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Zukunft | Umwelt | Gesellschaft gGmbH

**IKI Strategic  
Evaluation -  
„Forest and  
Landscape  
Restoration (FLR)“**

Evaluation Report

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# **IKI Strategic Evaluation - „Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR)“**

Evaluation Report

May 2021

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# 0 Executive Summary

## Background and Goals of the Evaluation

Syspons GmbH was commissioned by the Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft gGmbH (ZUG) to carry out a strategic evaluation of International Climate Initiative (IKI)-funded projects in the area of “Forest and Landscape Restoration” (FLR). The evaluation encompasses five FLR projects in El Salvador, which are/were implemented by three different organisations: Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the World Resources Institute (WRI).

The evaluation serves both learning and accountability purposes. To this end, the evaluation includes a comprehensive analysis with regards to the relevance, effectiveness, and complementarity of the different FLR projects. Furthermore, the evaluation also investigates the stakeholder landscape in the FLR sector in El Salvador, to assess the ways in which the IKI projects have contributed to creating the necessary enabling framework conditions for FLR in El Salvador. The results of the evaluation intend to contribute to improving IKI’s approach in the FLR sector. In order to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation, a combination of two different evaluation approaches was chosen: the evaluation design is based on a contribution analysis and complemented by a network analysis. The network analysis was based on the theory of social network analysis, combined with the relational coordination approach.

The evaluation took place between December 2020 and May 2021. Data collection followed a mixed-methods approach and was conducted remotely, due to travel restrictions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered and analysed through a desk research, analysis of project documents and secondary data, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, as well as an online survey among stakeholders in El Salvador.

## Evaluation Object

The strategic evaluation was carried out on five projects dedicated to forest and landscape restoration in El Salvador; the projects are funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI). IKI is part of the German efforts to promote international climate and biodiversity protection policies, and thus constitutes one of the key instruments of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) for financing measures on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as protection of biodiversity.

The five selected projects are global and regional projects funded by the IKI, with components or pilots that were/are implemented in El Salvador. Three of these projects have already been concluded, while two projects are still ongoing. GIZ and IUCN are each responsible for two of the five projects, while WRI is in charge of one project. The evaluation focussed exclusively on the project components related to El Salvador. It assessed the way in which the IKI projects have contributed to an enabling environment for FLR in El Salvador, and thus to achieving long-term FLR objectives.

## Key Findings of the Evaluation

The evaluation has found various **strengths** of the IKI projects engaged in forest and landscape restoration in El Salvador. First, the analysis reveals that the IKI projects have contributed to the development of a close and strong network of actors engaged in FLR, and strengthened the quality of cooperation between stakeholders in the FLR arena, by bringing together actors from different sectors. The implementing organisations GIZ, WRI, and IUCN are well-connected and perform an important cohesive function in the network. Furthermore, the evaluation revealed that international organisations (including initiatives like IKI) and the public sector are seen as the most influential stakeholder groups in the FLR arena in El Salvador. Because of this influential role of international actors, the IKI projects play a vital role in ensuring a continuous FLR approach in the country – especially in times of changing government priorities. At the same time, the evaluation found that collaboration between international initiatives like IKI and the public sector was a necessary condition to ensure a consolidated and nationally owned FLR approach in El Salvador.

Further, the IKI projects were also found to be highly relevant and needs-oriented. The analysis shows that the projects are well aligned to the international and national strategic reference framework, and well embedded in the country's existing systems and structures. The projects' goals and activities reflect the objectives of El Salvador's government, and their implementation strategies build on existing processes and structures. As such, the projects have been able to support the partners' development, for example through offering strategic and policy advice as well as tailor-made capacity development. In this context, the political commitment from the former Salvadorian government has been key to the projects' goal achievement so far, allowing GIZ, WRI, IUCN, and their partners to exploit existing opportunities for development.

Moreover, the evaluation found that the five IKI projects have so far successfully achieved their overarching objective and have thus contributed to developing a more enabling environment for FLR, by supporting and developing the policies, systems, and mechanisms of key stakeholders. The contributions are reflected in the projects' outputs and outcomes in the areas of governance, restoration practices, research and knowledge management, monitoring, and economic and financial mechanisms in El Salvador. Moreover, the IKI projects supported the country in adopting innovative approaches to FLR, by facilitating learning and knowledge transfer, conducting economic analyses on the costs and benefits of FLR measures, setting up financial instruments and funding schemes for FLR, improving the monitoring of measures within the country both on a subnational and national level, fostering inclusive restoration approaches, and building local authorities' capacity to implement national FLR policies and measures. However, the results also show that the country still needs to make further steps in order to create an enabling environment for all stakeholders to become engaged in forest and landscape restoration (e.g. specifically with regards to the private sector and civil society).

In that regard, the evaluation also identified some **weaknesses** concerning the current status of the FLR arena in El Salvador and the projects' engagement, which create **opportunities** for the further engagement of IKI in forest and landscape restoration in the country. Overall, the maturity (i.e. the level of development) of El Salvador's FLR governance, restoration practices, research and knowledge management, monitoring, and economic and financial mechanisms was found to be still rather low. Furthermore, many relationships in the FLR network currently represent a top-down structure or are characterized as a 'one-way-street'. In addition, intra-sectoral cooperation is far more frequent than inter-sectoral cooperation. As such, the analysis reveals the opportunity for the IKI projects to further deepen cooperation by facilitating bottom-up processes as well as multi-sectoral approaches. While the stakeholders in the network generally possess a solid level of capacities to carry out FLR-related initiatives, these capacities are not equally distributed among the different sectors in the FLR arena (public sector, private sector, civil society, international organisations). In particular, the lack of financial resources among several stakeholder groups (especially civil society) signals a need and opportunity for IKI projects to support funding mechanisms for direct implementation of FLR measures.

Further, despite regular and cooperative dialogue between the IKI projects and other FLR initiatives, the cooperation did not yet result in synergies on the level of output and outcome. This finding results from a lack of strategic donor coordination on behalf of the government in El Salvador on the one hand, and a lack of strategic orientation and overarching steering within the IKI funding scheme on the other. This provides an opportunity for future IKI engagement to reflect on steering mechanisms and reinforce its coordination efforts with the objective of increasing synergies between its projects and other interventions within the country.

Finally, the analysis confirms that the **long-term impacts** of the IKI projects are plausible and could positively influence concrete activities that will support adapting to and mitigating climate change, conserving biodiversity, and strengthening social, ecological, and economical developments in El Salvador. However, a weakness lies in the high level of aspiration reflected in the projects' theories of change, which does not necessarily correspond with the available capacities (personnel resources, time, and funding) and impact mechanism (such as policy advice). Hence, a focus on strategies for uptake and utilization of results, as well as upscaling, can help the IKI projects to effectively contribute to their intended long-term impacts in the future.

## Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned results, the evaluation team has derived four recommendations. These recommendations are further elaborated in chapter 6 of the report.

### Strategic Recommendations

1. *If synergies at the output and outcome level are intended to emerge between IKI projects, steering towards such results is needed. Hence, IKI should set a clear strategic reference framework to provide orientation and guide the cooperation of the implementing organisations.*
2. *If IKI seeks to achieve long-term-impacts with regards to the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change as well as the conservation of biodiversity, it should adopt mechanisms to reduce the attribution gap that currently exists between the projects' outcomes and the intended impacts.*

### Conceptual Recommendations

3. *IKI interventions in El Salvador should make use of the insights generated by the network analysis for embedding future projects into the network, monitoring its development, and targeting those network features that have been found to entail the most potential for future development.*
4. *Future IKI interventions should continue to embrace the needs-orientation displayed so far, to ensure that the projects are well-aligned with existing national/regional FLR strategies and build on existing knowledge, systems and mechanisms.*

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