

Ex-post evaluation

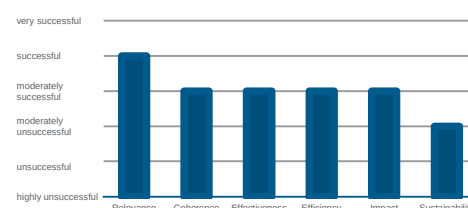
Community Forests II, Namibia

Title	Forestry Development (Community Forests in Northeast Namibia) II		
Sector and CRS code	Forestry development 31220		
Project number	2007 66 345		
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)		
Recipient/Implementing agency	National Planning Commission / Directorate of Forestry, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism		
Project volume/financing instrument	EUR 3.5 / budget grant		
Project duration	November 2012 – April 2022		
Year of report	2024	Year of random sample	2024

Objectives and project outline

The objective at outcome level was that the supported communities have the rights, are empowered, and possess the necessary resource information to sustainably utilize community forests. As a result, at the impact level, the supported community forests should be maintained as a livelihood for the local population. Funding was provided for consulting services, training and educational measures, equipment, and investments in infrastructure. In total, 21 already existing or newly emerging community forests were supported.

Overall rating:
moderately unsuccessful



Key findings

The project pursued a highly relevant approach to the protection of natural resources and demonstrated developmental effectiveness; however, its sustainability is at considerable risk. Due to the sustainability deficits, the project is rated as 'moderately unsuccessful'. The following aspects have significantly influenced this assessment:

- Increasing use pressure and low income potential threaten the survival of the community forests. The resilience of the communities and the Directorate of Forestry is currently too low to cope with these and other challenges in the medium and long term.
- Only a small proportion of the land designated as community forest is actually forested. Forest cover has been steadily decreasing over the past 23 years, albeit at a relatively low rate. At the time of the evaluation, approximately 98.5% of the 2000 forest cover remained intact.
- The project has enabled communities to gain self-determination over resources that are essential to their livelihoods. However, it has not succeeded in establishing economically and ecologically sustainable structures. Most of the community forests supported do not have valid management plans, timber use is limited to subsistence needs, and the potential for commercial timber use is low. Although some community forests generate regular income from the sale of non-timber forest products, in most cases the approach is not sustainable from a purely economic point of view.

Conclusions

- Focusing on a smaller number of priority community forests was a sensible choice for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness.
- Interventions to promote new, alternative income activities require recurrent training and long-term support, otherwise they are often ineffective.
- For a variety of reasons, pioneering community-based organisations tend to be more successful than latecomers. This should be taken into account when deciding on scaling up and communicating the potential to the target group in order to avoid raising unrealistic expectations.

Ex post Evaluation– Rating according to OECD-DAC criteria

Overview of sub-ratings:

Relevance	2
Coherence	3
Effectiveness	3
Efficiency	3
Impact	3
Sustainability	4
Overall rating:	4

Overall context

The project to be evaluated, “Promotion of Community Forests in Northeast Namibia, Phase II” (CFN-II), supported the establishment of community forests in northeastern Namibia. With a population of around 3 million people (as of 2023) on an area of 824,292 km², Namibia is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world. Around 40% of the population lives in the so-called communal areas, often under poor conditions. The rights of use to grazing land and other natural resources are regulated by traditional authorities (TA) according to customary rights. Private ownership of land does not exist - with a few exceptions.

Since the mid-1990s, the Namibian government has been pursuing a participatory, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approach, in which the exploitation rights to natural resources - especially game and forest - are transferred to the local communities if certain conditions are met. One pillar of the CBNRM approach is the designation of community forests, which is the focus of this evaluation.

The project to be evaluated was part of a program approach that extended over one pilot and two implementation phases and under which a comprehensive and integrated concept for community forest management was developed, tested and implemented. After the pilot phase, which ran from 1999-2003, the program approach was first developed and submitted to the BMZ in 2003 as a review report. The first implementation phase ran from 2004 to 2011. Government approval for the second phase evaluated here was given in November 2007. The financing agreement was signed in 2010. According to the plan, phase 2 was to be implemented directly after the first phase. However, its start was delayed by two years due to personnel changes in the responsible ministry and did not take place until the end of 2013. 3 years were planned for implementation; however, the project actually ran until 2022, six years longer than planned.

The project executing agency was the Directorate of Forestry (DoF). Since the development of the program approach up to the time of the evaluation in 2024, the Directorate of Forestry has changed institutional affiliation twice. At the beginning of the community forest initiative, it belonged to the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), but was then transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture (then: Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, MAWF) during the first phase of the project in March 2005. Since 2020, the Forestry Directorate has once again been under the MEFT. The German Development Service (DED), which was still independent at the time, was intended to be the implementation partner for the project to be evaluated. It played a key role in the development of the community forest approach and was already an implementation partner in the first phase of the project. Following its merger with the Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the Organization for International Training and Development (InWent) to form today's Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the DED ceased to be an implementing organization and was replaced by an international consulting firm. This had profound implications for the project design and implementation, which are explained in more detail in the Relevance and Effectiveness chapters.

The predecessor phase has already been evaluated and rated as partially successful (grade 3). The impacts on forest conservation were highlighted as positive, as was the fact that the local population was given the opportunity to use the forest resources legally and responsibly thanks to the legal protection of the community forests.

On the other hand, the lack of coordination with other land use concepts at the beginning, in particular the non-utilization of the conservancy structures established a few years earlier when establishing the community forest approach, were identified as weaknesses of the first phase. Other key points of criticism were the limited economic viability of the approach and the patchy application of the management plans drawn up.

Project Summary

As part of the project, the establishment of community forests in northeastern Namibia in the regions of Kavango East, Kavango West, Otjozondjupa, and Zambezi was promoted. Specifically, short- and long-term consulting services, awareness campaigns, training and educational measures for members of the community forest committees, community members, and project staff, as well as investments in infrastructure and the procurement of equipment, were financed. The measures aimed to support the transfer of usage rights to forest areas from the state to local communities, promote the integration of community forests and conservancies, and create the conditions for sustainable management of the supported community forests at the local and regional levels (module objective). At a higher development policy level, the forests were to be preserved as an important component of the livelihoods of the predominantly poor population in the project region. The target group of the project was the forest-dependent population in the project region. The project was implemented by the Directorate of Forestry with support from an international consultant and a local non-governmental organization.

Exchange Rate: 1 EUR = 19 NAD (November 2024)

Total costs

	Investment (Plan)	Investment (Actual)
Total cost (EUR million)	4,025	4,255
Counterpart contribution (EUR million)	0,525	0,76
Financing (EUR million)	3,5	3,49
<i>of which BMZ budget funds (EUR million)</i>	3,5	3,49

Rating according to OECD-DAC criteria

Relevance

1. Alignment with policies and priorities

Natural resources play a decisive role in the living conditions of the population in Namibia. A large part of the population in rural areas lives from livestock farming and agriculture. Natural resources such as wild animals and plants also serve as a source of food and medicine for many communities. The tourism sector, one of the country's most important economic sectors, is also largely based on the country's unique flora and fauna. Overall, the livelihoods of an estimated 70% of the Namibian population depend on the use of natural resources. Their conservation and sustainable management is therefore of central importance for Namibia's development opportunities and is an integral part of the national development strategy "Vision 2030".

Against this background, the focus of German-Namibian cooperation in the field of natural resource conservation, which is aimed at fair access to resources and sustainable resource management, is understandable and sensible. The project under evaluation fits in well with this.

Since the mid-1990s, the Namibian government has been using a participatory, community-based approach (Community-based Natural Resource Management - CBNRM)² to manage its natural resources and has played a pioneering role internationally. The most prominent example in the Namibian context are conservancies (communal game reserves). Once a conservancy has been established, local communities receive the rights to use the wildlife and can enter into contracts with private tourism providers in order to generate income from wildlife management.³ The designation of community forests (CF) is another important component of the national CBNRM approach, although it has always received significantly less attention and financial support than the conservancies. The legal basis for the establishment and management of community forests is the Forestry Act passed by the Namibian Parliament in 2001 and amended in 2005. Under certain conditions, the exclusive management and utilization rights to the forest and its resources can be transferred to the local communities.

The project supported selected communities in north-eastern Namibia in creating the formal requirements for the registration process in accordance with the legal requirements of the Forestry Directorate, thereby contributing to the implementation of the national CBNRM strategy. The community forest approach aims to empower communities to manage their resources independently and takes a highly participatory approach. Both the objective and the measures taken are in line with German development cooperation's commitment to protecting human rights. However, a complaints mechanism, which is standard in many international natural resource conservation projects today, did not exist in the project. Germany and Namibia have signed the Paris Climate Agreement. The aim of protecting the forest areas was to contribute to its CO₂ reduction targets.

2. Alignment with needs and capacities of persons concerned

Namibia is the driest country south of the Sahara. Almost all of the country's forest areas are located in the project region (Kavango East and Kavanago West, Zambezi (then still Caprivi), North-East Otjozondjuoa) in the sub-humid north-east of the country and are classified as tropical dry forests. The exact forest area of Namibia is not known as there is no regular national land or forest area mapping (De Cauewer and Beer, 2022). Based on the FAO forest definition⁴, the FAO estimates that around 9.8 % of Namibia's land area was forested in 2000. For 2020, the forest area was estimated at 6.64 million ha or 8.1 % of the country's land area (ibid.). The main reasons for the forest decline were and are the conversion of forest areas into agricultural land and pastureland and the associated land use conflicts, as well as the increasing pressure to use the land due to a growing population. Uncontrolled fires and illegal logging - particularly in the Kavango region - are also contributing to forest decline. Forest resources in the form of building materials, firewood, forest fruits and grazing areas are important components of the livelihoods of people and provide key ecosystem services as a habitat for wildlife and corridor for

² The legal basis is the Natural Conservation Amendment Act (Act 5) of 1996. Source: Government Gazette No. 1333, 17 June 1996, pp. 1-10.

³ As of 2024, there were 86 Conservancies, comprising an area of 166.179 km² and about 245.000 members. Source: <https://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies#statistics> (Letzter Aufruf am 21.11.2024).

⁴ FAO defines forest as an area of more than 0.5 ha that is covered with trees taller than 5 m and has a canopy cover of more than 10 % or is covered with trees that can reach these thresholds in situ.

wildlife migration, as a CO₂ sink, water reservoir and erosion control. The selection of project locations is therefore target-oriented from an ecological and social perspective.

The establishment of community forests fits in with the national CBNRM approach. Its basic principle is to actively involve the local population in the protection and management of natural resources by transferring the rights to use them in order to combine the protection of natural resources with the fight against poverty.

Around 90% of the population in the communal areas of the north-east practice agriculture and livestock farming, mostly on a subsistence basis. The sustainable management of natural resources is therefore important for the preservation of livelihoods. At the same time, the CBNRM approach promotes self-reliance. The objectives of the project are therefore fundamentally in line with the interests of the target group.

The project executing agency and, at the same time, the subordinate target group was the Namibian Directorate of Forestry. The forest utilization rights are predominantly held by the state; the DoF is therefore responsible for the administration and maintenance of the forest areas in the communal areas. The transfer of the rights of use to the forest resources was also intended to relieve the state authorities.

In contrast to today, gender equality was not a cross-sectoral focus of German development cooperation at the time of the appraisal. Its promotion was not explicitly part of the project's target system. Nevertheless, the objective promotes the interests of women, as they are responsible for collecting firewood and non-timber forest products (NTFP) in the project region and thus benefit from forest conservation measures. One possible starting point for leveraging further gender impact potential would have been to set quotas for the composition of the community forest committees. The results of scientific studies suggest that such measures promote ecologically sustainable forest management (see Effectiveness) and could therefore also have achieved further impact potential with regard to the original objective of the project.

3. Suitability of the concept

The project promoted existing community forests with infrastructure and training measures and supported emerging community forests (eCFs) in meeting the legal requirements for formal registration. These requirements include, in particular, the appointment of a Forest Management Committee (FMC), the clarification of boundaries with neighboring regions, the mapping of the area and the development of a constitution and a management plan based on a forest inventory.

The concept of community forest management is still considered an adequate approach to combine forest protection, rural development, community empowerment and poverty reduction. Numerous international organizations, non-governmental organizations and scientists argue that community forest approaches are often better suited to forest conservation than state-centric forms of forest management, especially in contexts where state enforcement power is low and forest resources are an important component of local livelihoods (Agarwal et al. 2008; Baland and Platteau, 1996). According to the central arguments, local communities usually have advantages with regard to monitoring (collective control and supervision of the applicable rules) and also have the necessary local knowledge with regard to resource dynamics and utilization potential (Agarwal, 2001; Ostrom, 1990).⁵

The project was based on the following theory of change: The transfer of usage rights to the communities, the recording of resources, technical training and equipment as well as pilot measures to generate income were intended to enable local communities to manage forest resources sustainably (module objective). The transfer of rights of disposal and management responsibility enables the communities to realize income from commercial timber extraction and NTFP, which also creates material incentives for sustainable management. Additional sources of income to finance sustainable use should result from the integration of community forests and conservancies and from the promotion of income-generating measures. At the impact level, this is intended to preserve the promoted forest areas as a livelihood for the people living there and as a habitat for numerous wild animals. Many of the community forest areas are located in the peripheral zones of national parks and serve as wildlife corridors. Community forests thus also contribute to securing long-term income from wildlife management and tourism promotion in conservancies and national parks.

⁵ On the other hand, community forest management can also have disadvantages. For example, different interests within the community can lead to conflicts and there is a risk that short-term economic interests are prioritized over long-term ecological goals. In comparison, centralized forest management can provide a more unified and coordinated strategy based on national objectives but may be less responsive to local needs.

The theory of change is basically plausible, with the caveat that the economic and poverty reduction potential of the approach was overestimated at the time of the appraisal. Empirical experience from Namibia and other contexts already showed at that time that noticeable increases in income from CBNRM are usually only granted to communities that have particularly favorable location potential and/or receive support over many years. The final report by an independent expert on the first phase of the project to be evaluated already referred to low commercial potential from timber extraction due to insufficient tree stocks at many project locations, high transportation and logging costs and, in some cases, a lack of sales opportunities. In view of this, as well as the personnel and financial capacity bottlenecks of the forestry directorate, which were already known in the conception phase (and correctly identified as a risk), the further scaling of the community forest approach was associated with considerable sustainability risks. These were made transparent in the appraisal documents, but without sufficient reflection on possible alternatives to reduce the risks. In retrospect, the question arises as to whether, for example, a focus on an even smaller number of already established community forests, on a much more comprehensive and longer-term promotion of alternative income opportunities, or other measures to ensure sustainability would have made sense.

At the beginning of the implementation phase, the number of recognized community forests had risen from 13 (by 2011) to 32 (2012), with an increase in area of almost 2.4 million ha to around 3 million ha in 2012. In numerical terms, the leap from the pilot phase to the broad-based implementation of the community forest approach had therefore already been made. Part of the project funds were to be used to ensure the quality of these results by supporting already established community forests. In retrospect, this objective also appears to make sense. At the same time, selected emerging community forests that were already in the registration process at the time were to receive further support. The approach should also be deepened by actively promoting the merger of community forests and conservancies in overlapping or adjacent areas. From the point of view of efficiency and coherence, it was a considerable shortcoming of the community forest approach that it was not built on and integrated into the existing structures of the conservancies from the outset.⁶ Integration should prevent potential conflicts of use and support their economic and ecological sustainability. Even if there was a risk that the integration would fail due to path dependencies, it was understandable to attempt the integration.

4. Reaction to changes / adaptability

At the time of the project appraisal in 2009, it was planned that the DED would support the executing agency in implementing the planned measures, as was previously the case in the first phase of the project. Due to the merger of DED, GTZ and InWent in 2011, the project had to be restructured and an external implementation consultant (an international consulting firm in consortium with a Namibian NGO) had to be hired to support the DoF and financed from project funds. Accordingly, even before implementation began, there were significantly fewer funds available for financing infrastructure, equipment and training measures than planned at appraisal. In addition to the financial restrictions, the loss of the DED meant a considerable loss of know-how in the area of community forest management.

For this reason, and based on experience from the first phase, it was decided at the beginning of the implementation phase in 2014 to focus the funding on community forests with particularly high potential instead of distributing the funding to all 50 existing and emerging community forests as originally planned. The prioritized CFs were to receive more intensive support and later serve as model community forests, while support for the remaining CFs was to be limited to a few basic services. The decision is understandable, both then and now, and is to be welcomed for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness.

Rating summary: The project was designed to support Namibia in implementing its CBNRM strategy. The concept of community forest management was considered promising at the time, as it is today, for combining forest conservation objectives with those of social and economic development in rural areas. Conceptually, the project was geared towards the needs of the target group. Even before implementation began, it was known that most of the community forests had little or no potential for commercial timber production and were therefore unlikely to be economically viable. Due to this, as well as the known personnel and financial capacity bottlenecks of the forestry directorate, the further scaling of the community forest approach was associated with considerable sustainability risks. In retrospect, it must be critically stated that greater attention could have been paid in the conception to the development of measures to mitigate these risks. Due to the close alignment with national priorities and needs,

⁶ This was not a failure of the project, but the result of political decisions in Namibia.

as well as the adaptability to changing framework conditions, the relevance of the project is still considered successful despite limitations in terms of appropriateness.

Relevance: 2

Coherence

5. Internal Coherence

CFN-II was part of the development cooperation program "Management of Natural Resources" and was meaningfully integrated into it. Resource management has been a focus of German development cooperation in Namibia since 2002. The project was divided into several phases. In the first phase (2004-2011), important groundwork was laid for the second phase by developing and promoting standards for procedures and processes, as well as the legal and institutional framework conditions for the establishment of community forests (CFs).⁷ To realize previously untapped synergies between the development of CFs and conservancies, the evaluative second phase focused primarily on the integration of these two approaches.

Many of the supported CFs are located in close proximity to national parks funded by financial cooperation (Integrated National Park Management Program (NamParks), Phase I-IV). They serve as ecological corridors and wildlife habitats, thus contributing to the preservation of Namibia's wildlife populations. At the same time, some community members benefit from adjacent support measures funded by NamParks projects. The project is also complementary to the financial cooperation project "Poverty-Oriented Support for Community-Based Conservation in Namibia." Under this project, FC supports and co-finances the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN), a sustainable financing instrument for compensating damages from human-wildlife conflicts and providing conservation services in communal areas.

There were also substantive links to the technical cooperation projects "Biodiversity and Climate Change" (project duration: 2012-2016) and "Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Namibia (CBNRM)" (2016-2019). These also partially supported conservancies and integrated CFs in the project region in the commercial use of natural resources, ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change, and capacity development. There are further connections to the technical cooperation project "Climate Change and Inclusive Use of Natural Resources (CCIU)," which supported MEFT in promoting laws, framework conditions, and governance structures for resource protection in Namibia. Nevertheless, synergy potentials from the interplay between technical and financial cooperation were not fully exploited: The technical support component of CFN-II accounted for about half of the funding volume. It is not clear why this was not implemented by technical cooperation after the withdrawal of the DED as a potential implementation partner. Particularly regarding the harmonization of legislation for community forests and conservancies as a prerequisite for their integration, technical cooperation could have likely provided important synergy effects.

As part of a national program for the development of communal areas, the establishment of commercial smallholder farms with an average size of about 2,500 hectares was promoted in a sub-region of Kavango East. This project was also supported by financial cooperation funds. On some of the few farms funded by German resources in the area, selectively valuable timber logs were harvested, in many cases without the necessary approval from the MEFT. The nationwide illegal logging (also in state forests and on communal land in the Kavango area) led to national protests from environmental organizations and culminated in a logging moratorium in November 2018. During the evaluation, it could not be conclusively determined whether the 32 smallholder farms directly funded by financial cooperation were also involved in the logging. The logging did not occur on community forest areas but in areas primarily designated for agricultural use, where a different objective is pursued than in the project being evaluated here. Nevertheless, the incident shows that national approaches to promoting agriculture can contradict the goals in the area of natural resource protection. The country strategy of the BMZ for Namibia was last updated in 2017. Whether the described incoherence in German engagement could have been avoided by an earlier update of the country strategy cannot be assessed retrospectively. From the perspective of

⁷ The measures included educating and training the target group on forest inventory and sustainable use planning, as well as developing suitable statutes and other regulations that legally define the rights and obligations of the communities and ensure a fair distribution of benefits/income (e.g., guidelines for resource inventory, mapping, participatory use planning, and monitoring).

the evaluation team, this example shows that the interplay between natural resource protection and measures to promote agriculture should be critically reviewed.

6. External coherence

Germany is one of Namibia's most important international partners in the field of natural resource protection. The project and its predecessor phase significantly supported the Namibian government in its efforts to promote CBNRM in communal areas. The measures focused on the implementation of processes and training in the supported community forests that were necessary to meet the requirements for the official designation of CFs by the Minister of MEFT as described in the Namibian Forest Act (Forest Act No. 12, 2001).

Community forests received - and continue to receive until the time of the evaluation - significantly less attention and support than conservancies. During the technical implementation phase from 2013-2016, there were no other national or international projects that directly supported CFs in northeastern Namibia. Only after that were a few projects initiated to promote CFs. Among them was a project by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP) to promote sustainable forest use in CFs, which financed, among other things, the implementation of forest inventories. Synergies also arise with the CBNRM EDA project funded by GCF resources and implemented through the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia (EIF). This project aimed to make the livelihoods of local communities climate-resilient and financed small projects (construction of greenhouses, procurement of solar panels, nurseries, rehabilitation of water boreholes, forest inventories), some of which benefited the community forests supported under CFN-II. The EU also promoted sustainable rangeland management in northern Namibia, thereby reducing the pressure on forests. The FAO program "Drylands Sustainable Landscapes" (DSL), also funded by GEF, aims to increase the climate resilience of agro-ecological systems and forests in dry areas. Additionally, there are further externally funded initiatives, mostly implemented by local NGOs, to develop alternative, natural resource-based income-generating opportunities (e.g., beekeeping), which are coherent with the objectives of the project.

During the implementation phase, there was regular exchange with WWF and Namibian NGOs in the area of CBNRM, including NNF, IRDNC, and the umbrella organization NACSO. According to interviewed representatives of local NGOs and KfW staff, the MEFT was able to coordinate the projects of different donors.

Rating summary:

The project was embedded in the development cooperation program for the management of natural resources and complemented ongoing technical and financial cooperation projects within this funding focus. However, internal coherence is impaired by parallel implemented land reform measures co-financed by German development cooperation, during which trees were felled. Although the logging did not take place on community forest areas, these activities contradict the objectives of the project being evaluated. Possible synergies between technical and financial cooperation also remained untapped. The external coherence of the project is assessed as successful, as it supports the partner's own efforts and harmonizes with the measures of other donors.

Coherence: 3

Effectivity

7. Achievement of (intended) project goals

The objective at the outcome level was: "Supported communities have the rights, are empowered, and have the necessary resource information to sustainably utilize the community forests."⁸ The achievement of the objective can be summarized as follows:

⁸ The objective formulation is not at the outcome level intended for module objectives but rather between the output and outcome levels, as the capacity for use alone is not sufficient for sustainable use and ultimately the preservation of community forests. However, in this specific case, a large part of the measures particularly aimed at capacity building, which means that the chosen objective formulation focuses on the immediate influence area of the project. Given the prevailing framework conditions and the limited resources, the level of ambition appears appropriate. Therefore, no adjustment of the objective formulation is made in the context of the evaluation.

Table 1: Overview of target achievement at outcome level

Indikator	Status at beginning of implementation (2013)	Target value according to PP (2016)	Actual value at PCR (2018)	Actual value at EPE (2024)
(1) Area of supported community forests managed by FMCs (in hectares). ⁹	1.450.785 ha	2.905.540 ha	2.841.134 ha	2.841.134 ha Achieved
(2) Number of registered community forests. ¹⁰	14 of 21	21	17 of 21	17 of 21 Partially achieved
(3) Number of supported community forests integrated into a conservancy.	2013: 6	15	10	10 Partially achieved
(4) Number of valid and implemented forest management plans.	No data available	2016: 21 valid and implemented plans	2018: 21 valid plans, no information on actual implementation.	2024: No comprehensive data available. 75% of the visited community forests had no valid forest management plan. Reliable information on implementation is not possible. Not achieved
(5) Income development from forestry activities in the supported forest communities (in N\$).	2009: 597.723 2010: 898.992 2011: 698.454 2012: 778.365	No quantitative specification. Indicator is considered achieved when the supported community forests receive income from forestry activities annually.	2016/17: 1,3 Mio. 2017/18: 2,1 Mio.	Only sporadic data is available. The majority of community forests do not generate significant income from forestry activities. Partially achieved

8. Contribution to goal achievement

Under CFN-II, 15 community forests received technical support between 2013 and 2016 in the form of training measures and funding for activities necessary for the registration or operation of the community forests. This included, in particular, conducting forest inventories, creating or updating forest management plans, and training committee members in financial accounting. Additionally, infrastructure measures and equipment—furniture, computers, printers, projectors—were financed in nine community forests. In total, 21 community forests received

⁹ The indicator is at the output level instead of the intended outcome level. Since the establishment of additional community forests was an objective of the project, it is still considered in the assessment. The scope of the indicator was adjusted during the evaluation and refers only to the areas and number of community forests directly supported by the project. In the project documents, the indicators referred to the total area and total number of all community forests in Namibia. This is also the reason for the differing figures between the evaluation report and the final control report of the project. Furthermore, the level of ambition was adjusted ex-post.

¹⁰ Indicator 2 is also at the output level. The target values were adjusted during the evaluation process.

support in at least one of the mentioned forms. A tabular overview of the funding measures can be found in the annex.

As **investment measures**, new office buildings were constructed in five communities, and existing office buildings were expanded in three others. The site selection was based on geographical location, income potential, and the commitment of the forest management committees (FMCs). The buildings were furnished with chairs, tables, and shelves and equipped with computers, printers, and projectors. In Ncumcara, a craft shop and a related workshop were also built, where furniture for the other office buildings was manufactured. During the evaluation mission, 6 of the 9 investment sites were visited. All visited buildings were in satisfactory condition and are regularly used by the communities. There were issues in two community forests with the toilet facilities.¹¹ The acquired equipment was mostly still in use. In two community forests, the laptop was missing—in both cases, the disappearance coincided with changes in leadership within the FMCs. The ousted chairpersons claimed after their removal that the laptop had been stolen. No police investigations were initiated.

Indicators 1 and 2: One objective of the project was to designate as large an area as possible as community forests in areas particularly relevant for natural resource protection and the preservation of livelihoods. At the beginning of the implementation phase in 2013, 14 of the 21 supported community forests were already formally registered, covering an area of 1.3 million hectares. The remaining 7 community forests were in the process of being established at that time (emerging Community Forests, eCF). Several milestones must be achieved for registration. The most important include clarifying the boundaries with all relevant stakeholders, drafting a constitution, establishing an FMC, conducting a forest inventory to determine the resource stock, and creating a forest management plan. By the end of the implementation phase, all supported community forests and eCFs met the formal requirements for registration according to project documents. The particularly relevant forest management plans were created with the support of the project (see below). Nevertheless, only 3 of the 7 eCFs have been formally registered to date. Since two of the newly registered CFs had particularly large areas, the set area target of 2.84 million hectares and a target achievement rate of 98% was almost reached. The reasons for the failure of the other eCFs vary but are either related to conflicting land claims from different traditional authorities (TAs) or failed attempts to integrate into existing overlapping conservancies.

Nationwide, 43 community forests were formally registered over an area of 6.7 million hectares in the year of the evaluation.¹² Of these, 27 CFs were located in northeastern Namibia, the broader project region of the initiative. Since the designated area figures of the CFs have very limited significance regarding the actual forest stock and condition (see also impact), Indicator 1 is given less weight in assessing effectiveness.

Indicator 3: The desired goal of integrating as many community forests as possible with conservancies was only partially achieved. Of the 21 supported community forests, 17 had geographical overlaps with or borders adjacent to existing conservancies. At the beginning of the implementation phase, 4 community forests were already fully integrated with conservancies, and nine others aimed for integration. By the year of the evaluation, four more integrations had been realized. In the other cases, integration has not yet occurred. In these cases, implementation has failed due to conflicting interests of involved stakeholders at the local or regional level regarding income distribution or the composition of management committees.

Indicator 4: Forest management plans form the basis for the management of CFs. The plans should specify, among other things, the forest care measures as well as the tasks and responsibilities of committee members and users, and outline the usage options and timber extraction quantities. In line with the requirements for conservancies, the management plans should be updated every five years. The financial cooperation recommended an extension to 10 years during the final control. Whether this recommendation was followed comprehensively could not be conclusively determined during the evaluation. The question of what duration currently applies was answered differently by various staff members of DoF.

As part of the project, eleven forest management plans were newly developed or updated. After the end of the technical support phase in 2016, all supported CFs had a valid forest management plan according to project documents. The implementing agency could not provide an overall overview of the current status of the forest

¹¹ The pit latrines could not be used because the pits were full, and according to the committee members, there were no companies in the region that regularly empty the pits with vacuum trucks or pumps. This information could not be verified during the evaluation.

¹² The figures are based on calculations derived from official area data from the local NGO NACSO, an umbrella organization of NGOs promoting CBNRM measures in Namibia. An additional 19 community forests currently have the status of "emerging" (covering an area of 2.94 million hectares).

management plans in the supported CFs upon request. Of the 7 CFs visited during the evaluation mission, only 2 had a currently valid plan. Some community forests have reportedly been waiting for years for an update of the plans. This requires conducting a forest inventory, which is labor- and cost-intensive and can only be done with the support of the Department of Forestry (DoF). Since the DoF lacks the necessary funds from the public budget for this, forest inventories are only conducted when external funds are available. Massive delays or uncertainty about whether these will even take place are the result. Without valid forest management plans, the community forests have no legal means to commercially utilize forest resources. Timber use is therefore limited to personal needs. To cover this, community members must obtain licenses from the FMC. Collecting firewood, however, can be done for personal use without a license.

National legislation (Forest Act and Regulations) provides little guidance on the form and content of the management plans (De Cauwer and Beer 2022). Detailed information on the frequency and personnel requirements for regularly occurring care, control, and protection measures was lacking in the majority of the reviewed plans.¹³ In some cases, there were also no details on the available timber quantities and derived harvest quantities. These observations align with the results of external studies on community forest management in Namibia.¹⁴

There are no official data on the actual implementation of the management plans—accordingly, this can only be verified anecdotally during the evaluation. Committee members of the visited community forests stated that they conduct regular patrols. According to their own statements, this has successfully curbed illegal activities—particularly the unlawful fencing and clearing of forest areas—in many places. However, it was lamented that due to insufficient income, there is not enough money for salaries, fuel, and transport to carry out patrols and other protection and care measures as frequently and intensively as desired. Uniforms are also lacking. Discussions on-site revealed that some FMCs have difficulties meeting basic requirements for reporting, accounting, and monitoring.

Targeted reforestation measures by community forest members occur only sporadically. The same applies to forest fire prevention measures, such as the establishment or maintenance of firebreaks. For these labor-intensive care measures, logistical, material, and technical support from the DoF is necessary. The DoF lacks the budget allocations for this—similar to the forest inventories—so such measures can only be carried out sporadically when external (usually international) funds are available.

Indicator 5: Comprehensive data on income development in the supported community forests were not available at the time of the evaluation, neither in aggregated form nor for individual community forests. However, discussions on-site, project documents, and fragmentary income data from individual community forests paint a clear picture: The majority of CFs do not generate significant income from timber extraction or other activities.¹⁵ Timber use primarily occurs for personal needs based on so-called block permits and is limited to collecting firewood and, to a lesser extent, timber materials. The block permits are transferred to the FMCs by the forestry administration for a small fee. For many CFs, the fees from the sale of licenses for firewood and timber materials represent the only source of income. Since these fees must be paid by the community members themselves, no additional income is generated at the community level.

The economically more successful community forests include those that are part of a conservancy, are engaged in wood processing, or harvest devil's claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*) on a larger scale and sell the harvest to traders. Devil's claw is a medicinal plant that is sold to Europe and Asia. Namibia is one of the world's largest exporters. Some community forests have rich stocks of devil's claw. Its harvest is labor-intensive but provides many households with a source of income. Some community forests have contracts with intermediaries who buy their annual harvest of several tons at a fixed price per kilogram (approximately 65 NAD per kg or about 3.5 EUR/kg). A large portion of the income goes directly to the plant collectors, while a part is retained by the FMC as a management fee. Before the harvest season, the collectors receive training on sustainable harvesting practices. According to interviewed committee members, collectors, and other stakeholders, marketing and selling devil's claw in the current scope would not be possible without the community forest structure.

¹³ Management plans of the following CFs were reviewed during the evaluation: CF Sikanjabuka (datiert auf: Februar 2022), CF Bukalo (Feb. 2022), Zilitene (Feb. 2022), CF Sachona (2010), CF Masida (2004).

¹⁴ E.g.: Benkenstein et al. (2014), De Cauwer and Beer (2022) or Nott et al. (2019).

¹⁵ Available data for the fiscal year 2022/23 in the Zambezi Region indicate an average annual income of approximately 30,000 NAD (about 1,600 EUR) per community forest. In the three years prior, incomes had nearly come to a standstill due to the COVID pandemic.

Only the revenues of the forestry committees (including transfers from the CCFN) are recorded here, not the incomes of individual community members from the potential sale of timber or non-timber forest products.

In some communities, alternative income-generating measures in areas such as gardening, beekeeping, brick-making, or poultry farming were promoted through training measures and the acquisition of equipment. With a few exceptions—including a shop for wood carvings and the carpentry in Ncumcara—most measures remained ineffective. The reasons for the failures are multifaceted. According to the final report of the implementing consultant, the gardening measures failed due to a lack of individual responsibilities and ownership. The promotion of beekeeping was also unsuccessful, as, among other reasons, the equipment was provided at the community rather than individual level. Discussions with locally operating NGOs and representatives of the Forestry Directorate revealed that training in the same activities is still being conducted today as at the time of project implementation. This suggests that at least the content focus is considered relevant by local actors. At the time of the evaluation, the beehives were mostly unoccupied, which respondents attributed to drought conditions. Since droughts are a regularly occurring phenomenon in the project region, the question arises as to whether this approach truly has sufficient potential as a sustainable source of income.

The supported training measures typically lasted one week. Project experiences show that one-week training sessions are insufficient to impart the necessary knowledge for complex ventures such as brick-making, beekeeping, or poultry farming. Instead, continuous support in the form of regularly occurring refresher courses and demand-oriented consulting seems necessary in the initial phase. The employment of an international consulting firm and a local NGO, both of which are no longer active in the project region after the project ended, meant that this continuity was not systematically anchored in the project structure from the beginning. However, selected CFs currently receive support for honey production in the form of training and necessary equipment from a local NGO that was not involved in the implementation of the project being evaluated.

Even after the transfer of usage rights to the communities, continuous support from the Forestry Directorate is necessary. To strengthen the capacities of the implementing agency, 22 training sessions (target value: 6) in areas such as financial management, licensing for timber management, fire management, law enforcement, creating management plans, calculating timber extraction quotas, and reporting were financed as part of the project. A total of 56 staff members (target value: 30) from the DoF participated in these measures. Additionally, the DoF received nine four-wheel-drive vehicles and equipment (computers with accessories, 14 GPS devices) from project funds. Whether the vehicles are still in operation could not be clearly determined during the evaluation mission. However, it became evident during the mission that the DoF lacks the necessary budget to maintain the vehicle fleet comprehensively. There is also sometimes a lack of funds for fuel.

The evaluation team does not have comprehensive data on the socio-demographic composition of the FMCs. In the seven visited community forests, all chairpersons were male. Other positions were also predominantly occupied by men. The constitution of the community forests does not stipulate any requirements regarding the gender composition of the FMCs. Results from scientific studies on community forests in India and Nepal suggest that this leads to untapped potential. For example, a causal study by Leone (2019) shows that an increase in the proportion of women in FMCs led to a significant decrease in firewood extraction in Nepalese community forests. Further studies on Nepal and India observe that a higher proportion of women correlates with stricter (ecologically more sustainable) regulations on timber extraction (Agarwal et al. 2009a) and an improvement in forest conditions (Agarwal et al. 2009b). Since women are generally responsible for collecting firewood and non-timber forest products, they have better knowledge of resource dynamics and a greater incentive to prevent degradation, as this has immediate effects on their workload.

9. Quality of implementation

The strategic management of the project took place as planned through a project steering committee, which was chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the MAWF and consisted of a total of 10 members (5 representatives from the MAWF/DoF, one representative from the MET, two representatives from the Ministry of Land Reform (MLR), as well as, as observers, the project coordinator of the initiative and a local KfW representative). For operational management, a temporary project implementation unit (PMU) was established, supported by an international consultant. The implementation was carried out by the international consultant in collaboration with a local NGO. Compared to other local NGOs, the selected NGO had relatively little experience in the area of CBNRM and no specialized technical experience in forestry.¹⁶

The quality of implementation was assessed as satisfactory by various interlocutors. A deficit in implementation from the perspective of the evaluation team is the late tendering of construction measures. This only occurred at

¹⁶ The last mentioned also holds true for other local NGOs.

the end of the technical consulting phase and extended over several years (see efficiency). The construction quality of the infrastructure measures was assessed as satisfactory at the time of the final control. During the on-site visits during the evaluation, minor construction defects were noted.

10. Non-intended effects (positive or negative)

The construction of office buildings for the FMCs and the purchase of computers and printers had positive unintended effects. In the communities visited during the evaluation trip, the office buildings were often the only buildings available for community meetings or those of individual groups. The buildings also host training and educational measures from other local development initiatives. In all communities equipped with office equipment, the forestry committees offer copying and printing services for a small fee, which is also widely used and saves residents long trips to the nearest town.

In some community forests, conflicts arose during the democratic elections of the committees between individual candidates. In two cases, it was reported that committee members were initially unwilling to relinquish their positions after being ousted and to hand over the equipment (laptops) to their successors. In these cases, the necessary knowledge for administration and reporting was also not passed on.

Rating summary:

The set area targets were largely achieved, although only just under half of the supported community forests have received formal registration. The integration of community forests and conservancies, aimed for economic reasons, has only succeeded for a portion of the supported forests. The funded measures to promote alternative income sources largely remained ineffective. Since the end of technical support from project funds in 2016, many community forests have received little support from the DoF. As a consequence, currently only some of the supported community forests are able to manage the forests ecologically and economically sustainably. They lack the necessary resource information, management plans, and income potentials. Therefore, the module objective could only be partially achieved. Considering the limited project funds and challenging framework conditions, effectiveness is assessed as still somewhat successful.

Effectivity: 3

Efficiency

11. Production efficiency

At the time of the project review, total costs of 4.025 million EUR were planned, which were exceeded by approximately 230,000 EUR at project completion. The financial cooperation funded approximately 3.5 million EUR of the expenses, while the remaining costs were borne by the Namibian government. About 60% of the total costs were attributed to physical investments, and 40% to other costs, with the most expensive item being the expenses for consulting services. This results in a very high cost share for the implementation consultant for a financial cooperation project. The actual consulting costs amounted to 1.71 million EUR, nearly 70% above the originally planned expenses during project conception. According to the final control report, the cost increases were due to the selected implementation consultant's offer being 265,000 EUR higher than originally budgeted for this purpose. The awarding took place through an international tender. Additionally, at the request of the implementing agency and with the consent of the financial cooperation, the contract with the implementation consultant was expanded in 2016 to include a subcontract with an architect for the planning of infrastructure measures and the supervision of their construction, which further increased costs by 353,000 EUR. The cost increases came at the expense of training, marketing measures, audits, project evaluations, and other items. The fund utilization audits conducted as part of the financial cooperation progress controls found no indications of misuse of funds.

There were significant delays. An initial duration of about 3 years was planned. The technical support component of the program was completed within the planned timeframe (end of 2013 to end of 2016). However, the tendering for the larger construction measures only took place in the last half of the technical support phase. The project documents state that a needs assessment had to be conducted first. During the evaluation, it could not be conclusively determined why the needs assessments took so long or whether they should have been conducted

earlier.¹⁷ The tendering for the construction services was carried out in two lots and was won by two Namibian companies. These companies repeatedly faced significant funding shortfalls during the construction phase and were reportedly overwhelmed according to the implementation responsible and KfW project managers. Whether tendering the nine construction projects in individual contracts would have been more efficient cannot be answered retrospectively. Presumably, the implementation could have been faster, but the effort for tendering and administration would have been higher.

The delays negatively impact production efficiency. As a result, (moderate) costs for the implementation consultant were incurred over a significantly longer period. Additionally, capacities were tied up at DoF and KfW, albeit to a limited extent.

Based on the available information, it is not possible to assess whether the outputs could have been delivered more efficiently with an alternative input deployment. Often, in forest protection projects, production efficiency is assessed by relating costs to the protected area or benefiting population. From the evaluator's perspective, the local context is not well suited for such a measure. On the one hand, the designated community forest areas have limited significance regarding the actual forest cover and qualitative condition of the forests (see impact). On the other hand, the support measures of the individual community forests varied significantly in content and finance, so that a simple, unweighted summation of the areas of all supported community forests would not adequately reflect the project support. Therefore, in assessing production efficiency, we also rely on the assessments of various stakeholders, who mostly rated the efficiency of the project as still satisfactory.¹² **Allocation efficiency**

The project has promoted the implementation and scaling of the community forest approach in Namibia with limited resources: It has established some lasting institutional structures (FMCs and registered community forests) and raised awareness for forest protection and the empowerment of the local population. Despite challenging framework conditions and only limited support for CFs, the forest stocks have largely been preserved (see next chapter). Whether higher effectiveness could have been achieved through alternative resource allocation cannot be assessed in the context of the evaluation.

In assessing allocation efficiency, it is positively noted that the protection effects achieved so far preserve important ecosystem services from which the entire Namibian population benefits. The northeast is considered Namibia's "breadbasket." The forests bind nutrients that are important for soil productivity. They also provide protection against erosion and desertification and contribute to water retention. The forests serve as habitats for fauna and contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and the promotion of nature-based tourism. Furthermore, they act as CO₂ sinks. Many of the mentioned ecosystem services have the characteristics of public goods (non-rivalry in and non-excludability from use) and are therefore typically not protected/provided to the socially desired extent through market mechanisms. This justifies the use of public funds, which in this case can be considered financially additional.

Rating summary:

Higher costs, a significantly longer duration, and comparatively high consulting costs reduce the production efficiency of the project. An alternative resource allocation would likely not have increased the effectiveness of the project. The public good nature of the forests justifies the use of public funds. Due to the deficits in production efficiency, overall efficiency is assessed as only partially successful.

Efficiency: 3

¹⁷ The implementation consultant responsible during the technical phase could not be located due to a lack of contact information and therefore could not be interviewed as part of the evaluation. Former project managers from the financial cooperation and the implementing agency could not recall the implementation details from nearly 10 years ago. Additionally, the reviewed project documents did not provide more specific information regarding the causes of the delays in construction planning.

Impact13. Overarching (Intended) developmental changes

The overarching objective of the project at the impact level was the preservation of the supported community forests as a livelihood for the target group in northeastern Namibia. A central challenge for evaluating the impact is the fact that there is currently no comprehensive forest monitoring in Namibia, and therefore no objective data on the qualitative condition of the forests (De Cauwer and Beer, 2022). Forest inventory data are only sporadically available for individual community forests and are often incomplete or outdated.

In line with the program goal of the project, the area registered as community forest in Namibia was defined as a target indicator during the project review. This indicator is at the wrong level of effect (output instead of impact) and does not meet all SMART criteria¹⁸, which is why it is not used to measure the achievement of objectives. Instead, the change in forest cover of the supported community forests is referenced for the evaluation, based on satellite data from Global Forest Watch. An important limitation for the analysis is the generally very low tree canopy cover in Namibia. A global study based on high-resolution Landsat 7 satellite data found that Namibia has only 13,000 hectares of forest with a tree canopy cover of 25% or more (Hansen et al. 2013). For the analysis in this evaluation, the common definition of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is used. According to this definition, areas larger than 0.5 hectares with a tree canopy cover of more than 10% are considered forests. Thus, almost all of Namibia's forests have a tree canopy cover between 10% and 25%. This means that only a portion of the designated community forest areas can have their canopy cover change rates observed and analyzed over time. Another limitation is that at the time of the evaluation, there were no data available for supported but still unregistered community forests (4 out of 21 cases). Additionally, it should be noted that the underlying data only reflect gross deforestation. Any increase in forest areas due to reforestation measures and natural regeneration is therefore not captured. Since no reforestation measures were promoted as part of the project, this is unlikely to have significant effects on determining the project's contribution to achieving its objectives.

Table 2: Achievement of impact

Indicator	Status PP	Target Value according to EPE	Actual Value at EPE
Change in average annual deforestation rate after formal registration	Annual average for community forests registered in 2006 (n=7) for the period 2000-2006: 0.04% Value for community forests registered in 2013 (n=7) for the period 2000-2013: 0.07%	The average annual deforestation rate is declining or at least constant	Partially achieved. Annual average for community forests registered in 2006 (n=7) for the period 2007-2023: 0.07% Value for community forests registered in 2013 (n=7) for the period 2014-2023: 0.06%

14. Contribution to overarching (Intended) developmental changes

For the evaluation, annual data on forest cover for the period 2000-2023 are available for a total of 39 community forests. Among them are 17 community forests that were supported as part of the project. In the base year 2000, the 39 community forests together had a forest area—defined as an area with a tree canopy density of more than 10% — of 121,668 hectares; in 2023, this value was 120,153 hectares. This corresponds to an absolute decrease of 1,515 hectares and a relative decrease of 1.25%. The same analysis for the subgroup of community forests funded by the project shows a forest area of 82,154 hectares in the base year and 80,945 hectares in the last observation year 2023. This results in a slight decrease in the forest cover of the supported community forests of 1.47% over a period of 23 years, or an annual decrease of 0.06%. It is noteworthy in this context that only 6% of the total area (1.316 million hectares) of the 17 supported community forests considered in this analysis is

¹⁸ The indicator is neither time-bound nor specific, as (1) it also includes areas that lie outside the intervention zone and thus have no (direct) connection to the measures, and (2) the area formally designated as community forest does not adequately inform about the condition of the forest and therefore only very limitedly about the achievement of objectives.

actually forested (according to the common FAO definition). In four of the supported community forests, the forest area was never larger than 100 hectares during the observation period. This underscores the limited harvesting potential of the community forests.

The analysis of any changes in deforestation rates after formal registration presents an unclear picture for the community forests funded by CFN-II. In the present sample, 7 of the 21 supported community forests were registered in 2006. Before 2006, the average deforestation of these community forests was 0.04% per year; afterward, it was 0.07%, thus slightly higher. For the community forests registered in 2013 (n=7), a different pattern emerges: In the period before their registration from 2000-2013, the average annual deforestation rate was 0.07%; in the following years, it was slightly lower at 0.06%. The target set at the time of the evaluation was therefore only partially achieved.

Figure 1 shows the cumulative percentage of deforestation over the period 2000-2023 for the community forests funded by the project, for which satellite data were available (17 out of 21), and which were already registered in 2006. The solid line shows the development of deforestation, while the dotted line shows the linear average trend of deforestation over the 23 years. If the deforestation curve is above (below) the trend line, the deforestation rate in the respective observation period was lower (higher) than the average rate. Figure 2 shows the development for the supported community forests that were registered in 2013. In Figure 1, it is evident that the deforestation trend for the community forests registered in 2006 was lower in the years 2000-2006 (the cumulative deforestation is above the dotted trend line) than in the years immediately following registration. Thus, the official registration did not lead to a noticeable protective effect here. The curve for the community forests registered in 2013 in Figure 2, on the other hand, shows a temporary decrease in deforestation between 2013 and 2017, which coincided with the project implementation period. Since then, deforestation has again followed its average trend from the past 23 years.

The data show that the community forest approach could not reverse the deforestation trend. However, this does not mean that the approach is entirely ineffective. It is possible that deforestation would have progressed more rapidly without the protective efforts of the communities and the forestry authority. However, verifying this hypothesis is not possible based on the available data.¹⁹

In several discussions with representatives of the target group, it was emphasized that the project contributed to a greater awareness within the communities of the forest's value as a source of firewood, building materials, and food. The transfer of usage rights and management responsibilities has strengthened the self-confidence and agency of the communities, enabling them to better protect the forest as part of their livelihoods from external interests. The formal registration as a community forest plays an important role in the enforcement of usage restrictions, according to the interviewed committee members and staff of the forestry directorate. This, along with the fact that regular patrols are conducted through the forests, makes it plausible that the community forests and thus the project measures contribute to the preservation of the forests.

¹⁹ To enable causal inferences, a counterfactual study would be necessary (what would forest development look like if no community forest had been established?). There are no comprehensive data for unprotected, otherwise comparable forest areas regarding topography, proximity to roads, population density, soil characteristics, and other relevant factors that typically influence deforestation, which could have been compared with the deforestation trend of the supported community forests. A comparison between the forests registered in 2006 and those registered in 2013 is also not meaningful in this case, as the two groups exhibited different deforestation trends before the relevant comparison period.

Figure 1: Deforestation Trends in Supported Community Forests Registered in 2006.²⁰

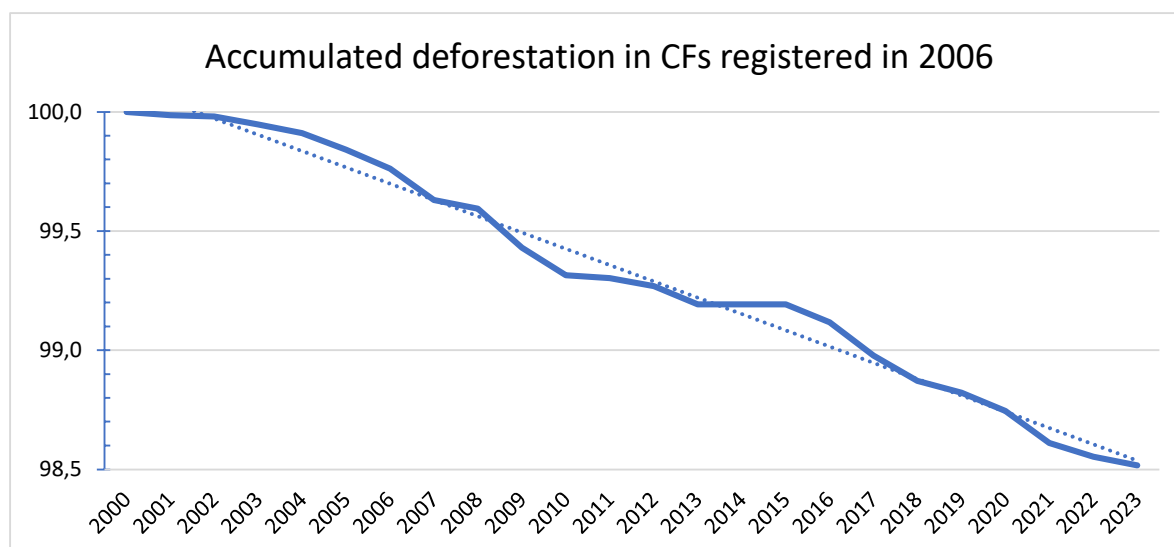
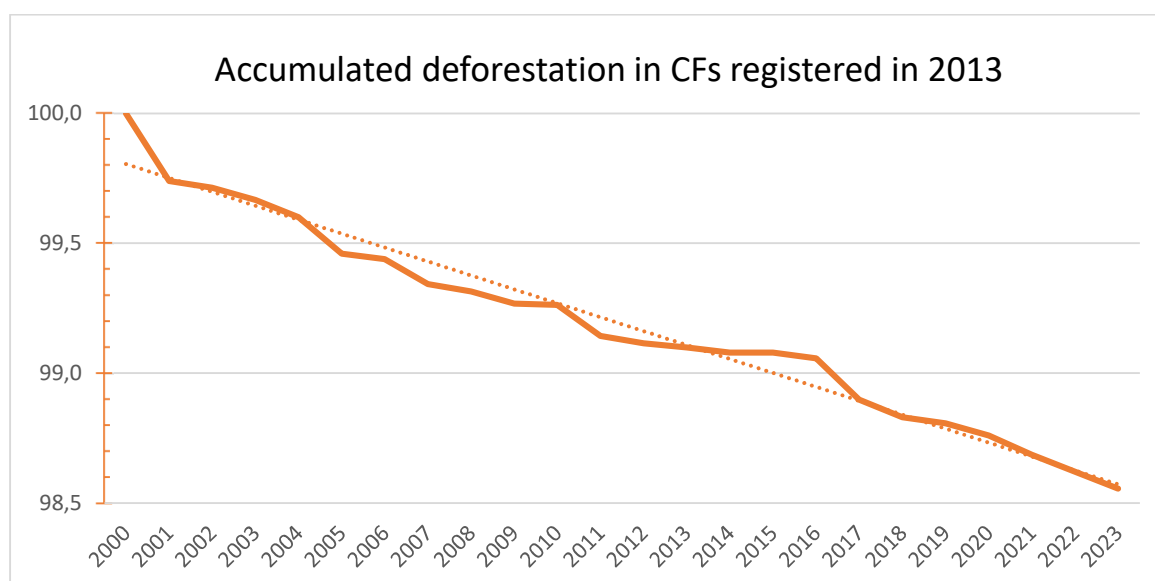


Figure 2: Deforestation Trends in Supported Community Forests Registered in 2013.²¹



15. Contribution to overarching (unintended) developmental changes

Neither in the project documents nor during the evaluation trip on-site were there indications of unintended effects at the impact level.

Rating summary: The evaluation of satellite data shows that only a small proportion of the areas designated as community forests is actually forested according to the internationally applicable forest definition. Furthermore, the evaluation indicates a slight but continuous decline in forest cover in the supported community forests between 2000 and 2023. The data do not suggest that the formal establishment led to a decrease in the deforestation rate. The hypothesis expressed by some respondents that deforestation would have progressed even faster without the establishment of community forests cannot be verified based on the available data. Overall, the

²⁰ Source: Own representation based on satellite images from Global Forest Watch.

²¹ Source: Own representation based on satellite images from Global Forest Watch.

impact is assessed as limitedly successful, as 98.5% of the forest areas have been preserved over the last 23 years, thus achieving the primary objective at least partially.

Impact: 3

Sustainability16. *Capacities of persons concerned*

All community forests funded by the project and formally registered still held the status of community forest at the time of the evaluation. The community forests are managed by elected committees that regularly report to the DoF. The evaluation shows that most CFs generate insufficient income to make a relevant monetary contribution to the livelihoods of their members. In most cases, the income is not enough to cover the costs of patrols or to pay committee members compensation for their work. More costly management and maintenance measures, such as maintaining firebreaks, financing forest inventories, or replacing worn-out equipment, are unlikely to be financed from their own resources in the medium to long term.

During the project review, personnel shortages and a lack of financial resources in the DoF were identified as central risks to the sustainability of the project. During the implementation phase, these risks could be temporarily mitigated but not overcome. Since the recession in 2017, structural bottlenecks have reportedly worsened according to staff from the DoF. While salaries are paid, other budget allocations are too low, meaning that operational expenses and central management tasks must predominantly be financed from project funds and thus only occur when external funds are available.

All respondents assessed the separation of the DoF from the Ministry of Agriculture and its integration into the Ministry of Environment as a good decision that allows for a more coherent natural resource protection policy. The personnel changes in the leadership of the DoF were also welcomed by all sides as a step towards stricter enforcement of existing laws. DoF staff also reported that the MEFT can mobilize significantly more external funds, which also benefits the DoF with more third-party funding.**17. Contribution to support for sustainable capacities**

The project has made an important contribution to consolidating the community forest approach in Namibia and has established the foundations for community-based forest management in many areas. Many community members have learned new skills through training measures that they can use beyond the context of forest management. The capacities for monitoring and implementing management plans have improved through training measures, the acquisition of durable goods, and the construction of buildings. A challenge is that knowledge is not always passed on after personnel changes in the forestry management committees, and the DoF's budget for regular refresher courses is insufficient. As a result, some forestry committees lack the necessary competencies to manage the community forests.

According to the target group, the financed infrastructure provides a lasting benefit—albeit not necessarily in terms of the actual objective. In the affected communities, the community forest management buildings financed from project funds are used for various purposes by different social groups. In some places, there was previously no public building available for meetings. The construction of a craft shop and the equipping of carpentry workshops with machines have also helped to strengthen local value creation in specific areas.

However, the project has not succeeded in improving the income situation of the target group. Revenues from timber extraction fall short of expectations, and the measures to promote alternative income sources have largely been ineffective, with few exceptions. The evaluation could not determine how useful the training measures for income-generating activities were perceived by the target group. There were neither refresher courses nor a functioning demand-oriented consulting service after the one-week training sessions. The employment of an international consulting firm and a local NGO, both of which are no longer active in the project region after the project ended, meant that this continuity was not anchored in the project structure.

Whether the project has led to an improvement in the living conditions of the target group, despite the low income effects, cannot be definitively answered. Undoubtedly, local people benefit from the preservation of the forests, whose ecosystem services are essential for their livelihoods. The empowerment of communities to have control over resources that are vital for their survival is valuable in itself. Various stakeholders emphasized that community forests and the usage rights granted by their formal designation strengthen the position and influence of local communities in land use planning. At the same time, community forests facilitate regional land use planning, as

interest balancing has already taken place at the local level during boundary demarcation and management planning. Some community members also reported that they take pride in their responsibility for their forest. However, there were also critical voices complaining about the costs of timber extraction and usage restrictions.

The project contributed to the temporary strengthening of the DoF's implementation capacities for monitoring and oversight of community forests through the acquisition of vehicles and equipment, as well as the financing of training measures (see effectiveness). Whether the material acquisitions are still in use could not be determined. Fundamental deficits regarding personnel and resource allocation due to insufficient budget allocations could only be limitedly and temporarily compensated. A sustainable strengthening of the implementing agency could not be achieved and would not have been expected given the limited funding.

18. Durability of effects over time

Despite the earnest efforts of the communities and the forestry directorate, significant risks remain for the sustainable management and preservation of the forests.

The greatest threat to forest areas is likely the steadily growing population and the increasing demand for grazing and arable land.²² This increases the pressure on usage and increasingly endangers the forest stock.²³ Representatives of visited community forests reported more frequent cases of people from other communities encroaching into the forests to keep their livestock and establish new fields. In some cases, these are wealthy and politically influential individuals who live in Windhoek or other cities and keep their livestock on communal land.

A closely related threat to the durability of the effects is unresolved land rights issues and land use conflicts. Not all relevant stakeholders accept the land use plans of the community forests. On-site reports indicated cases where traditional authorities grant land use rights in community forests to private actors without prior consultation with the responsible FMCs. The establishment of a community forest requires the approval of the relevant traditional authority, which in turn has the right to request the dissolution of the community forest. Although this requires the approval of the FMC, traditional authorities can effectively undermine the authority of the FMCs by granting grazing rights. This example illustrates the fragility of the approach in the absence of economic successes. Land use conflicts or the lack of enforcement of land use rights are also identified as relevant risks in project documents.

Uncontrolled bushfires and forest fires pose another threat. Due to scarce resources, firebreaks are not maintained or only irregularly, increasing the risk of extensive forest fires. Most fires are set by people to clear land or stimulate grass growth. Most fires occur at the end of the dry season, when a significant amount of biomass can burn, and tree canopies are regularly caught and destroyed by the flames (De Cauwer and Beer, 2022). With the growing population, an increase in fire risk is to be expected. Additionally, it is anticipated that the predicted increase in dryness and heat due to climate change will further elevate the risk of forest fires in the future.

The personnel and material resource shortages at the forestry directorate represent another ongoing risk to sustainability. A direct consequence of this is the often-insufficient support for community forests and FMCs. The evaluation shows that some FMCs are not sufficiently functional and still require support. The lack of competencies and the inadequate resource allocation of some FMCs pose a risk to the sustainable management of the forests. Currently, the community forests funded by CFN-II still receive regular payments from COVID special funds from the CCFN to finance maintenance, protection, and other forest management-related measures. For some of the community forests visited on-site, these were the most important source of income. The special funds from the CCFN are expected to be exhausted in the first half of 2025. Whether there will be support from the CCFN for community forests afterward is uncertain.

The lack of nationwide forest inventory data and a digital recording of allowable logging and extraction quotas, as well as issued permits, is viewed as a structural problem that jeopardizes sustainability. Currently, there are no data on the total amount of wood extracted from the forests or the total number of permits issued. Thus, central information for sustainable forest management is lacking.

²² This is the result of numerous scientific studies on tropical dry forests (e.g., De Cauwer et al., 2016 and Pröpper et al., 2010) and corresponds to the assessments of various stakeholders during the evaluation.

²³ This challenge could likely be most effectively addressed through productivity increases in agricultural production on already existing areas.

The evaluation has shown that most community forests generate little or no income from forest management. Without external assistance, this is unlikely to change in the future. The results of current forest inventories and scientific studies indicate that the tree stocks in most community forests are insufficient for commercial management. The annual extraction quotas are so low due to the limited tree stock that even after the merger of several community forests, the harvest volume would not be sufficient to be commercially attractive (Nott et al. 2019). Discussions with representatives of various FMCs also revealed that they often have little or no knowledge of the commercial timber market, lack contacts with companies, and have no idea of appropriate prices. In the past, timber was sold at very low prices (150-200 NAD per tree, which corresponded to about 10 EUR per tree at the time of the evaluation).

More promising is the sale of non-timber forest products, particularly devil's claw. Namibia has established export structures and a 90% share of the global market. Devil's claw grows in large quantities in the forests of the Kavango and Zambezi regions, making overexploitation unlikely according to expert assessments. Since the majority of the income directly benefits community forest members and only a small portion flows into the community forests' coffers, structural income problems persist. As long as the direct income of the community forests remains so low, there is a risk that competing land use forms will prevail in the medium or long term.²⁴

At the same time, it should be noted that the much greater benefit for the predominantly subsistence-living population comes from the preservation of the forest's ecosystem services, rather than from commercial timber use. Over the past years, it has been possible to preserve the forest stocks despite declining tree canopy cover. During the on-site visits as part of the evaluation, the impression was formed that the majority of community forest members are aware of the central importance of forest protection and are willing to advocate for the preservation of their forest despite adverse circumstances. For this to succeed in the future, there is an urgent need for stronger technical and material support from the DoF and Namibian politics.

Additionally, a sustainable financing instrument that financially rewards community members for the positive externalities associated with their protection and maintenance measures—particularly soil and water protection as a basis for agricultural production, habitat protection for wildlife as a basis for the booming tourism industry, and to a lesser extent, the preservation of CO₂ sinks—could promote the preservation of the remaining forest stocks. The CCFN already exists as an instrument that could play such a role in the long term with more comprehensive capitalization. There are also considerations for bilateral cooperation between Namibia and Germany to place a stronger focus on the development and expansion of sustainable financing mechanisms in the area of natural resource protection. It will be important to ensure that the funding focus is not only on national parks and conservancies but also includes community forests. At this point in time, it must be stated that their preservation and thus the durability of the effects are at significant risk.

Rating summary:

The project has succeeded in temporarily strengthening the capacities of the forestry directorate and contributing to the expansion of the community forest approach. Some of the supported community forests have been consolidated; however, the majority of community forests generate little or no income to finance maintenance and protection measures and are only very limitedly functional. With the expected cessation of temporary support from CCFN funds in the first half of 2025, the income situation is likely to worsen. Additionally, there are enormous structural challenges, foremost population growth and increasing usage pressure, which already pose a serious threat to the preservation of the forests. Currently, the resilience of the communities and the forestry directorate is too low to address these challenges in the medium and long term. Therefore, sustainability is assessed as rather unsuccessful.

Sustainability: 4

²⁴ For example, there is a risk that traditional authorities (TAs) may withdraw their support for community forests if income remains consistently low, as they receive a percentage of the revenues.

Overall rating: 4

The project pursued a highly relevant approach in the area of natural resource protection, complementing the bilateral cooperation between Namibia and Germany. It has played a central role in scaling and consolidating the approach. In some communities, formal registration as a community forest has been achieved, thus legally establishing the basis for community-based management. As a result, the project has enabled some communities to gain self-determination over resources that are essential for their survival. Despite these successes, the project has not succeeded in creating economically and ecologically sustainable structures. The majority of supported community forests do not have valid management plans. Timber use is limited to personal needs; the potential for commercial timber use is low. The promotion of alternative income sources has largely been ineffective, and the intended integration with conservancies has not succeeded in many cases. It is positively noted that some community members generate income from the sale of devil's claw, which would not be possible without the community forest structure. In most cases, however, the community forest approach is not economically viable. De facto, the communities are currently mostly unable to manage the forests ecologically and economically sustainably. Thus, the module objective has only been partially achieved and under significant constraints.

Nevertheless, the overarching development policy goal of preserving the forests has at least been partially achieved. It should be noted that, primarily due to habitat characteristics, only a small portion of the designated community forest area is actually forested. The evaluation of satellite data shows that forest cover has continuously declined over the past 23 years, but at a relatively low rate, so that approximately 98.5% of the forest stock from 2000 is still preserved today. It is possible that deforestation would have been higher without regular patrols, the increased awareness of the importance of forest protection among the target group, and the legally formal exclusion of third parties. However, this cannot be verified due to a lack of suitable data. It is also not possible to make reliable statements regarding the ecological condition of the forests.

Population growth and increasing usage pressure, low income potentials, and a lack of support options from the forestry authority, as well as the effects of climate change, already threaten the future of community forests today. Currently, the resilience of the communities and the forestry directorate is too low to address these challenges in the medium and long term. At this point in time, the sustainability of the project appears to be significantly at risk. For this reason, the overall project is assessed as no longer successful, with a rating of 4.

Contributions to Agenda 2030

The project was conceived before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda but still contributes to sustainable development, primarily to SDG 15 "Life on Land." Through the positive climate effects of forest protection, it also contributes to SDG 13 "Climate Action." The project aims to preserve the livelihoods of the predominantly poor population in northeastern Namibia and thus contributes to SDG 1 "No Poverty," despite only minimal income effects. The project aligns with the fundamental principles of the 2030 Agenda: the supported community forest approach aims to promote social, economic, and ecological development by providing the local population with better opportunities to generate economic returns through the transfer of usage rights to forest resources. The project fits into Namibia's national CBNRM strategy. Furthermore, the project is inclusive in that all population groups in the target region are affected by the approach. No negative unintended effects are known.

Project-Specific Strengths and Weaknesses, as well as Cross-Project Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The strengths and weaknesses of the project include, in particular:

- The focus on a smaller number of priority community forests was a sensible decision for efficiency and effectiveness reasons, given the limited budget.
- By combining funding for infrastructure and equipment, as well as various training for the target group and implementing agency, the project aimed for a holistic strengthening of the community forest approach.
- The project enabled communities to gain self-determination over resources that are essential for their survival.
- The financed buildings provide significant benefits to the affected communities. In many places, they are the only public buildings available for meeting purposes.
- There were significant delays in the implementation of infrastructure measures. Despite low complexity, the construction work extended over several years.
- The measures to promote alternative income sources were ineffective.
- There were no measures for the medium-term securing of the achieved effects. Due to a lack of personnel and material resources, the supported community forests receive little support from the responsible authorities after project completion.
- Potential gender opportunities remained untapped.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned:

- Community-based approaches, where usage rights and management responsibilities are transferred to the local population, usually require several years of support and consultation in carrying out administrative tasks, especially when the communities have no prior experience in budget management and reporting. Since the need for support may extend beyond the project duration, collaboration with organizations that operate independently in the field is recommended. This increases the likelihood of continuous support for the communities that lasts beyond the project duration.
- Experiences from this project and other contexts show that scaling community-based approaches is associated with high risks regarding economic viability. Pioneers often have particularly favorable conditions (e.g., high resource availability, particularly motivated individuals, high ownership) and receive more support, making them tend to be more successful than latecomers. This should be considered when deciding to expand the approach, especially in communicating the potentials to the target group. Otherwise, false expectations regarding economic opportunities may arise.
- Measures to promote alternative income from resource-conserving activities—such as beekeeping or poultry farming—require recurring training and long-term support. The necessary knowledge cannot be imparted in a one-week training session. Additionally, project experiences show that when allocating equipment or establishing orchards as community property, there is a risk that no one develops ownership, leaving the investments unused.
- When awarding construction contracts for small-scale infrastructure measures to local SMEs, delays due to capacity bottlenecks on the part of the contractors should be anticipated and generously planned for. Close monitoring of construction progress and (moderate) penalties for initial contract violations are also recommended.

Evaluation approach and methodology

Evaluation Methodology

The ex-post evaluation follows the methodology of a Rapid Appraisal, meaning a data-driven qualitative contribution analysis, and represents an expert judgment. In this process, effects are attributed to the project based on plausibility considerations, which rely on careful analysis of documents, data, facts, and impressions. This also includes, when possible, the use of digital data sources and the application of modern techniques (e.g., satellite data, online surveys, geocoding). Causes for any contradictory information are investigated, attempts are made to clarify them, and the assessment is based on statements that can be confirmed by multiple information sources (triangulation) whenever possible.

Documents:

Modulvorschlag, Abschlusskontrollbericht und jährliche Berichte für CFN II und CFN I, Evaluierungsbericht für CFN I, Inception Report, Abschlussberichte des Consultants für CFN I und CFN II, MEFT, Forest Act, Traditional Authority Act, MEFT State of Community Conservation Report 2022,

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Pröpper, M., Gröngröft, A., Falk, T., Eschenbach, A., Fox, T., Gessner, U., Hecht, J., Hinz, M. O., Huettich, C., Hurek, T., Kangombe, F. N., Keil, M., Kirk, M., Mapaure, C., Mills, A., Mukuya, R., Namwoonde, N. E., Overmann, J., Petersen, A., Reinhold-Hurek, B., Schneiderat, U., Strohbach, B. J., Lück-Vogel, M., Wisch, U. (2010). Causes and perspectives of land-cover change through expanding cultivation in Kavango. – In: Hoffman, M. T., Schmiedel, U., Jürgens, N. [Eds.]: Biodiversity in southern Africa. Volume 3: Implications for land use and management: pp. 1–31, Klaus Hess Publishers, Göttingen and Windhoek.

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UNEP (2010). The Evidence Base for Community Forest Management as a Mechanism for Supplying Global Environmental Benefits and Improving Local Welfare: A STAP advisory document.

Data sources and analytical tools:

Annual reports of DoF Zambezi, Management plans and forest inventory reports for several community forests, Satellite data of Global Forest Watch on development of forest coverage in 39 CFs

Interviewpartners:

DoF, MEFT, target group, other donors, experts, NGO representatives

The analysis of effects is based on assumed causal relationships documented in the impact matrix developed during the project review and possibly updated during the ex-post evaluation. The evaluation report presents arguments explaining why certain influencing factors were identified for the observed effects and why the examined project likely contributed to them (contribution analysis). The context of the development measure is considered regarding its influence on the results. The conclusions are related to the availability and quality of the data basis. An evaluation concept serves as the reference framework for the evaluation.

The method provides a balanced cost-benefit ratio for project evaluations, where the gain in knowledge and evaluation effort are balanced, allowing for a systematic assessment of the effectiveness of financial cooperation projects across all evaluations. Therefore, individual ex-post evaluations cannot fully meet the requirements of scientific scrutiny in terms of a clear causal analysis.

The following aspects limited the evaluation:

- Lack of data on the actual implementation of forest management plans and missing forest inventory data for the supported community forests for at least two different observation points.
- Lack of data on the development of forest areas on comparable areas that are not registered as community forests.

Rating Methodology

Projects are rated on a six-point scale for each of the OECD DAC criteria. The scale is as follows:

Level 1 very successful: result that clearly exceeds expectations

Level 2 successful: fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings

Level 3 moderately successful: project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate

Level 4 moderately unsuccessful: significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results

Level 5 unsuccessful: despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate

Level 6 highly unsuccessful: the project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

The overall rating on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all six individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Rating levels 1-3 of the overall rating denote a “successful” project while rating levels 4-6 denote an “unsuccessful” project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally “successful” only if the achievement of the project objective (“Effectiveness”), the impact on the overall objective (“Impact”) and the sustainability are rated at least “moderately successful” (level 3).

List of abbreviations:

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
CF	Community Forest (Gemeindewald)
CFN	Community Forests Namibia
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst
DoF	Directorate of Forestry
EUR	Euro
eCF	emerging community forest / Gemeindewald in der Gründungsphase
FC	Financial cooperation
FC E	FC Evaluation
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit
GIZ	Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
ha	Hectar
MAWF	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry
MEFT	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism
MV	Modulvorschlag
NRO	Non-governmental organization
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
TA	Traditional authority
TC	Technical cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	US Dollar
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

The annex to this report is available upon request (german only).

About this publication

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