

UN-REDD  
PROGRAMME



## Project Document

# Social Forestry Phase 2 (2026-2030)

Switzerland support to UN-REDD

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## Background

Social forestry (SF)<sup>1</sup> is a key strategy for sustainable forest management in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It empowers local communities with rights to manage forests, aiming to address deforestation, poverty, and climate change. Research<sup>2</sup> shows that when communities have secure tenure and adequate support, SF can reduce deforestation, boost incomes, and enhance climate resilience, advance gender equality, while contributing to environmental and development goals.

Despite SF's progress, and its great potential to scale its impact, key fundamentals still need addressing. This includes ensuring that tenure holders can fully and equitably benefit from their rights, particularly by having the means to profit from their forests and receive fair rewards for their stewardship, while also ensuring that decision and policy making are shaped through inclusive and well-informed processes.

**Switzerland's** initial support successfully showcased the potential of SF to improve livelihoods and advance climate goals in ASEAN, on the one hand, and, on the other, yield regional capacity development on REDD+ implementation, generated through knowledge management (trainings, learning platforms, regional exchanges, and communities of practice), in Africa. Continuing this support would allow Switzerland and UN-REDD to build on these achievements, helping both regions strengthen climate action, enhance biodiversity conservation, and promote sustainable economic development for millions of forest-dependent people.

Continued engagement would facilitate the transfer of effective SF best practices and business models between ASEAN and Africa, fostering South-South cooperation and innovation. It would help leverage additional contributions from other donors, mobilize much-needed climate finance and engage the private sector in sustainable supply chains, addressing both mitigation and adaptation challenges. Moreover, Switzerland's involvement would reinforce its global leadership in sustainable development, align with its international cooperation priorities, and contribute to the achievement of major international climate and biodiversity commitments.

**UN-REDD** and its core partner agencies, including leveraging on broader agency portfolios, have long been supporting SF in forest countries in Latin America, but also Asia and Africa, with efforts and key strategic partnerships especially embedded in Outcome 1 (Forests solutions realized) and Outcome 3 (Forest solutions enhanced) of the logical framework for 2021-2025. Recognizing the crucial role that communities and Indigenous Peoples play in reducing deforestation and sustaining long-term impact, the UN-REDD 2026–2030 Strategy highlights SF as a key element. SF is integrated throughout the Strategy's outcomes and outputs, with particular emphasis in Outcome 4: Enhancing actions to address drivers of deforestation. Within this, Output 4.3 (Local solutions) and Output 4.1 (Forest solutions) serve as primary entry points, closely linked to other components such as Output 4.4 (Enhanced and aligned

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<sup>1</sup> There are different terms used for SF around the world including Community-based Forestry in many African states, while at the ASEAN level the term social forestry is commonly used, though many AMS use different terms including community forestry and community-based forest management. Additionally, SF can take many forms, including within a country, with rights of tenure holders differing according to its objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Fischer, et al. (2023). Community forest governance and synergies among carbon, biodiversity and livelihoods. *Nature Climate Change* 13, 1340–1347, and Diansyah, et al. (2021). A systematic review on community forest management in Southeast Asia: Current practices and impacts on biodiversity conservation and livelihood quality of local communities. *Human Ecology Review*, 27(1), 3–21

upfront investments and finance) and Outcome 3 (Enhancing climate ambition). Furthermore, the new Strategy's Cross-cutting element of "Social inclusion and gender equality" directly and indirectly supports SF, including through UN-REDD's commitment to the human rights-based approach. Additionally, UN-REDD can leverage its status as a trusted partner to make connections across scales and geographies to create opportunities and support frameworks to embed socially inclusive, gender responsive and rights-based measures into government programs and financial mechanisms, including carbon markets.

In **Africa**, UN-REDD has supported countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Uganda and Zambia to align SF with REDD+ efforts. Key areas include land tenure security, capacity development, and connections to payment for ecosystem services. At the regional level, UN-REDD collaborates with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Central Africa Forest Commission (COMIFAC), and the East African Community (EAC), leveraging initiatives like the ECOWAS-FAO, SIDA supported "[Global Transformation of Forests for People and Climate](#)", to advance SF among member states. Additional support is provided through SDC funding in the partnership between UN-REDD and the African Forest Forum (AFF) to strengthen mainstreaming of sustainable forest management among other aspects.

Switzerland has supported countries in Africa, including through UN-REDD, in progressing in their REDD+ Strategy implementation and broader climate goals, fostering partnerships with national forestry agencies, and promoting inclusive, evidence-based forest policies. Activities have included training, South-South exchanges, policy dialogues and knowledge-sharing platforms on REDD+ and climate finance, social inclusion and benefit sharing, deforestation-free supply chains.

Despite progress, challenges persist, especially in supporting SF tenure holders to develop sustainable livelihoods and track outcomes.

In **Southeast Asia**, UN-REDD, and its core partner agencies, through broader portfolios, have supported strengthening local communities' capacities on forest management, and the integration of SF into national policies, REDD+ strategies or NDCs, assisting, for example, Cambodia, Indonesia and Lao PDR to strengthen community tenure rights, improve forest monitoring and access climate finance. Through partnerships with ASEAN bodies, ASEAN Member States (AMS) and non-state actors, as well as leading the "[Climate change mitigation through social forestry actions in ASEAN countries](#)" (in short ASEAN SF Initiative), UN-REDD has promoted inclusive decision-making and access to finance, capacitated forest dependent communities to benefit from climate and other finance mechanisms for sustainable livelihoods, created a holistic, sustainable, and replicable model for the commercial development, financing, and capacity development of Social Forestry Enterprises (SFEs), established the basis for concerted implementation of forest Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and Ecosystem-based Approaches (EbA) in ASEAN following the development of the ASEAN Guidelines and Toolkit on NbS and EbA in the Forestry Sector, and improve evidence to support climate finance for SF. Switzerland's long-standing support for SF in ASEAN has supported major progress by AMS. For example, between 2010 and 2024, the area under SF in the region grew from 6.7 to over 15.3 million hectares, alongside stronger legal frameworks that secured

clearer rights and greater benefits for tenure holders<sup>345</sup>. The SDC supported ASEAN SF Initiative has built capacity as well as a strong evidence base for SF's role in climate mitigation and its integration into NDCs, supported integration of NbS<sup>6</sup> in SF and built capacities on SFE development.

**Ongoing assessments, as part of the ASEAN SF Initiative, suggest that SF areas experience lower deforestation than non-SF areas.** However, the impacts vary depending on the specific goals of each SF scheme and the rights and support provided. These findings underscore the need for robust monitoring systems to track the various inputs to monitor nature and climate outcomes and ensure that SF models align with NbS principles, particularly strong tenure rights and climate resilient livelihood options. Furthermore, it is also vital to connect the monitoring systems and reporting to support informed policy making, as well as facilitate access to finance.

Another key development under the Initiative has been the increased focus on enabling access to investment and economic incentives for SFEs. This is particularly evident in the ASEAN Blueprint being developed under the Initiative, which summarizes the support provided to SFEs through mentorship, technical assistance, improved product sourcing at the SFE level, mobilization of private sector investment to specific value chains and an enhanced market access<sup>7</sup>. These needs also reflect the priorities identified based on consultations with ASEAN, and country and regional stakeholders.

Overall, UN-REDD will adopt a deliberately bottom-up and localised implementation approach, working through and with national and regional partners from the earliest stages of work planning through to implementation and learning. Interventions will be grounded in countries' strategies and policies and informed by local knowledge, existing institutional capacities and on-the-ground realities, with implementation pathways adapted to each national context. UN-REDD will engage a range of national and regional actors, including government institutions, civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples' and local community organisations, academic and technical partners, based on their comparative advantages and existing relationships in country. Modalities of engagement will be co-designed with partners during inception and implementation<sup>8</sup>, ensuring national ownership, strengthening local capacities, and enabling sustainable, context-specific results beyond the life of the Initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aramis.admin.ch/Texte/?ProjectID=48051>

<sup>4</sup> Wong et al. (2020). Social forestry in Southeast Asia: Evolving interests, discourses and the many notions of equity. *Geoforum*, 117, 246-258.

<sup>5</sup> Also highlighted in the ongoing reviews of the AWG-SF Plan of Action (2021–2025)

<sup>6</sup> ASEAN bodies have increased their emphasis on NbS in recent years, including in Draft Food, Agriculture and Forest Sectoral Plan (2026-2030). Note NbS is sometimes used interchangeably with Ecosystem-based Approaches by AMS and ASEAN bodies.

<sup>7</sup> The “Blueprint for Accelerating Commercial Development of Social Forestry Enterprises (SFEs) in ASEAN”, which is scheduled to be endorsed by the ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry in Q3 2026, includes 8 concrete examples of the project's achievements at the SFE level, including key lessons for future scaling up.

<sup>8</sup> This includes consultation process with various ASEAN bodies and relevant partners starting in Q1 2026 and hopefully culminating in Q3 2026 with endorsement of the Initiative's continued work in Southeast Asia by ASEAN Senior Officials in Forestry in their Annual Meeting.

## Objective and outcomes

The overall objective is to **scale-up implementation and impacts of social forestry, by enhanced forest management capacities, enhanced investments in SF and access to markets and climate finance, and support through integration in national, regional and global actions for climate, livelihoods and nature.**

The work, over a five-year period (2026-2030), has **three complementary outcomes and corresponding components**, covering Southeast Asia, Africa and global knowledge and cross-regional sharing:

- A. ASEAN: Strengthened capacities and evidence base to achieve impact at scale for social forestry in ASEAN, aligned with Nature-based Solutions' principles, supporting access to markets and finance and informed integration and effective implementation within actions for climate, equitable livelihoods and nature.
- B. Africa: Strengthened social forestry capacities in Africa, building upon previous experience in the region, and utilizing global and regional learning and mechanisms, supporting access to finance and informed integration within actions for climate, improved equitable livelihoods and nature in selected hub countries to inform regional SF work.
- C. Accelerating policy and market uptake for social forestry to scale and sustain biodiversity, climate and equitable livelihood impacts.

The outputs for the two regions (Components A and B), are broadly similar although different in depth, focusing on **monitoring system and capacity development (Output 1), supporting impacts through: access to markets and finance (2), and informed policy support (3)**. The interconnected nature of the outputs is reflected in their activities, for example in ASEAN, where strengthening foundational systems, under ASEAN SF, supports effective implementation through improved access to finance and informed policymaking. See annex 1 for the draft theory of change, it will be further developed during the inception phase (i.e. endorsement and consultation process in Component A, and consultation process for Components B and C).

**Climate action includes mitigation and adaptation with focus on NDCs, as well as other related initiatives.** The action for nature focuses on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and their translation to national levels, including NBSAPs. The entire package also expects to bring in and enhance positive direct and indirect impacts on enhanced livelihoods, including through NbS pilots, SF enterprise development and strengthening the enabling environment to facilitate enhanced protection of forests.

The initiative is **gender responsive** and inclusive of **Indigenous Peoples and local communities** (IPLCs) in its approach to equitable livelihoods, recognising that women, men and youth have different roles, needs and opportunities in relation to forests and land use. Equitable livelihoods encompass fair access to resources, decision-making, capacities, benefits, markets and finance, including climate and nature finance, as well as safeguards for all. Example emphasis will be on women's leadership and economic empowerment in SF value chains and NbS enterprises, and to the rights, knowledge and effective participation of IPLCs.

The **work in the two regions reflects the different starting points, and priorities.** For example, the ASEAN SF Initiative has created strong foundations and identified various priorities for further scaling up. The work in Africa will focus on consolidating existing

community-based forestry (CBF) efforts, generating and disseminating lessons learnt and good practices in SF and land use management in the region to support exchanges of knowledge and experiences on CBF. The work in Africa will also replicate and adapt the learnings and knowledge from the ASEAN SF Initiative, such as SFMS and link to, for examples, NDC development and reporting, as well as SFE development. Global knowledge and cross-regional sharing (Component C) will focus on facilitating the knowledge sharing within and between Africa and ASEAN.

SDC's continued engagement would be strategic, supporting scaling up the impacts of the work in ASEAN, strengthening many of the fundamentals for SF in Africa, including through the transfer of SF good practices and business models between ASEAN and Africa, fostering South-South cooperation and innovation. It would also help mobilise much-needed climate finance and engage the private sector in sustainable supply chains, addressing both mitigation and adaptation, as well as nature protection needs. Moreover, Switzerland's involvement would reinforce its global leadership in sustainable development, align with its international cooperation priorities, and contribute to the achievement of major international climate and biodiversity commitments.

## Component A: ASEAN

### Context

Forests and trees play a central role in ASEAN Member States' (AMS) climate strategies and are prominently featured in their NDCs. Beyond mitigation and adaptation, they contribute to biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction, and livelihoods. SF, if integrating the principles of NbS (as recognised by the ASEAN Secretariat and most AMS), is a key NbS in the ASEAN region. Countries are scaling up SF, for example, Cambodia targets 2 million by 2029 (31.58% of 2025 forest area), Indonesia 12.7 million hectares by 2030 (13.23%), while in Lao PDR the potential is approximately 6.23 million ha by 2030 (47.79%)<sup>9</sup>. If all the countries in the region are to meet their target area for social forestry, then it would cover over 27.4 million hectares (13.41% of the region's forests). Additionally, SF is increasingly integrated into NDCs, biodiversity strategies (NBSAPs), and green economy plans, supported by legal reforms and enterprise programs like Indonesia's innovative SF enterprise development program (KUPS).

Realising SF's full potential in the region<sup>10</sup> requires stronger policy frameworks, reliable data, and greater capacity at local and institutional levels. Although tenure rights have improved, implementation challenges remain, particularly in monitoring and aligning with climate and nature conservation goals as well as supporting women and Indigenous Peoples to be powerful actors in jumpstarting and accelerating change. However, to unlock their full potential and ensure their meaningful participation, collective, rapid efforts by governments, development partners, civil society groups and local communities are essential. Research being conducted as part of the ASEAN SF has found that women and vulnerable groups are often sidelined from decision making, forest management and therefore benefit sharing, further undermining,

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<sup>9</sup>The data for Lao PDR is based on FAO's analysis of data from the Government of Lao PDR. It has not officially been endorsed.

<sup>10</sup> As of 2024 approximately 15.34 million hectares of forest land, in Southeast Asia, is under some form of social forestry management, Data from various sources.

among other things their resilience to external shocks. This is also reflected in academic research<sup>11</sup>.

The UN-REDD ASEAN Social Forestry Initiative is addressing these gaps. During 2022–Q1 2026, the Initiative provided support at the ASEAN regional level and with focus activities in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Lao PDR, resulting in the advancement of SF monitoring systems which facilitated the development of SF climate mitigation assessments, facilitating the integration of SF in NDCs<sup>12</sup> and climate finance strategies. Furthermore, the Initiative worked with the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Working Groups on Forest and Climate Change (AWG-FCC) and Social Forestry (AWG-SF) on the development of Guidelines and a practical Toolkit to support the integration of NbS in forestry, including SF<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, the Initiative has worked to improve foundations and pilots of SFE development to be scaled up.

The new financial contribution proposed in this concept note not only builds on the above but also continues to respond to consultations with and requests from government agencies in the focus countries, in addition to the ASEAN Secretariat, AWG-FCC and AWG-SF, as well as those involved in SF and NDC implementation. The consultations and requests particularly from the ASEAN Secretariat, as well as the AMS, are reflected in the focus on NbS, and the desire to strengthen its integration in SF, as well as the development of the SF monitoring system (SFMS) to cover climate action more broadly, as well as nature conservation. The continuing focus on development of the SFMS differs from country to country, with Lao PDR for example, needing to address the many inconsistencies in data (e.g. overlapping SF boundaries) that have implications for the tenure holders. Indonesia, on the other hand, has a well-developed SFMS, built around goKUPS<sup>14</sup>, but is working to integrate the SFMS in the National Forest Monitoring System, as well scale out the monitoring to cover SF impacts on biodiversity, forest carbon, and other socio-economic indicators. Another priority action is the development of ASEAN Guideline on monitoring social forestry which will support AMS to further enhance their social forestry monitoring systems to cover environmental and socio-economic impacts of SF, particularly through NbS actions.

Alongside the analysis and review of experiences with small catalytic financing for Indigenous Peoples and local communities in ASEAN, these measures will help to understand the impacts of SF programs, identify areas for refinement and scaling up, improve implementation arrangements, support regulatory reforms, and facilitate more direct access to finance at the local level.

Finally, the Secretariat and the AMS also expressed a desire to enhance access to climate finance, as well as scale up SFEs' contribution to livelihoods through enhancing market access and attracting investments and are developing their regulatory framework reflecting this. The

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<sup>11</sup> For example, in Indonesia, despite the 2021 regulatory reforms aiming for gender equity, women hold only 19.5% of roles in Village Forest management bodies and 13.9% in Community Forests. They are often excluded from decisions on land allocation, training, and resource distribution. In Vietnam, women's and indigenous groups have limited access to credit, technology, and market information stifles growth. Only 21% of formal MSMEs are women-owned, often constrained by collateral requirements the Law on Support for SMEs (2017) is embedding gender quotas (e.g., 40% female ownership thresholds) for forestry cooperatives to qualify for state subsidies (Toumbourou et al. In press).

<sup>12</sup> Cambodia has finalised its NDC with inclusion of SF in qualitative and quantitative terms. Indonesia and Lao PDR are working to finalise their NDCs, with the Initiative having provided feedback and data for inclusion of SF.

<sup>13</sup> UN-REDD, as part of ASEAN SF, worked with ASEAN Secretariat and AWGs FCC and SF, as well as Nanyang Technological University to develop the Guidelines and Toolkit. It is anticipated they will be endorsed by ASEAN in August 2025, with expectation that UN-REDD can support their mainstreaming in the region.

<sup>14</sup> <https://gokups.menlhk.go.id/>

support to SF and SFEs, to be scaled up with the new financial contribution, alongside improved access to climate finance and complementary financial instruments grounded in strong tenure rights, can strengthen climate resilient livelihoods. This support also promotes gender equality, and enhance equitable access to, and control over, key resources such as finance, economic opportunities, information, and technology.

## Outcome

Strengthened capacities and evidence base to achieve impact at scale for social forestry in ASEAN, aligned with Nature-based Solutions' principles<sup>15</sup>, supporting access to markets and finance and informed integration and effective implementation within actions for climate, equitable livelihoods and nature.

## Outputs and key activities

While keeping in mind the interlinkages between the Outputs and their activities, the work would see the enhancement of capacities and systems for strengthening the evidence base for SF (Output 1) leading to impacts through increased investments and access to finance (Output 2) and informed policy making (Output 3).

### **Enhanced capacities and systems for monitoring to strengthen the evidence base and reporting on the impacts of SF to support its integration into climate and nature conservation initiatives (such as NDCs and NBSAPs), guided by NbS principles.**

- a) Assessment and planning, starting with updating and expanding the capacity and system development needs assessment (CDNA)<sup>16</sup>, and resulting action plan being implemented. This includes further system development and capacity development program, including for the SF Monitoring System (SFMS). This includes alignment with AMS integrating SF in national development, biodiversity and climate action initiatives such as Cambodia and Indonesia's NDCs and NBSAPs, Lao PDR's 2025 National Adaptation Plan, as well as the ASEAN Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sectoral Plan (2026-2030)<sup>17</sup>, and the forthcoming Strategic Plans of Action for AWG-FCC and SF (2026-2030). Currently the nascent SF monitoring systems in Cambodia and Lao PDR face numerous opportunities and challenges, for example, the VF Monitoring System (VFMS) Committee in Lao PDR, created as part of the Initiative, highlighted the need to integrate VFMS in relevant national monitoring systems to align with national programs, including monitoring progress towards 70% forest area target.

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<sup>15</sup> The NbS Principles are shared in the ASEAN Voluntary Guidelines and Toolkit on NbS and Ecosystem-Based Approaches (EbA) in the Forestry Sector, including SF. They were developed under ASEAN SF and were endorsed at the 28th Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials in Forestry (ASOF) in August 2025. Both were also endorsed in the 47th Meeting of ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) held in September 2025 and will be published in April 2026.

<sup>16</sup> The CDNA conducted in ASEAN SF phase 1 is focused on SF monitoring for climate mitigation, the updated and expanded CDNA would include progress in SF monitoring, as well as increased consideration of SF monitoring in context of climate action in general (i.e. inclusion of resilience) and nature protection.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Action Programme 3 of the new Plan includes alignment of national forestry policies with regional and international frameworks to ensure coherence in tackling issues related to carbon neutrality, illegal logging, and NbS/EbA, fostering greater policy effectiveness and implementation. Priority activities include Develop regional monitoring and evaluation systems.

- b) Toolkit and guideline development, including ASEAN Guidelines / Toolkits<sup>18</sup> for, 1. SF monitoring (including alignment with NbS), and 2. integrating SF into NDCs, NBSAPs (and their reporting), and operationalization with relevant tools to assess SF's climate and biodiversity impacts using UN-REDD platforms. Options include ABC-Map (monitoring Adaptation, Biodiversity and Carbon), se.plan (forest restoration planning decision support tool), and Deforisk (predicts deforestation risk). Both Guidelines / Toolkit were part of the Plans of Action (2021-2025) of the AWG-SF and likely included in the forthcoming PoA for AWG-SF for 2026-2030. Guidance and capacity development will also be provided to support AMS to use these tools to, for example, further expand the SF area in a systematic manner.
- c) System development includes establishment and expansion of SF database, data collection and analysis covering climate and nature actions. Work with government partners to conduct assessments of impacts of SF on, e.g. climate adaptation and biodiversity, building on the SF mitigation assessment capacity development activities conducted under ASEAN SF. The economic impact on livelihood enhancement will also be monitored. Integrate SFMS into existing national forest monitoring systems and other relevant platforms. Facilitate reporting of results, including supporting access to finance (Output 2) and informed policy making (Output 3).
- d) Capacity development and knowledge sharing: learning from and leveraging existing innovative grant mechanisms within the UN-REDD partner agencies' portfolios targeting SF tenure holders, including Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable communities to leverage scalability and policy impact across ASEAN and African countries. Pre-investments from UN-wide Climate Promise will be leveraged to curate lessons from existing initiatives with local communities and SFEs to strengthen technical and governance capacities by showcasing effective, community-driven models and by informing policy dialogue, capacity development, and strategic support. These tested approaches will help refine the design, operation and delivery of the ASEAN SF Strategic Response Fund (ASFSRF) in line with the Phase 1 progress, improving scalability, governance arrangements, and access to inclusive, locally responsive finance based on proven schemes and demonstrated real-world results and feedback from local actors (e.g. CBOs, LNGOs, IPOs) and communities. The selected cases to be examined focus on direct grant mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and local communities for community-based forest management in Cambodia<sup>19</sup>. This will provide derisked proof of concept for bottom-up models to inform regional uptake. Tentative activities to capture these experiences could include stakeholder feedback consultations and participatory reviews, documenting cases to generate online capacity-building materials for SFEs and communities, complemented by knowledge products and REDD+ Academy integration. These may comprise structured online learning (micro-learning modules, short video lessons, modular learning pathways) and live, interactive formats (webinar series, virtual communities of practice, and peer-exchange). Specific activities will be refined collaboratively with the country team to ensure contextual relevance, impact,

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<sup>18</sup> ASEAN Voluntary Guidelines and Toolkits are resources developed with oversight of ASEAN Secretariat to support AMS to develop capacities and systems to address specific opportunities and gaps. The Guidelines and Toolkit proposed are included in the AWG-SF Plan of Action.

<sup>19</sup> The Cambodia case leverages co-financing and partnership from UNDP's Direct Grants to Indigenous Peoples under the Climate Promise (2024–2026) and the monitoring improvements under UN-REDD support (2024–2025). These efforts support on-the-ground implementation aligned with NDC forest targets, focusing on securing community tenure, strengthening land-use planning and community governance arrangements, and testing field-level interventions that reveal practical challenges and opportunities for advancing bottom-up, community-driven financing models and facilitating access to NbS finance.

and scalability.

- e) The ASFSRF, which cuts across all three outputs, will be re-introduced to support strategic activities for AMS to strengthen their SFMS for supporting access to finance (Output 2) and / or informed policy making (Output 3). The Fund will also support the implementation of the Regional Guidelines and Toolkit for integrating NbS into forestry through concrete projects with forest-dependent communities (Output 2 and 3). It will aim to align with, for example, activities under Output 2 supporting SF enterprise development, with regional funding mechanisms provided by ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund (GTF) and the ADB Nature Solutions Finance Hub. The draft interlinked selection criteria for the Fund reflect prioritisation of community-level impact while testing approaches (e.g. NbS Toolkit) that can be sustained through government systems, finance mechanisms, or market incentives beyond the grant period, include: 1. Community-level impact potential aligned with NbS triple wins, 2. Contribution to SF monitoring, SF market and finance access, and/or policy learning, 3. Feasibility and readiness, 4. Leveraging and complementarity, 5. Scalability and learning value and 6. Strategic alignment (e.g. ASEAN, AMS, UN-REDD). The criteria will be reviewed with relevant partners including ASEAN bodies, SDC and other strategic partners. UN-REDD would seek to partner with a local organisation(s) to support management of the ASFSRF in SF landscapes in the focus countries. The identification of the regional organisation would follow the competitive selection process as required by FAO. Additionally, UN-REDD's experience with direct grants to Indigenous Peoples and local communities in Cambodia will help inform the design and operational modalities of future ASEAN-level community grant mechanisms, including the ASFSRF. This includes lessons on participatory monitoring, community forest patrolling, safeguards, grievance mechanisms, and gender-responsive delivery models aligned with NbS, as well as REDD+ and NDC objectives.

**Enhanced access to investment, markets and finance capacities for SF, in line with NbS principles and national policies, through integration with climate and nature protection initiatives.**

Importantly, interventions will build on existing analyses to identify and address barriers limiting women's and marginalized groups' access to finance, markets, and decision-making. It will also promote and support women-led and gender-inclusive SF, adhering to NbS principles. Targeted awareness-raising and adaptation of products and work practices will be implemented to overcome potential barriers.

- a) Improved access to climate finance for SF, adhering to NbS principles, including by initiation through the ASFSRF, and upscaling through e.g. ADB's Nature Solutions Finance Hub for Climate, Biodiversity, and the Environment, and other blended finance facilities, building on the ASEAN Guidelines and Toolkit developed in the ongoing ASEAN SF SDC funded initiative<sup>20</sup> and adhering to relevant ASEAN guides including the ASEAN Taxonomy for sustainable finance.
- b) Pipelines of forest-positive MSMEs sourcing from SFEs are established at jurisdictional level. MSMEs sourcing products from SFEs will receive targeted business development

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the Toolkit provides practical guidance supporting, among others the development of enabling environments for inclusive forestry investments and markets, and valuation of ecosystem services.

support, including mentorship and capacity development.

- c) Access to markets for SFEs improved by stimulating nature-positive off-takers/traders (MSMEs) to open markets for SFEs products. Coordinated by the relevant jurisdictional authorities, MSMEs sourcing from SFEs will be supported in entering fairer markets and forming offtake agreements with SFEs to ensure sustainable economic growth. Extension officers will also be trained to facilitate business development at the SFE level.
- d) Support mobilization of private sector investment and creating incentives into MSME and SFEs through engagement with financiers and policy support. The focus on MSMEs and SFEs reflects our value chain approach to strengthening SF. All SFEs are composed of local communities managing social forestry areas - therefore, supporting SFEs directly supports community access to finance and market opportunities. Through leveraging networks of impact investors, private sector, Development Finance Institutions and other investments sources at national and regional level and potentially through designing/refining financial instruments, MSMEs sourcing products from SFEs will be better positioned to attract investments that strengthen their supply chains. For example, make connections with initiatives such as the [Tropical Landscapes Grant Fund \(TLGF\)](#) and national funding mechanisms such as Indonesia's Climate Resilience Fund (CRF [DINFRA]), developed by UN-REDD, which aims at scaling-up finance and private sector engagement for NbS to tackle climate change, enhance biodiversity, and support sustainable development. Efforts will be made to link these finance streams to the below mentioned ASFSRF as a potential co-financing source.
- e) Opportunities for MSMEs and SFEs to access carbon revenue through regulatory frameworks (e.g. national REDD+ / carbon schemes) will be explored, fostering an enabling environment for sustainable growth. For example, this will be explored in the Riau Province where UN-REDD supports on REDD+ readiness. This approach will build on UN-REDD's increased efforts to link jurisdictions with buyers and investors seeking high-integrity forest carbon credits. These efforts could be expanded to include SF schemes (as per item a), leveraging opportunities to unlock climate finance and scale responsible private investment in the sector. Capacity and knowledge development to support SF tenure holders benefit from their forest stewardship, including national and regional learning events. It will also make connections to UN-REDD agencies supported funds and support expanding on NbS with focus on marginalized groups, including women and youth. Additionally, this area of work will benefit from the knowledge and learning work, including e-learning, under Component C.

**ASEAN's ambitious regional policy frameworks on integrating NbS in SF are effectively implemented in the AMS.**

- a) Policy and guideline development, including materials to support connecting policy and decision makers with the results from the SFMS. Implementation of the proposed ASEAN Guidelines and Toolkit on integrating SF in NDCs and NBSAP, and access to investment and incentives will also enhance SF access to climate finance. This would also support institutional strengthening and enhanced coordination (3b). Additionally, UN-REDD will support AMS to translate lessons from Climate Promise-supported pilots in Cambodia into policy-relevant guidance for integrating social forestry finance mechanisms into NDC implementation plans, climate finance strategies, and enabling regulatory frameworks, including for community grants.

- b) Institutional strengthening and coordination through the establishment and support for existing multi-stakeholder National Working Groups<sup>21</sup> to coordinate SF programs, strengthen regulatory frameworks, facilitate data and knowledge sharing from SFMS, and promote integration of NbS in SF programs and NDCs, NBSAPs and other relevant sectoral policies. In addition to business and value chain development and access to markets for SFE, and finance access.
- c) Capacity development and strategic support through, for example, national and regional sharing events and e-learning, based on the Guidelines and Toolkit on integrating NbS in SF. Additionally, operationalize the ASFSRF to support strategic pilot activities that apply the NbS Guidelines and Toolkit<sup>22</sup>. This will build on the outreach campaign for when the Guidelines and Toolkit are published in 2026, in consultation with ASEAN Secretariat.
- d) Building on the Blueprint and its dissemination among AMS, work together with ASEAN Secretariat to develop regional commitments/actions in the form of regional-specific roadmaps for scaling forest-based economies aligned with AFOLU sector targets and biodiversity and SDG commitments, as well as relevant ASEAN Commitments, Plans and Strategies.
- e) Support ASEAN Secretariat, relevant AWGs and other ASEAN bodies to implement and monitor the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sectoral Plan (2026-2030), AWGs' 2026–2030 Plans of Action, as well as ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan (2025-2030), including enhanced coordination and technical assistance through regular meetings and fundraising efforts<sup>23</sup>. This work will also utilize UN-REDD's collaboration with other Divisions (i.e. Environment Division), Working Groups (e.g. ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWG-NCB)) and centers, at the ASEAN level such as the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.

## Scope and partnerships

In simple terms the focus of the work in ASEAN will be moving towards scaling up impacts and further strengthening the foundations built in the ongoing ASEAN SF SDC funded Initiative, including through access to finance and supporting informed policy making. The scale of the activities reflects the funds available at this stage. UN-REDD has designed a program recognising the need to build on the work under ASEAN SF, as well as meeting the expectations of the ASEAN Secretariat and AMS. For example, the size of grants for the ASFSRF and funds for capacity development are limited considering their objectives. However, UN-REDD will continue to work with donors and related initiatives, such as ADB Nature Solutions Finance Hub, and related EU and UK programs in the region, to access funds to help us meet these expectations, including having a comprehensive capacity development program, including in-

<sup>21</sup> For example, in Lao PDR ASEAN SF has, with partners, worked with Department of Forestry to revive the Village Forestry Working Group (VFWG), and formalised its connections with other government and multi-stakeholder WGs to ensure coherent support for VF. While in Cambodia ASEAN SF engages with WG at national and sub-national levels, including with SDC supported CASFor, while in Indonesia ASEAN SF indirectly engages with SFWG, including through DG SF.

<sup>22</sup> The selection of the pilot activities will be based on the Guidelines and Toolkit's Guiding Principles which include 10: Recognise and respect knowledge, traditions and choices of local communities, 11: Support gender equity and social inclusion and 12: Ensure safeguards and tenure rights.

<sup>23</sup> This will include continuing discussions on the functioning of the AWGs post-2030, including financial sustainability in-line with the new Plans of Action (2026-2030).

person events to support mainstreaming NbS, and opportunities to scale up the reach and impact of the ASFSRF, as well as having grants supporting implementation of NbS with focus on marginalised groups, including women and youth.

In close partnership with the **ASEAN Secretariat, the work will be implemented at the ASEAN level with additional national focus and work on the ground in Cambodia, Indonesia and Lao PDR** (based on the strong foundation of the ongoing SDC-UN-REDD ASEAN SF initiative). Potential inclusion of Timor Leste is being explored based on identified needs to strengthen SF in the country, opportunities to build on existing work, and requests from the ASEAN Secretariat, AWGs and the relevant government agencies, as well as Timor Leste becoming a UN-REDD partner country. The inclusion of Indonesia, as a pioneer in many areas of SF development in Southeast Asia and globally also allows for enhanced sharing, including with Timor Leste.

Additionally, following the consultation process with the ASEAN Secretariat a “project advisory or steering committee” will be established, which would include strategic partners at ASEAN levels.

Building on the strong partnerships developed in the current phase of ASEAN SF, the Initiative will continue working with ASEAN bodies (including ASEAN Secretariat (Forestry and Agriculture, as well as Environment Divisions), AWG- FCC, AWG-SF, as well as seek synergies with AWG-NCB and others including ACB), supporting regional coordination, development of Guidelines and Toolkits, and knowledge exchange across the AMS and with relevant African partners through South-South exchanges. The collaboration at ASEAN level will not only be directly with the relevant bodies, but also through collaboration with the, for example, the ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund (GTF) and their grant recipients, who are working with the Environment Division of the Secretariat, as well as AWG-NCB and ACB.

The partnership with ASEAN bodies will be further enhanced through the anticipated endorsement by ASEAN Secretariat for Component A. Additionally, the collaboration between ASEAN SF and AWG-FCC and AWG-SF on the development of their new Plans of Action for 2026-2030 will also provide a strong basis for buy-in and collaboration for the work under the ASEAN Component. Furthermore, there is also a great deal of alignment building on existing collaboration on the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework for Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry Towards Food and Nutrition Security and Achievement of the SDGs and the forthcoming ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan (ACCSAP, 2025–2030) which will have significant emphasis on NbS across various sectors. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Strategic Plan (under ASEAN Community Vision 2045) also emphasises NbS (and EbA) including Strategic Goal 11 (climate/disaster resilience), it includes a measure to “implement nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches” to strengthen mitigation / adaptation<sup>25</sup>. Additionally, the ASEAN Biodiversity Plan (2024–2030)<sup>26</sup> includes actions that explicitly reference capacity development and stocktakes on NbS / EbA and mainstreaming across sectors, including forestry, as well as enhancing monitoring systems including for NBSAPs. A further example, are the regional (including the 1 Billion Trees Initiative as set out in the ASEAN Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sectoral Plan 2026-2030), and national restoration and forest area targets (e.g. 60% in Cambodia by 2035 and 70% in Lao PDR by 2030) that can be supported through, for instance, the use of FAO developed se.plan which is being

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<sup>25</sup> The ASCC sets broad, cross-sectoral development priorities for people, environment, health, culture, resilience, etc., while the ACCSAP sits within the ASCC ecosystem and translates climate priorities into concrete cooperation actions.

<sup>26</sup> [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/48-Final\\_ASEAN-Biodiversity-Plan.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/48-Final_ASEAN-Biodiversity-Plan.pdf)

piloted in the three focus countries, as well as RESULT Asia-Pacific program to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land in the region, including ASEAN.

The Initiative will continue to strengthen its partnership with government and non-state partners, including ensuring buy-in to embed the work in relevant initiatives and programmes, including the ASEAN Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sectoral Plan 2026-2030. For example, raising awareness and supporting the use of the ASEAN Guidelines and Toolkit on NbS and EbA in the Forestry Sector, on social forest monitoring, disseminating and raising awareness of the Blueprint for Accelerating the Commercial Development of SFEs in ASEAN, among ASEAN Member States, as well as the broader ecosystem of actors, including development partners, donors, NGOs, and other stakeholders engaged in SF and forestry through participation in relevant regional and national events. Arrangements with key regional / international implementation partners will be further developed based on competency-based selection during inception. The initiative will coordinate with key regional and national partners other ongoing initiatives to ensure complementarity, for example ADB Nature Solutions Finance Hub, ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund, EU TAF-GTEI project, IUCN and the SCoNe Coalition and Swiss-funded initiatives<sup>27</sup>.

RECOFTC will remain as a key strategic partner in the Initiative, bringing a strong link to national and subnational government agencies and partners, as well as communities and forestry enterprises. RECOFTC's engagement will likely take different forms to ensure synergies are developed and maximised (e.g. RECOFTC may be invited to join the Steering / Advisory Committee for the work under Component A). Discussions on the specific roles are ongoing and will be determined following consultations with ASEAN, as well as relevant AMS, and RECOFTC itself. At this stage collaboration at regional levels will include regular meetings to identify and build on synergies, this includes continuing direct engagement, as well as through, for example, the SCoNe Coalition, of which RECOFTC is a member. Specific engagement with the SCoNe Coalition could, for instance, include indirect engagement through ASEAN bodies including the Environment Division and AWG-NCB. Direct engagement will continue with synergy development, including through the piloting of the ASEAN NbS Guidelines and Toolkit developed under the ASEAN SF Initiative potentially in SCoNe Coalition project landscapes, as well as explore synergies with their NbS Tool and Incubator.

RECOFTC's potential roles in Cambodia, Indonesia and Lao PDR will also reflect the organisation's value-added at national and landscape levels. This can include possible piloting the NbS Toolkit and Guidelines in RECOFTC program and project landscapes. While at national levels, in Lao PDR for example, RECOFTC may be engaged to facilitate the work in the country, including implementation of the work by government agencies. In Cambodia, the collaboration will build on existing partnerships under, for example, the CASFor project. Additionally, under Output 2, RECOFTC and the Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) are considered as key delivery partners<sup>28</sup>.

The Initiative will also continue to engage with multi-stakeholder processes, as well as those driven by non-state actors, such as the regional CSO Forum. For, example, national and

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<sup>27</sup> CASFor - Community Action for Sustainable Forests – Cambodia, Land Management and Decentralised Planning in Lao PDR - Enhancing land tenure in forest areas, STAF - Skills For Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR, SEACAI, Integrated approaches to climate mitigation and air quality improvement in Southeast Asia (active in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and ASEAN under the Environment division– one of the thematic focus areas will be on forest fire management), ISFL - BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (SDC), Sustainable Landscape Program Indonesia (SECO).

<sup>28</sup> Locally-anchored business and value chain actors under Output 2 will be determined through open procurement

regional CSOs participate in online and in-person events, with the plan being to continue this engagement in 2026-2030. Discussions are ongoing to continue the CSO Forum, led by NTFP-EP, in some form, with focus likely to be on online events that are linked to strategic activities and needs of the Forum members.

## Component B: Africa

### Context

Progress on SF in African states reflects different overall objectives, as well as priorities, capacities and support. In general terms, there is increasing engagement of local communities in managing forests. Over the past 20 years, SF<sup>29</sup> has gained momentum across the continent as a strategy to decentralize forest governance, improve conservation outcomes, and enhance rural livelihoods.

Over 20 million hectares of forests are now under some form of SF in Africa. While progress has been uneven across countries, the overall trajectory shows increased recognition of the role that local communities can play in sustainable forest management. Countries like Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda and Zambia have institutionalised frameworks for SF. The improvement in SF extent and effectiveness throughout Africa is helping balance forest conservation with development of sustainable livelihoods of forest communities, including through eco-tourism and sustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products. Progress is most evident where there is a supportive policy and institutional framework, secured forest tenure, strong local governance and technical, capacities economic benefits are realized and partnerships exist, though widespread adoption remains mixed.

Overall, while there are successes, greater investment and policy support is needed to expand the benefits for communities and the environment. Various challenges must be addressed, including continued unclear land tenure, and insufficient technical and financial support, reflected in many ways including limited coordination, poor monitoring, and lack of investment in enterprise development. Additionally, stronger regulatory frameworks, based on an enhanced evidence base and deeper community engagement, coupled with enhanced access to finance are essential to make SF a viable pathway to environmental sustainability and improved livelihoods across the region.

With SDC support, UN-REDD has partnered with AFF to support REDD+ implementation in Africa. The collaboration involves the provision of capacity development to African countries through technical assistance (trainings, peer-learning via knowledge exchange and community of practice). One of the prioritised topics related to REDD+ implementation is social inclusion ensuring that Indigenous Peoples and other forest communities benefit from the REDD+ process, with growing emphasis on the role of SF for local climate action.

The partnership with AFF has provided valuable lessons on how strategic collaboration can amplify implementation efficiency and impact potential. By leveraging AFF's extensive regional network, and strong capacity for stakeholder engagement, the project was able to maintain a

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<sup>29</sup> Comprising different community-based forest management approaches such as Participatory Conservation, Joint Forest Management Community Forest Management, or smallholder forestry.

cohort of 13 African countries that directly benefited in terms of capacity building through peer learning, policy dialogue, and knowledge exchange activities. AFF's research orientation facilitated the rapid generation and dissemination of knowledge products, extending the project's influence beyond its duration. Moreover, the partnership demonstrated that collaborating with regionally rooted organizations can enhance operational efficiency and strengthen African civil society organizations' technical capacities and engagement with member states.

UN-REDD has also supported Community Forestry in West Africa region, through practitioners' workshops, South-South exchanges, community initiatives and collection and dissemination of knowledge and good practices on SF. The continued SDC support will enable, among other things, further leveraging of regional mechanisms through COMESA, in the region to facilitate learning and knowledge sharing, as well as to enhance cooperation between member states and mechanisms, as well as among networks and associations of forest communities. COMESA's Forest Management Strategy is designed to facilitate cooperation on forestry issues in the region promotes regional economic integration, including support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), value chain development, and intra-regional trade. Social forestry enterprises (SFEs) can benefit from COMESA's programs that improve access to markets, harmonize product standards, and facilitate regional trade—especially for non-timber forest products (NTFPs), community woodlots, and ecotourism. Regional mechanisms provide strong platforms for sharing learning and knowledge, providing impetus and support to member states. The initiative will link to and support enhanced collaboration between these mechanisms.

Learnings from the SDC-funded UN-REDD ASEAN Social Forestry Initiative will be tailored to the context, needs and priorities of Africa.

This specific initiative will work to achieve the following outcome, outputs and activities:

### **Outcome**

Strengthened social forestry capacities in Africa, utilizing global and regional learning and mechanisms, supporting access to finance and informed integration within actions for climate, livelihoods and nature in selected hub countries.

### **Outputs and key activities**

As with Component A, the outputs and their activities are interlinked, with output 1, enhanced capacities and systems for monitoring, supporting output 2, access to finance, and output 3 informed policy making.

Regional mechanisms such as COMESA will play a key role in all the outputs. The significance of the hub countries is that they are strategic member of these regional mechanisms, vital for regional learning and knowledge development. For UN-REDD, involving COMESA offers a strategic pathway to scale SF across the region by linking it with regional economic integration, SME development, and climate-smart market access. This collaboration will embed SF within COMESA's broader green growth and climate resilience frameworks, supported by UN-REDD capacity building for COMESA's climate platforms (e.g., the Climate Unit and the COMESA–EAC–SADC Tripartite on Climate Change). It will also connect forest communities in the countries to promote regional value chains, harmonize enabling policies, and leverage trade, finance, and climate mechanisms to scale SF in the regional economy.

### **Enhanced capacities and systems for monitoring to strengthen the evidence base for SF's impacts on climate action and nature conservation in the selected hub countries.**

- a) Capacity and system development needs assessment (CDNA) conducted in the hub countries to identify the priorities for the development of SFMS for understanding the impacts of SF on climate action, nature protection and communities' livelihood.
- b) Adapting Guidelines and Toolkits<sup>31</sup> developed in ASEAN for relevant regional mechanisms in Africa, to strengthen SF extent and effectiveness and support SF integration in NDCs.
- c) Capacity development and knowledge sharing, including e-learning courses, shared under Component C.

### **Enhanced access to markets and finance for SF in priority landscapes.**

- a) A pipeline of forest-positive MSMEs sourcing from SFEs established and receiving targeted business development support including incubation, mentorship, capacity strengthening.
- b) Access to markets improved for selected SFEs by stimulating nature-positive off-takers/traders (MSMEs) to open markets for SFEs products<sup>32</sup>. MSMEs sourcing from SFEs will be supported in entering fairer markets and forming offtake agreements with SFEs to ensure sustainable economic growth.
- c) Enabling access to investment and incentives into MSME and SFEs through engagement with financiers. Through leveraging networks of impact investors and designing appropriate financial instruments, MSMEs sourcing products from SFEs will be better positioned to attract investments that strengthen their supply chains.
- d) Capacity and knowledge development to support forest communities and smallholders benefit economically from their forest stewardship, including e-learning modules developed under Component C, and guidance for informed access and benefit from forest carbon markets.

### **Regulatory framework for SF programs facilitates effective integration of national climate and nature protection initiatives.**

- a) Policy and guideline development including focus on enabling SF access to climate finance. This will be built on ASEAN Guidelines / Toolkit and existing resources in the focus countries.

### **Scope and partnerships**

The hub countries will be Kenya and Zambia<sup>33</sup>. The countries will have different focus on the three outputs, based on continuing discussions with relevant government agencies. UN-REDD's collaboration with COMESA, and AFF as an implementing partner, will also be

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<sup>31</sup> Based on ongoing discussions with partners in Africa.

<sup>32</sup> With emphasis on non-timber forest products and other selected value chains in the hub countries

<sup>33</sup> The hub countries were selected based on criteria including being a UN-REDD country, with agencies' direct and indirect support for SF, having SF program with active support from government, and strength as a hub country to scale-up through regional mechanism.

strengthened to support scaling up of the work across the region. The ongoing collaboration with AFF will continue, the scope of their responsibility will be more focused as an implementing (rather than an institutional) partner whose expertise and experience in organizing events and mobilizing stakeholders across the continent will be crucial. Furthermore, the hub countries active engagement in regional mechanisms provides an important platform for scaling up, not only through Kenya and Zambia's membership of COMESA, but also that the former is current COMESA Chair, while the latter is the host country of COMESA's headquarters, both countries are also active members of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100). These platforms have a strong mandate to support its members to share learning and collaborate on common issues in the forest landscape sector, and to work with other relevant international bodies. Arrangements with key regional / international implementation partners will be further developed based on competency-based selection during inception.

During the inception phase, UN-REDD will consult with partners to identify appropriate mechanisms to enhance project efficiency, effectiveness and coordination, including strengthening synergies with existing initiatives and platforms. Where feasible, this will build on existing coordination mechanisms in the hub countries and at regional levels.

## Component C: Policy and market uptake

### Context

Component C will focus on influencing policy and market actors so social forestry can scale and sustain biodiversity, climate and livelihood impacts. The Component will build on the proof-of-concepts that will be generated from components A (ASEAN) and B (Africa), including enterprise incubation pipelines, monitoring systems aligned with climate and biodiversity reporting requirements, policy tools such as the Social Forestry Enterprise Blueprint, the ASFSRF, as well as regional guidelines.

Evidence shows that a key constraint to sustained social forestry impacts is not the need for more proof-of-concept pilots nor knowledge products, but the extent to which policy frameworks, financing conditions and investor risk perceptions enable scaling. This makes influencing policy and investment a high-leverage, cost-effective way to scale impact beyond direct implementation in the hub countries of the two regions.

The scaling potential is significant. Africa has around 20 million hectares under some form of community forestry, while ASEAN has more than 15.3 million hectares under social forestry, with targets approaching 27.4 million hectares by 2030. Across both regions, enterprise pipelines already involve hundreds of enterprises and thousands of forest-dependent households, with clear potential to grow if finance and markets become more accessible.

Several structural barriers continue to limit this transition. Investors often see tenure uncertainty, weak performance data, small enterprise scale and uneven business capacity as major risks. Policymakers may support social forestry, but continued effort is needed to translate this progress into operational models that can be embedded in climate, biodiversity and forest economy programmes, and to strengthen learning on the impacts of social forestry to support scale-up. Social forestry enterprises also remain weakly linked to sustainable supply chains and deforestation-free sourcing commitments, limiting market access even where viability has been shown.

Without investment and market uptake, social forestry risks remaining a policy commitment rather than an economic opportunity. This is why Component C focuses on two linked areas of work:

- First, knowledge brokerage and policy influence are required to embed social forestry guidelines, enterprise pipelines, monitoring systems and policy tools developed under Components A and B. This involves using strategic communications and policy advisory inputs to translate operational evidence into decision-relevant formats, for example, presenting enterprise pipelines to public finance institutions and private investors, and translating social forestry monitoring evidence into inputs for climate and biodiversity policy and financing processes.
- Second, deliberate brokerage with finance institutions, investors and market actors is needed to translate policy readiness into actual capital flows and market access for social forestry enterprises. This would include engagement through regional policy and investment platforms like Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Asia Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other relevant actors.

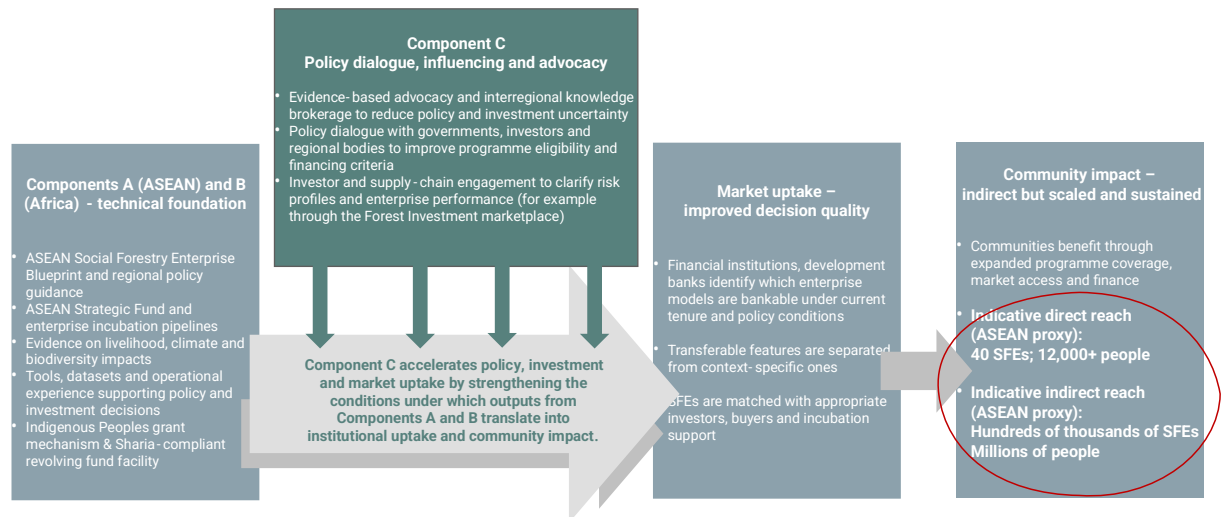
The impact pathway is outlined in Figure 1. The pathway shows that when operational evidence is consistently brought into policy, finance and investor processes, perceived risks can fall, eligibility barriers can be reduced, and enterprises can gain clearer routes to finance and markets. Better access to finance and markets can then help community enterprises grow, stabilise revenues and create jobs, while strengthening incentives for sustainable forest management, climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation.

ASEAN and African countries also share comparable tenure contexts, where forests largely remain state-owned and community access is conditional. Lessons from one region can therefore inform policy and market uptake in the other. In summary, Component C uses UN-REDD's comparative advantage as a convenor and knowledge broker to align policy

frameworks, financing criteria and market incentives around tested social forestry models, helping translate them into larger-scale impact.

**Figure 1.** Impact pathway for policy dialogue and advocacy to accelerate market uptake of social forestry and scale biodiversity, climate and livelihood results

## Policy dialogue and advocacy to accelerate market uptake of social forestry



## Outcome

Accelerating policy and market uptake for social forestry to scale and sustain biodiversity, climate and equitable livelihood impacts.

## Outputs and key activities

### Output 1. Knowledge brokerage and policy influence

Many social forestry activities and enterprises struggle to access climate and public finance not because of lack of viability, but because policy frameworks, investment protocols and risk perceptions do not adequately recognize them.

This Output, therefore, focuses on integrating tested approaches, tools and evidence from Components A and B into policy and planning processes so that financing frameworks become more inclusive and investment-ready.

Target audience: ASEAN, African Union, AFF/COMESA; ministries of finance, forestry and environment.

- To strengthen political legitimacy, access to investment, including reducing perceived investment risks, identify and engage with 3 or more national and regional policy processes (NDC updates and reporting, biodiversity strategies, nature investment plans) where outputs from Components A and B can be integrated.

- Support informed policy making processes using strategic communications such as policy briefs, expert media commentary and social forestry success stories to provide inputs, via relevant Working Groups in ASEAN and other formal and informal mechanisms in ASEAN and Africa, into the abovementioned policy processes focusing on:
  - Enterprise pipeline evidence (income potential, social compliance, other metrics)
  - Monitoring data aligned with climate/biodiversity/NDC and other relevant frameworks
  - Climate finance readiness.
- Linked to support for policy processes, conduct annual 3-5 targeted technical sessions or briefings (mainly virtual or in person where necessary and leveraging other convening opportunities as appropriate and possible) with regional bodies ASEAN, AFF/COMESA to review how social forestry cases/models/outputs from components A and B can be incorporated into:
  - Financing priorities (e.g. NDC investments, biodiversity/NbS funding, etc.)
  - Programme design (e.g. design of financing windows accessible to community actors)
  - Eligibility criteria for financing (e.g. tenure security, safeguards compliance, MRV alignment, enterprise capacity needs).
- Leverage multiple strategic partnerships at landscape, national and regional levels, for example through the ASFRSF in ASEAN, recognizing the Fund as a strategic learning and system-testing mechanism to support the practical integration of social forestry as an NbS into informed policy making.

These engagements aim to achieve specific changes in policy and planning frameworks rather than general awareness raising.

## **Output 2. Market uptake, investment mobilization and investor matchmaking**

Even where policy conditions improve, financing will not flow without deliberate brokerage between investors, buyers and enterprise pipelines. This Output, therefore, focuses on connecting enterprise pipelines and models from Components A and B with finance and market actors, and supporting uptake. This includes converting readiness into actual investment by connecting validated SF enterprises with development finance institutions, climate and biodiversity funds, impact investors and responsible corporate buyers.

Target audience: Development finance institutions (ADB, AfDB, AIIB), climate and biodiversity funds, impact investors and corporate buyers with deforestation-free sourcing commitments.

- Identify suitable finance intermediaries for different types of social forestry actors, broker introductions, and support tenure holders to prepare the documentation, business cases and follow-up engagement needed to access grants, public programmes, incubators and blended finance mechanisms.
- Select and present 8-12 enterprise cases from Components A and B that demonstrate viable business models, climate, biodiversity benefits and community impact.
- Facilitate 4-6 targeted engagement opportunities where these enterprise cases can be directly presented to development finance institutions (ADB, AfDB, AIIB), climate funds and impact investors.
- Conduct primarily virtual bilateral engagement (or in person where necessary) to support concrete follow up actions such as: investor interest or due diligence; inclusion of enterprises in existing investment pipelines and engagement of corporate buyers for sourcing.

- Run a curated forest investment marketplace process (virtual introductions, pipeline reviews, follow-up advisory support) to convert investor interest into transactions, building on UN-REDD's inaugural Asia-Africa Forest Investment Marketplace that took place in Hanoi, Viet Nam in March 2026.
- Provide follow up support to interested partners on tenure security, business models, revenue streams and environmental performance to help move from initial engagement to early uptake.

The objective of these activities is to trigger uptake such as inclusion of social forestry enterprises in financing pipelines, pilot investments or integration into supply chains.

## Implementation arrangements

The UN-REDD Programme will be implemented under a joint governance and management structure that ensures coordinated delivery, strategic oversight, and operational efficiency across all levels. Building on the collaborative strengths of the participating UN agencies, the governance model emphasizes shared responsibility, transparency, and responsiveness to evolving needs.

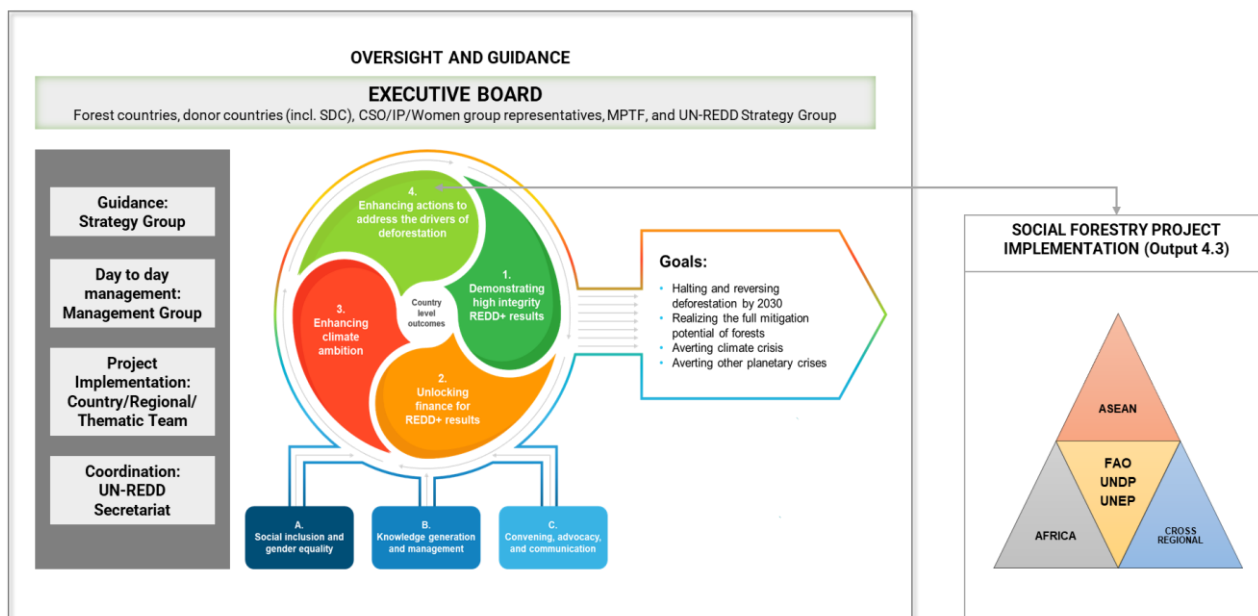
Within this joint governance arrangement, implementation responsibilities will be allocated according to the comparative advantages, mandates and country and landscape presence of the UN-REDD agencies. FAO will serve as the coordinating organisation for Components A and B, reflecting its long-standing leadership in social forestry, sustainable forest management, national forest monitoring systems, as well as its strong country presence in the ASEAN focus countries and African hub countries. Under Component A, FAO will also provide technical and coordination support to ASEAN sectoral bodies, including the AWG-SF and AWG-FCC, supporting implementation of regional plans of action, guidelines and monitoring frameworks, as well as the activities of the AWGs (e.g. implementation of their PoAs 2026-2030). UNEP will coordinate Component C, building on its comparative advantage in knowledge management, policy coherence and global advocacy, including the synthesis and translation of evidence into policy- and investment-relevant guidance. Drawing on their significant experience, UNEP will coordinate the work on MSMEs and SFE development, strongly aligned with related activities of FAO and UNDP. UNDP will contribute across Components A, B and C, drawing on its expertise in governance, climate policy integration, inclusive and innovative finance, and community-level delivery mechanisms, including grant-based approaches for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Coordination across agencies will be ensured through UN-REDD's established management structures, enabling integrated delivery, joint learning and adaptive implementation within and across regions, noting the various opportunities for synergies with other UN-REDD initiatives.

For the SDC contribution, implementation will be channelled through the UN-REDD pooled fund and aligned with the Programme's results framework. Specifically, SDC's support will contribute to Output 4.3: Indigenous and local solutions scaled up and supported, which strengthens tenure rights, promotes social forestry, and supports community-based approaches to sustainable forest management.

This arrangement integrates SDC's support within the broader UN-REDD strategy, while ensuring a clear line of contribution to the scaling up of social forestry and community-based solutions.

The work under Component A (ASEAN) will be guided by a Steering / Advisory Committee. The decision on the role and composition of the Committee will be determined following consultations with the ASEAN Secretariat. The consultations are scheduled to be completed by end of quarter 3 2026.

## UN-REDD 2026-30 Management Structure



## Partnerships

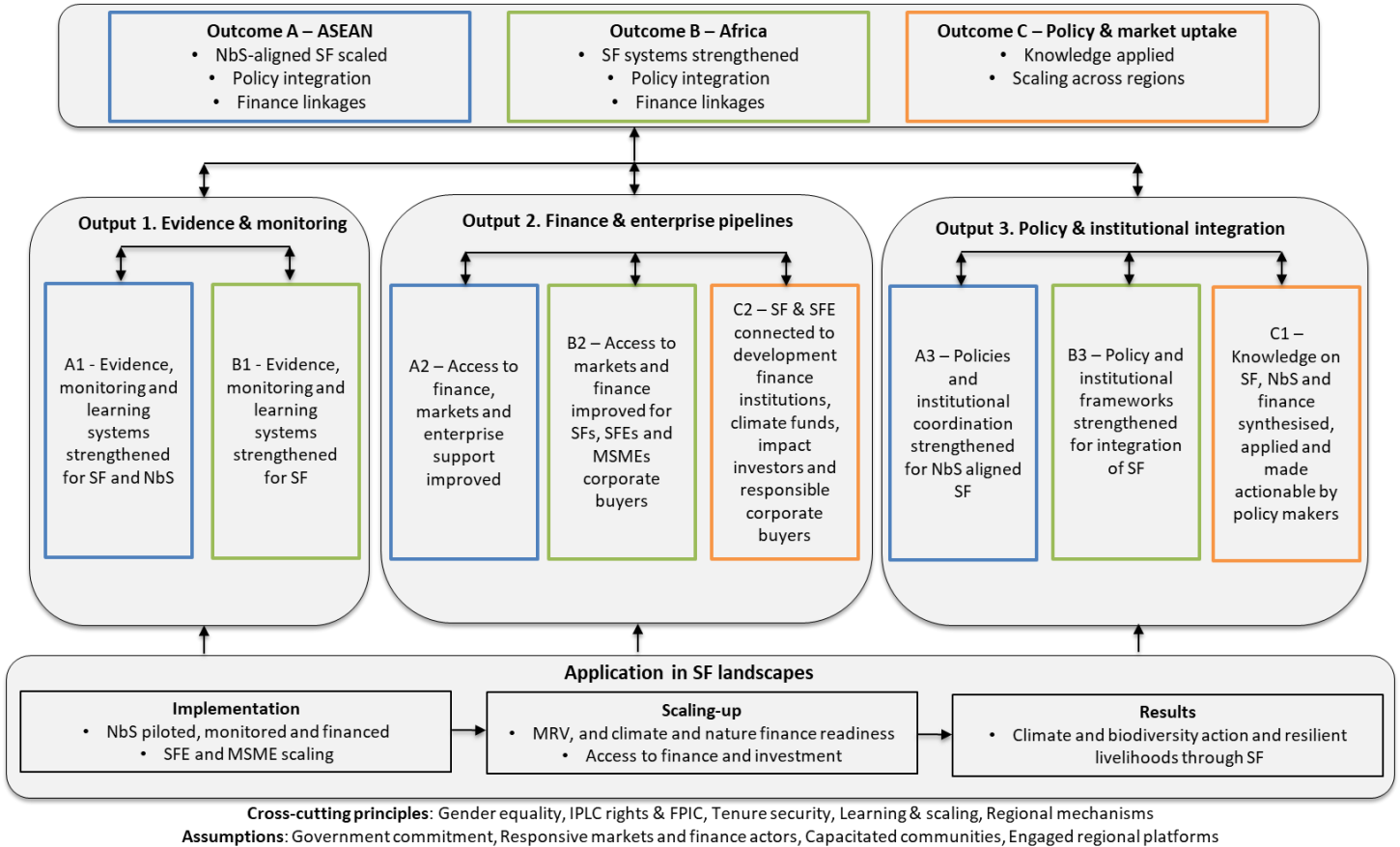
Partnerships will be central to the work, with a focus on regional bodies and national government agencies as key implementing partners. Arrangements with key regional / international implementation partners will be further developed based on competency-based selection during inception. In the sections describing component A, B and C, more details are provided on the specific partnerships. Additional collaboration will involve non-state actors at both national and regional levels. Emphasis will be placed on participatory methods to ensure buy-in and access to data, supporting informed decision-making and policy development.

# Annexes

## Annex 1. Theory of change

### IMPACT (2030)

Through enhanced SF programmes, forest-dependent Indigenous Peoples and local communities in ASEAN and Africa sustainably manage forests as high-integrity NbS, contributing measurably to climate mitigation and adaptation, nature conservation, and resilient, equitable livelihoods, with results embedded in national, regional and global climate and nature frameworks.



The draft theory of change will be further developed during the inception phase – i.e. endorsement and consultation process in Component A, and consultation process for Components B and C

## Annex 2. List of acronyms

ACB	ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFF	African Forest Forum
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
AFR100	African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AMS	ASEAN Member States
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASFSTRF	ASEAN SF Strategic Response Fund
AWG-FCC	ASEAN Working Group on Forest and Climate Change
AWG-NCB	ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity
AWG-SF	ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry
BTR	Biennial Transparency Report
CBO	Community based organization
CBF	Community-based forestry (commonly used term for social forestry in many African states)
CDNA	Capacity and system development needs assessment
COMIFAC	Central Africa Forest Commission
DINFRA-CRF	Climate Resilience Fund, Indonesia
EAC	East African Community
EbA	Ecosystem-based Approaches
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
goKUPS	Social forestry monitoring system (Indonesia)
GTF	ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund (GTF)
IPO	Indigenous Peoples Organization
KUPS	Social forestry enterprise development program (Indonesia)
LNGO	Local non-governmental organization
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NFMS	National forestry monitoring system
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
NTFP-EP	Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme
PfES	Payment for Forest Environmental Services
PIAPS	Indicative Map for Social Forestry Areas (Indonesia)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Se.plan	Forest restoration planning decision support tool
SF	Social forestry
SFEs	Social forestry enterprises
SFMS	Social forestry monitoring system
SIMONTANA	National forestry monitoring system, Indonesia
SME	Small-medium enterprise
TLGF	Tropical Landscapes Grant Fund
VF	Village Forestry (Lao PDR)