BOS+ Mid-term evaluation of the programme in Uganda (2022-2026)

Final report (July 2025)

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Preface

It has been a great experience to combine evaluation work with coaching a team of peer evaluators. The focus of peer reviewers helps to understand better the organization and adds value in terms of surfacing technical issues and identifying the key issues that matter to BOS+ and to the partners.

Corina Dhaene (ACE Europe) Mechelen, Belgium, July 2025

Summary

1 **Focus and methodological approach** - BOS+ organised a peer evaluation of its DGD programme 2022-2026, “Resilient Forest Landscapes for development and well-being”, executed by BOS+ and its partners. The objective of the midterm evaluation was to strengthen the quality of the execution of the programme, refine and strengthen the strategies to maximise impact, refine and improve the BOS+ partner strategy, and to refine and improve the monitoring of the programme. The midterm served above all learning purposes. This report concerns the peer review in Uganda, undertaken from June 24th up to 29th 2024. The peer review was executed by Bram Sercu (programme coordinator for Uganda, based in Belgium), Debbie Eraly (regional programme coordinator Latin America, based in Ecuador) and Rosanna Pacheco (programme coordinator for Peru, based in Peru).

2 During inception phase of this peer review (January - April 2024) several workshops have been organised that involved BOS+ peer evaluators, country representatives, the M&E officer and representatives of implementing partners. This was done to create a shared ownership and understanding of the approach. This allowed to refine the evaluation questions. Three evaluation questions were related to the effectiveness of the programme and the contribution of the programme to changes at the level of organised farmer groups (and how they integrate agro-forestry approaches in their strategies), individual famers (and their decision making on tree planting to support biodiversity on their farms) and forest management groups (and how they build capacity for managing forest reserves under a contract with government. Two additional evaluations questions related to the BOS+ partnership strategy and the quality of the M&E.

3 There was a task division between the peers and the external evaluators. The external evaluator suggested methods for collecting and analysing data (such as developing ICMO pathways on Intervention – Context - Mechanisms - Outcomes) The peers were leading in collecting data en executing the interviews and the focus group discussions related to the three evaluation questions on effectiveness and shared their findings and learnings in a debrief note. The external evaluator covered the two additional evaluation questions and wrote the full report.

4 **Learnings on the peer review approach and the findings: the perspective of the peers** - Overall the experience of the peer evaluation has been appreciated for several reasons amongst which the following: the joint reconstruction of the TOC allowed to understand better where it aligns well and where not with reality, the combined experience and diverse expertise of the peers added value to the overall analysis of findings and promoted interorganisational learning, the peers from Latin-America became more aware of the difficult context in which the programme in Uganda is executed, more in particular the pace of deforestation and the fact that almost no forest is left to care for. This was a wake-up call about the potential effects of increasing deforestation in Latin-America.

5 The support by an external consultant is seen to have added value, particularly in managing the process during the field visit, addressing tensions that arise or are observed both within the peer review team as within the team of the partner, suggesting a method to systematise the information collected (e.g. by using the methodology of ICMO). The peers hoped to get more support in experiencing new and alternative data collection tools (beyond interviews and focus group discussion) but realised that an evaluation exercise is not only about the tools. Nonetheless, it was felt that more specific attention for 'observation' should have been integrated in the approach.

6 The learnings drawn by the peers from their work in Uganda that can be useful for other BOS+ countries concern the following: (a.o.) the science-based approach of KFF with the protocols, the follow-up and monitoring of individual tree planting with database (which supports visualization); the combination of a technical approach with a more holistic approach that supports communities and families in their farm planning through the collaboration with another NGO, IDP approach: it was witnessed that this complementarity worked well and satisfies various needs of farmers; the importance of women in ensuring diversity in the types of trees makes the peers realising that it is important to support women to take a specific and active role in programme execution.

7 The peers have formulated their recommendations for the programme and the M&E (and have been taken into account by the external evaluator in developing overall conclusion and recommendations). The key recommendations for the organisation of future peer reviews refer for the need to allow more time for the peer review, both in terms of preparing the focus and the programme with the partner and in terms of having sufficient time on the ground for interacting with various stakeholders and amongst the peers.

8 **The overall findings** - The mid-term evaluation of the BOS+ programme in Uganda indicates that significant groundwork has been laid by KFF, particularly in promoting biodiversity. The planting of indigenous trees shows promising early results in terms of outreach and farmer engagement. Indicators such as number of trees planted, number of farmers reached (including women), and tree survival rates are generally on track or already exceeded.

9 The broader programme ambition, centred on the so-called "triple win" of biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation, and community livelihood, might not be fully realised by the end of the programme. This is partly due to the programme's current scope, which emphasises biodiversity and to a lesser extent climate-specific actions while giving limited attention to systemic support for income generation and community-based approaches in agro-forestry and forest management. KFF is trying to improve on that, but their capacity for group work is limited and they do not have an adult learning approach.

10 Having KFF as a partner was a good choice: KFF is a respected science-based partner with extensive experience in biodiversity and also respected for it by government actors and other NGOs. The evaluation pointed as some weaknesses, especially in areas of realising community engagement, cross-sector collaboration with other NGOs, and lobby and advocacy in relation to community forest management. The partnership agreement is seen to be sufficiently flexible and

open by KFF, allowing for support in terms of techical capacity development. KFF at the same time is a partner in transition with several challenges around strengthening technical and scientific competences of the team, development of leadership and team work, which are currently not yet addressed by the programme. This partnership is based upon strong and positive relations between coordinators, an agreement and a results framework with indicators. Some process could be more formalised and structured, e.g.co-designing of strategies between BOS+ and KFF involving more members of the team. Since the new programme manager has build his experience for more than a year, we understand that steps in this direction have been taken already.

11 Collaboration between KFF and JFW and its implementing partners is not optimal: organisations are operating in silos and with divergent views surfacing tensions between biodiversity and development approaches). This limits potention for synergy and shared impact. The situation is caused by role ambiguity (about the position of KFF in the joint programme arrangement between BOS+ and JFW). On the other hand: intervention areas where collaboration with Iles de Paix was realised were more promisin, particularly in integrating agroforestry into broader household and longer term farm planning, promoting agro-ecology.

12 Strategically, the programme's Theory of Change and indicator framework are seen as too general and insufficiently adapted to the local context. While the follow-up and monitoring by KFF of planted trees is excellent, the monitoring and evaluation system of the programme shows room for improvement: eg. To strengthen local capacity (beyond the purely technical follow-up) , to further clarify indicators that are not fully clear to the partner and its team, to create more space for participatory M&E and joint learning at the partner level in order to stimulate adaptive management. Community development and strengthening of groups emerged as an expected outcome in the reconstruction of the ToC (in order to ensure sustainability) but there is no indicator to follow-up on this.

13 To maximise impact, programme management would be helped by a jointly designed and locally grounded Theory of Change, by support to participatory and learning oriented M&E practices, and the organisation of a strategic dialogue between partners such as JFW and with KFF: on how to further grow and on how to strengthen alignment with other developmend actors/NGOs and other views on development in order to evolve to a more balanced approach that supports all three pillars of its intended 'triple win'.

Abbreviations

CFM	Community Forest Management
ICMO	Intervention Context Mechanism and Outcome
IDP	Iles de Paix
KFF	Kyaninga forest foundation
NFA	National Forestry Agency (Uganda)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

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1 Introduction

1.1 CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

14 BOS+ organises a peer evaluation of its DGD programme 2022-2026, “Resilient Forest Landscapes for development and well-being”, executed by BOS+ and its partners. The outcomes in the partner countries focus on strengthening social-ecological resilience of forest landscapes and of the local communities, translated into five result areas: conservation of forests, sustainable management and use of forest, agroforestry practices, forest restoration and capacity building of partners and key beneficiary organisations.

15 The evaluation is designed as a guided peer midterm evaluation, with a limited focus to ensure deeper analysis. The objective of the midterm evaluation is to strengthen the quality of the execution of the programme, refine and strengthen the strategies to maximise impact, refine and improve the BOS+ partner strategy, and to refine and improve the monitoring of the programme. The midterm serves above all learning purposes, learning between countries needs to be facilitated, and is centred around the overall evaluation question: “To what extent is our intervention strategy effective and does it translate well our logical framework?”

16 The peer review was planned to be conducted in two countries, Bolivia and Uganda. Through the involvement of two BOS+ colleagues as peer reviewers, also elements of the other country programmes (Peru and Ecuador) can be discussed. However, due to circumstances (related to severe forest fires in Bolivia and new organisational priorities for BOS+) the peer review in Bolivia could not take place.

17 This means that this report only concerns the peer review in Uganda, undertaken from June 24th up to 29th 2024. The peer review was executed by Bram Sercu (programme coordinator for Uganda, based in Belgium), Debbie Eraly (regional programme coordinator Latin America, based in Ecuador) and Rosanna Pacheco (programme coordinator for Peru, based in Peru).

18 Some time has passed between the execution of the field visit and the report writing. An additional exchange with the peer team and the coordinator of BOS+ on June 30st 2025 has helped to finalise the report.

1.2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

19 During inception phase of this peer review (January - April 2024) several workshops have been organised that involved BOS+ peer evaluators, country representatives, the M&E officer and representatives of implementing partners. Programme documents like the country ToC, M&E frameworks and documented lessons learned have been consulted. During workshops, the ToC

'in use' had been reconstructed, evaluation questions identified and a first proposal of programme developed. Based on this information, the external consultants guiding this MTE peer evaluation have developed a methodological note, with an evaluation framework, describing the the methodologies that will be applied, tools for data-collection (such as interview guidelines) and reporting. Feedback and additional input from the BOS+ team were taken into account for finalizing the methodology.

20 The evaluation questions are related to the pathways in the ToC of the programme. The evaluation questions (EQ) are:

- EQ1[1]: How does interaction between KFF and individual farmers inspire farmer groups to discuss and consider agro-forestry approaches amongst each other (including all members), with government actors and extension workers and with other groups (verify level of awareness and willingness of individual farmers to act)? – *related to Pathway 2 and 4, and results 2 and 5 in the logframe*

- EQ 2: How did interaction with KFF and the knowledge transfer on specific species contribute to individual farmers (youth, women) and their households to take informed decisions about which trees to plant where and why and to take a leading role in change towards agroforestry/agroecological practices? – *related to Pathway 2 and 3, and results 2 and 4 in the logframe*

- EQ 3: What is needed to build and maintain capacity for contracting with government by forest management groups (capability to engage with the communities (including conflict management), to interact with government, to develop a plan, to plan its execution, to etc.)? – *related to Pathway 4, and result 5 in the logframe*

- EQ 4: What can be learned from the Bos+ partner strategy regarding the realization of programme objectives and accessing target groups? Are partners well chosen? How well is the ability developed of KFF staff to interact with communities, to build credibility, to identify the needs of various groups and to reflect about the challenging context (demographic expectations vs use of land and pressure on reserve and attitude of NFA and local extension workers, with regards to the work, interventions of other NGOs)? – *related to Pathway 2, and result 2 in the logframe*

- EQ 5: are M&E data, collected by partners and Bos+ providing reliable and valid data for adaptive programme management?

21 The tables below explains what pathways and results have been covered by the evaluation (in italic).

Result	ToC (sphere of control) - pathways	Connected to following Logframe Results

[1] Numbering has changed and starts with number 1, because the Bolivia evaluation did not take place.

1	Sustainable forest and water management is better integrated in policy development and implementation	The importance of resilience of socio-ecological systems with a focus on water and forest interlinkages has been brought to the attention of relevant stakeholders, including policy makers.
2	*Knowledge on sustainable forest and water management is enhanced and upscaled*	*Knowledge on resilience of social-ecological systems with a focus on water and forest interlinkages is improved through research and sensitisation*
3	*(pathway 3) Better and multifunctional use of and access to (agro-)ecosystem services*	*Rights and access to water-related ecosystem services are improved*
4	*(pathway 3) Better and multifunctional use of and access to (agro-)ecosystem services*	*Access to and use of ecosystem services from agroforestry systems are improved*
5	*(pathway 4) ecosystem conservation and restoration*	*Forest and water ecosystems are effectively conserved and restored*
6	NA	*Synergy between actors involved in the programme and with external actors and networks, is strengthened*

R	**Results (logframe) compared to outcomes in the ToC**
	outcome
R1	The importance of resilience of socio-ecological systems with a focus on water and forest interlinkages has been brought to the attention of relevant stakeholders, including policy makers.
R2	Knowledge on resilience of social-ecological systems with a focus on water and forest interlinkages is improved through research and sensitisation
R3	Rights and access to water-related ecosystem services are improved
R4	Access to and use of ecosystem services from agroforestry systems are improved
R5	Forest and water ecosystems are effectively conserved and restored
R6	Synergy between actors involved in the programme and with external actors and networks, is strengthened

1.3 HOW TO READ THE REPORT?

22 This report has been written on the basis of the results of the analysis conducted with KFF during the evaluation visit, a written input from the peer reviewers identifying the key learnings about interventions observed in Uganda, reflecting upon their utility for the context in Latin-America, recommendations for the programme in Uganda and for the process of monitoring and evaluation including the peer review process. The inputs of the peer reviewers have been complemented by a validation and additional observations from the ACE Europe consultant. The consultant has taken the lead in answering the questions related to M&E (EQ5) and to partnership of BOS+ with other organisations (EQ4) both in the phase of information gathering as in the phase of report writing.

23 The report starts with a description of the programme to evaluate and the execution of the peer review. The next chapter describes the findings on the programme in Uganda and the response to 5 evaluation questions. It is followed by some lessons learned listed by the peer reviewers. And it concludes with overall conclusions and recommendations, including a focus on M&E and partnership relations.

2 Brief description of the programme in Uganda and execution of the peer review

2.1 PROGRAMME TO EVALUATE

24 The programme in Uganda is a joint programme with the NGO JFW. The Bos+ component is executed by the partner KFF; the JFW component by NRDI and JESE. This evaluation is not looking at the interventions executed by JFW and their partners nor at the coherence between interventions. At the time of the evaluation only few activities have been undertaken in collaboration with JFW. However, matters of partnership and relations will be looked into.

25 The programme is guided by an overall ToC. This ToC is rather general and not looking into the specifics of the intervention in Uganda. The reconstruction of the ToC has clarified what the interventions are about.

26 The programme is implemented at the level of communities within the Mpanga and Semliki catchments area in the Rwenzori Region. Both areas have been visited by the evaluation team.

27 There is one partner, Kyaninga Forest Foundation (KFF, www.KFF.ug). This NGO was set-up in 2010. Initially, the aim was to help local communities living near Lake Kyaninga and the surrounding Kyaninga Forest to find ways to deal with the ever-increasing demand for natural resources such as firewood. This demand is caused by increase in population. Through this community-based work the urgent need for a wider intervention was identified: KFF saw the need to address the question of land shortage against the economic aspirations of households (see also lessons learned in the 2022 report). KFF attained NGO status in 2017 to address wider issues. KFF has invested in developing a database recording position and status of trees in the area. This supports KFF in its fenology agenda to study how trees and forest systems are behaving. To be able to supply the local actors with trees, KFF has its own nursery. It is aiming to set-up satellite nurseries run by farmers and farmer groups in the medium and long term.

28 KFF works with several partners; besides BOS+ the most relevant partner for this evaluation is îles de Paix (IDP), a Belgian NGO that supports farmer groups. Through these groups KFF targets farmer HH to work with and îles de Paix is mobilising farmers for activities. KFF also works with farmers in regions without collaboration with Iles de Paix in Harungongo and Bundibugyo.

29 The programme also targets 3 forest management groups that are managing (or preparing for that) parts of the forest (conservation and restoration activities) under contract with the Uganda National Forest Authority (NFA). This work is also supported by another partner, US Forestry Agency. The members in the forest management groups have been assigned by their communities. There have been some interventions with schools (planting trees and educational programmes), but these are currently not developed under this programme.

30 The four pathways of change in the Uganda programme are the following:

- Pathway 1: Sustainable forest and water management is better integrated in policy development and implementation;
- **Pathway 2: Knowledge on sustainable forest and water management is enhanced and upscaled;**
- Pathway 3: Better and multifunctional use of and access to (agro)ecosystem services;
- **Pathway 4: Ecosystem conservation and restoration.**

31 Pathway 1 concerns advocacy and lobby on forest management but interventions in this area are not yet developed/pursued; attention is on informing government actors about concrete interventions (and to sign off for particular actions). Pathway 3 is not worked upon either: it takes time for new trees that are planted to provide eco-system services. According to KFF there is already some additional access to firewood, some fruits, shad, fodder, etc. but this is mainly a result of previous actions (not under this programme).

32 Main focus of the programme until the time of evaluation is thus on pathway 2 and raising the profile of indigenous trees at the level of communities, HH, individual farmers and government actors and, on strategic Pathway 4, and more in particular the work with the forest management groups. Under pathway 2, collaboration with universities is considered. Although there is interaction between researchers, collaboration for joint monitoring or joint action research is not on the agenda for now.

33 During the workshop on the reconstruction of the ToC in use, following actors have been defined with their expected and observed changes. This list of changes has been used as inspiration to develop the interview guidelines and to focus attention of peer reviewers

Actor	Expected change	Observed change[2]
KFF	Growing steadily but not too fast	KFF is growing in numbers of staff, partners, digitalisation (GIS) and recognition/being solicited for support and advice by local actors
LC staff and councillors	Recognise value of indigenous trees, pay attention to forest management (e.g. Fires) and ensure application of regulations	Are aware of importance of planting indigenous species and their specific utility (e.g. river base stabilisation)
Farmers/HH	Are aware of the value of indigenous tree planting on their farmers, they know from use perspective what trees exist and developed skills to map and monitor their trees and adapt their behaviour in using land (in particular	Are in (increased) demand of receiving indigenous trees, they value them for a more diverse set of reasons, start planting them and have developed skills to care for the trees and start using for firewood (Huarungo women's group)

[2] Not exhaustive

	cacao farmers). In the long term, they will start satellite nurseries	
Cocoa buyers	Are open for dialogue and are more aware of perverse effects of pushing for more cacao in the area	No changes specified
Partner NGOs	Are aware of importance of planting indigenous species, consult and involve us in their activities	No changes specified
Farming communities		More awareness of the importance of planning indigenous species, e.g. river stabilisation and increased demand
Communities living close to reserves	Understand that they have a responsibility/have a role to play in forest management (with a focus on conservation and restoration), they understand they need to value part of the forest that is assigned to them, understand that this is not a short-term opportunity for quick gains	Some individual farmers have started planting trees, but community management of forest is only at the beginning
Forest management groups	Are able to get and maintain license for forest management, understand what care for the reserve means, are able to use the tools proposed, can engage in longer term thinking, can execute conservation and restoration activities and minimise negative effects on forest. 1 forest group in Itojo (Ramufa) is able to get its licence back	The CFM groups have been installed and signed MoU with NFA (Ramufa); a patrol officer is assigned. The group has monthly meetings but some important conflicts exist with local leaders who claim full control over what they call their ancestral land ("stolen land"). This complicates the relationships and active work in the CFM
NFA units/staff at local level	Are less corrupt, assume the role they need to play	NFA staff denounced non rightful confiscation of materials In Itojo a new NFA officer re-activated the work, recovered the reserve which was encroached and mobilised the environmental police to perform their duty, monthly meetings with CFM groups are organised, intention to start restauration work

2.2 EXECUTION OF THE PEER REVIEW AND LIMITATIONS

34 The programme for the field visit was developed taking into account a number of specific points of attention. How this played out in the execution of the review and consequent limitations for the review is included in the list below:

- Meeting farmers that have been involved for a longer time and farmers that only recently interacted with KFF. The choice was to visit farmers that have been involved for a longer period of time and others to assess the difference in effects.

- Meeting some farmers that did not yet plant trees: it proved however that all farmers had experience with planting trees, however not (or only to a limited extent) with indigenous trees.

- Interviews with government actors: it was possible to speak to actors from LC1 level (political, chairpersons) and agricultural staff at LC3 level and officers from NFA.

- Workshops and interviews with staff: a start- and end workshop were organized involving all layers in the organization, interviews with 5 field officers were organized, and the team visited 3 of KFF's nurseries (which included interviews with their attendants and coordinator).

- In case needed, the team split up in order to cover all the interviews planned for.

- The external evaluator proposed to the team to structure and analyse data collected by using an ICMO approach (Intervention Context Mechanism Outcome), that situates the programme's intervention against a specific context (with elements that are helpful and others that are not helpful) and connects it to the first response of target groups by identifying the mechanisms that trigger response and intermediate change. This approach was used for developing EQ2 and EQ3, see also annex 6.4.

- The findings from the data collection during the field visit were cross-checked with the 2023 performance report and the M&E data. Most interesting is the report of KFF to BOS+ which consists of the logical framework indicators and targets and a brief written narrative about context. This report was written with the M&E data provided for Y1. The DGD performance narrative report is less informative about the realisations of the Bos+ programme: the format is developed by JFW and does not contain information about R4 which is about the interventions of Bos+ (addressed in EQ 1), quantitative data under the other results are not mentioned for Bos+.

- The number and profiles of respondents were briefly discussed with the KFF team leader during the online preparation. However, it appeared challenging for the KFF team to understand exactly what the peer evaluation team needed in terms of numbers and profiles of respondents so usually all stakeholders would be mobilized and the groups were too big to allow for good interaction. This required some flexibility from the side of the peer evaluation team: they needed to divide the people present in smaller groups in order to allow sufficient interaction and to ensure that various perspectives would be included in the interviews. It is a lesson for future evaluations: there is a need to pay much more attention to the implementation of an evaluation with teams that are less experienced in receiving evaluation teams.

35 Meeting other NGOs: the external evaluator interviewed JFW and IDP to include their perspective on collaboration, synergy and partnership (EQ4). This was not part of the programme of the peers. Iles de Paix was interviewed by the external evaluator because of the synergy that was established in one of the zones of intervention, Karangura (executed with the partner of IDP, RCA).

3 Answers to the evaluation questions

3.1 EVALUATION QUESTION 1 – HOW DID THE WORK OF KFF WITH INDIVIDUAL FARMERS INSPIRE FARMER GROUPS TO DISCUSS AND CONSIDER AGRO-FORESTRY APPROACH.

36 Although not a specific objective of the programme to strengthen groups (there are no particular results or indicators in the logical framework to refer to/report upon), the reconstruction of the ToC in use highlighted that (formally organised and registered) farmer groups might be an important actor in the change process, eg. for stronger sensitisation and mobilisation of individual farmers, for providing services to their members and for increasing pressure on government to invest more in tree planting.

37 It is not possible to fully answer this question for two reasons: (i) the programme did not yet lead to a substantial number of tangible results that would permit outscaling of activities and results at the level of farmer organisations (or by these organisations), (ii) KFF applies an individual approach to tree planting, interacting with individual farmers which means that there has been little opportunity so far for organized groups to be involved and gain interest as a group. KFF, for now, has confirmed that groups are seen as a way to facilitate access to individual farmers and that it has no ambition to strengthen groups as such.

38 There is still an interest from KFF to see farmer groups and communities taking on a bigger role in the future, but this might require the realization of tangible results first (eg. Enjoying actual ecosystem services), which need a long(er) time to materialise. It would also require a specific strategy and capacities from KFF (social in addition to tecnical). And it is not something KFF would invest in.

39 The peer evaluation team interacted with the leadership of 4 groups to understand the perspective of leadership on reforestation and how they would integrate this in their vision as a strategic goal. Two well established groups: one (RAMUFA, founded in 2012) that has engaged with NFA through a community forest management (CFM) arrangement and 1 cocoa cooperative (Busuro cooperative, founded in 2012). Two other groups (Kinoni group and Kyakatimba group), founded respectively in 2020 and 2021, were waiting to be registered and start as CFM groups. The main crop of these farmers is cocoa.

40 From the interaction with leadership, the involvement/pre-occupation of leadership and the groups with agro-forestry and forestry/forest management is (still quite) limited:

- Leadership is aware of the fact that tree planting can answer a number of climate related problems such as lack of rain, shade (for crops), risks of landslides, floods … Efforts to sensitise, mobilise and support farmers to do so are however limited, and groups are looking at partners, such as KFF to support. There have been other interventions in the past, providing trees and some training, but not many.

- The main urgent needs as expressed by the leadership are not related to indigenous tree planting or supporting maintaining forest reserves but to increasing direct income in the short term and support livelihoods (trees as cash crops, which leads them to choose for Eucalyptus or pine combined with crops).

- The groups are not (yet) able to provide seeds and trees to their members without external help and attempts in the past to start with nurseries as a common effort failed (sustainability not ensured). Reasons are many: it takes too much effort (to follow-up on the process from seedling to tree), incentive for joint management of the nursery is lacking, there is no direct relation with income generation, there is no easy access to seeds for indigenous trees.

- Tree planting is primarily viewed upon from the perspective of use as firewood, revenue and potential income generation (preferably in the short term and partly answering the need for firewood at household level). The fact that indigenous trees have specific attributes (e.g. Medicinal, fruits for the children) and that some trees are harmful (e.g. Eucalyptus taking too much water) are known by the respondents.

- Activity of KFF is seen to have mobilized government to provide trees to individual farmers (Eucalyptus and Mimosa, the latter which is indigenous) but this is incidental, irregular and slow.

- Making charcoal from cocoa-pods: members from the cooperative do not believe yet that this would be possible. The BOS+ programme coordinator also doubts that the initiative could take off as it would require more effort and yield less income (because of people not willing to pay the higher prize) compared to the traditional charcoal production practice.

Conclusion on EQ 1 - Agro-forestry and forest management is not top of mind of the organized (and registered) farmers groups the peer review team interacted with. The external evaluator concludes that using existing groups mainly as a way to get to individual farmers is a relevant one and should be continued. There is no indication that more support to strengthening the capacity of formally organized and registered farmer groups for agro-forestry or forest management is the way to go for the BOS+ programme with KFF in the medium term (next 5 to 10 years). This for 2 reasons: KFF does not have the expertise nor the ambition or capacity to ensure this kind of strategy since they are more technically focused and the groups are too much focused on creating opportunities for increased income.

Recommendation: What could be envisaged however is to use the informal (e.g. Savings) groups better to strengthen joint learning and exchange between farmers (see also EQ 2).

3.2 EVALUATION QUESTION 2 – HOW DID INTERACTION WITH KFF AND THE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ON SPECIFIC SPECIES CONTRIBUTE TO INDIVIDUAL FARMES AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS TO TAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT TREEPLANTING

41 To answer this EQ, there are two types of interventions to consider: the provision of indigenous trees to individual farmers and the support to CFM groups. This evaluation question concerns the first. The second type of intervention is covered by EQ 3.

42 Information to answer this question was mostly collected in Karangura and Harungongo and with the Busuro cooperative. In Karangura, KFF worked with groups that were also supported by IDP. These farmers meet for various purposes and discuss issues related to tree planting and maintenance. Interaction with these farmers, in particular the women provided interesting insights about how the groups work and how tree planting could be part of a diversified production system. In Harungongo there are no formal farmer groups exist and there is less structured exchange between farmers.

3.2.1 INTERVENTION AND CONTEXT

43 **Intervention** - The intervention is about the distribution and provision of various types of indigenous trees (timber, medicinal, fruit) for farmers to plant on their farm land (gratis) combined with training and support.

44 The M&E data confirm the execution of the intervention:

- IR4.2 Increase in the number of native fruit tree species grown in local agroforestry systems in the direct beneficiary communities (BOS+) with the mid-term target value being +1 on average per farm (fruit tree species): in Y1 135 HH (of the 200 registered) have been supplied with fruit trees. In total 1009 fruit trees were distributed and planted (725 jackfruits, 10 Vangueria, 11 Guava and 263 Eriobotria), which means more than 7 trees per HH, which largely exceeds the end of term value. Information from the peer review confirms that most farmers have received more than 1 tree per HH. In total 5183 trees have been planted; most of the HH have been involved in at least 2 rounds of distribution.

- IR4.3 Number of people trained and engaged in improved agroforestry practices, focusing on native tree species - in (disaggregated for women and men) (BOS+) with the mid-term target value being + 500 farmers of which 100 female and 400 male. In Y1, the programme already exceeded that target, in particular for women: 217 women took part in the training and 483 men. There is a caveat: 'trainings' are the moments where field staff interacts with farmers that received trees, these moments allow to monitor how the trees are doing and to answer questions from the farmers. This interaction is understood to capture the part in the indicator that refers to 'engagement with improved agroforestry practices'.

- The KFF system gives evidence of more farmers being reached and more trees planted in Y2: 1,524 (678 women, 846 men) farmers reached; 14 574 trees planted) and hints at more than 75% of survival rate which is considered to be very good by the peer reviewers (and by IDP).

45 **Quality of interventions** - The information received from the respondents and the visits to the KFF nurseries confirms the quality of the intervention: KFF is able to provide different types of indigenous species for various products (timber, firewood, food, medicine), the seedlings are of very good quality, KFF field officers are based on the ground and regularly check the farm to discuss with the farmer what kind of trees are wanted and what is feasible given the space in the farm (#acres), the quality of the soil, the orientation of the land etc. ; KFF field officers are present to plant the trees with the farmers and to check after planting. What other NGOs (interviews with IDP and JFW) appreciate is the technical knowledge and the science (ie. lab that is being build) behind the approach which distinguishes KFF from other organisations.

46 One point of attention, that is also highlighted by KFF might be the quality of training (materials) and the provision of an appropriate adult learning approach that supports and develops social learning amongst farmers (and might diminish the need for field staff to be omni present on the ground). IDP suggested to play on the pride of farmers to enhance the learning, this could be done for eg. by installing some competition and prize.

47 **Context** – Both helpful factors in context as non-helpful have been identified. What was helpful and supporting the execution of this intervention: the dire need for income and firewood; the need for solutions that help mitigate effects of climate schange that farmers are confronted with,such as shade for crops; the fact that farmers already have some understanding on the role of trees (thanks to earlier interventions from NGOs and some government programmes) and have, in some cases, already taken some own initiatives for awareness raising); and finally, the lack of seedlings for indigenous trees (access to seeds and access at reasonable price) and the logistic limitations (getting seedlings and young trees at the farm).

48 The intervention has played well on those factors and conveys the correct key messages on the importance of planting (indigenous) trees and highlights the added values of indigenous trees.

49 What was not helping/was challenging: the distrust of farmers of (new) NGOs (it takes some time before activities, that involve registration, are trusted), the very weak government administration that cannot accompany the interventions and cannot do its share of technical support and follow-up (which was confirmed by interviews with several government stakeholders, the farmers and other NGOs); the habit of tree planting using exotic species (and providing quick wins, such as Eucalyptus to respond to the dire need for extra income), a habit that is sometimes supported by government and other NGOs.

50 The intervention has found ways to address some of these challenges: proximity of KFF field officers has contributed to creating trust, government actors are involved in all actions (they are informed and provided with some support for fuel to participate in particular activities). Some challenges are not yet addressed and might require additional strategies (eg. Through synergies with other partners or looking for targeted income generating activities), such as the need for

direct income which stimulates farmers to plant Eucalyptus and use their land for cash crops mainly.

3.2.2 RESPONSE TO WHAT IS OFFERED AND INTERMEDIATE CHANGES

51 It is expected in the programme and by KFF that access to and use of eco-system services from agroforestry systems are improved and that knowledge on resilience of social-ecological systems is improved through research and sensitisation.

52 **First response** – The first response to the activities was acceptance to work with KFF and planting (evidence: registration in KFF system). The initial distrust of some farmers with regards to the distribution of trees without asking money in return did not endure for long.

53 What explains this positive first response? There are several elements: The intervention of KFF is:

- indirectly addressing lack of money (trees are given for free because farmers do not have the money to pay for it, distribution/transport is organized by KFF because farmers do not have the means);
- building further on a certain level of understanding and awareness;
- providing advice/proximity in a context where farmers cannot consult government officials that are supposed to accompany them. The KFF field staff is hands-on, is together with the farmer, encourages;
- in one intervention area, Karanguru, the intervention is developed in synergy with IDP. IDP applies an integrated farm model that supports the farmer in planting. This model also pays attention to planting trees for e.g. to become more self-sufficient in provision of firewood. Through its partners, IDP is supporting group building: per 30 families there are 2 social workers[3]);
- Identifying trees that have some immediate utility (medicine and fruits).

54 The high response of women needs to be highlighted: the programme and the integrated farm model ensured that women were involved in the activities. There was an interest for them to participate: women are looking primarily at fruit trees because they see here an opportunity to gain some money over market sales to use for their own savings or to buy food (that is not provided by the farm in sufficient volume as the focus of the farm is often on cash crops). Involving women in the programme thus ensures more diversity in tree planting. Hence the

[3] To give an idea of the capacity of governments agents that need to support and accompany farmers, at best there are 3 officers to cover 450 HH (information received from IDP)

relevance of the indicator counting the planting of fruit trees. Information from the peer review (separate discussions with men and women) confirms that it is in principle the man in the HH that decides on what tree to plant and where.

55 What is challenging/risk: the peer review has identified two main risks:

- expectation management and how to keep farmers motivated: tangible results (eco-system services) take a longer time (up to 5 to 10 years) to materialize;

- limited experience of KFF in group building and facilitation, which means that interventions that are not developed in synergy with an NGO partner that covers this approach, might turn out to be less effective (but this should be checked further, by analysing the M&E data collected in the coming months).

56 **Intermediate outcome** – There are already indications of further and intermediate changes, more in particular: farmers that start caring for the trees they received (mulching, watering, reaching out to KFF field staff with technical questions. Evidence: survival rate indicates good after-care of planted trees. Farmers are starting to know better about specific indigenous species and there is some renewed appreciation for their aded value. Overall, KFF notices a higher demand for trees and this was confirmed by the peer evaluation. [4]

57 The realisation of these intermediate changes can be explained by the following: caring for the new trees is asking limited efforts for farmers, they can count on continuous advice/proximity (for now), there is additional provision (and replacement) with indigenous trees by KFF.

58 The challenge is again in managing expectations as it will take a longer time before farmers start experiencing reduced expenses (for eg. By having their own firewood), or substantial effect on their income. A second risk lies in the expertise of field staff to answer to specific/technical problems (eg. Insect plagues) in a correct and adequate way and to do the work that actually should be done by government extension workers.

Conclusion on EQ 2 and recommendations - What does it mean for realising the expected outcome: access to and use of eco-system services from agroforestry systems are improved and knowledge on resilience of social-ecological systems is improved. The knowledge is increasing but the part of the outcome referring to eco-system services cannot be realised within the lifetime of the DGD programme, except for increased access to fruits, use of medicinal plants and maybe increased access to firewood (e.g. through pollarding). It might be interesting to follow-up more closely on those effects, for e.g. With women on the effects of fruit trees, and on the % of firewood that is generated on the farm and its evolution, without expecting too much effect. Knowledge building might require more involvement of the farmers (men and women) in

[4] The baseline on resilience (JFW, October 2022) already highlighted that, practices on planting indigenous trees and mulching were present in the intervention areas of the programme. The HH survey will be repeated beginning of 2025: it will be interesting to see to what extent practice has increased. There are no indications yet that farmers start planting indigenous trees by their own initiative but new information might contradict.

analysing data on their indigenous trees (through guided farmer self-assessment). By the end of the programme, it should also be possible to observe what new practices (pollarding and pruning amongst others) on larger trees are being applied.

What are next steps (information from discussion restitution workshop): the approach of proximity is important but how to continue? It was suggested by participants in the workshop that more attention should be going to empowering representatives of communities to grow their own seedlings (for e.g. in Harungongo) and to identify people/farmers that have been successful in the three rounds of tree planting (e.g. Harungongo) and use them as peer trainers. This is not yet planned in the programme activities and budget. Budget is needed as these farmers do not have the (financial) means to act: money is needed to facilitate. Without, it is very hard to organise and mobilise the groups.

Supporting farmers by developing a community approach that supports exchange between HH and group building, might strengthen the effects (but the peer review was not conclusive on this). It was suggested that support to farmers by field workers might take on a group approach in the future. However, KFF has no experience yet (see also EQ1).

3.3 EVALUATION QUESTION 3 – WHAT IS NEEDED TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN CAPACITY FOR CONTRACTING WITH GOVERNMENT BY FOREST MANAGEMENT GROUPS?

59 The **outcome to realise** is to facilitate sustainable management of forest reserves and to ensure that the forest system is effectively conserved.

60 The work on Community Forest Management (CFM) is organised in the forest reserves (not the national parks). The work on CFM is in its early stages as NFA needs to grant the licenses to the three groups involved in the programme.[5]

61 **Intervention** – The intervention has been mainly about building relations and trust with NFA and CFM groups. There are efforts to establish direct contact (and agreement) with NFA at national level (granting the licences). Engaging with CFM groups is conducted through tree distribution scheme.

62 The peer review revealed that it is very delicate for KFF to engage with the groups on CFM before licenses are granted and before signing an MoU between NFA (at national level) and KFF. NFA communicated that interventions cannot happen before that is the case. Therefore, KFF is not focusing on CFM-issues yet but works with the groups in a similar way as with other farmers, which is providing them with indigenous trees to plant on private land and giving advice.

[5] One of which is trying to get its license back after it was taken because NFA found that degradation of the forest reserve land was continuing thus not seeing any progress or benefit in terms of forest protection.

63 However, the intervention in itself is challenging as the stakes for the CFM groups are high: getting a license would give them access to extra income as they use the plots of forest reserve land assigned to them to plant Eucalyptus or pine as cash crops. KFF and the largest part of the KFF field team are not seen to have enough knowledge/experience to navigate this political/conflictuous environment and no clear tasks/roles are assigned to field officers to deal with this.

64 **What elements in the context are helping**? CFM groups are already partially self-organised and motivated, land tenure in the forest reserves is clear (blocks of land that can be allocated to CFM groups are demarcated), the need for forest products keeps the groups motivated (driver of change), support from US Forestry (paying for NFA official in Kampala) has provided KFF with a focal point on the matter.

65 **What is not helping**? The context is really not conducive for KFF approaches. The land tenure rights as such are not allocated to the CFM group nor their communities and contracts are only for 10 years (thus not allowing for communities to feel part of forest conservation policies), NFA still is a weak institution (in terms of enforcement on the ground) and effective coordination on the topic with lower level government (LCs) is not yet happening, some communities want to reclaim back land (see action of LCI in Itojo with support of the LCIII, reclaiming ancenstral land at the level of government[6]), there is no clear government vision for the Western Rwenzori on using and restoring the forest reserves and how to define best ratio in land tenure. The new supervisor at NFA has been assigned to change a number of things: stronger enforcement and calling for joint community action to restore.[7] NFA at local level is interested in collaborating with KFF but decision about MoU is at the national level and there is little enclinement to sign an MoU with KFF being a smaller partner operating in a specific niche.

66 **First response to this intervention**: the groups have accepted KFF as external partner to support interaction with NFA, there is openess of groups towards KFF (and high expectations) + steps are made in the license approval and NFA has been triggered to take more inititiave (appointing a new supervisor and bringing in environmental police, which is new[8]).

67 What explains this first response: KFF offers seedlings for free and brings them to the farms, farmers have expectations for receiving further support with provision of seedlings and transport of young trees. KFF engaging on a regular basis with NFA (Kampala and Itojo) thus putting a spotlight on the area (triggering response).

68 What is challenging/risk: the farmer groups and KFF are not yet clear on the goals related to sustainable forest restoration and use of forest products. E.g. planting indigenous species vs eucalyptus. Or, KFF wanting to restore NFA forest reserve land (with help of community/labour)

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[6] People still have not digested that they are not allowed to enter the forest or use as they want (to hunt, get firewood, do farming for cash crops), what is possible in forest reserves, is not enough to them, punishment is severe but needs are higher and there is not always enforcement.
[7] Restoration is key, because if not restored properly, the communities see this as waste land that could be used by them and they see no interest in or reason to protect the forest.
[8] However, the peer evaluation cannot firmly substantiate this as a result of KFF being present and active in the area.

by planting more indigenous trees in the forest reserve and not only on the private land of farmers, thus limiting the space for cash crops like Eucalyptus and pine.

69 As the process has only started, there is not an intermediate outcome to be observed The three groups have been assessed by NFA, and an MoU is being signed with CFM Ramufa, but the groups do not have their license yet and thus, there are no management plans yet (IR 5.3.)

Conclusion on EQ 3 - What does this mean for realising the outcome, and to facilitate sustainable management of forest reserves with forest systems being effectively conserved? The intervention is not yet contributing to this expected change.

KFF is however doing other things to promote forest conservation that were not part of this MTE and are happening in a fragmented way in different (other) areas and with small groups of HH as appears from the follow-up of the indicators (see also table with overview of indicators below).

Recommendation – The external evaluator questions if the CFM strategy should be pursued: it is not aligned with the vision and mission of KFF and KFF does not have the expertise to manage the political/conflictful environment; developing this expertise might divert them from their vision and mission. The problem is that CFM groups' interest is to plant cash crops with non-indigenous trees which is not something that KFF wants to support. However, it could be directly discussed with KFF if they would consider to grow and add another angle to their work, using the trust they have built and their technical expertise as a leverage. And then, if KFF sees an opportunity, to analyse the conditions and the consequences of this choice and how the programme could support.

3.4 EVALUATION QUESTION 4 – WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE BOS+ PARTNER STRATEGY REGARDING THE REALISATION OF PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND ACCESSING TARGET GROUPS? ARE THE PARTNERS WELL CHOSEN?

70 For answering this question, it needs to be understood that the programme in Uganda is implemented by a joint collaboration between Bos+ and JFW. Assessing the specific partnership (arrangements) between BOS+ and JFW was not part of this mid-term review. However, it is playing a role as appeared from the peer review and therefore reference is made to these arrangements and an interview, which was not initially planned with JFW was conducted (see programme in annexe)

3.4.1 KFF AS PARTNER: ADDED VALUE AND (EVOLUTION IN) PERFORMANCE

71 KFF is a young organisation, pioneered by a visionary leader that puts a science-based technical and forest protection approach, rather than a developmental approach, at the centre.

72 The partner has 14 staff members of which 8 field workers (managed by a field manager and working in designated zones), 1 administrative staff, 1 coordinator and 3 nursery workers. The team is committed and presents an interesting mix of young and older/more experienced staff, and a mix of men and women, with various backgrounds and capable of living with the farmers in their communities. The staff is always on the ground and the work is intense, every day farmers are visited. The organisation is seen to work also in areas that are more dificult to reach.

73 The organisation is evolving towards a more mature organisation. The transition process is developing alongside (and stimulated by) the acquisition of new projects (one with JFW and another one with the US Forestry Agency).

74 This transition process is characterised by:

- staff turn over both at the level of management and field officers. A new manager started to work beginning of 2024. The field manager left after 5 years end of June 2024 (coinciding with the field visit);
- Recently, a couple of staff with higher qualifications were added (to stimulate research and on communication and advocacy);
- More female staff was added to the team (nursery staff and field staff), which is important to ensure interest of women farmers.

75 KFF has a strong science base which is visible in various things: the specifies it grows (saving rare specifies, introducing them again and protecting them from extinction), in the care and attention for selecting trees and choosing where to plant them (thereby taking into account various criteria), the clear protocol of tree distribution, in the way the registration of each tree is done and follow-up is transparent. This science based approach and the choice only to focus on planting indigenous trees is what KFF is about and it is a specific niche that can add value to other actors. The organisation is respected by farmers and extension workers for this science-based approach and for its specialist knowledge on indigenous trees but even more for being present and being together with the farmers and for the fact that inputs and services provided are for free. The fact that the organisation is not investing in developing specific and popular income generating activities (IGAs), such as beekeeping), is not well understood by the respondents in this peer review as this kind of IGAs is seen as a priority need for the communities.

76 KFF leadership tries to ensure that the team gradually integrates specialist knowledge in its activities to align with its science base, but this is work in progress and appropriate approaches and instruments to support competence development of new staff are not optimal (no proper induction for new staff is being offered). Moreover, organised exchange at the team level on technical issues or observation of issues related to group functioning was not sufificiently organized according to different team members, The risk of having the main focus on an exact science approach, is that non-technical issues connected to social change processes are not sufficiently detected or addressed. Different team members are sensitive to the challenges connected to change processes and are well situated (on the ground, good interaction with the

communities)to address them but would need further support and training to ensure this. This would require that KFF integrates that additional focus in its strategy and in the job descriptions.

77 In terms of synergy: how is collaboration with others going? The evaluation considers collaboration with other NGOs here and primarily looked at the partners in this joint programme. This section does not concern the collaboration with IDP: as already stated in the above, collaboration with IDP and their implementing partners has gone well and presents a good example of effective synergy based on the model of integrated farm planning.

78 The partnership agreement between Bos+ and KFF situates the partnership against the background of the joint programme with JFW and specifies that KFF is 'engaged in a wider cooperation', without specifying what this means in practice or on the ground.[9] Indicator IR 6.1 suggests that KFF is engaged in synergies and exchanges and needs to report upon that, but the Excell sheets does not mention anything in relation to this (no concrete follow-up) – see further below for the table with the indicators.

79 Further, the partnership agreement states that Bos+ is responsible for ensuring coordination with all the partner organisations[10], but this is not seen to be very effective on the ground.

80 The review confirms that collaboration between the partners in this joint programme has not been optimal and that partners are working in silo's, except for some trainings and trajectories provided by JFW (see next point on support to capacity development). The following can be highlighted as problematic::

- Not having been able to choose with whom to work: KFF was not involved in developing the terms of partnership with JFW and its implementing partners. Besides that, it should be noted that KFF feels free to develop its relations (beyond the collaboration with JFW) and appreciates this flexibility.

- There is confusion about who takes the lead and who needs to follow instructions from whom on what. There is also confusion about the mandate of KFF as an implementing partner: e.g. KFF feels like JFW is treating them as an implementing partner whereas they do not perceive themselves as such. They see themselves as representatives of BOS+ in Uganda and feel trusted by Bos+ to act as such. KFF would like to work with JFW in a partnership arrangement based on equal grounds.

- There is confusion about what line to follow in forest conservation: e.g. KFF has very specific knowledge on indigenous trees but other implementing partners have their ways of doing and do not easily accept critical feedback on how they are working from another implementing

[9] The partnership agreement with KFF states the following: 4.1. In addition to the counterpart, the following parties are also involved in achieving the outcome in Uganda: Join For Water, National Resource Defence Initiative (NRDI), Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE). By signing this agreement, the counterpart is engaged in a wider cooperation to realise the outcome

[10] 5.1.1. General coordination of the programme in Uganda with all the partner organisations and relevant actors and interactions with donors (partnership agreement between KFF and Bos+

partner, hence activities and information are being fenced off which limits opportunities for joint learning and increased competition between organisations.

- There are few spaces and times to sit together with all partners at a more strategic level. Such spaces could help in clarifying the issues in the above. However, KFF has not experienced so far, a strong push from Bos+ to work with JFW. There is not yet a shared mindset amongst partners to learn from each other and reflect upon available data and information together.

- Divergent views on the work: JFW and implementing partners focus on community development against the background of a system in which multiple uses of natural resources are considered, thereby accepting compromise and trade-offs to which KFF is not willing to incline.

- Personal issues related to the leaders of the organisations KFF and JFW or their implementing partners play a role as well.

3.4.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOS+ PARTNER STRATEGY

81 **Selection of KFF and capacity for triple win** – KFF has been identified as an interesting NGO for Bos+ by the former coordinator of JFW (now IDP).

82 Following things are not clear to the external evaluator:

- to what extent have the BOS+ partner criteria been used to assess KFF's capacity and how did this provide information for further developing the partnership, e.g. to define support to capacity development.

- How was capacity for implementing the triple win for impact assessed?

83 From the peer review it can be concluded that this capacity for implementing the triple win for impact is not fully ensured by KFF (and can probably only be realised in collaboration with other organisations): KFF clearly has capacity in the field of biodiversity (win 1), and can support climate adaptation strategies (eg. Some results can contributed to soil stabilisation on sleep slopes in Karanbura) and mitigation strategies (by increasing carbon stocks in the landscape) on a limited scale (win 2) but has only limited capacity and experience on engaging with communities and groups (win 3). Hence the importance of developing synergies (see the point in the above).

84 **Strength of partnership relations** - To assess how partnership strategy is implemented and appreciated, the external evaluator has looked into the BOS+ partnership strategy (2016) and the partnership agreement with KFF.

85 The partnership agreement is limited to arangements for the DGD programme but nevertheless much appreciated for its longer time frame providing a lot of security to KFF. An explicit exit strategy has not yet been discussed nor formalised.[11] Thinking over a more explicit strategy might help both KFF and Bos+ to think about the partnership beyond the DGD programme. KFF confirms that it would be problematic for the organisation if the partnership would end now after 10 years. Stimulating KFF to ensure co-financing is a first step to start thinking about sustainability of the programme results. Eg. KFF has been stimulated to secure 20% of co-funding which it managed (in kind) through a collaboration with the US Forestry Agency. An exit strategy could specify further strategies to enhance financial, but also institutional sustainability .

86 Besides the partnership agreement, the partnership, is based on good relations (between coordinators) and a results framework with indicators. . Having good personal relations is extremely valuable in development work and this arrangement has been working well, as KFF and BOS+ respondents confirm. However, as KFF is developing, it is felt by both KFF and BOS+ that some elements connected to the partnership might need to become more explicit and formalised. This is also seen important to help KFF in its transition process and to support new staff coming in to understand what the programme is about.[12]

87 Support to capacity development has been provided through JFW on gender and on lobby and advocacy of which in particular the support on L&A has been appreciated by KFF.

88 Points of attention in managing the partnership are the following:

- The role of BOS+ in the coordination of the relation between partners: within the joint programme: it is said in the partnership agreement that BOS+ would ensure the coordination between the partners on the ground. This is obviously not an easy task from a distance. There have been tensions between partners KFF and JFW (in particular their implementing partners) on vision and development approaches that are not yet fully addressed. Both KFF and JFW confirm that this requires more attention for the second part of the programme;

- There is a good interaction and dialogue between the BOS+ programme coordinator and KFF. KFF feels that there is flexibility in how it can implement its actions and that there is possibility for them identify partners to work with on the ground. KFF however has only a limited view on the bigger picture as details of the budget and details of the agreement with JFW are not shared. This is considered to be a weak point in the partnership by KFF. There is no co-design of strategies: KFF was not involved in the choice of working with JFW and its implementing partners. KFF did not feel involved in the initial decision to have this MTE (as this is a requirement from the donor) and did not really own this idea of having a mid-term evaluation. The limited experience of KFF with external evaluation was clear in the preparation of this

[11] The partnership agreements refer to the following: 5.1.8. At the beginning of the programme, BOS+ will, together with the counterpart organisation, define the path to ensure the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the outcome in Uganda (this could include an exit strategy in the medium to long term). This strategy will be elaborated as a concise document and (after signing) added as an annex to this contract.
[12] KFF has experienced quite some turn over in management staff. The framework and terms of cooperation might not have been so clear to new people.

MTE: the approach and the required support in mobilizing respondents was not fully understood by the team, there was also anxiety about the evaluation. This was aggravated by internal tensions at KFF between the (growing) team and the coordinator about work arrangements and HR management.

– There is not yet an explicit strategy to support capacity development.[13] KFF feels free to develop its own activities and BOS+ trusts them with that, but there have been limited efforts to design approaches together with the current programme manager and the team.

Conclusion on EQ 4 and recommendations - KFF is a relatively young but evolving organisation, with a strong scientific and technical approach. Its staff is dedicated and embedded in local communities, which enhances outreach to hard-to-reach areas. Recent developments—such as adding qualified staff and more women—reflect growth and maturity but at the same time create challenges, i.e. In terms of ensuring professional HR management. KFF's value lies in its niche expertise in biodiversity conservation. However, it lacks experience in income-generating activities (IGAs), climate-focused work, and community engagement, limiting its ability to deliver on the programme's 'triple win' (biodiversity, climate, livelihoods) independently.

Partnership implementation reveals several weaknesses. KFF was not sufficiently involved in further elaborating the structure of the joint programme and collaborative management with JFW, leading to confusion over roles and authority. As equal partner to JFW, Bos+ could address these issues better through structured dialogue. Collaboration between implementing partners remains minimal, with siloed operations and a lack of shared strategic vision. There are tensions around leadership dynamics, forest conservation approaches, and communication. BOS+ has not yet been able to adequately address these issues, for e.g. through a strategic discussion with JFW.

Despite these issues, the BOS+-KFF partnership is valued for its longer-term duration and flexibility and is supported by good relations between coordinators and joint discussions on indicators and implementation strategies. In order to ensure effectiveness and to support the growth of KFF, the partnership and the programme probably would benefit from a joint effort to define more explicit frameworks and strategies for programme development, i.e. an exit strategy, and a strategy to support capacity development. Although KFF appreciates the autonomy it has been allowed in implementing the programme, more interaction at a strategic level involving several members of the team could support the organization in taking some key decisions on strategies and interventions.

While KFF is a relevant and committed partner with niche expertise, it cannot realise the programme's broader objectives on its own. The current partnership strategy lacks clarity, inclusiveness, and formalised support structures and does not ensure synergy on the ground,

[13] The partnership agreement states the following : 5.1.3. In mutual agreement with the counterpart: organisational and institutional capacity building to optimise the services provided to the target group related to the envisioned results and outcome and to improve the organisational and financial sustainability of the counterpart itself.

The joint work with IDP provides a good example of synergy, however, it is limited to a specific area and does not cover the entire scope of intervention. An interesting reflection is to what extent KFF can be motivated to adapt some aspects of IDP's intervention strategy. The technical team seemed to be clear about the need to do more organized work with the population, but they lack the necessary support, knowledge, and tools to do so, while IdP is considered strong at that aspect.

Recommendation: BOS+ needs to foster greater synergy between JFW and KFF in order to ensure synergy of action among all implementing partners. This requires the clarification of roles, and support to co-creation of implementation strategy and a programme for support to capacity development. A more transparent and structured approach—involving key members of the KFF team—is essential for strengthening collaboration.

3.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 5- ARE M&E DATA, COLLECTED BY PARTNERS AND BOS+ PROVIDING RELIABLE AND VALID DATA FOR ADAPTIVE PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT? THE UGANDA CASE

89 To answer this question, the evaluation has looking into the capacity for M&E and the link between the ToC and the logical framework.

3.5.1 M&E CAPACITY OF BOS+ AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

90 **Organisation of M&E and follow up** – KFF has a detailed system to follow up on the farmers and trees that is now digitized in the arcGIS platform. This provides them with valid and trustworthy data for their internal monitoring and evaluation. Data from this platform and additional data provide information to follow-up on indicators from logical framework. Every year, values for indicators are provided by KFF and discussed with BOS+. Six monthly visits are used to go over the indicators with KFF (as the BOS+ coordinator is not based in Uganda) and to discuss progress and new developments in context. Each visit is combined with meetings with stakeholders to enrich the knowledge of what is happening on the ground. The reports for DGD (learned lessons and performance scores) concern the joint outcome and the results by all partners of BOS+ and JFW. It is the BOS+ coordinator that adds information about the programme to the JFW reporting format and to the performance reporting to DGD. This report is not communicated back to KFF for their feedback (corrections, things to add, …).

91 **Capacity of KFF** - During the start workshop with KFF, the external evaluator used a checklist for KFF team to assess its own current capacity for monitoring and evaluation. This was further discussed with the KFF manager and leader. The KFF team states that a shared understanding of the objective, ambitions and expectations of the M&E system within the KFF team and with BOS+ is not present. The team for now does not have sufficient capacity (HR) to appropriately

participate in, contribute to and manage an adequate M&E system (that also answers the information needs of BOS+). This is not necessarily an issue of budget: although there is no separate budget line in the BOS+ programme on M&E, the KFF manager does not consider this to be an issue to further develop capacity.

92 The evaluation revealed that the M&E capacity of KFF currently rests upon: (i) detailed monitoring via the ARCGIS software (this is the in kind support from the US Forestry Agency), (ii) observation by the field workers (implicit monitoring as part of their tasks) and (iii) surveys (eg. About farmer perception).

- The ARCGIS system of KFF allows to register each farmer (HH) that has received trees and allows follow-up on all trees planted and on other indigenous species that are identified by the field staff. Staff can easily upload information using a tablet. Competence of the staff to use the tablet and the software is considered to be sufficient but is increasing. The possibilities of the software for tracing (planted) trees, analysis and visualisation of data are promising. For the time being, there are also some limitations with regards to the monitoring of the BOS+ indicators and for answering the information needs of BOS+. E.g. It is not possible to link the trees to a specific farmer and the system is not monitoring the actual interventions/actions by the farmers involved.

- The observations of field workers are very valuable as they are the eyes and ears of the programme. By their continuous presence, they are able to capture a lot of information: on the trees, but also on how the farmer is performing and what difficulties he/she faces and on contextual issues. However, there is not yet a good approach to exploit information coming from the field: field reports are not analysed yet by the coordinator (due to lack of time) and there is no dedicated space nor time to discuss findings and performance and to reflect upon these (focus of team meetings is now on operational planning and obstacles for execution).

- Surveys can help to understand the perception of farmers. There is not yet a planned strategy on how to use surveys.

93 **Points of attention** - There are some points of attention in order to strengthen validity of data collected and in order to stimulate adaptive planning:

- The indicators are often at output level (number of trainings, farmers reached, number of activities), helping to assess interventions and their reach but giving less information about actual change processes at the level of farmers and their communities (see table below for more details).

- Some indicators try to capture changes in behaviour of farmers, but the targets and/or information provided is not measuring directly changes in behaviour, which poses a problem for validity of the data (see table below for more details).

- It is not yet fully clear to KFF what is exactly meant by some of the indicators: wording and exact method to measure are not self-explanatory and the Indicator Reference Sheet (IRS) are not yet fully clear for all indicators.

- The field staff was not aware of the indicators as specified in the logical framework. Combined with the lack of space and time to discuss, this is not helpful with view to analysing in a more systematic way the programme's performance nor with view to supporting and stimulating staff to be reflective practitioners.[14]

- KFF fills out the Excel sheet with indicators but is not required to send a report to BOS+ in which they analyse the results, highlight challenges, propose alternative pathways, etc. BOS+ adds questions to the Excel after which a discussion is organized. Some reporting on main findings beyond indicators might be helpful to engage the team in joint reflection about how the programme is going...

94 The table in annex further elaborates on the the issue of validity of data. It is taken from the methodological note and was complemented after the peer review visit. It gives an overview of the indicators that were taken into account for this peer review. From the overview in annex, room for improvement to strengthen validity and relevance of what is measured (inluding target setting) is clear.

3.5.2 TRANSLATION OF TOC INTO THE LOGFRAME

95 There is only a general and higher level ToC of the joint programme with JFW that is translated into a joint logical framework. This translation is done in a coherent way. A translation of the ToC to the specific situation of KFF is not done.

96 When reconstructing the Theory of Change in use with KFF, the peer review team and the external evaluator tried to clarify the current view on the change process that BOS+ wants to influence through KFF. From this reconstruction it became clear that many planned strategies did not yet start, for e.g. lobby and advocacy, developing knowledge products, transferring knowledge to other actors and NGOs, developing forest management plans … The focus so far has been primarily on planting indigenous trees.

97 The assumptions of the joint JFW-BOS+ programme are formulated in a very general manner. This means they are not helpful to orient reflection on the performance of the programme and decision taking about next steps and necessary adaptations.

98 The assumptions were shared by the external evaluator with KFF during the start-up workshop but not recognised as such by KFF. The assumption that the promise of an additional income

[14] Reflective refers to the ability to think about and examine one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions. It involves introspection and consideration of one's experiences, perspectives, and decision-making processes. It is about a deliberate, thoughtful process of self-examination.

through tree planting would motivate the farmers to invest in indigenous tree planting seemed to be the one that resonated best with the KFF team. This assumption is not validated by the peer review: it takes too long before any substantial additional income can be expected and for now, the farmers do not intend to follow-up the planting of indigenous trees by their own initiative (to grow indigenous trees themselves or to buy them). However, as suggested in the above, the assumption that farmers need to see a difference at least in their spending, is a plea for ensuring better monitoring (in the second half of the programme) of calculating savings in relation to selling fruits and savings in buying firewood (thanks to pruning and pollarding).

99 The external evaluator finds there is an issue with the ToC and the pathway and outcome on forest management to look into. Aligning with and using the system of CFM, might be useful to have an additional entry point to reach farmers and have them planting indigenous trees on their farms. However, it is not likely that this approach will lead to sustainable forest management in the sense that resilicience of the forest system in the forest reserves would be strengthened by planting more indigenous trees (unless on a very long term basis and if farmers are willing for eg. to plan mahogany), because farmers want to use the plots of land assigned to them in the reserves to plant eucalyptus and pine as cash crop.

100 Conclusion on EQ 5 and Recommendation - The BOS+ M&E officer is not based in Uganda, which means that data collection largely relies on the KFF and their data collection procedures and their validation through biannual visits. The evaluation of the BOS+ programme in Uganda confirms the quality of the KFF monitoring system that allows a detailed follow up of agroforestry interventions starting from the number of trees in the nursery up to the trees provided to famers and how they are taken care of. This covers the technical aspects of the work. Some limitations in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity are the following: KFF, the local partner, currently lacks sufficient human resources and does not share a common understanding of the overall M&E system with BOS+. M&E is carried out using three sources: the ARCGIS system (for data collection on trees), observations by field workers (which are not currently used systematically) and occasional surveys (without a plan on how to use the results of those). There are structural problems with validity, ie. for indicators that concern measuring behavioural change: these indicators are unclear. In addition, the translation of the Theory of Change (ToC) into the logical framework is too general and insufficiently tailored to the reality of KFF. Key assumptions are insufficiently shared or validated. For the time being, the programme focuses primarily on tree planting, while strategic components in the overall ToC, such as lobbying and knowledge sharing are lagging behind.

101 The current M&E system is sufficiently strong to provide reliable and valid data for adaptive programme management when it concerns technical issues but not full effectiveness of the programme The points of attenion are: the KFF capacity to monitor, consolidate and analyse changes beyond technical indicators, the clarify of indicators measuring social and behavioural change, a clear link between the ToC and the reality and practice on the ground, and of the mechanisms for providing structural feedback to or dialogue with KFF and members of the team, guided by the ToC and its assumptions. Without strengthening local capacities, strategic reflection and joint monitoring, it will remain difficult to make informed decisions or learn from implementation

102 Recommendation: it is recommended to strengthen the M&E function locally (including the clarification of indicators, installing mechanisms for team reflection and strengthening of the feedback loop), make the programme logic and theory behind it more concrete and explicit, and approach M&E as a strategic dialogue process between BOS+ and KFF-team.

4 Lessons learned from the peer reviewers

103 This section draws directly from the reports of the peer reviewers. It describes the added value of the peer review process as experienced by the peers, lists their learnings about the programme in Uganda and their recommendations for future peer review processes. An overview of what went well during the peer review process and what was more challenging can be found in annex. The peer review reports are also attached as separate documents.

104 **Added value of peer review** - Overall the experience of the peer evaluation has been appreciated for several reasons:

- The experience of reconstructing a ToC is valuable to align it better to reality and to critically reflect upon the M&E system and the (utility of) indicators that are used. It provides lessons to integrate in the M&E approach of BOS+ and when designing new projects and programmes. The fact that KFF found it challenging to prepare for the field visit (which respondents to mobilise and how) clarified how important it is to involve partners and the teams in the design of the M&E system and to support them to integrate participatory M&E approaches in their work.

- The peers and their appreciation of (the execution and progress of) a programme in another country brings in specific technical knowledge and multiple perspectives. This adds value to the analysis and overall conclusions of the mid-term evaluation. This can be confirmed by the external consultant who has been able to make good use of the peer review reports;

- The peer review is an opportunity to learn about how to review (learning on methods and instruments) but also on how to interact and learn with partners and colleagues. The peer review process has invited colleagues to look at the bigger picture. More in particular the constant interaction with and involvement of the country representative (who was part of the peer review team) has allowed to go deeper into analysis and reflection. As such, the peer review process was a good example of intra-organizational learning;

- The peers from Latin-America became more aware of the difficult context in which the programme in Uganda is executed, more in particular the pace of deforestation and the fact that almost no forest is left to care for. This was a wake-up call about the potential effects of increasing deforestation in Latin-America.

- The peers from Latin-America realized that, although the context of Uganda was very new to them, their experience and expertise in executing and managing programmes allowed them to quickly sense and understand programme dynamics and to engage with farmers and other stakeholders. This increased their confidence as peer reviewers.

105 Notwithstanding the added value, the peers also has some critical reflection about the need to better prepare for the field visit with the partner and the cost-efficiency of having a team of peers flying to other continents for peer reviews.

106 The support by an external consultant is also seen to have added value, particularly in managing the process during the field visit, addressing tensions that arise or are observed both within the peer review team (eg. On task division) as within the team of the partner, adapting the organisation of interviews and focus group discussions when necessary, helping the peer review team to systematise the information collected (e.g. by using the methodology of ICMO). The peers hoped to get more support in experiencing new and alternative data collection tools (beyond interviews and focus group discussion) but realised that an evaluation exercise is not only about the tools. They value more the experiencing of drawing information from engaging with different types of stakeholders (beyond the direct target group). Nonetheless, it was felt that more specific attention for 'observation' should have been integrated in the approach.

107 **Learnings about the programme in Uganda** – There are various learnings about the programme in Uganda, some of which are also interesting for learning within Bos+ and in the context of Latin-America. The learnings are the following:

- In terms of execution, the peers would find it interesting to further explore the need for having a country representative on the ground, as they saw that the Uganda country representative (based in Belgium) has been able to develop a good understanding of context and a good relation with the partner. Another point of interest was seen in the proximity and presence of partner field staff on the ground in terms of building trust with farmers and their communities. As these choices have an impact on the budget of the programme, it would be interesting to look into those for other programmes as well.

- The science-based approach of KFF with the protocols, the follow-up and monitoring of individual tree planting with database (which supports visualization), the specific tree-caring technologies such as pollarding etc. is seen to have supported the quality of interventions and decision making by farmers and it can provide valuable information to local authorities and partners. This approach can be inspiring to other programmes. KFF could be invited to share their knowledge with BOS+ and BOS+ partners.

- The collaboration with IDP, a partner with specific expertise in supporting joint work of farmers and promoting agro-ecology (holistic approach), involving the whole family (with attention to involvement of women), supporting families to plan better their investments and develop long term plans is seen as valuable. The IDP approach takes into account the context and social aspects that influence on reforestation and allows farmers to integrate and articulate the planting of trees (which requires a longer-term vision) with other interventions as such supporting sustainability. The peers value the combination of a technical approach with the IDP approach: it was witnessed that this complementarity worked well and satisfies various needs of farmers. The peers would find it interesting to reflect upon this in the context of Latin-America.

- The importance of women in ensuring diversity in the types of trees makes the peer realized that it is important to support women to take a specific and active role in programme execution. This requires that the partner reflects upon the diversity in their proper team; the peers have seen that KFF started to hire more women to the team and is reflecting on the organization of the work.

- KFF is seen to be an organization that needs to invest in further learning i.e. When expanding its interventions to community forestry and lobby and advocacy. The current team cannot yet provide the skills and competences that are needed.

108 **Recommendations** - A reflection by the peers about the preparation and execution of the MTE and the field visit provides useful and practical ideas about the next steps in the programme of Uganda (and Bos+), the organisation of M&E in Uganda (and by BOS+ in general) and how to repeat the experience of peer evaluations.

109 Following recommendations have been formulated with regards to the next steps in the programme (and the design of a new programme):

- Review the ToC to align it with reality. A reconstruction workshop/exercise with the partner(s) can be very helpful to that end. Integrate this as an ongoing activity in the M&E system of BOS+ programmes.

- Stimulate learning within the BOS+ programme: for e.g. On how to integrate agro-forestry better in cacao farms

- Consider how to evolve from an intensive approach focusing on the individual farmer (which requires a lot of investment of field staff on the ground): e.g. By identifying and supporting model farmers as experts and peer trainers in tree management techniques and calling for deconcentrated government departments to offer better services on plant and tree diseases.

- Always consider the planting of trees as an intervention in a particular territory where other actors are having their interventions and approaches. Try to align better with partners that have a community/holistic approach, e.g. Ensure to be involved as KFF when longer term plans for the farm are designed by IDP. If alignment or alliance building is not possible, try to copy some elements of the IDP approach related to group strengthening and be aware of community dynamics in design of programme interventions.

- Offer support to strengthen team work within KFF, e.g. by ensuring spaces for joint analysis of data and information from the M&E system, including the valorisation of the observation of team members.

110 Following recommendations have been formulated with regards to M&E:

- Ensure the follow-up of this peer review with a participatory action plan that is monitored jointly between BOS+ (country representative and peers) in collaboration with the partner KFF;

- Critically review to what extent the M&E system provides the information needed. Review indicators, if necessary, in order to collect useful information;

- Ensure to add explanatory information when doing the follow-up of the indicators in order to understand the progress.

- Plan for joint learning amongst the BOS+ countries, identify topics for learning, to start with about the KFF monitoring software to follow-up on the tree planting.

- Support KFF and other partners to develop their own participatory evaluation process with stakeholders and provide information, exchange and learnings about the 'how to'.

111 Following recommendations[15] have been formulated with regards to the organisation of the peer reviews:

- allow for more time, both in terms of having a longer period of preparation and having more interaction with the partner. This will allow to develop a shared understanding about the objectives and expectations related to the review. Having sufficient time helps to focus the review and to outline priorities and shared interests. Involvement of key decision makers of the partner in the full process is key to support joint analysis of findings and uptake of conclusions.

- Allow for a reconstruction of the ToC beforehand in order to understand how the programme was actually implemented. This is necessary to prepare for data-collection, i.e. To identify the respondents and the key areas and questions to focus on.

- Both interaction with the partner and reconstruction of the TOC will help to identify sensitive issues and tensions that might influence on the execution of the review and need to be taken into account when interacting with the partner, the partner staff and the target groups.

- Ensure sufficient information about context for the peer reviewers, this is essential for preparation and for analysis. Part of this information should be provided when preparing for the evaluation. Also, during the field visit, it is advised to ensure moments with the programme coordinators and field officers to refresh some info, clarify certain issues and get more context.

- Make sure to have identified the need for translation before the start of the field visit. This will allow time to identify an interpreter that is not part of the programme, to appropriately instruct the interpreter on how the work is expected to be done and to budget the cost.

- Ensure a detailed programme of the field visit with clear guidelines on which respondents to mobilise (who/what profile and how many), how (which method, interview or focus group, observation or other) and for how much time (e.g. 40 minutes for an interview, 1h30 for a focus group discussion). This to avoid confusion when arriving in the communities targeted by the

[15] Information is drawn from the peer review reports but also from notes to support the preparation of the peer review in Bolivia (that eventually was not organized).

programme and the evaluation. Guidelines should include information about the maximum number of people, the organization of separate interviews and focus group discussions for specific groups such as men/women, young/older. A mapping of actors that are not directly involved allows to include them in the programme ensuring to capture their (external) perspective in the analysis. Accept however that this planning might change due to circumstances.

- When collecting data and information, it is advised to have field staff and representatives of the partner to introduce the peer reviewers to the respondents. This is key to respect the relations the partner has with the stakeholders and to ensure peer review does not do harm.

- Pay attention to the dynamic in the team of peer reviewers, organise the work as such that each peer reviewer feels comfortable and is valorised for his/her expertise and competences. Observe and adapt.

- Ensure time during the field visit for regular discussion and writing sessions amongst the peers

- Ask for an individual report of every peer. Think over the format of the report to ensure comparable information. If direct input to the evaluation questions of the review is required, ensure alignment with the questions formulated.

5 Conclusions and recommendations by the external consultant

112 The mid-term evaluation of the BOS+ programme in Uganda indicates that while significant groundwork has been laid by KFF, particularly in promoting biodiversity, progress towards achieving the full set of the BOS+ programme objectives is uneven. The programme's implementation has primarily focused on the planting of indigenous trees, with promising early results in terms of outreach and farmer engagement. Indicators such as number of trees planted, number of farmers reached (including women), and tree survival rates are generally on track or already exceeded.

113 However, broader programme ambition, centred on the so-called "triple win" of biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation, and community livelihood, are not being fully realised. This is partly due to the programme's current scope, which emphasises biodiversity and to a lesser extent climate-specific actions while giving limited attention to systemic support for income generation and community-based approaches in agro-forestry and forest management. KFF is trying to improve on that, but their capacity for group work is limited and they do not have an adult learning approach.

114 Gains in ecosystem service access (e.g. fruits, medicinal plants, firewood) are slowly emerging but remain modest as they need a longer time frame to fully materialise. The anticipated behavioural shifts at the level of farmers and long-term ecological or economic benefits are thus unlikely to materialise within the DGD programme's timeframe. The evaluation also revealed strongly divergent views between KFF and the communities where it is operating (without a clear strategy on how to address this), eg. farmers aiming for community management contracts of forest reserves are primarily looking at planting cash crops which is against the vision of KFF.

115 Having KFF as a partner was a good choice: KFF is a respected science-based partner with extensive experience in biodiversity and also respected for it by government actors and other NGOs. Partnerships between BOS+ and a partner such as KFF thus ensures technical capacity in biodiversity, but also exposes gaps, especially in areas of realising community engagement, cross-sector collaboration with other NGOs, community forest management and lobby and advocacy. The partnership agreement is seen sufficiently flexible and open by KFF, allowing for support in terms of techical capacity development. KFF at the same time is a partner in transition with several challenges around strengthening technical and scientific competences of the team, development of leadership and team work, which are currently not addressed by the programme. This partnership is based upon strong and positive relations between coordinators which is valuable in development work and has worked well. The downside is that the programme currently operates without a strong framework for more structured and well planned co-designing of strategies between BOS+ and KFF.

116 Collaboration among implementing actors, particularly between JFW, its local partners and KFF, is limited. Coordination challenges on the ground (operating in silos and with divergent views surfacing tensions between biodiversity and development approaches), role ambiguity (about the position of KFF in the joint programme arrangement), and a lack of strategic dialogue reduce the potential for synergy and shared impact. Intervention areas where collaboration with Iles de Paix was realised were more promising, particularly in integrating agroforestry into broader household and longer term farm planning, promoting agro-ecology.

117 Strategically, the programme's Theory of Change and indicator framework are seen as too general and insufficiently adapted to the local context. While the follow-up and monitoring by KFF of planted trees is excellent, the monitoring and evaluation system of the programme shows room for improvement: eg. To strengthen local capacity (beyond the purely technical follow-up) , to further clarify indicators that are not fully clear to the partner and its team, to create more space for participatory M&E and joint learning at the partner level in order to stimulate adaptive management. Community development and strengthening of groups emerged as an expected outcome in the reconstruction of the ToC (in order to ensure sustainability) but there is no indicator to follow-up on this.

118 The BOS+ programme in Uganda thus has made meaningful progress in biodiversity restoration and climate adaptation through indigenous tree planting. Various interesting practices and experiences have been identified through the peer evaluation process, such as the following:

- KFFs' technical expertise and tool for monitoring trees planted. This helps in monitoring and is useful to support informed decision making about further investments and actions at the level of farmers, farmer communities and deconcentrated government services.

- Women provide diversity in planting (because they have different needs and wants). To strengthen the focus on women, it is important to further feminise the KFF team (more women) and work around gender with the team

- Collaboration with NGO partners such as iles de Paix (IDP) working on long term farm planning with the family and community strengthening may be important so that (1) tree planting in support of biodiversity becomes part of the farming plan and the common household decision and (2) farming families and their communities contribute to a good environment to reforestation. It should be noted however that effectiveness of the IDP approach for increased biodiversity was not directly assessed by the evaluation as it was out of scope. It might be interesting to integrate this issue in the M&E framework and analysis of data.

119 To maximise impact, the programme needs a more locally grounded Theory of Change, improved M&E practices, support to strengthen alignment with other developmend actors/NGOs and other views on development in order to evolve to a more balanced approach that supports all three pillars of its intended 'triple win'. Taking into account the recommendations already formulated by the peer reviewers, including those on future peer reviews (which can be supported by the external evaluator), the following additional recommendations should be considered by BOS+:

120 **Recommendation on programme management and partnership**: (i) Combining , relationship-based cooperation with KFF with a more formalised partnership model having clear agreements on roles, strategic objectives, expectations with regards to cooperation and capacity development and support KFF in its transition process, (ii) enhance KFF's engagement in broader partnerships by improving transparency on the partnership arrangements with JFW, ensuring mutual respect, and building on its strengths as a science based NGO, (iii) Establish regular, structured spaces for joint planning, reflection, and decision-making between BOS+, JFW, KFF, and other implementing actors. Since the new programme manager has build his experience for more than a year now, we understand that steps in this direction have been taken already.

121 **Recommendation on synergy and programme execution**: (i) Promote and support more synergy with more than one complementary partners, especially those focused on livelihoods, income generating activities and community engagement (ie. To replicate the expertience with. Iles de Paix), to achieve the triple win, (ii) Foster strategic dialogue to resolve conflicting visions on development and support collaboration rather than siloed work. (iii) Strengthen the role of women through targeted staffing and programme measures that respond to gendered needs and planting preferences; (iv) Encourage peer learning by identifying successful local farmers to act as trainers or facilitators, (v) consider reflect upon the investment of BOS+ on community management systems for forest reserves through KFF: as this would require a lot changes in the vision and mission of this partner it requires a strategic discussion with KFF (do they want to take on an additional role, how do they envisage synergy with other actors, what is needed to make that work?.

122 **Recommendation to strengthen M&E systems**: (i) Localise and Operationalise the Theory of Change, (ii) Ensure that KFF has a clear understanding of their contribution to programme outcomes and underlying assumptions, (iii) strengthen local capacity for M&E (beyond the technical follow-up of tree planting), refining indicators, and embedding reflection and joint learning in the team, (iv) Improve indicator clarity and ensure indicators to measure with desired behavioural, ecological, and socio-economic outcomes, (v) promote joint learning within the team and with target groups through regular review and sense-making of field data and field staff's observations, (vi) consider participatory approaches (e.g. guided self-assessment by farmers) to enhance learning and ownership over the objectives of the programme and the ambition of the triple win.

6 Annexes

6.1 ANNEX 1: OVERVIEW OF INDICATORS AND COMMENTS ON VALIDITY OF DATA COLLECTION

R	Results (logframe)	Indicators (logframe)	Comments by the external evaluator
03	outcome	IO.3. decreased forest degradation rates in the project intervention area – what is KFF's capacity to measure and what is the measure (see 15% decrease of degradation rates expected)	An appropriate method has not yet been defined. KFF stated that this will be taken up with JFW soon. One of the challenges is that the intervention areas keep changing
R1	The importance of resilience of socio-ecological systems with a focus on water and forest interlinkages has been brought to the attention of relevant stakeholders, including policy makers.	NA (KFF is not yet investing in policy influencing)	KF staff has been involved in training provided by JFW on lobby and advocacy KFF decided to start low key and slow, adopting a learning by doing approach KFF assigned the responsibility for L&A to one of the team members. First experiences with trying to influence local government on preparing and voting a bylaw were discouraging as the LG asked a considerable budget in doing so. The fact that LG in Uganda has very little space to take initiative and that budgets are fixed and assigned to execution of national government plans (pushing LG to seek additional budgets elsewhere) is not helpful. A draft strategy was developed on the topic of 'fire'. The document was not shared with the evaluator
R2	Knowledge on resilience of social-ecological systems with a focus on water and forest interlinkages is improved through research and sensitisation	IR2.1. number of knowledge sharing activities (counting the number of specific workshops/exchanges) IR2.3. the % of participants in sharing activities on protection and conservation of forest ecosystem indicate usefulness for their own work (50% of the people of which at least 20% of women)	KFF did not yet offer knowledge sharing activities to other organisations. Interview with JWF reveals that there is an openness to learn more about the expertise of KFF and the registration software that they are using. However, BOS+ and JFW have not yet been able to create the proper conditions for joint learning amongst their partners. There are tensions between the partners

			related to various factors, one of which being unable to work well together on the ground.
R3	Rights and access to water-related ecosystem services are improved	NA (focus of JFW)	NA
R4	Access to and use of ecosystem services from agroforestry systems are improved	IR4.2. Increase in the number of different native fruit tree species grown in local agroforestry systems in the direct beneficiary communities. +1 on average per farm IR4.3. number of people trained and engaged in improved agroforestry practices, focussing on native tree species (and improvement of tree integration on the farm and adoption of high-quality agroforestry systems). + 500 (100 women, 400 men)	See also answers under EQ1 IR 4.2. Information is collected and is valid and to be trusted. Target setting might be adapted, including reflection upon additional indicators or aspects to monitor in order to be more informative about actual change processes IR 4.3. what is counted is the number of farmers that receive trees. The system of provision of trees entails regular interaction with the individual farmer. Rather than 'training', it concerns advice (which is of course valuable). There is a recommendation, not to organise more formal training but to stimulate social learning between farmers, by using the groups they are involved in (such as saving groups) and to add an indicator on this. Improved agroforestry practices as such are not monitored. Instead of adding an indicator, it might be interesting to use the observation of field officers to harvest changes in practices of farmers. This can help to assess how they apply new knowledge and practice in their farm and how they plan for the future and what elements they use to make decisions (so not only when the field staff is there and not only limited to the trees received from KFF)
R5	Forest and water ecosystems are effectively conserved and restored	IR5.1. ha of restored ecosystem through active intervention and/or natural process of rewilding. 300ha with 70% survivability of trees planted	IR 5.1. the data provided in the Excell sheet (Y1) do not provide information about ha but about trees that have been delivered by KFF and planted by the farmers (but are not organised per individual farmer). Y2: Total 83 ha

		IR5.2. ha of conserved ecosystem. 490 ha (looking at national parks/reserves where conservation measures have been implemented involving 3 forest management groups) IR5.3. number of protection plans developed and validated (related to 3 forest management groups). IR5.4. number of people applying ecologically sound restoration techniques for making their landscapes more resilient in the intervention area. 300 M/W (with chances for long term sustainability of the restoration and multiplication.	3 ha agroforestry, 60ha Kyaninga forest (5,000 indigenous trees planted in Kyaninga forest (Season 1 and 2),) 20 ha Nyasakura wetland (450 trees planted). The peers find this an acceptable number given the size of the organisation KFF and their close follow-up. Kyaninga Forest and Forest Buffer - 9124 trees Agroforestry: Karangura - 5183, Rwengaju - 2034, Harugongo - 11288, UPDF - 1100, Ndali Crater Lake - 1000, KIMS School - 83, KFF Vistor - 26, Kaganda Harugongo - 85, Ian Clerk - 300, Another KFF Vistor 203 IR 5.3. there is not yet progress as the groups have not yet seen their licence for forest management renewed or approved (see also under EQ5) IR 5.4. 20 ha Nyasakura wetland. The indicator relates to the work that is done on wetlands with a limited number of HH on specific techniques. There is shared responsibility with JFW (mid-term target is 100) The figures for Y1 are the following (and exceed the mid-term target): 64 (40M, 20F): 10 men and 2 women involved in cycad census, 10 men and 2 women involved in enrichment planting of Kyaninga Forest, 4HH working to protect Nyabukara Wetland (4 M,4F),16HH planting ecologically sound species along streams (16M,16F), Not counted: 15 HH involved in allowing cycad census
R6	Synergy between actors involved in the programme and with external actors and networks, is strengthened	NA, IR6.3. on evolution of knowledge and satisfaction with the realisation of women's rights in natural resource management. This refers to an assessment based on 7 criteria	There was only limited activity in relation to the indicator. It is not clear what the assessment with the 7 criteria is about. KFF already paid attention to ensure participation of women in activities and

			ensuring a better gender balance in the team KFF has highlighted that it is in dear need to learn on mainstreaming of gender. JFW has referred KFF to Care International for training on gender sensitive workplace policies KFF admits that gender sensitivity of field staff when engaging with HH in taking decisions on the type of trees to plant and where
		Other: IR6.1 Number of synergies and (inter) national exchanges in which Join For Water and BOS+ and their partners promote resilience of social-ecological systems (JFW, BOS+) IR6.2 Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) (self) assessment score (%) on a range of enlisted skills focusing on organisation management and natural resource management to increase resilience (JFW, BOS+)	NA: assessing the collaboration with JFW was not part of the mid-term review See also under EQ 4: limited activity so far It is not clear to KFF what this is about: budget to purchase for e.g. Software? A questionnaire has been filled out by KFF staff on how they score their knowledge after receiving training but there was not yet an analysis (There is no such thing as a capacity building plan. A recent initiative, whereby KFF staff can shadow the L&A officer of JFW in Kampala is very much appreciated by KFF Although KFF is transitioning into a more mature organisation (hiring higher skilled staff, adding layers in the organisation, developing separate depts., refining the field work approach and training provided (that might be supported by JFW), there is no explicit question of support to capacity development towards BOS+

6.2 ANNEX 2: EXPERIENCES WITH THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Phase of the evaluation	What went well?	What was missing/needs more attention?
Defining learning and evaluation questions and developing methods and guidelines	– Taking time to reconstruct the ToC helps to understand how a programme is implemented – Ensure to prepare in collaboration with the partner in order to outline priorities – Defining evaluation questions helps to focus data collection – Detailed guidelines developed by consultants were helpful – Ensuring a good mapping of external stakeholders to include as respondents	Methods identified: integrate the method of participative observation of how work on the ground is actually done
Logistical preparations		Underestimated the fact that this was the first external evaluation for the KFF team (requires more explicit management of expectations and more clear instructions on how to organize and mobilise respondents for data collection activities) Important to think through challenges for translation and considerations for covering costs for participants
Start-up workshop with partners	Having field workers, nursery staff and management together: approach made them trusting the exercise and made them forthcoming to share their thoughts (context of KFF where there was no practice of organizing meetings for joint reflection)	
Data collection and team work	– Exchange and discussion between peer evaluation team members – Allowing peer review team members to find their place within the team – Support from the external consultant – Contextualization by country representative was key to understand and further analyse – Good to ensure interaction with specific groups (e.g. Men and women separate) – Organisation of reflection and discussion meetings with the peer review team in the evenings	Differentiate better between methods (interviews and FGD) – requires more interaction with Country representative/partner to understand how respondents are organized in order to provide relevant guidance and instructions for mobilization of respondents Better plan for translation What helps to have a successful FGD to analyse change: ensuring information and understanding about the way of working of the programme (practice of group or community approach), about the targeted groups and how they are structured + their level of cohesion, about the progress of the programme (are there already significant effects or dynamics?)
Preparing for restitution meeting with partners	ICMO approach to structure and analyse information helped to invite the peer reviewers and KFF team for reflection Assessing positive and negative dynamics at partner level in order to	KFF staff expected that the MTE would also be a space where their grievances would be addressed and assessed by the evaluator, this created tension during the meeting (element of expectation management)

	share the information in such a way that it can be heard by the team	
Reporting	Peer review reports helped the consultant to understand what they value in the practice of other countries and what are domains for further reflection and future learning	Need to connect the report format for peer evaluators more clearly to the learning/evaluation questions. They did not use these to structure their answers. More guidance needed in how to describe what has worked? (such as: look back at the start-up workshop and the presentation in the restitution workshop, the evaluation questions and the notes, …

6.3 ANNEX 3: PROGRAMME OF FIELD VISIT AND INTERVIEWEES

Detailed attendance lists are with the BOS+ coordinator for Uganda

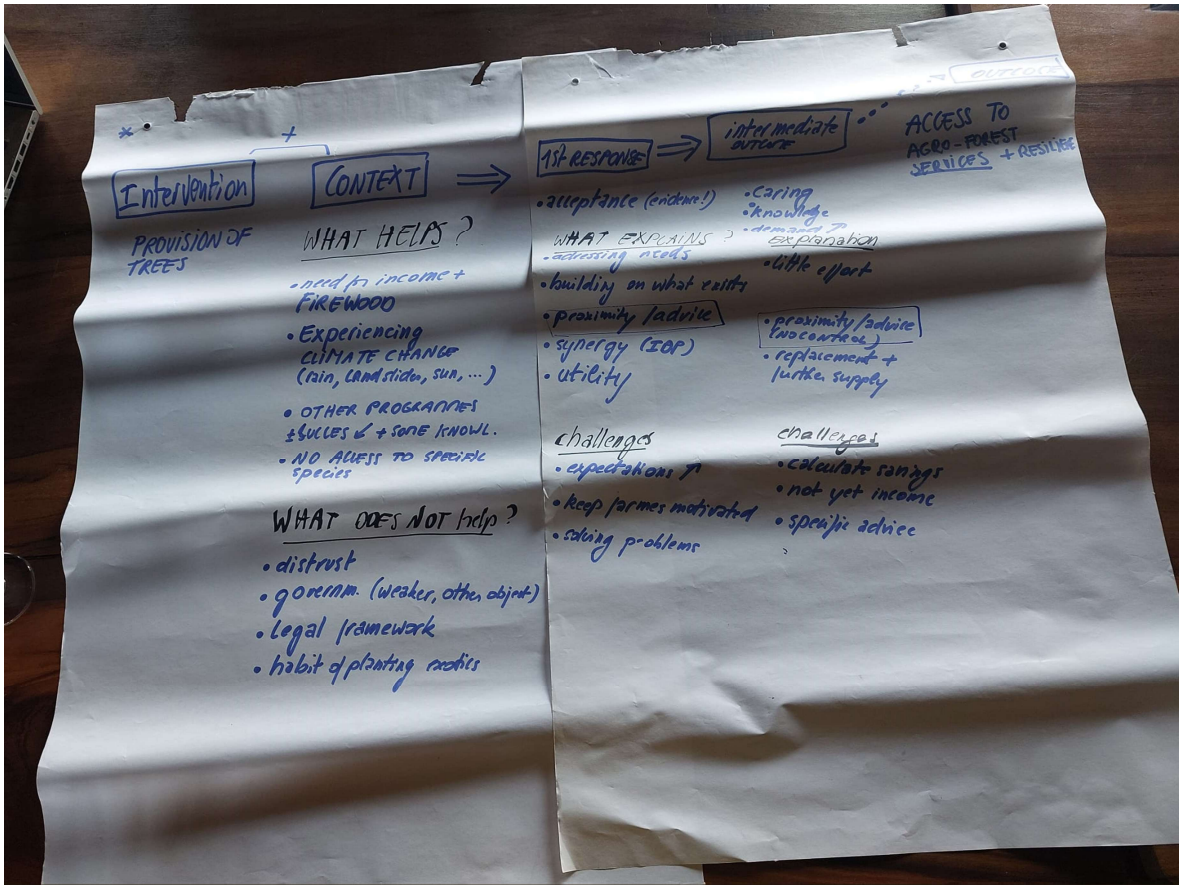
Date	Name/function	# people (M/W)	Location
24/06/2024	Youth councillor (political function) and extension worker	2 men	Harugongo Sub-County LC3
24/06/2024	2 women's groups Kikonge B Tree Planting, and Kyamahuli	12 women	Harugongo
	Bulyambuzi Conservation Group	8 men 5 women	Harugongo
25/06/2024	Production councillor + field staff of RCA (UG partner of IDP)	1 woman 1 man	Karangura sub-county LC3
25/06/2024	Female members of a mixed group of men and women and part of a savings group Katuuru Ageteraine Group	5 women	Karangura
	Kamabale Twisyumme super farmer group	8 men 8 women	Karangura
	Chairperson of LC 1	1 man	Karangura
	Îles de Paix, coordinator	1 man	Fort Portal
26/06/2024	Rwenzori Mountains United Farmers Association RMUFA - Leadership (chairperson, general secretary, treasurer, chairperson of patrol group)	4 men (1 is also chairperson of LC2 and another of LC1)	Itojo
	NFA officer and supervisor (+ 1 person from patrol team and 1 from environmental police)	3 men	Itojo
	Members of RAMUFA	a large group of about 20 people and app 20-25% women	Itojo

	Group (Kinoni) that wants to become a recognised CFM group, introduction with full group followed by group interviews 3 sub-groups dealing with nursery, beekeeping and leadership of the group (chairperson, secretary and member)	6men 4 women	Sempaya
	Chairperson of LC 1		Sempaya, Burondo Central (village)
	additional chairperson		Sempaya
	Kyakatimba Tree Growers group	8men 3women	
	Visit to a farm		
27/06/2024	Cocoa Cooperative (Busoro Cooperative) Leadership (6/9) including 3 ordinary board members	2 women	Bundibugyo
	Cocoa cooperative members that already received trees	7 men 4 women	
	Cocoa cooperative members that did not yet receive trees	2 men 4 women	
	Agricultural officer	1 man	? (Bram)
Throughout the field visit	Separate interviews with field officers of KFF and coordinator of field officers	4 men 1 woman	
After the visit			
9/07/2024	Director of KFF	1 man	Online
24/07/2024	Manager of KFF and coordinator of BOS+ programme	1 man	Online
17/07/2024	JFW, programme manager (Belgium) and Representative of the Uganda Office	2 women	online

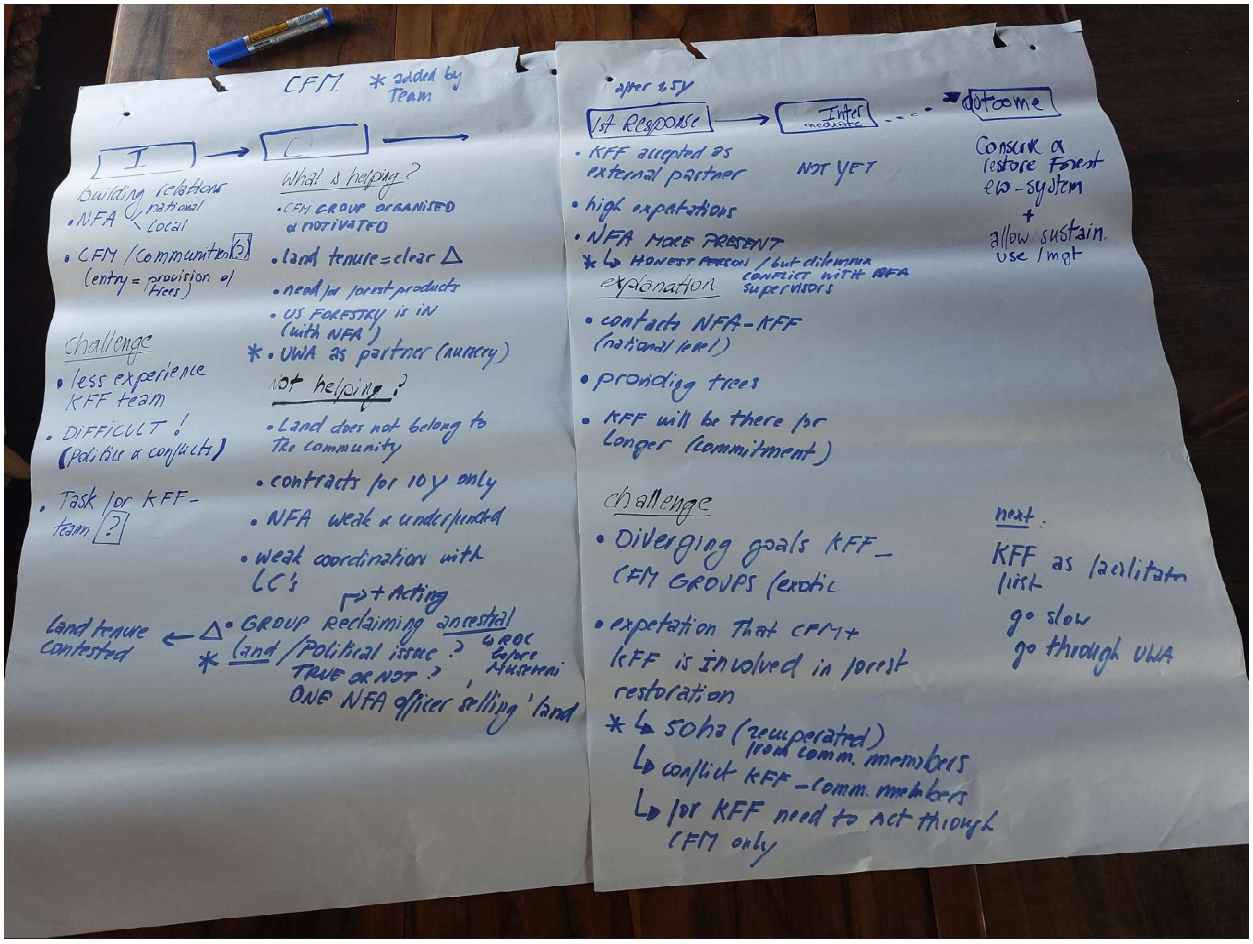
6.4 ANNEXE: ICMO WORKSHOP WITH PEER REVIEW TEAM

To structure the findings, ACE Europe used the structure of ICMO: Intervention, Context, Mechanism and first response, outcome and change. The results of this were written down on flips and shared and discussed with the KFF team at the end of the field visit.

ICMO provision of trees to farmers



ICMO support groups to perform as Community Forest Management (CFM) groups



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