

Measuring Progress, Driving Impact: WeForest's M&E Approach





Kenny Helson

Monitoring & Evaluation Manager
@ WeForest

“I am proud to be part of the skilled, passionate, and collaborative M&E team at WeForest. Only through continuing our high-quality data collection, we gain the insights needed to fully understand our impact and adapt our approaches when needed. This human and quality-centred emphasis on M&E at WeForest directly aligns with our values of integrity, transparency and excellence.”

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01

WeForest's Model and Impact


WeForest is conserving landscapes at-scale and leading the transformation of degraded landscapes into thriving ecosystems.


Through **four global programmes** - encompassing nearly 20 tailored projects across Latin America, Africa, and Asia, we are:

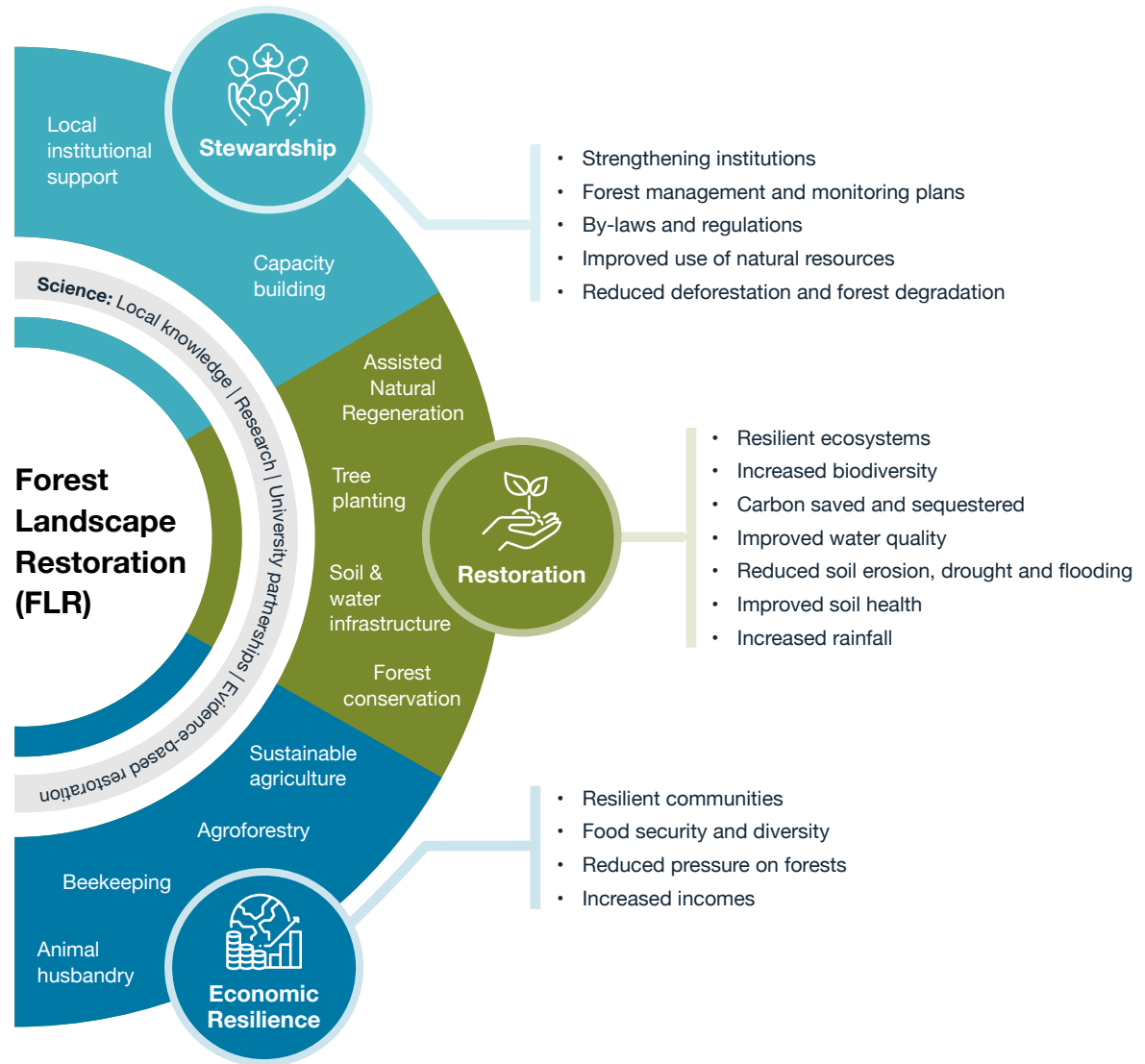
 Revitalising over **50,000 hectares**

 Growing **80 million trees**

 Impacting the resilience of nearly **70,000 families**

 Capturing nearly **5M tonnes of CO₂**

 Boosting average annual household income for some of the world's poorest, most marginalised communities by over **\$500 (USD)**



Our vision is to foster a model where people and the environment succeed together, while also mitigating and adapting to climate change. Local communities - the true agents behind successful, sustainable conservation and restoration - lead our mission and impact.

Addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and strengthening the socioeconomic fabric of forest communities requires more than just tree planting. Our holistic model, **Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR)**, integrates scientific research, rigorous monitoring, and robust evaluation.

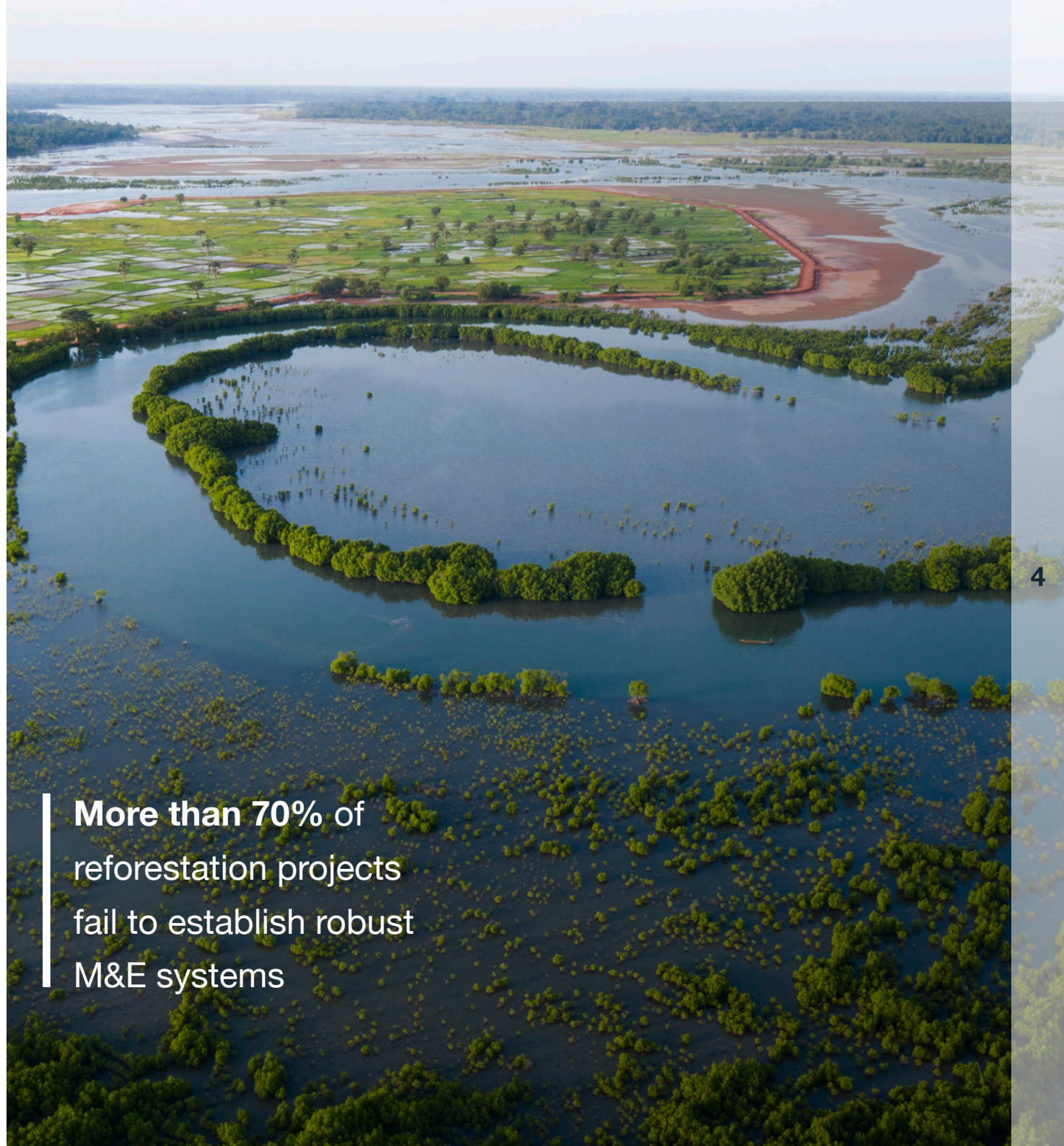
02

Why M&E Matters

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) sits at the core of WeForest's holistic and integrated approach. We believe M&E is fundamental to our adaptive management of projects - ensuring that consistent, real-time data drives responsive, dynamic, and impactful programming.

We stand apart in a growing reforestation space. According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization, more than 70% of reforestation projects fail to establish robust M&E systems (FAO, 2019). This lack of quality assurance means that time, energy, and resources are wasted - hampering long-term impacts. It also keeps forest communities, governments, and other stakeholders in the dark on methodology, partnerships, and achieving shared goals.

That's why we've made M&E central to our holistic restoration projects - integrating reliable technology, innovation, and face-to-face data collection across all of our projects and partner communities. It not only sets us apart, it builds trust with stakeholders that WeForest is delivering real impact across key indicators.



**More than 70% of
reforestation projects
fail to establish robust
M&E systems**


03

WeForest's M&E Methodology

03.1

Forest and Landscape Restoration approach

Our M&E efforts are aligned to WeForest's FLR model, which rests on three core pillars:



Stewardship

Our first main approach, focuses on ensuring proper forest governance. We co-create rules and structures, ensuring all stakeholders understand and commit to sustainable forest management.



Restoration

The second approach centres on forest restoration, conservation, and agroforestry, led by the communities. We collaboratively monitor the forest canopy's coverage, the variety and size of trees, the success of newly planted seedlings, as well as the health of water sources and soil.



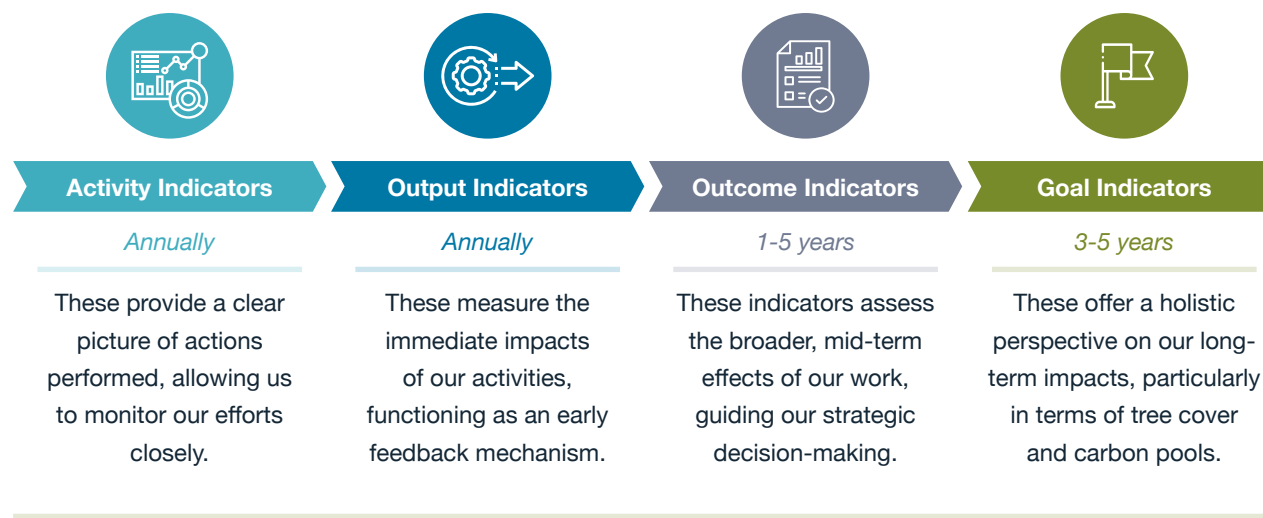
Economic Resilience

Lastly, 'economic resilience', prioritises ensuring forest-friendly incomes and livelihoods. It aims to reduce pressure on forest resources and promote alternative, sustainable income opportunities, especially for households led by women.

03.2

M&E indicators

We combine rigour and adaptability to serve both the specific needs of each project and our overarching organisational objectives. Rooted in SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) indicators, our M&E strategy aligns with global best practices endorsed by leading organisations like the World Bank (World Bank, 2018). The application of these indicators is detailed below:



03.3

Reporting

WeForest's M&E reporting process is rooted in thorough data management and transparent communication. Our logframe acts as a comprehensive guide, encompassing all monitoring needs, and serves as a tool for both frequent internal evaluations by the M&E team and formal quarterly assessments of progress. Leveraging the expertise of five dedicated working groups - including remote sensing, verification, and socioeconomics - we execute on a range of M&E activities while maintaining robust KPI databases at the project-level and HQ-level.

WeForest's M&E Methodology

03.4

Third-party verification

Moving forward, our goal is that each project undergoes third-party verification every 3-5 years using carbon verifications or Ecosystem Restoration verification from Preferred by Nature (PBN). This not only enhances our quality assurance and credibility but also fosters internal learning.

At the close of each project's decade-long span, we undertake an endline study on its environmental, social, and biodiversity outcomes. This review can be paired with external checks or done independently. Additionally, some projects aim to certify carbon stocks every 3-5 years for up to 20-50 years, using standards like VCS and CCB by Verra or the Plan Vivo Standard. In particular, the CCB 'Climate, Communities & Biodiversity' standard ensures holistic assessment, requiring positive impacts on climate, communities, and biodiversity—reinforcing our comprehensive approach to environmental stewardship.

03.5

Research partnerships


WeForest enters into partnerships with local and global universities and research institutes to support scientific exploration within our project sites, thereby enhancing our M&E capabilities. These academic collaborations often result in the collection of additional data and offer deeper insights into our project impacts on both ecosystems and people. Additionally, they provide opportunities to trial innovative monitoring techniques, such as eDNA for tracking different species and LiDAR for understanding forest layouts. These partnerships sharpen our understanding of the complex balance of the many factors that shape our project outcomes.



04

A Global M&E Team

Behind the graphs, data points, and comprehensive reports lie the heartbeat of our M&E operations: our dedicated and talented team. While our reports reflect numbers and outcomes, it's our team's unwavering commitment, passion, and expertise that makes this possible.



Every member of our HQ M&E team holds a Ph.D., underlining the calibre of expertise at the helm of our operations. Furthermore, nearly **90% of our field and country M&E teams have advanced degrees**, showcasing a deep reservoir of knowledge and dedication across the globe.

And it's not just about individual excellence. Collaboration is deeply ingrained in our ethos. Recently, we facilitated an exchange visit, gathering M&E staff from Zambia, Malawi, and Senegal at our flagship project in the Desa'a Forest of Ethiopia. These workshops, along with our team discussions at HQ, offer invaluable opportunities to share knowledge, experiences, and methodologies. This spirit of collaboration ensures that we are always learning, refining, and innovating together.



Michelle Picoli

Geospatial Data Scientist @ WeForest HQ

“Earth Observation (EO) data is not just satellite images; it’s our window to watch the world change. By combining EO with WeForest’s ground data and teams’ expertise, we can not only track environmental shifts but also assess the impact of WF restoration projects. The introduction of this type of innovation into our M&E practices improves understanding of the interactions between human activities and the environment, helping us to transparently evaluate our impact.”



Haggai Mutale Mulenga

M&E Country Manager @ WeForest Zambia

“In my role as WeForest’s country-level M&E manager, I play a crucial part in capturing the data at the heart of our six FLR projects across Zambia. It’s about more than numbers - it’s a unique vantage point to see our impact first-hand and coordinate our M&E teams and partner communities across the country and share critical lessons from our FLR approach. Feeding WeForest Zambia’s data and learning up to HQ enhances our shared wisdom and strengthens our collective drive.”



Birhane Etay Rede

Forestry & Remote Sensing Expert @ WeForest Ethiopia

“My work in the Desa’a Forest - WeForest’s largest project - centres on partnering with communities to plant native trees and ensuring their growth in our specialised nurseries. We focus on building vital forestry techniques while also conserving the health of our soil and water. To track these efforts, I work closely with WeForest’s M&E team at HQ on remote sensing, making sure we are on the right path towards restoring our forest.”

05

Our Evolving M&E Strategy



05.1

Strengthening the baseline

Three years ago, we set out to refine and enhance our M&E strategies. While maintaining our unique project M&E approaches, we also adopted an organisation-wide framework. By standardising our key performance indicators (KPIs), we've unified the way we measure and speak about our impact. From our HQ in Brussels, we strategically support each of our global projects, ensuring they're in sync with our core M&E goals. A full list of global KPIs is at the end of this document.



05.2

Recent Accomplishments and Near-Term Plans

Following this organisational alignment, our M&E team achieved concrete progress. First, we meticulously captured each project through advanced geospatial polygons, enhancing our database with detailed information on vegetation and specific types of intervention (for example, tree planting versus assisted natural regeneration). This attention to detail also allows us to communicate our work more transparently and effectively to partners and stakeholders. Second, we've revamped our project reporting process to ensure stronger links between M&E and project management. Third, we are expanding our M&E teams by introducing specialised roles at each level of the organisation: project-level officers, country-level managers, and our dedicated HQ M&E team. Lastly, our shift to Remote Sensing reinforces our innovative aerial monitoring and shift to tech solutions that complement our on-the-ground work.



05.3

Looking Ahead to the Last Half of Our 2025 Strategy

As we enter the final half of our 2025 strategic plan, further embedding M&E within our project operations team remains a priority. Scaling our project portfolio requires the standardised collection and analysis of data. Building beyond this data collection, we strive to adapt, learn, and refine our interventions, ensuring maximum impact. Key to our forward-thinking approach is enhancing our digital capacities, nurturing scientific collaborations, and strengthening ties with academic institutions worldwide. With these initiatives, we are reaffirming our commitment to drive forest restoration, uplift communities, and position WeForest as a leader in sustainable development practice.



Appendix:

WeForest's Global KPI overview

This appendix outlines our HQ-level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), acting as a snapshot of WeForest's global impact. These key HQ-level metrics are a solid, norming framework but not exhaustive. They work in tandem with bespoke, project-specific KPIs that are tailored to each unique ecosystem and its communities.

Stewardship KPIs:

Governance Impact

In our commitment to healthy forests and healthy people, we prioritise co-creating solutions alongside local communities and fortifying their forest governance structures. We believe in collaborative stewardship, combining local wisdom with scientific research to establish trust and transparency. Since these KPIs need to be highly tailored by project, the KPIs below are examples of the types of metrics we might deploy to gauge impact on community-based forest governance, mitigating drivers of deforestation, and safeguarding ecosystems.

Project-specific examples:

Example KPI 0.1: Percentage (%) of the forest management plan and bylaws that have been drafted, published, and implemented.

Example KPI 0.2: Number (#) of forest offences registered by

patrol teams in accordance with the forest act and local bylaws.

Project Impact on Landscape:

KPI 2.1: Assessment of the geophysical boundary encompassing the socio-political and biophysical landscape system impacted by the project.

KPI 2.2: Total area (# in hectares) encompassing new conservation, restoration, and agroforestry zones.

Restoration KPIs:

Ecological Impact

Restoration lies at the heart of our operations, where we leverage scientific insights and regenerative techniques to revitalise degraded forests using native species. These KPIs measure the impact of our reforestation programme alongside key forest health metrics such as soil and water enhancement and boosting flora and fauna biodiversity.

CO2 Sequestration Estimation:

KPI 1: Estimated quantity (# in tons) of CO2 sequestration based on landscape area under KPI 2 and average projected CO2 per hectare.

Tree Density

KPI 3.1: Estimated number (#) of trees based on areas under KPI 2 and average long-term tree densities.

KPI 3.2: Actual count (#) of planted seedlings and saplings of woody species.

Seedling Survival Rate

KPI 4.1: Percentage (%) of seedlings planted in the previous year that are still alive.

KPI 4.2: Percentage (%) of seedlings planted three years ago that are still alive.

Biodiversity Metrics

KPI 5.1 - KPI 5.4: Counts (#) of various woody plant species that were planted or are assisted with natural regeneration, including those marked as threatened or near-threatened on the IUCN Red List.

KPI 5.5 - KPI 5.8: Counts (#) of various non-woody plant species, animal species, mammal species, and bird species within the project landscape, including those marked as threatened or near-threatened on the IUCN Red List.

Economic Resilience KPIs:

Social Impact

Our model ensures long-term project viability by fostering forest-friendly livelihood activities within local communities. We measure our success in this area through KPIs that track income generation and diversity alongside sustainable use of forests. Women, women-led households, and vulnerable groups in our partner communities are prioritised. Our social impact KPIs are designed to measure our specific impact on these demographics, and underscore our dedication to binding environmental and social outcomes.

Livelihood Diversification:

KPI 7: Number (#) of households engaged in alternative livelihood activities.

KPI 14: Number (#) of households involved in beekeeping, income generated (\$), and honey production (kg).

KPI 15: Number (#) of households involved in animal husbandry, income generated (\$), and number (#) of animals distributed.

KPI 16: Number (#) of households involved in tree crop cultivation, income generated (\$), and number (#) of crop trees distributed.

KPI 17: Number (#) of households involved in non-tree crop cultivation, income generated (\$), and number (#) of seeds distributed.

Capacity Building and Training:

KPI 9: Number (#) of individuals trained by the project on sustainable farming, forest management, livelihoods, etc.

KPI 11: Number (#) of community nurseries supported and operational in the reporting year.

KPI 12: Number (#) of household-based nurseries supported and operational in the reporting year.

KPI 13: Number (#) of local associations or cooperatives directly supported by the project.

Sustainable Energy:

KPI 10: Number (#) of households that received energy-efficient cookstoves.



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