

**ECOSYSTEM-BASED ADAPTATION AND
FOREST RESTORATION IN VULNERABLE
RURAL COMMUNITIES OF THE CARRIBIEAN
BIOLOGICAL CORRIDOR**

Mid-term Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report – Executive Summary

Prepared for

**The International Climate
Initiative (IKI)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of the project

The project "Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Forest Restoration in Vulnerable Rural Communities of the Caribbean Biological Corridor", also designated as "Comunidades Caribeñas Resilientes" (in Spanish) / "Communautés Caribéennes Résilientes" (in French) (CCR), was officially approved in March 2020 and its end date set for August 2027. The project has an approved budget of 20.164.500€ in grants from the International Climate Initiative (IKI). As other IKI projects, CCR is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA), and managed by the Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft (ZUG). CCR aims to improve livelihoods and increase the resilience and adaptability of people and ecosystems of rural communities to climate change along the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC). The project works in Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti, in two regions in each country. The project is implemented by Welthungerhilfe (WHH), OroVerde and five local executing agencies.

Evaluation objectives and scope

The purpose of this Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to facilitate the synthesis of lessons learned, to increase accountability and transparency, and to support evidence-based decision making to steer the project. The MTE was conducted between February 2022 and September 2022, by five evaluators, led by a team leader. The evaluation combines a set of standard questions coming from the standard IKI evaluation criteria (relevance; planning, steering and coherence; effectiveness; transformational impact and sustainability; social and environmental safeguards; standard indicators) and additional more project-specific learning questions. Findings are based on desk review, interviews and direct observation. A variety of sources have been triangulated to provide evidence-based findings.

Main findings

Relevance

CCR is aligned with a wide range of national legislation, policies, strategies and plans on climate change adaptation and mitigation, and on sustainable development. The relevance of project objectives and approach to partner institutions is mixed. While alignment with rural development or/and biodiversity conservation is high, alignment in terms of climate-informed action is limited. In all three countries, local governments and municipalities have showed high interest in the project. The project also responds to the needs and priorities of affected populations. The project is fully aligned with regional (CBC) needs and priorities. The project is consistent with the Paris Agreement, the Glasgow Climate Pact, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Planning, Steering and Coherence

The implicit overall project logic was suitable to achieve project objectives. In the design, the budget, which was significant, covered the main activities, but during implementation several external shocks have negatively affected the capacity of the budget to fund project activities. The results framework is not fully adequate. Project design allocated significant time to the project, which is adequate for a development project and particularly for an EbA and CBA project, but more time may be needed. The DAC markers were not addressed in the project documents as they were not mandatory when the project was designed but some DAC markers are relevant and already addressed by the project.

The project monitoring system has not been fully used for project steering. The project has systematically reflected on contextual changes and adaptive management actions were taken on the ground to a certain extent. The initially designed steering structure underestimated the complexity of project management and coordination. In 2021, a new governance and management structure was developed with the partner institutions to increase their participation in the strategic decisions of the project. Steering and governance with government partners remain a challenge in DR and Haiti. At regional level, steering and governance are adequate. Implementation by WHH and OroVerde is appropriate, but human resources are insufficient and there is a need for more local presence from OroVerde. At the local level, the quality of execution is mixed, with strong implementation experience and relevant technical skills, but with room for improvement in the integration of the climate lens. ZUG' support is adequately addressing the needs of the project and its partners. Further support on political steering could be useful to address policy and advocacy challenges that project partners cannot fully address.

Coordination is mostly adequate at the global level and especially regional levels. The quality of coordination with relevant actors varies significantly between partner countries, but is generally good at national and especially local levels. This coordination has resulted in some cooperation and synergies. However, most of the relations and synergies that have been developed have not yet led to formal partnerships, although a few can be pointed out.

Effectiveness

As of December 2021, progress was unsatisfactory in all output indicators. In most indicators, no quantitative progress has been made. Where quantitative progress has been made, this is not considerable. That said, some important activities have been conducted and some outputs delivered in the DR and Haiti. Moreover, as of June 2022, the project seems to be in a good position to accelerate delivery. As of December 2021, there was no quantitative progress in any of five outcome indicators, although qualitatively progress on capacity building, planning and pilot ecosystem restoration activities may have allowed some progress on the adoption of EbA practices by direct target groups (one of the five outcomes). It is too early to identify progress on the other outcome indicators. The planned and implemented activities and outputs do contribute to the foreseen outcome. Several barriers and external factors have caused delays to project implementation. Some of them have been overcome or are currently on the way to being solved, but others may affect project activities for an extended period of time. The project should be extended.

Transformational impact and sustainability

The potential of achieving the expected adaptation related impacts at the local level is considerable in Cuba, and more limited in DR and Haiti, where support from OroVerde will be key to advance on them. Impacts at the national level are likely to be limited. The scale of interventions is too low for significant adaptation impact at the regional level. Biodiversity impacts will likely be high in Cuba

and indirect, but not necessarily minor, in DR and Haiti. In the three countries climate change mitigation impacts will be indirect, but not necessarily minor. The social and economic co-benefits are likely to be more important in DR and Haiti where partner institutions have extended experience in supporting sustainable agriculture. In DR access to basic infrastructure will also be enhanced. The project has promoted female income generating activities. Unintendedly, the project has increased the interest of young people in agricultural activities, and social cohesion.

The project contributes to transformative change towards a climate neutral, climate resilient and biodiversity-friendly society to a great extent. It does so by putting in place preconditions for systemic change. To that end CCR produces knowledge, raises awareness and builds technical capacity on EbA at different levels, creates new systems of economic incentives and strengthens governance systems. CCR also creates opportunities for horizontal and vertical scalability, especially at the local level. At the national level, EbA is overall well positioned in the three countries and regional and global processes will likely foster interest in replication and funds to do so.

The contribution of political partners, implementing partners and target groups to the sustainability of project results is mixed. It is difficult to find a stakeholder with interest, capacity and resources. The project is helping increase interest, capacity and resources of political partners with some success, except at the national level in the DR and Haiti. Implementing partners have high interest. The project has increased their technical capacity on EbA and they have strong social capital, but limited financial resources. Funding proposal could strengthen their financial capacities. Target groups seem to have strong interest. The creation of local governance platforms, the dissemination of knowledge, economic benefits from the EbA activities and the creation of companies will increase their technical and financial capacity and their interest.

Safeguards

Safeguards were developed in line with IKI requirements and the risk categorization is plausible and suitable. Safeguards measures are deemed generally adequate to avoid, minimize or mitigate negative impacts. No negative impact of the project has been detected so far, but project is currently planning a feasibility study to analyse and rule out possible negative environmental impacts in one case.

Standard indicators

Standard indicators are more useful to IKI than to the project. The project has not reported regularly on the selected IKI SI. This is partly due to the fact that the project is expecting to change to the new SI. Some further thoughts are necessary on the relevance and suitability of the different IKI indicators. Overall, the reported results for the SI plausibly reflect the implementation activities, although some aspects need further clarification. With the delay already incurred the planned results may now be overestimated.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion in the different sections, the evaluation team has the following recommendations:

Table 1. Summary of recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Responsible party
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1	Promote the finalization of project approval in Cuba, in order to start project activities in this country as soon as possible	WHH and OroVerde, BIOECO and UPSA, with support from the CBC Secretariat and the relevant German foreign affairs-related institutions
2	Submit a one -year project extension and amendment request to IKI, seizing this opportunity to revise the logical framework, the results framework, the workplan, the budget, the governance structure and the risk assessment and identification of mitigation measures.	WHH and OroVerde
3	Finalize the climate risk assessments, ensure they inform activities on the ground and their results are shared widely, and explore ways of updating the data and the analyses down the road	The local executing partners, with support from OroVerde and WHH
4	Further promote exchanges between implementing and executing entities, to further strengthen peer to peer learning	WHH
5	Strengthen coordination and cooperation with and ownership of key national stakeholders, particularly in the DR, by implementing the communication strategy and starting the discussion on the funding proposals	WHH and OroVerde and the local executing partners
6	Explore ways of supporting advocacy for policy development at the national level regarding EbA	German foreign affairs-related institutions
7	Continue the coordination and cooperation with the CBC Secretariat	WHH
8	Strengthen coordination with other projects, including projects with a focus on financial mechanisms	WHH and the local executing partners, with support from IKI
9	Approve the project extension, provided it is well structured, reasonable and in line with recommendation 2 of this evaluation	IKI
10	Adjust administrative procedures to make them a bit less strict, for instance, through adding a “contingency” budget line.	IKI
11	Consider the lessons learned identified in this document in the design, approval, implementation and evaluation of other ongoing and future IKI projects, by , among other aspects, assessing the implementation and technical capacities of implementing and executing entities during project design and ensuring required technical assistance is provided during implementation, considering long project timelines, and designing institutional arrangements that allow working both downstream and upstream	IKI



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