planning and coordination with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors (3.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of coherence with the approaches of other key donors/ development/ humanitarian actors (3.4.)
- Effectiveness
 - Analysis of completion of objectives at immediate (IM) and intermediate outcome (IO) level (4.1.)
 - Analysis of completion of output objectives (OP) (4.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of effectiveness in completing objectives (4.3.)
 - Analysis of routine communication and coordination procedures between DF and local partners (11.1.)
 - Identification of practical implementation challenges and analysis of coordination for response (11.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of DF / partner communication and coordination (11.4.)
 - Analysis of regional, national, and local context and their influence on results (12.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of resilience to context (12.2.)
- Efficiency
 - Assessment of programme costs vs. results (13.1.)
 - Assessment of management costs vs. activity costs (13.2.)
 - Analysis of implementation resources at DF and among partners (13.3.)

- Identification of unnecessary expenditure and other sources of inefficiency (e.g. delays, wasted resources) (14.1.)
- Analysis of implementation conditions and timelines (15.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of cost-effectiveness (15.2.)
- Sustainability
 - Identification of measures taken to ensure sustainability of results and analysis of their effectiveness (16.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of sustainability measures (16.2.)
 - Analysis of ownership for key stakeholder groups considering (1) their capacity, (2) their incentives (17.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of local ownership (17.2.)
 - Analysis of sustainability prospects at intervention level considering (1) local capacity, (2) local ownership, (3) economic context (18.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of sustainability at intervention level (18.2.)
 - Analysis of exit strategies (19.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of exit strategies (19.2.)
- Reporting
 - Partners have adequate capacity and resources to report results and their data collection methods conform to the requirements of the results framework (20.2.)
 - The indicators and data collection methods of the results framework are robust, verifiable and adapted to the local context (20.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the results framework and sources for data collection (20.4.)

4. Other donors and development actors (country level)

- Coherence
 - Other key donors/ development actors are aware of the existence of the programme and its main focus (3.1.)
 - Coherence with development strategies of other key donors/ development actors, esp. on food security (3.2.)
 - Joint planning and coordination with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors (3.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of coherence with the approaches of other donors/ development / humanitarian actors (3.4.)

5. Partners

- Relevance
 - Alignment with the priorities and plans of local partners (1.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of relevance from the standpoint of partners' priorities and plans (1.4.)
- Coherence
 - Coherence with development strategies of other key donors/ development actors, esp. on food security (3.2.)
 - Joint planning and coordination with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors (3.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of coherence with the approaches of other donors/ development / humanitarian actors (3.4.)
- Effectiveness
 - Analysis of completion of objectives at immediate (IM) and intermediate outcome (IO) level (4.1.)
 - Analysis of completion of output objectives (OP) (4.2.)

- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of effectiveness in completing objectives (4.3.)
- Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding nutrition and care practices (5.1.)
- Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP1>IM1>IO1) (5.2.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's achievements on nutrition and care practices (5.3.)
- Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding economic empowerment (6.1.)
- Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP2>IM2>IO2) (6.2.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's achievements on economic empowerment (6.3.)
- Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding improved government services and legal frameworks, in particular Climate Adaptive Villages (CAV) plans, and their contribution to increased climate resilience (7.1.)
- Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP3>IM3>IO3 and OP5+OP6+OP7>IM5>IO3) (7.2.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's influence on government services and legal frameworks (7.3.)
- Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding the influence and recognition of women and marginalised groups (8.1.)
- Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP4>IM4>IO4) (8.2.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the influence and recognition of women and marginalised groups (8.3.)
- Analysis of reported results by gender (9.2.)
- Analysis of gender dynamics at household, community and grassroot organisation level confirm that the programme benefits equally accrue to women and men (9.3.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the benefits accruing to women under the programme (9.4.)
- Identification of existing measures targeting PWDs and analysis of their results (10.2.)
- Identification of good practices on the inclusion of PWDs (10.3.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the inclusion of PWDs (10.4.)
- Analysis of routine communication and coordination procedures between DF and local partners (11.1.)
- Identification of practical implementation challenges and analysis of coordination for response (11.2.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of DF / partner communication and coordination (11.4.)
- Analysis of regional, national, and local context and their influence on results (12.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of resilience to context (12.2.)
- Efficiency
 - Assessment of programme costs vs. results (13.1.)
 - Assessment of management costs vs. activity costs (13.2.)
 - Analysis of implementation resources at DF and among partners (13.3.)
 - Identification of unnecessary expenditure and other sources of inefficiency (e.g. delays, wasted resources) (14.1.)
 - Analysis of implementation conditions and timelines (15.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of cost-effectiveness (15.2.)
- Sustainability

- Identification of measures taken to ensure sustainability of results and analysis of their effectiveness (16.2.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of sustainability measures (16.2.)
- Analysis of ownership for key stakeholder groups considering (1) their capacity, (2) their incentives (17.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of local ownership (17.2.)
- Analysis of sustainability prospects at intervention level considering (1) local capacity, (2) local ownership, (3) economic context (18.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of sustainability at intervention level (18.2.)
- Analysis of exit strategies (19.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of exit strategies (19.2.)
- Reporting
 - Partners have adequate capacity and resources to report results and their data collection methods conform to the requirements of the results framework (20.2.)
 - The indicators and data collection methods of the results framework are robust, verifiable and adapted to the local context (20.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the results framework and sources for data collection (20.4.)

6. National and local officials

- Relevance
 - Alignment of interventions with the government's priorities and plans (1.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of relevance from the standpoint of the government's priorities and plans (1.4.)
- Effectiveness
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding nutrition and care practices (5.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP1>IM1>IO1) (5.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's achievements on nutrition and care practices (5.3.)
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding economic empowerment (6.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP2>IM2>IO2) (6.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's achievements on economic empowerment (6.3.)
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding improved government services and legal frameworks, in particular Climate Adaptive Villages (CAV) plans, and their contribution to increased climate resilience (7.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP3>IM3>IO3 and OP5+OP6+OP7>IM5>IO3) (7.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's influence on government services and legal frameworks (7.3.)
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding the influence and recognition of women and marginalised groups (8.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP4>IM4>IO4) (8.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the influence and recognition of women and marginalised groups (8.3.)
 - Analysis of regional, national, and local context and their influence on results (12.1.)

- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of resilience to context (12.2.)
- Sustainability
 - Analysis of ownership for key stakeholder groups considering (1) their capacity, (2) their incentives (17.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of local ownership (17.2.)
 - Analysis of sustainability prospects at intervention level considering (1) local capacity, (2) local ownership, (3) economic context (18.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of sustainability at intervention level (18.2.)

7. Beneficiary communities / CBOs

- Relevance
 - Alignment on the needs of target groups (1.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of relevance from the standpoint of the needs of target groups (1.4.)
- Effectiveness
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding nutrition and care practices (5.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP1>IM1>IO1) (5.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's achievements on nutrition and care practices (5.3.)
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding economic empowerment (6.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP2>IM2>IO2) (6.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's achievements on economic empowerment (6.3.)
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding improved government services and legal frameworks, in particular Climate Adaptive Villages (CAV) plans, and their contribution to increased climate resilience (7.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP3>IM3>IO3 and OP5+OP6+OP7>IM5>IO3) (7.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the programme's influence on government services and legal frameworks (7.3.)
 - Confirm and qualify reported achievements regarding the influence and recognition of women and marginalised groups (8.1.)
 - Document strengths and weaknesses along the causal pathways leading from programme activities to outcomes (primarily but not only OP4>IM4>IO4) (8.2.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the influence and recognition of women and marginalised groups (8.3.)
 - Analysis of gender dynamics at household, community and grassroot organisation level confirm that the programme benefits equally accrue to women and men (9.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the benefits accruing to women under the programme (9.4.)
 - Identification of existing measures targeting PWDs and analysis of their results (10.2.)
 - Identification of good practices on the inclusion of PWDs (10.3.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of the inclusion of PWDs (10.4.)
 - Analysis of regional, national, and local context and their influence on results (12.1.)
 - Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of resilience to context (12.2.)
- Sustainability

- Analysis of ownership for key stakeholder groups considering (1) their capacity, (2) their incentives (17.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of local ownership (17.2.)
- Analysis of sustainability prospects at intervention level considering (1) local capacity, (2) local ownership, (3) economic context (18.1.)
- Forward-looking analysis: avenues for improvement of sustainability at intervention level (18.2.)

Annexes:

- Country findings note: Ethiopia
- Country findings note: Guatemala
- Country findings note: Malawi
- Country findings note: Nepal
- Country findings note: Somalia
- Terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Review
- MTR Inception Report