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Adaptation Fund Board
Project and Programme Review Committee
Thirty-sixth Meeting
Bonn, Germany, 8-9 October 2025

PROPOSAL FOR INNOVATION LARGE GRANT FOR UGANDA

ADAPTATION FUND BOARD SECRETARIAT TECHNICAL REVIEW OF PROJECT/PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

PROJECT/PROGRAMME CATEGORY: Single Large Innovation Project Full Proposal

Country/Region: **Uganda**
Project Title: **ACCESS (Adaptive and Affordable Clean Cooking Enables Sustainable Solutions)**
Thematic Focal Area: **Nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation**
Implementing Entity: **Ministry of Water and Environment**
Executing Entities: **Mercy Corps**
AF Project ID: **AF00000386**
IE Project ID: **Requested Financing from Adaptation Fund (US Dollars): 5,000,000**
Reviewer and contact person: Rywon Yang **Co-reviewer(s):** Naoki Uozawa
IE Contact Person:

Technical Summary	The project "ACCESS (Agroforestry, Community, and Climate-resilient Ecosystem Sustainability Solutions)" aims to enhance the climate resilience of smallholder farmers in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda by promoting integrated watershed management, addressing water scarcity, and improving food security through sustainable land use practices, ecosystem restoration, and access to climate-resilient technologies. This will be done through the three components below: Component 1: Reduction in exposure and sensitivity to water scarcity, flooding, and increased drought for smallholder farmers through the implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation (USD 2,512,847); Component 2: Local and regional institutions enable smallholder farmers to access climate information, financial resources, and technical support for planning and implementing wide-scale, ecosystem-based restoration and adaptation actions. These efforts are guided by climate risk-informed, gender-responsive governance frameworks that foster inclusive, market-oriented, and scalable adaptation across landscapes, while aligning with national priorities (NAP, NDC) (USD 1,590,988); Component 3: Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy Engagement (USD 106,211). Requested financing overview:

	Project/Programme Execution Cost: USD 399,953 Total Project/Programme Cost: USD 4,610,000 Implementing Fee: USD 390,000 Financing Requested: USD 5,000,000 The initial technical review raised several issues, such as clarification on climate change adaptation justification, innovation rationale, ESP and GP compliance, and lack of budget details, as is discussed in the number of Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review. The second technical review raised several issues, such as clarification on climate change adaptation justification, innovation rationale, ESP, and GP compliance, as is discussed in the number of Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review. The third technical review raised several issues, such as clarification on climate change adaptation justification, problem statement and innovation rationale, full cost of adaptation, ESP compliance, and lack of budget details, as discussed in the number of Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review. The fourth technical review raises several issues, such as clarification on climate change adaptation justification, the innovation rationale, the details of project activities, and lack of budget details, as discussed in the number of Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review. The fifth technical review raises several major issues, such as a lack of clarity on the adaptation rationale and problem analysis, insufficient innovation justification, and significant inconsistencies between activities and the budget. The proposal also suffers from unclear project components, a weak results framework, and a poorly defined beneficiary framework and inclusion strategy. Furthermore, the review found a weak knowledge management approach and significant gaps in compliance with the Environmental and Social and Gender Policies. These are discussed in the number of Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review. *Please be advised that the findings of the AFB Secretariat's review of the funding proposal(s) do not reflect, indicate, or prejudge the outcome of the reaccreditation process currently underway. The Implementing Entity (IE) shall acknowledge that the funding proposal will not be approved by the Board if the IE's accreditation has*

	expired, and reaccreditation has not been achieved at the time of the Board's decision. Notwithstanding this potential risk, the IE has elected to proceed with the development of the funding proposal.
Date:	August 28, 2025

Review Criteria	Questions	Comments 3rd Review (August 27, 2024)	Comments 4th Review (June 9, 2025)	Comments 5th Review (August 28, 2025)
Country Eligibility	1. Is/are the beneficiary country/countries a developing country/countries Party/Parties to the Kyoto Protocol?			
	2. Is the participating country / are all participating countries developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change?			
Project Eligibility	1. Has the designated government authority for the Adaptation Fund / Have the governments' designated authorities for the Adaptation Fund endorsed the project?			
	2. Does the project/programme support concrete adaptation actions to assist the country or countries in addressing adaptive capacity to the adverse effects of climate change and			

	build in climate resilience? In case of regional project/programme, is there added value using the regional approach, compared to implementing similar activities in each country individually?	**CAR 2: Not cleared.** The project has a clear objective which is to promote afforestation and reforestation to reduce vulnerability of people and ecosystems to climate change, encourage sustainable forest management and expand the use of clean energy for cooking to reduce reliance on biomass. The background and context of the proposal provides detailed overview of climate scenarios and their impact on the population of target region.	**CAR 2: Not cleared.** The interventions lean heavily toward mitigation and do not provide a strong climate adaptation rationale as currently described. **Without clear evidence of how these measures directly reduce climate vulnerability or enhance adaptive capacity of specific groups in Uganda, they do not meet the AF's adaptation criteria.** To be considered an adaptation measure, the activities must show how the intervention helps	**CAR 2: Not cleared.** The removal of the clean energy component has led to a significant design shift, with the proposal now fully repositioned as an ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) initiative. This change—prioritizing agroforestry, CSA, IWRM, and land restoration—better aligns with the Adaptation Fund's adaptation mandate. However, the proposal does not yet fully justify the adaptation rationale. The problem statement emphasizes deforestation and agroforestry barriers but gives limited attention to

		However, this description focuses on various climate hazards and impacts rather than centring on the specific issue the project targets – deforestation. The proposal also specifies that human-induced activities are the primary cause of deforestation (p.9). Please clearly articulate the relationship between human-induced deforestation and the worsening impacts of climate change on the local population, as the proposal does not sufficiently explain this connection. This explanation is necessary to demonstrate that 1) deforestation is not merely an environmental protection issue, but a direct threat to the livelihoods and resilience of the target community in the context of a changing climate, 2) and that there is the need for targeted adaptation measures that	communities **adjust to the observed or expected impacts of climate change**—such as shifting rainfall patterns, drought, or heat stress. While the proposal integrates important elements such as access to clean energy and behavioral change around cooking fuels, the climate adaptation rationale remains insufficiently articulated. The core technology—solar-powered electric cookstoves (ECOCA)—is fundamentally a mitigation intervention, aimed at reducing deforestation, biomass reliance, and emissions from cooking fuels. Although the proposal references adaptation co-benefits (e.g., reducing time spent collecting firewood, reducing indoor air pollution, increasing affordability), it **does not clearly establish how these activities directly address climate change risks or vulnerabilities**	climate-related water risks (droughts, floods, scarcity), the lack of climate information and early warning systems, and market barriers—despite these being central to the proposed interventions. The linkage between problems and outputs is not consistently articulated, and the Theory of Change does not clearly show the causal pathway from drivers → activities → resilience outcomes. **Please clarify following points:** • Expand the problem analysis to include water-related climate risks, climate information, and market barriers. • Provide a clearer linkage between identified problems and proposed components, supported by concrete baseline data and localized evidence. • Revise the Theory of Change to present a clear causal pathway from drivers to adaptation outcomes.

		address both the drivers and impacts of deforestation in the climate change context. Please strengthen the adaptation justification by clarifying the missing link between deforestation and the climate change impacts faced by the target population, addressing the following points: - **Impact of Ongoing Deforestation in a Climate Change Context**: how current deforestation affects livelihoods by diminishing resources and productivity, which in turn affects people's ability to cope with and adapt to climate change in the target area.	facing communities in Uganda. The linkage between human-induced deforestation – caused by activities such as biomass harvesting – and the climate change impacts on the local population remains unexplained. The proposal includes **business and delivery model innovations**, including: • The "Pay-As-You-Cook" (PAYC) lease-to-own model • The combination of subsidies from the Adaptation Fund and World Bank EASP • Last-mile distribution networks, local assembly, and e-waste management • Behavior changes strategies tailored to women and youth However, these are **innovations in energy access and business**	

			model deployment, rather than **innovative adaptation solutions**. At present, the proposal reads more as a clean energy access project with strong mitigation, gender, and economic development benefits, rather than an adaptation innovation initiative. **To be aligned with the Adaptation Fund's innovation objectives, please demonstrate:** - How the model responds to specific adaptation challenges (e.g., coping with erratic rainfall, water stress, food security) - What is new or untested about the solution in the adaptation context (e.g., piloting electric cooking as a climate resilience tool in drought-affected regions) - How climate change is impacting fuelwood availability, livelihoods, or health	

		CR 1: Not cleared. The project will target 8 districts in the Acholi sub-region and aims to reach 788,765 indirect beneficiaries, with 157,753 people benefiting directly from the project activities. While the proposal specifies the number of direct beneficiaries and identifies targeted vulnerable groups, it lacks detailed socio-demographic information about the population in the target areas if available. If it is not available, please state so.	in the target areas, and how ECOCA directly addresses those impacts. - How the revolving finance model and business innovations are enablers of adaptation solutions, not just market enablers. **CR 1: Not cleared.** The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) now provides the general socio-demographic information for the target areas. However, please elaborate on the selection criteria for the 167 farmer groups. Specifically, clarify how the project will choose these 167 entities and describe the intended composition of these groups.	**CR 1: Not cleared.** The revised proposal does not provide sufficient clarity on the overall beneficiary structure. Multiple target groups and numeric targets are presented across components, but their relationships, overlaps, and rationale remain unclear. For example, the proposal mentions 167 farmer groups, 36 vs. 20 committees, 200 trained individuals, and 60 community-based agents, without clarifying how these categories are defined, differentiated, or interlinked. This raises concerns about

		Some information is provided for Gulu district. However, since the 8 target districts have been selected, please provide comprehensive socio-demographic information for the target areas and potential beneficiaries. This could include for example: - population density and distribution across the target districts - age and gender breakdown of the population - economic activities and income levels of the communities - Household sizes and family structures - Existing environmental conditions and land use patterns Alternatively, if this data is not available, please list and confirm the sources of best available socio-	**CR 2: Not cleared.** This CR is not fully addressed. The proposal clarifies the existing gap on agroforestry strengthening adaptation rational. However, the Component 1 lacks sufficient details on the activities and the clear link on how these activities will achieve the objective of Component 1, which is to restore degraded land of 6,800 ha. Please clarify following points: • **Activity 1.1.1. :** Despite the inclusion of the ESIA in the updated proposal,	overlap, tailored training content, inclusivity, and whether the targets are realistic given the project's scope and resources. • **Beneficiary framework and definitions:** Please present a clear, consistent framework that (i) defines direct and indirect beneficiaries; (ii) clarifies relationships, overlaps, and differentiated roles among target groups (including committees and policy dialogue participants); and (iii) shows how all beneficiary categories contribute to the project's overall results. • **Numeric targets (beneficiaries):** Please provide the calculation logic and selection criteria for all beneficiary-related targets (e.g., groups, committees, individuals), ensuring they are realistic in the project context and reconciled across components and indicators.

		demographic data for each of these areas. Additionally, elaborate on the selection criteria for the 167 farmer groups. Specifically, clarify how and why the project has chosen these 167 entities and describe the intended composition of these groups. **CR 2: Not cleared.** Outcome 1 of the project has been substantially revised. However, the background and context for the activities under Outcome 1 are not sufficiently detailed. Please further develop the background, rationale, and content of the activities for Outcome 1, including the following points: • **Knowledge Transfer and Training**: Success in FMNR often hinges more on knowledge transfer and training than on capital investment. Agent	please provide a justification for its necessity. • **Farmer-led land identification:** As noted in the response to CR 11, please specify under which activity the farmer-led identification of target lands for restoration will take place. • **Forest Value Chain**: Provide more information on the forest value chain, including the current situation and justification for the planned activities. • **Restoration of 6,800 hectares**: Most activities under Outcome 1 focus on technical assistance and training. Please clarify how these activities under Outcome 1 will directly achieve	**CR 2: Not cleared.** The revised proposal presents activities at a **concept-note level of detail**. Many activities remain too general, with limited explanation of how specific actions will generate concrete outputs and how those outputs will contribute to the stated outcomes and objectives. This lack of clarity is compounded by inconsistencies across beneficiary structures and numeric targets. Several targets —such as 55 demonstration plots, four land-use plans, and six vs. eight weather stations— appear arbitrary, lack justification, and are not clearly linked to the results framework. In addition, discrepancies emerge between the narrative, the detailed budget tables, and the yearly allocation tables. • **Please revise the description of activities** to show

		training and their engagement with farmers are crucial for enhancing acceptance and participation in the initiative. Please provide further details on the qualifications of these potential agents and how they will be recruited. • **Past experience of the Executing Entity**: The executing entity, Mercy Corps, has experience with FMNR. Please describe their past experience, including success factors and pitfalls to avoid, and explain how these will be applied to the current project. • **Basic Assessment of Target Area**: A basic assessment of the target area (6,800 hectares of degraded land)	the restoration of 6,800 hectares, showing a clear link between actions and results. • **Benefit Sharing Mechanism**: While the objective of the benefit-sharing mechanisms is explained (p.25), the design, implementation process, and roles of the relevant stakeholders remain unclear. The proposal would be strengthened by including a more detailed explanation—or preferably a diagram—illustrating how these mechanisms will function in practice. • **Monitoring System for Activity 1.2.10**:	clearly how each activity contributes to specific outputs and how these outputs link to the intended outcomes and objectives. • **Please provide the calculation logic and rationale for the numeric output targets** and reconcile inconsistencies across sections. (e.g., six vs. eight weather stations) • **Please ensure consistency between the narrative, detailed budget, and yearly allocation tables,** particularly regarding frequency, timing, and cost of activities. Following are new CRs related to new project components and activities. **<u>Levels of intervention</u>** Intervention levels are applied inconsistently across activities, creating confusion about ownership and accountability. For example, a “community-based plan” is described as leading to a “landscape-level grant”

		should be undertaken during the project preparation stage. This information is essential for conducting an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). Please elaborate on the target land, including: - Land ownership status - Current ecological conditions (existing tree cover, soil conditions, etc.) - Any ongoing activities by locals that might conflict with the project - A map of target area (degraded land), if possible • **Link Between FMNR and Agroforestry**: These practices complement each other, with FMNR enhancing land restoration and tree regeneration, which can support and	Describe the monitoring system for Activity 1.2.10, including its form (e.g., digital or manual), who will manage it, and how it will be applied across all 8 districts.	(Activity 1.2.4), while other activities emphasize sub-county hubs (Activity 2.1.2) or district-level adaptation plans (Activity 2.2.6). Catchment guidelines (Activity 1.2.2) are also not clearly linked to community-level action. This fragmented use of intervention levels makes it unclear who is responsible for implementation and how actions at different levels are meant to connect. **CR 27(New):** Please map each activity to a clear level of intervention (community, sub-county, district, landscape, catchment) and explain how these levels are linked in practice. **<u>Sequencing and timeframe</u>** Many preparatory studies and planning activities are scheduled alongside implementation, making the project's timeline difficult to follow. For example, area identification (1.2.4) appears to occur in parallel with catchment guidelines (1.2.2), nd market assessments (Activity 2.2.1) are listed

		improve agroforestry systems. If there is an intended connection between FMNR and agroforestry activities within the project, please strengthen it. Also, please detail how these activities will be implemented across different types of land in the target areas. Additionally, the proposal mentions varying numbers of target beneficiaries for different activities, sometimes referring to households and other times to farmers. Please clarify how beneficiaries are allocated across these activities. • **Forest Value Chain**: Provide more information on the forest value chain, including the		alongside vendor support (Activity 2.2.3) and bundled pilots (Activity 2.2.5) without showing whether the assessments will precede these interventions. In Component 3, knowledge products are planned evenly across three years, although in practice outputs would only emerge after results from Components 1 and 2. This raises concerns about whether the 36-month timeframe is adequate. **CR 28(New) :** Please provide a timeline showing sequencing, dependencies, and critical path to ensure deliverables are achievable within 36 months. **<u>Roles, responsibilities and quality assurance</u>** Several key outputs do not specify who will be responsible for drafting, validating, or approving them. This includes community land-use maps (1.2.4), catchment guidelines (1.2.2), adaptation action plans (2.2.6), and policy briefs (3.1.3). Without clarity on responsibilities, validation

		current situation and justification for the planned activities. • **Restoration of 6,800 hectares**: Most activities under Outcome 1 focus on technical assistance and training. Please clarify how these activities under Outcome 1 will directly achieve the restoration of 6,800 hectares, showing a clear link between actions and results. • **Benefit Sharing Mechanism**: Explain the benefit-sharing mechanism, including involved actors, governance structures, and the flow of funds. A diagram would be helpful. • **Monitoring System for Activity 1.2.10**: Describe the monitoring system		processes, and intended use, ownership and sustainability are uncertain. It is not sufficient to state that the EE will oversee delivery; the proposal needs to clarify **who will draft the outputs** (e.g., consultants, local authorities, community groups), **who will validate and endorse them** (e.g., district governments, line ministries, community assemblies), **what stakeholder participation will be ensured during the process,** and **how the outputs will be applied in practice** (e.g., integrated into district planning, guiding sub-county adaptation measures, or informing national policy). **CR 29 (New):** Please identify the responsible institutions for each output, describe the validation and quality assurance mechanisms, explain stakeholder participation beyond consultants, and clarify how each output will be used to influence decision-making and ensure sustainability.

		for Activity 1.2.10, including its form (e.g., digital or manual), who will manage it, and how it will be applied across all 8 districts. • **NROs**: Please include information on the consultations with the district governments regarding the involvement of NROs in the project. • **Land Management Committees**: Indicate the percentage of women participating in the land management committees. Once outcome 1 is revised, please revise the project indicators of project results framework accordingly and disaggregate the target		**<u>Operation, maintenance, and sustainability of technology</u>** The proposal introduces several technological components—weather stations, data platforms, hubs, and token systems—but provides no plan for post-project operation, maintenance, and cost recovery. Key questions remain on who will operate and finance these systems, how calibration and repairs will be covered, and how data ownership, access, and security will be managed. **CR 30(New):** Please specify O&M responsibilities, financing, and exit/hand-over strategies for all technology components. **<u>Token-based early response system</u>** The design of the token-based emergency response mechanism remains underdeveloped. Critical details are missing regarding the trigger mechanism, eligibility and targeting of beneficiaries, vendor contracting and settlement,

		indicator by gender when relevant. **CR 9: Cleared.**		fraud prevention, and gender and inclusion safeguards. The USD 200,000 allocation is presented without clarity on unit costs, cost breakdowns, or governance structures. **CR 31(New):** Please elaborate on the design of the token system, including triggers, targeting, vendor arrangements, and accountability measures. **<u>Private sector and financial mechanisms</u>** The market engagement and financial mechanisms are insufficiently detailed. Support for agro-dealers (2.2.3) and the bundled services pilot (2.2.5, currently budgeted at USD 0) are described only conceptually. Key elements such as PAYG models, inventory financing, risk-sharing arrangements, vendor incentives, and monitoring indicators are missing. **CR 32(New)** : Please provide a clear business model, partnership structure, and financial flows for vendor

				engagement and pilots. **<u>Indicators and alignment with Project Result Framework</u>** Output and outcome indicators are not consistently aligned with the planned activities or beneficiary numbers. For example, knowledge increase and adoption indicators in Output 1.1 are not clearly linked to the training activities, and the methods for counting households versus individuals remain unclear. Gender and youth disaggregation is not systematically applied. **CR 33(New):** Please revise the PRF to ensure indicators reflect activity outputs, disaggregation, and realistic targets. **CR 34(New):** Please revise all beneficiary-related indicators to include both percentages and corresponding absolute numbers, particularly for gender, youth, and other

				vulnerable group disaggregation. **CR 35(New):** Please clarify and standardize the counting methodology for beneficiaries (households vs. individuals) to ensure consistency across components and in the PRF. **<u>Duplication across activities</u>** Several activities appear to duplicate efforts or overlap in scope, risking inefficiency. For instance, demonstration sites are included under both 1.1.5 and 2.1.4, committee strengthening is addressed in both 1.1.6 and 1.2.1, and multiple “dialogue” or “meeting” activities (2.1.5, 2.1.6) overlap without clear differentiation. **CR 36(New):** Please consolidate or clarify these activities to avoid redundancy. **<u>Component 3 design and coherence</u>** Component 3 appears disconnected from Components 1 and 2, combining management,

				monitoring, policy dialogue, and knowledge management in a generic manner. For example, monitoring activities (3.1.1, 3.1.3) should fall under project management costs, while policy dialogues (3.1.2, 3.1.4) are not clearly linked to field results. The 18 proposed national-level meetings appear excessive and unrelated to the localized scope of Components 1 and 2. Sequencing of knowledge products across three years is also unrealistic, since outputs will only emerge after field activities. **CR 37(New):** Please restructure Component 3 to align with evidence from Components 1 and 2, reallocate monitoring to project management, and adjust timing and scale of knowledge products and dialogues.
	3. Does the project/programme hel p spread innovative adaptation practices, tools and technologies that have demonstrated success	**CR 11: Not cleared.** The project aims to address deforestation by restoring degraded land, promoting agroforestry, and shifting local practices	**CR 11: Not cleared.** The response identifies key barriers to agroforestry and reforestation in the Acholi sub-region—including low awareness,	**CR 11: Not cleared.** The proposal presents a layered model combining technological, institutional, social, and market-based approaches, including

	in one country to another country, countries, or regions; and/or Does the project/programme pilo t at larger scale innovative adapta tion practices, tools or technologies generated that have demonstrated viability at a small scale?	away from wood collection towards energy-efficient, biomass-free cooking technologies. This will be coupled with a market-based approach, enhanced community involvement, and training. While the problem statement on cook stoves and energy access is well-defined, the proposal needs to better clarify the deforestation issues and its innovative solutions. Please provide a more detailed explanations of the current challenges and gaps on reforestation and agroforestry. Following points could be useful to explore : - Current adoption rates and challenges in implementing agroforestry practices - Specific barriers to effective reforestation efforts and how these gaps will be	cultural resistance, economic constraints, land tenure insecurity, and climate variability—and outlines how the project will address these through training, financial incentives, and community engagement. It draws on consultation findings to support these points and emphasizes the need for locally adapted culturally sensitive approaches. (pages 6-8) The proposal emphasizes innovation in institutional and market frameworks; however, these elements are either not sufficiently developed or do not clearly demonstrate added value beyond existing multilateral, participatory stakeholder engagement approaches. To strengthen the innovation rationale, **please clarify how the proposed institutional, policy, and market-based interventions represent a distinct advancement compared to current practices in the region, and how they**	FMNR, agroforestry, solar irrigation, AI forecasts, and token incentives. It also refers to skills development, community engagement, and market linkages to support adaptation. However, the problem analysis remains overly general, with limited baseline data and insufficient linkage to the specific adaptation problems the project components aim to address. Moreover, the innovations presented are mostly established practices in the region, while the potentially novel elements (AI forecasts, token incentives) are described only at a conceptual level without operational detail or evidence of feasibility. Given that project activities remain unclear in many areas (see related CRs on activity design, sequencing, and budget alignment), the innovation rationale cannot yet be adequately assessed. **Please address CAR 2 and CR 2 first, and then provide**

		addressed by the project Furthermore, the revised proposal does not adequately showcase the innovative elements required for an innovation project application. Please provide a detailed explanation of the innovation rationale. Specifically, outline how innovative approaches can address identified climate adaptation problem through innovations across physical and technological tools, knowledge and skills, institutions, policies, rules, and organizational structures.	**specifically address the identified climate adaptation challenges through new or enhanced mechanisms.** Please also see CAR2 pertaining to component 2.	**a detailed explanation of the innovation rationale.** Specifically, outline how innovative approaches can address identified climate adaptation problems through innovations across physical and technological tools, knowledge and skills, institutions, policies, rules, and organizational structures.
	4. Does the project / programme provide economic, social and environmental benefits, particularly to vulnerable communities, including gender considerations, while avoiding or mitigating negative impacts, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and	**CR 13: Not cleared.** The target of the indicator '# of participants' should also include gender disaggregated target. (E.g., '100 participants (40% women)')	**CR 13: Cleared. (pages 81-84)** Modifications have been made to the project results framework accordingly.	**CR 12: Not cleared.** As the project has been substantially revised, the proposal does not provide a clear comparison of the expected benefits against the baseline situation in the target area. Please include a clear presentation of the expected benefits **in relation to the baseline situation.**

	Gender Policy of the Fund?			**CR 13: Not cleared.** The proposal outlines a wide range of expected economic, social, and environmental benefits, but these remain broad descriptions closely tied to conceptual activities rather than concrete, measurable interventions. The lack of specificity on who will benefit, how benefits will be distributed, and how results will be quantified makes it difficult to assess the project's actual contribution. **Please outline the mechanisms through which different vulnerable groups** (e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities) will participate in and access project benefits, and explain how the project will ensure that benefits are equitably distributed across targeted beneficiaries.
	5. Does the project engage, empower and/or benefit the most vulnerable	**CR 14: Not cleared.** The proposal indicates that vulnerable groups such as women and female-	**CR 14: Cleared. (pages 6-8)** The response outlines key barriers and needs faced	**CR 14: Not cleared.** The proposal references vulnerable groups in multiple activities, such as ensuring

	communities and social groups?	headed households, youths, the elderly, and persons with disabilities will be targeted throughout the project. While a general description of these groups and activities is mentioned, it lacks detailed socio-demographic information about these populations within the 8 districts. Detailed information on their characteristics and needs is necessary for effective implementation. Please address this under CR 1 for project beneficiaries and provide further elaboration if additional data on the vulnerable groups is available.	by vulnerable groups, including women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.	60% women among the 5,000 farmers trained under Activity 1.1.5, setting a target of at least 50% women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in local water governance committees (Activity 1.2.1), and prioritizing women and youth in the selection of extension agents (Activity 2.1.3). It also commits to reaching 2,000 vulnerable farmers—especially women and youth—through a token-based incentive system (Activity 2.2.2), and to integrating youth into agroforestry value chains while providing elderly and persons with disabilities with accessible technologies. However, despite these references, the proposal does not clearly explain how these groups will be systematically identified, engaged, and guaranteed equitable benefits across components. The proposal should provide greater clarity on how vulnerable groups will be consistently identified and

				meaningfully engaged across all project components. **Please provide further information on the following** : • The criteria and mechanisms for identifying vulnerable groups across different components; • How participation of these groups will be consistently ensured beyond percentage targets, including in governance and decision-making processes; • Disaggregated beneficiary numbers in the project results framework (not only percentages); • Clear explanation of how the token-based incentive system will prioritize vulnerable groups and guarantee equitable access to its benefits.
	6. Does the project advance gender equality and the	**CAR 3: Not cleared.** The revised GESI includes specific gender data for	**CAR 3: Not cleared.** The GAP was not attached to the submission. The	**CAR 3: Not cleared.** The provided gender assessment report is still

	empowerment of women and girls?	Uganda, incorporating key informant interviews with local leaders and focus group discussions. The updated gender action plan (GAP) now better reflects women's participation in project activities. However, the GAP only includes indicators without specifying targets for these indicators. Please add the targets for the indicators in the GAP and include these indicators in the project results framework.	GAP does not include specified targets for the indicators.	based on the previous project's focus on cook stoves, and does not reflect the revised project objectives and activities. While the Gender Action Plan (GAP) includes a set of activities, indicators, and targets, these are not yet integrated into the main project design or monitoring framework, making it difficult to assess how gender considerations will be operationalized and tracked. **Please update the gender assessment to align with the revised project objectives and activities.** **Furthermore, the activities included in the GAP should be clearly reflected in the project components and budget, and the proposed indicators and targets must be incorporated into the Project Results Framework.**
	7. Is the project/programme cos t-effective?	**CR 15: Cleared.** The proposal shows cost-effectiveness by integrating agroforestry,		**CR 15: Not cleared.** The proposal provides a general narrative on the cost-effectiveness of selected

	In the case of regional project/ programmes, does the regional approach support cost effectiveness? Do es the project engage, empower, and/or benefit the most vulnerable communities and social groups?	FMNR and Non-Timber Forest Product(NTFP) value chains, reducing initial costs while enhancing long-term environmental and economic benefits. **CR 16: Cleared (page 38-39)** The proposal provides a comparative analysis of its business model with similar products in the region.		interventions, particularly FMNR, agroforestry, and NTFP value chains. However, the analysis remains broad and descriptive, without presenting a clear assessment of alternative options and a comparison of their relative costs and benefits. In addition, the cost-effectiveness discussion does not comprehensively cover all project components. Please note that cost-effectiveness analysis for AF projects needs to compare the proposed project costs to an alternative approach that could achieve the same project results, and that could have taken place to help adapt and build resilience in the same sector, geographic region, and/or community. A quantitative estimate of cost-effectiveness could be provided where feasible. **Please provide a clear analysis of alternative options considered for each major intervention, including a comparison of**

				their relative costs and expected benefits.
	8. Is the project / programme consistent with national or sub-national sustainable development strategies, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national communications and adaptation programs of action and other relevant instruments?	**CR 19: Cleared (page 50)** The Uganda TNA identified FMNR as a climate change adaptation priority.		
	9. Does the project / programme meet the relevant national technical standards, where applicable, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Fund?	**CR 20: Not cleared. (page 51)** Please address CAR 7 and revisit this CR, if necessary.	**CR 20: Not cleared.** While relevant national policies are listed in the ESIA (p. 20–25), the proposal does not adequately clarify whether specific project activities—particularly those involving land use—require compliance with national technical standards. If such compliance is required, the proposal should clearly outline the steps taken to meet these standards, along with the nature and current status	**CR 20: Cleared. (pages 74-77)** The project commits to comply with Uganda's National Environment Act and Environmental Impact Assessment regulations through participatory assessments. All water-related interventions will follow the technical guidelines of the Ministry of Water and Environment and the National Water and Sewerage Corporation. Land-based activities will align with Uganda's national

			of any authorizations or clearances granted.	land use planning policies while respecting customary land rights. Solar irrigation systems will be procured and installed according to the standards of the Uganda National Bureau of Standards.
	10. Is there duplication of project / programme with other funding sources?	**CAR 4: Not cleared.** While some additional information is provided for 'Pump-Up' and PRUDEV II on page 52, it is still unclear how they will complement or avoid overlapping with the proposed project. Please provide more details on complementarity or areas of overlap. Please provide details on the World Bank's EASP project, as the business simulations and scenarios outlined on page 27-29 depends on combined subsidies from this project and the EASP project. Please also clarify if the target beneficiaries are the same as those in the EASP project. Please refer to the comment under question 13 below as well.	**CAR 4: Not cleared.** The proposal states that overlapping areas will target the same beneficiaries, while avoiding duplication of activities with PUMP-UP. Please clarify the specific mechanisms or actions that will be implemented to prevent duplication and to enhance coordination and collaboration with the PUMP-UP initiative.	**CAR 4: Not cleared.** The revised section provides more detail on complementarity with PUMP-UP and PRUDEV II. However, overlaps remain, particularly with PRUDEV II in the areas of market development and climate-smart agriculture. The proposal does not yet explain how these overlapping activities will be differentiated in practice. **Please clarify how ACCESS will ensure complementarity rather than duplication in these areas.** With respect to PUMP-UP, while geographic expansion and the use of lessons learned are noted, the proposal should more concretely demonstrate how these insights are informing the design of project

				components. For instance, financing mechanisms such as seasonal repayment plans or group-based asset financing are mentioned in the narrative but not developed into actual project activities. The project components, therefore need further development and specificity; **please address CR 2 and 32.**
	11. Does the project / programme have a learning and knowledge management component to capture and feedback lessons?	**CR 22: Cleared (page 76)**		**CR 22: Not cleared.** The proposal presents knowledge management activities under Component 3, but related activities also appear in Components 1 and 2. However, these are not clearly defined, lack concrete outputs, and show weak linkage with Component 3. The identity of Component 3 is therefore unclear, and the overall structure does not demonstrate how KM is integrated across the project. This is primarily a project structure issue (see CR 37 on Component 3). Once this CR 37 is addressed, please revise the KM section to:

				• Define concrete knowledge outputs, dissemination mechanisms, and target audiences; • Ensure alignment between KM activities, the budget, and the Project Results Framework; • Clarify whether the Community Accountability Reporting Mechanism (CARM) requires a dedicated budget allocation; and • Remove or reframe references not directly relevant to this project (e.g., global platforms and working groups such as the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy in Situations of Displacement, Smart Communities Coalition, and Safe Access to Fuel and Energy), unless their role in this project is clearly explained.
	12. Has a consultative process taken place, and has it involved all key stakeholders, and vulnerable groups,	**CAR 5: Not cleared.** The proposal focus, especially in Component 1, has been substantially	**CAR 5: Not cleared.** Additional consultation was conducted in October 2023 as part of the ESIA,	**CAR 5: Not cleared.** The revised proposal substantially alters the project components, yet

	including gender considerations in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Fund?	revised. Please clarify whether additional consultation was undertaken for the revised contents.	involving 50 participants, 24% of whom were women (pages 58–59). While the proposal includes relevant feedback on cookstove adoption, it does not address consultation findings related to Component 1—particularly reforestation, agroforestry, and land restoration. Please summarize the key outcomes of these discussions and explain how they have been reflected in the design of project activities in Section J, Part II.	there is no evidence that stakeholder consultations were undertaken to validate these changes. **Please undertake a new consultation process and provide a report documenting the process, including dates, participants, visual evidence, community feedback, and how inputs were incorporated.** The process should be comprehensive and gender-responsive, ensuring participation of all stakeholders, including women, vulnerable and marginalized groups, and Indigenous Peoples where relevant.
	13. Is the requested financing justified on the basis of full cost of adaptation reasoning?	**Not cleared.** The primary goal of Outcome 1 is to restore 6,800 hectares of degraded land. However, as highlighted in CR 2 ('Restoration of 6,800 hectares'), it is unclear how the planned activities and allocated budget will directly accomplish this objective. Please address	**Not cleared.** The response provides key cost items of outcome 1. However, this should be either explained in the Part II.A. of the proposal and in the budget breakdown. **Please reflect the information provided in the proposal and in the budget breakdown.**	**Not cleared.** While the proposal provides some explanation, the current lack of clarity in the adaptation rationale and project activities makes it difficult to assess whether the requested financing is fully justified on the basis of full cost of adaptation reasoning.

		CR 2 and provide further justification for the requested funding in Section L. Regarding the subsidies for ECOCA, the response and the revised proposal (page 27) indicate that the reduced cost of $290 per cookstove will be achieved through subsidies provided by this project and additional subsidies from the World Bank's EASP project. However, it is important that the Adaptation Fund project, on its own, can meet its objectives without relying on additional donor funding. If co-financing is involved, the AF project should still be able to deliver its outcomes regardless of the success of the other project(s). Please clarify whether and how this project will achieve its outcomes regardless of the success of the other project(s).	Regarding the additional support under the World Bank's EASP subsidy program, ECOCA East Africa has been registered and pre-qualified for participation. Nevertheless, ACCESS has been designed with a viable business model to remain feasible without these subsidies. Feasibility studies indicate that households can still adopt the ECOCA system through the existing $80 subsidy and flexible 36-month payment plan. (page 30) **Please include this information in PART II Section L.**	**Please address CAR 2 on adaptation justification first, and then revise this section as necessary.**

	14. Is the project / program aligned with AF's results framework?	**CAR 6: Not cleared.** In the 'Alignment with the AF Result Framework' table, the 'Fund Outcome' column should reflect the outcome-level expected results from the Strategic Results Framework, while the corresponding indicator should be placed in the 'Fund Outcome Indicator' column. Similarly, the 'Fund Output' column should indicate the output-level expected results associated with the aforementioned outcome, and the corresponding indicator should be placed in the 'Fund Output Indicator' column. Please refer to the example provided in the 'Results Framework Alignment Table' and revise the table accordingly.	**CAR 6: Not cleared.** The 'Alignment with the AF Results Framework' table has not been revised.	**CAR 6: Cleared.** The proposal aligns with outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 as described on pages 127-130.
	15. Has the sustainability of the project/programme outcomes been taken	**CR 24: Not cleared.** The project ensures sustainability by	**CR 24: Cleared. (page 62)**	**CR 24: Not cleared.** The proposal outlines environmental, social,

	into account when designing the project?	embedding interventions within natural cycles, building local capacity for agroforestry, and integrating ECOCA cookstoves to reduce deforestation. It also leverages local savings groups for financial support for ECOCA cookstoves and collaborates with authorities to maintain and adapt practices beyond the project's duration. However, the description is general. Please provide specifics on the exact mechanisms on how to ensure the active and continued involvement of communities in the agroforestry and reforestation activities, and how the institutionalization of connections between communities and government officials will be realized.	Response provides that the proposed mechanisms -including CLMCs, collaboration with NROs, community-led mapping, and community bylaws - demonstrate a structured approach to embedding sustainability by strengthening community ownership and institutional linkages beyond the project period.	institutional, financial, and technical sustainability largely through descriptions of activities, but it does not clearly explain how the outputs of these activities will be sustained beyond the project's duration. **Please clarify the followings**: • Regarding operation and maintenance (O&M), please address CR 30. • Details on the long-term economic viability of project benefits, including sustained access to markets, livelihood opportunities, and value chain development. • How community-based interventions and committees will be maintained after project closure, including incentives, governance arrangements, and resource flows. • Strategies to ensure environmental sustainability, particularly the long-term durability

				and monitoring of restored ecosystems. • A more detailed and operational exit strategy that specifies timelines, responsible actors, and mechanisms for sustaining outcomes after project completion.
	16. Does the project / programme provide an overview of environmental and social impacts / risks identified, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Fund?	**CAR 7: Not cleared.** The reforestation and agroforestry activities, while they have significant positive environmental impacts, they can also present various environmental and social risks that need to be assessed and managed. These risks might include impacts on local biodiversity, land use conflict, changes to local water resources, etc. Therefore, an environmental and social impact assessment is generally required to address these potential issues and ensure the project is implemented sustainably.	**CAR 7: Cleared. (pages 67-69)** The ESIA and ESMP have been provided, and the AF's 15 principles table has been revised.	**CAR 7: not cleared.** Despite the substantial revision of the project content, the ESIA and ESMP have not been updated or revised. • Please provide an updated ESIA and a revised ESMP that reflect the current scope and activities of the project. • Please categorize the proposed project as per the requirements of the AF Environmental and Social Policy (ESP). • Please revisit the checklist for the AF's 15 ESP principles. The current version is overly generic and does not demonstrate a

		The revised proposal highlights some ecological and social risks that the project poses and the project activity 1.1.1 states to conduct a comprehensive Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). The ESIA should be taken prior to the fully-developed proposal submission. Alongside with the assessment, the Environmental Social Management Plan (ESMP) should be included as part of the proposal to ensure that the project does not have negative environmental social impact. Any potential risk would be covered through the environmental social management plan. Also, if unidentified sub-projects (USPs) are anticipated, the proposal should acknowledge the USP approach and outline measures for identifying and managing environmental, social, and gender-related risks during project implementation. Consultation with the		systematic identification of potential risks. A more detailed and project-specific analysis is required, explicitly addressing the relevant principles for this project (e.g., access and equity, differential risks for vulnerable and marginalized groups, Indigenous Peoples, human rights, gender equity, natural habitats, biodiversity, and pollution/resource efficiency related to agricultural inputs).

		relevant stakeholders on the ESIA should also be part of the process. The column for potential impacts and risks in the AF's 15 principles table (section N) should include the risk analysis, such as low/moderate/high risk. The assessment should consider (i) all potential direct, indirect, transboundary, and cumulative impacts that could result from the proposed project/programme; (ii) identify possible measures to avoid, minimize, manage, or mitigate environmental and social impacts of the proposed project/programme. Please revise the table in section N of Part II, revisit the project category, conduct ESIA, develop ESMP, and include the documentation as an annex to the proposal.		
Resource Availability	1. Is the requested project funding within			

	the parameters for large grants set by the Board?			
	2. Is the Implementing Entity Management Fee at or below 8.5 per cent of the total project budget before the fee? Are the Project/Programme Execution Costs at or below 9.5 per cent of the total project/programme budget (including the fee)?	The revised IE and EE cost are within the caps.	-	The revised IE and EE costs are within the cap, at 8.4% and 8.6% respectively.
Eligibility of IE	1. Is the project submitted through an Implementing Entity accredited by the Board?	**MOWE is in the re-accreditation process.**	**MOWE is in the re-accreditation process.**	**MOWE is in the re-accreditation process.**
Implementation Arrangements	1. Are there measures in place for the management of for environmental and social risks, in line with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Fund? Proponents are encouraged to refer to the Guidance document for	**CAR 9: Not cleared.** Please address CAR 7 and revise section C of Part III.	**CAR 9: Cleared.** The ESMP has been provided in the annex. **CAR17 (New)** While a general explanation of the grievance mechanism is provided on page 69, the proposal should clearly articulate how communities and stakeholders will be made	**CAR 17: Not cleared.** While the proposal provides a general description of the grievance mechanism (p.101), it does not address the earlier request for clarification on: • how communities and stakeholders will be made aware of the mechanism at project

	Implementing Entities on compliance with the Adaptation Fund Environmental and Social Policy, for details.		aware of the mechanism—both at the outset of the project and at regular intervals throughout its implementation. In addition, the current description does not detail how feedback loops will be maintained to ensure that complainants are informed about the status and resolution of their grievances. It is recommended that a diagram be included to visually present the grievance mechanism, illustrating the flow of complaints—from intake through resolution—along with roles, communication points, and feedback loops.	outset and during implementation; • how feedback loops will be maintained so that complainants are informed of progress and resolution; and • inclusion of a diagram to illustrate the flow of complaints, roles, and communication points.
	2. Are there measures for financial and project/programme risk management?	**CAR 11: Not cleared.** No revisions or responses have been provided for this CAR.	**CAR 11: Cleared. (pages 71-76)** Financial and project/programme risk management measures have been provided.	
	3. Are arrangements for monitoring and evaluation clearly defined, including	**CAR 12: Not cleared.** No revisions or responses have been provided for this CAR. Provided budget	**CAR 12: Not cleared.** The M&E plan does not specify the submission	**CAR 12: Not cleared.** The M&E plan does not comply with the Adaptation

	budgeted M&E plans and sex-disaggregated data, targets and indicators, in compliance with the Gender Policy of the Fund?	breakdown does not provide the budget for M&E.	schedule for the **baseline report (due by 1st PPR**), **project performance reports (PPRs)** or the **audited financial statements**. Please revise the M&E plan to ensure compliance with the Adaptation Fund's M&E guidelines, specifically by including the required reporting timelines. While the budget narrative refers to the overall M&E budget, it does not provide a detailed breakdown of costs for each M&E activity listed in Section D of Part III. Please revise the M&E table in Section D to include: • A disaggregated budget for each M&E activity; and • The responsible entity or executing body for each activity.	Fund's M&E guidelines, as it omits key mandatory reports such as Project Performance Reports (PPRs), audited financial statements, and the Project Completion Summary. Please revise the M&E plan to ensure inclusion of these required reporting elements, along with their timelines, in line with the Fund's guidelines.
	4. Is a budget on the Implementing Entity Management Fee use included?	**CAR 14: Not cleared.** The budget breakdown does not provide a budget for the IE fee.	**CAR 14: Not cleared.** **Regarding the budget plan please address following points:**	**CAR 14: Not cleared.** Significant discrepancies remain between the proposal, budget tables, and explanatory notes. The

		Besides the staff costs, the current budget table only provides a lump sum of the costs at the activity level. Please provide a detailed budget with budget notes indicating the breakdown of the expenses at the activity level. Also, please double-check the alignment of activity numbers and budget items.	• **IE fee:** The detailed explanation on how the IE fees will be utilized in the supervision of the M&E function is missing. Please provide the breakdown of the IE fees. • **EE costs :** While explanatory note, and breakdown of EE costs has been partially provided in the budget sheet, the breakdown of EE cost is not provided. Please revise. • **Budget breakdown for the proposed activities:** the budget narrative provides some explanation on the budget for the activities it does not provide the breakdown. Please provide the budget breakdown of the	proposal allocates USD 130,544 for M&E under the EE, but this figure does not appear in the budget breakdown and conflicts with the IE fee note. The EE cost breakdown is still missing, and the IE fee explanation lacks detail on how it will be used for M&E supervision and oversight. **Please reconcile these inconsistencies and provide a consistent, detailed breakdown of IE fees, EE costs, and M&E allocations.** **CAR 19 (New):** While a budget breakdown has been provided, it does not adequately address the inconsistencies between the activity descriptions and the allocations. Many activities remain too general or conceptual, which makes it difficult to assess whether the proposed costs are justified. **Please revise the budget breakdown to provide a clear linkage between each activity and its corresponding costs, with**

			activities in Component 1.	**sufficient detail on unit costs, quantities, and underlying assumptions.**
	5. Is an explanation and breakdown of the execution cost included?	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14**.**	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.
	6. Does the M&E Framework include a break-down of how implementing entity IE fees will be utilized in the supervision of the M&E function?	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.
	7. Is the timeframe for the proposed activities adequate?	**CR 26: Not cleared.** The proposal states that beneficiaries will make monthly installments over 24 months to fully acquire the ECOCA (page 27). However, on page 34, it is mentioned that the household owns the system after 3 years. Please clarify this discrepancy. Additionally, the initial warranty period has been reduced from 5 years to 3 years. Please provide a justification for this change.	**CR 26: Not cleared.** Regarding the justification for payment period and warranty period, the proposal reflects a flexible payment period of 24 to 36 months under the Pay-as-You-Cook model, based on household payment commitment. (page 56) The proposal has been revised to remove the carbon credit component, resulting in a reduction of the warranty period from 5 years to 3 years. However, the total project implementation period has been revised and	**CR 26: Not cleared.** Although the proposed duration of three years could in principle be adequate, the heavy emphasis on preparatory studies and assessments across multiple activities raises concerns about timely delivery. It is unclear whether the project can realistically complete the number of studies planned and still have sufficient time to implement and demonstrate concrete results within the 3-year period. **Please address CR 28 and add any further explanation as needed.**

			extended to 4 years. **Please update the comment on page 15 to reflect the revised duration. Additionally, revise the budget sheet to align with the 4-year timeframe, as it currently reflects budget planning for only 3 years.**	
	8. Is a summary breakdown of the budget for the proposed activities included?	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.	**Not cleared.** Clarification is requested under CAR 14.
	9. Does the project/programme's results framework align with the AF's results framework? Does it include at least one core outcome indicator from the Fund's results framework?	**CAR 16: Not cleared.** Indicator 1 should be revised from "number of participants (direct and indirect" to "number of beneficiaries (direct and indirect)".	**CAR 16: Cleared. (pages 81-84)** Indicator 1 has been appropriately updated to reflect "number of beneficiaries (direct and indirect)" as requested.	**CAR 16: Not cleared.** Please include innovation-specific indicators and targets in the project results framework. (Please refer to the Guidance to Implementing Entities for Application of Innovation Indicators for Fully Developed Project/Programme Proposals.) **CAR 18(New):** Please include separate tables on core impact indicators. These can be included after Table III.F. Further, as relevant, and corresponding also to

				the core impact indicators, please update the Results framework (III.E) and Alignment with the Adaptation Fund results framework (III.F) Please follow the Guidance for reporting on Core Impact Indicators.
	10. Is a disbursement schedule with time-bound milestones included?	**CAR 17: Cleared. (page 79)**	DS will be revisited until technical clearance.	DS will be revisited until technical clearance.

Funding Proposal Template

Application Template for Fully-Developed Proposal and Project Concept Proposal[1]

PROGRAMME ON INNOVATION: LARGE GRANTS PROJECTS

REQUEST FOR PROJECT FUNDING FROM THE ADAPTATION FUND

The annexed form should be completed and transmitted to the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat by email.

Please type in the responses using the template provided. The instructions attached to the form provide guidance to filling out the template.

Please note that a project must be fully prepared when the request is submitted.

Complete documentation should be sent to:

The Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat
1818 H Street NW
MSN N7-700
Washington, D.C., 20433
U.S.A
Fax: +1 (202) 522-3240/5
Email: afbsec@adaptation-fund.org

[1] Single Country and Regional Concept proposals should complete Part I and Part II of the Project Proposal Template.

SINGLE COUNTRY/ REGIONAL INNOVATION PROJECT/PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

PART I: PROJECT/PROGRAMME INFORMATION

Title of Project/Programme: ACCESS (Agroforestry, Community, and Climate-resilient Ecosystem Sustainability Solutions) - Large Innovation Project (as per screening process classification), C category

Country/ Countries: Uganda

Thematic Focal Area[2]: Nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation

Type of Implementing Entity: NIE

Implementing Entity: Ministry of Water and Environment

Executing Entities: Mercy Corps

Amount of Financing Requested: 5,000,000 USD

[2] Thematic areas are: Agriculture, Coastal Zone Management, Disaster risk reduction, Food security, Forests, Human health, Innovative climate finance , Marine and Fisheries, Nature-based solutions and ecosystem based adaptation, Protection, and enhancement of cultural heritage, Social innovation, Rural development, Urban adaptation, Water management, Wildfire Management.

Project / Programme Background and Context:

1. Environmental and socio-economic context and Climate Change vulnerabilities at national and project site level:

1.1 Environmental and Climate vulnerability context

Uganda, a Lower Middle-Income Country in East Africa, covers an area of 241,555 square kilometres, including various water bodies. The country's climate is predominantly tropical, characterised by bi-modal rainy seasons, except for the northern region, and is strongly influenced by the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) systems. Uganda is the world's 13th most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the Climate Vulnerability Index.[3] Communities in Uganda urgently need to adapt to a changing climate, as their livelihoods and resilience depend significantly on natural resources. In particular, Northern Uganda, where the project site is, is heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture, and because of reliance on the natural environment, this has caused its degradation. Climate change is now acknowledged as a significant threat to disaster risk reduction efforts and a major obstacle to meeting the increasing needs of the most vulnerable populations.[4] Uganda has in the past decade experienced more erratic rainfalls, leading to frequent floods, mudslides and landslides that lead to loss of lives and property. In December 2023 alone, Uganda experienced multiple extreme weather events including floods and landslides which affected 38,547 individuals. Of these, 15,962 people were displaced due to the adverse weather conditions which also affected infrastructure. These figures are part of a consolidated trend that saw from January 2023 to November 2023 a total of 215,299 individuals affected and over 47,467 people internally displaced.[5] Prolonged dry seasons are also frequent, leading to loss of crops and livestock. These changing weather patterns are closely correlated to loss of forest coverage, as there is clear evidence of the interrelation of changes in climate and coverage of forest ecosystems.[6] In the past 20 years, Uganda has lost over a million hectares of tree cover—nearly a third of the country's total. This forest loss is linked to agricultural expansion, wood extraction for energy, increased urbanisation due to high population growth, free grazing animals and wildfires. The need to adapt to a changing climate is stark, considering the high level of reliance on agriculture (40% of Uganda's GDP) for 80% of the growing population. Simultaneously, population growth (3%)[7] also increases the demand for energy, which is often met through combustion of biomass, including timber obtained through illegal logging, contributing to the forest loss of 50,147 hectares/year.[8] According to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FAO, 2020), an estimated 1.2 million hectares of forest cover (approximately 5% of Uganda's total land area) was lost in the period from 1990 to 2020. The average annual loss of forest cover was 41.300 hectares between 1990 and 2020,[9] and it is expected that Uganda will lose most of its forest cover in less than 25 years, as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) had already warned in its State of the Environment for Uganda Report (2008).

[3] University of Notre Dame
[4] https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/CCKP_Metadata_October%202021.pdf
[5] Uganda Multi-Hazard Infographic - Response/DRR Platform (Published: 24th January 2024)
[6] Climate change impacts and adaptation in forest management: a review
[7] Uganda profile
[8] Uganda's alarming deforestation rate, a broken promise to the Bonn Challenge
[9] Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020

Based on existing climate models and predictions, Gulu, Omoro and Nwoya[10][11][12]. Higher temperatures exacerbate water scarcity, increase the risk of heat stress and heat related illnesses like hyperthermia, reduce agricultural productivity, can lead to proliferation of waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery and disproportionately affect women who are primarily responsible for water management at household level**.** 2. Decreased rainfall: the PRECIS model projects a significant decrease in rainfall for Gulu District by 2033. This reduction in rainfall is likely to exacerbate dry spells and drought conditions, impacting[13], for example likely reducing millet yields by 2.6% below current averages. 3. Increased frequency and intensity of floods: despite the overall decrease in rainfall, the region may still experience more intense and frequent flood events due to erratic and heavy rainfall patterns. This is consistent with broader trends observed[14]. Floods destroy household assets, farms and public infrastructure, reduce access to clean water with raising groundwater that easily mises with shallow water wells and collapsed pit latrines, disrupt agricultural activity and daily life generally, making it difficult for people to access, gather and use dry firewood, thereby making it hard for people to cook food. When floods are anticipated, people resort to increased tree felling in an attempt to store up biomass for cooking in such challenging times, contributing heavily to land degradation through increased deforestation. 4. Bushfires: the combination of higher temperatures and prolonged dry spells increases the risk of bushfires. These fires can devastate agricultural lands and natural habitats, further stressing the local ecosystem and livelihoods. 5. Dry spells and droughts: prolonged dry seasons are expected to become more frequent. The longest dry spells are projected to decrease from an average of about 60 days to about 45 days, but with continuing large year-to-year variability, making dry spells more frequent and difficult to predict. Droughts not only affect water availability and agricultural activity but also, they increase the effort and time spent by women and youth gathering water or biomass for cooking, hence reducing their daily productive time and in turn reducing their income potential. 6. Other climate-related disasters: Acholi sub-region Gulu[15]. An increase in the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, and heavy storms is anticipated[16][17]

The impact of climate hazards is particularly severe in these districts, with a disproportionate effect on women and girls. Women in Gulu and the 2 other districts, who are often responsible for agricultural activities and household water management, face increased workloads and health risks due to changing rainfall patterns and more frequent floods. The district's reliance on rain-fed agriculture makes it especially vulnerable to climate variability, with women bearing the brunt of food insecurity and reduced household incomes during crop failures. Climate-related crop failures and reduced yields disproportionately affect women's income, as they often rely on small-scale farming for their livelihoods.

[10] However, it is also important to note that the Acholi sub-region has not been explored extensively in regard to climate modelling and prediction, as noted in the literature review in https://www.globalgiving.org/pfil/48090/projdoc.pdf
[11] Ibid 19
[12] Oriangi, G., Mukwaya, P., Luwa, J., Emmanuel, M., Maxwell, M., & Bamutaze, Y. (2024). Variability and Changes in Climate in Northern Uganda. African Journal of Climate Change and Resource Sustainability, 3(1), 81-97. https://doi.org/10.37284/ajccrs.3.1.1830
[13] Uganda's Third National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, July 2022; https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Final%20TNC%20Uganda.pdf
[14] Ibid, Oriangi, G and all (2024)
[15] Uganda's Third National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, (2022)
[16] Economic Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change in Uganda, Ministry of Water and Environment, Republic of Uganda (2015)
[17] Alex N, Basalirwa CPK, Majaliwa JGM, Mbogga SM, Mwavu EN, et al. (2014) Analysis of Future Climate Scenarios over Central Uganda Cattle Corridor. J Earth Sci Clim Change 5: 237. Doi: 10.4172/2157-7617.1000237

Women and children are more vulnerable to climate-induced health issues, such as waterborne diseases during floods, respiratory illnesses caused by use of dirty cooking fuels such as firewood, or malnutrition during droughts. Women have less access to crucial information about climate risks, and increased time spent on climate-adaptive tasks (e.g. water and biomass collection during droughts) reduces women's opportunities for education, income generation, and community participation. Finally, there are safety concerns, as during extreme weather events like floods, women and girls may face higher risks of gender-based violence in evacuation centres or while travelling longer distances for resources.

1.2 Social-economic Context

Between 1990 and 2010, Uganda had one of Africa's highest GDP growth rates at around 8% average, though economic growth since 2011 has barely surpassed population growth. In 2019, annual GDP growth was 6.8%, slowing to 2.9% in 2020, largely due to the impact of Covid-19 (World Bank, 2022). Uganda's Vision 2040 strategy aims for the country to become a lower middle-income country by 2017 and an upper-middle income one by 2032. As of January 2024, the World Bank categorised Uganda as a Lower Middle-Income Country, i.e. one with a per capita income of USD 1,085 or less. Uganda faces several developmental constraints, including a high population growth rate of 3.3% p.a., post-conflict conditions in the North, soil erosion, and degradation, among others. The increase in the population and upcoming developments, including the continuous growth in the refugee population, trigger pressure on natural resources, which is reflected in deforestation and ecosystems' degradation, such as the degradation of wetlands for rice cultivation, brick manufacturing, food, water, and other construction materials.

Given their central role in agricultural and household duties, women face immense burdens from climate hazards. The increased unpredictability and extremity of weather patterns, such as droughts and floods, significantly strain their responsibilities like gathering water, firewood, and farming. These duties become more time-consuming and physically demanding, stretching their capacity to support their families, and handicapping them from other economic or educational engagements. Furthermore, women's limited access to resources and decision-making platforms curtails their ability to adopt adaptive agricultural techniques or access vital information.

Youth in Uganda encounter direct impacts through disrupted educational opportunities and diminishing job prospects, primarily in agriculture-dependent rural areas. Extreme weather events can damage educational infrastructure and prolong interruptions to schooling. Additionally, climate volatility undermines agricultural reliability, leading to job insecurity and reduced income potential. Health risks escalate for youth from increased exposure to climate-induced diseases and nutritionally insecure conditions, potentially stunting long-term development.

In general, women and youth encounter significant barriers in agroforestry and reforestation, such as limited access to quality tree-planting materials and inadequate training in agroforestry practices, which hinder their ability to effectively engage in sustainable land management. Empowering women and youth through targeted training programs can enhance their understanding of agroforestry benefits, enabling them to establish tree-based enterprises that contribute to both food security and income generation. Furthermore, addressing issues of land tenure insecurity is equally important for the project, as many women lack ownership rights, which discourages their investment in long-term agroforestry projects.

There are other Vulnerable groups within the Acholi sub-region including 4.6 % **elderly populations** (usually defined as those 60+ years). This demographic often faces age-specific health challenges, such as limited mobility, chronic illnesses, and reduced physical resilience, which are further compounded by social isolation and economic insecurity especially in contexts where strong social safety nets are absent. Elderly people are particularly at-risk during climate-induced disasters, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves, which are increasingly common in the Acholi sub-region. Their limited mobility makes it harder for them to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Many elderly individuals rely on traditional cooking methods that produce high levels of smoke and particulate matter. Prolonged exposure to indoor air pollution worsens age-related respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Other vulnerable populations include persons with disabilities (PWDs). Across the districts, the prevalence of disabilities displays significant variation, influenced by environmental, healthcare, genetic, and lifestyle factors. Disabilities within the Acholi region encompass a wide range, including difficulties in seeing, hearing, remembering, and walking, as shown in the table below.

Comprehensive overview of disabilities across several districts (Disability Status report- Uganda - 2019)

Region/District	Seeing	Hearing	Remembering	Walking	Total number of persons with disabilities	Total Population	Prev. (%)
Agago	15,049	11,163	13,872	10,997	51,081	227,792	22.463
Amuru	10,865	7,123	11,430	8,182	37,600	186,696	20.167
Gulu	26,621	15,114	19,330	17,218	78,283	436,345	17.969
Kitgum	14,451	9,001	11,994	10,160	45,606	204,048	22.473
Lamwo	10,275	6,786	11,481	8,541	37,083	134,379	27.681
Nwoya	11,807	7,754	13,843	8,342	41,746	133,506	31.3
Pader	15,046	9,680	14,743	11,006	50,475	178,004	28.4

The table above indicates a significant prevalence of disabilities in the Acholi sub-region, with percentages ranging from 17.97% in Gulu to a 31.3% in Nwoya. This highlights that nearly one in every four to five individuals in these districts is living with some form of disability, underscoring the critical need for inclusive planning and support mechanisms. Districts such as Nwoya (31.3%), Pader (28.4%), and Lamwo (27.681%) have the highest disability prevalence rates. These variations may be attributed to disparities in access to healthcare, socio-economic conditions, and environmental factors. Targeted interventions in these districts are essential to address the disproportionate needs of PWDs.

Disabilities related to seeing, hearing, memory, and mobility are widespread across all districts, with mobility difficulties and memory impairments being particularly prominent. This indicates a need for accessible infrastructure, assistive devices, and healthcare services tailored to these specific challenges. The high prevalence of walking disabilities and cognitive challenges (remembering) directly affects individuals' ability to engage in income-generating activities, participate in education, or access social services. For instance, PWDs with mobility impairments face significant barriers in collecting fuel, traveling to markets, or adopting climate-resilient agricultural practices.

The high prevalence of disabilities in the Acholi sub-region, particularly those related to mobility and memory,presents unique challenges for inclusion in climate resilience initiatives. People with disabilities often face systemic barriers that limit their participation in agricultural livelihoods, environmental conservation, and disaster preparedness. For instance, individuals with mobility impairments may struggle to access communal water sources, participate in tree planting, or land restoration activities, or attend training sessions on climate-resilient agriculture. Memory impairments may further complicate the uptake and consistent application of new practices or technologies. Without inclusive design—such as accessible infrastructure, tailored communication materials, assistive technologies, and dedicated support services—PWDs risk being left behind in adaptation efforts. It is therefore essential that climate resilience strategies in the Acholi sub-region intentionally incorporate the needs and perspectives of PWDs, ensuring their active participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring of sustainable land use, food security, and watershed management interventions.

2. Project Target Area

Following the comments received from the Adaptation Fund through the Ministry of Water and the Environment (MWE) on March 5, 2024, extensive strategic discussions were initiated within the consortium to reassess the project's targeted locations. After careful consideration among the consortium leadership, discussions within the MWE, and consultations with the communities involved, as outlined in the attached letter submitted to the MWE, the proposed project location shifted from Masaka to Gulu and its neighbouring districts (Acholi sub-region). This decision was made to optimise impacts, enhance efficiency, promote sustainability, and improve sequencing, layering, and integration (SLI) with current Mercy Corps projects in the area. Considering the area has a vulnerable community with less adaptive capacity to climate change impacts, it was determined that Gulu and the surrounding districts within the Acholi sub region would better align with the Adaptation Fund objectives as well as meet the needs of the communities involved.

Secondly, implementing the project in Gulu and the greater Acholi areas would enable the consortium to leverage existing climate adaptation initiatives like Mercy Corps' *Powering the Uptake of Climate Change Mitigating Pumps (Pump-Up) project*. The Pump-Up project is designed to strengthen the resilience of farmers in Northern Uganda (Yumbe and Gulu districts), including women, youth, and refugee farming communities to build resilient livelihoods and to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. The promotes resilient livelihoods and support communities in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change by enabling access to scalable solutions. The project also catalyzes viable investments in climate-resilient technologies such as solar water pumps (SWPs) integrated with best practices in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). In fact, ACCESS will be borrowing the same business model implemented by Pump Up which is already effective in the area, where awareness campaigns on climate resilient technologies are also already ongoing.

The project targeted area, the Acholi sub-region is in the Northern Region of Uganda and Gulu is its administrative capital. The region is bordered by South Sudan in the North, Karamoja sub-region in the East, Lango sub-region in the South and West Nile sub-region in the West. It occupies a total land area of about 28,278 sq. km, approximately 11.77% of Uganda.[18] The Acholi sub-region which comprises the 8 districts of Agago*,* Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo*,* Nwoya, Pader and Omworo has for decades been

[18] https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12080537_02.pdf

known both for its climate change vulnerability and the 20 yearlong Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war.[19] This Northern region of Uganda is home to the largest population of people living in poverty (about twice the national level). 90% of the same population were Internally Displaced Persons following the LRA rebel conflict which subsided in 2006 after a ceasefire agreement between the rebels and the government of Uganda.[20]

Specifically, the project will coordinate its activities from Gulu district, which serves as the main administrative and economic hub for the region. Project activities will take place primarily in the whole of Acholi sub region including; Agago, Amuru, Kitgum, Lamwo, Omoro and Nwoya. Mercy Corps' experience of delivering social behaviour change and market systems development projects in the sub-region demonstrates that activities implemented in these three core districts can influence systems change across the region.

Gulu in particular is a high vulnerability district, exposed to among other hazards; floods, prolonged dry spells, crop pests and diseases, heavy storms, animal vectors and diseases and human epidemics.[21] The climate of Gulu and its neighbouring districts is tropical dry in nature and with two main seasons: a wet season and a dry season. The wet season in Gulu occurs from April to October, with the heaviest rainfall usually falling between June and September. Gulu district has experienced a huge reduction of its tree cover since 2010 extending over 50% of its land area. Between 2001 and 2023, Gulu lost 42.4kha[22] of tree cover equating to a 6.8% decrease in tree cover since 2000. Additionally, an average of 603kt per year was released into the atmosphere. In total, 13.3Mt of CO_2e was emitted in this period. By 2023, the Acholi districts of Gulu, Nwoya and Omoro had lost a combined 2.8 thousand hectares of forest cover.[23] Gulu district is generally warm, however, extreme seasonal rainfall and temperature variation continues to be consistently attributed to negative human-environment interactions directly affecting rural livelihoods of smallholder farmers since they lose their abilities to plan for the season resulting in poor crop productivity and exposing households to risk of food insecurity and starvation. Agriculture is the backbone of the regional economy. The major source of household incomes is sale of crops. More than 80% of the population is estimated to engage in subsistence agriculture. The monthly household income in Acholi sub region is 105,000 UGX (vs national average 190,000 UGX), 77.9% of the population cooks with firewood, and 17.6% of households use charcoal.

Gulu district, with whom consultations have been held in the month of April 2024, has laid out a vision to become a district offering a high quality of life and sustainable holistic development, with natural resource management being one of the key service areas.[24]

3. Problem the proposed project is aiming to solve

3.1 Current situation and gaps

[19] Gulu District Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Profile

[20] Ibid 33

[21] Gulu District Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Profile', Ministry for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Republic of Uganda.

[22] https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/UGA/8/?category=forest-change&location=WyJjb3VudHJ5IiwiVUdBIiwiOCJd

[23] Charcoal burning devastates landscapes in northern Uganda | Monitor

[24] Gulu District local government charter

Uganda has been gradually improving its readiness and taking actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. As part of its adaptation planning processes, Uganda formulated a National Adaptation Plan for the Agriculture Sector (NAP Ag) in 2018 and in 2020, These frameworks emphasize critical adaptation strategies such as promoting afforestation and reforestation, advancing agroforestry to enhance nutrient cycling and integrated pest management, and encouraging sustainable forest management to strengthen ecosystem resilience.

These efforts demonstrate Uganda's progress towards medium-to-long-term planning for adaptation. However, Uganda's adaptation efforts face several challenges, including inadequate local-level climate adaptation financing, limited individual and institutional capacity, and limited access to international climate finance and support for technology and capacity-building. These gaps hinder Uganda's ability to implement integrated climate solutions that respond to both environmental degradation and community vulnerability, especially in fragile ecosystems like those in the Acholi sub-region. Land Use and Deforestation Pressures in Acholi.

Deforestation remains a major threat in the Acholi sub-region. Between 2001 and 2020, the region lost over 37,744 hectares of tree cover, with key drivers including land clearance for agriculture, charcoal production, and unregulated tree harvesting. These practices are deeply embedded in the local economy and culture and continue to erode ecosystem services critical for climate resilience.

In October and November 2024, extensive consultations, focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted with community members, civil society organisations, and local authorities (ESIA pp21-26). This process revealed a widespread perception of environmental degradation in the Acholi sub-region, particularly linked to deforestation and unsustainable land use. Despite the well-documented ecological and economic benefits of agroforestry—including soil fertility restoration, erosion control, and diversified livelihoods—the adoption of such practices remains low. Community members consistently cited low awareness and limited technical knowledge about agroforestry and its benefits as major constraints.

In particular, participants pointed out a relatively low adoption rates in agroforestry, as perceived by them, and experienced by NGOs and CSOs working in Acholi. Indeed, despite the recognized benefits of agroforestry, adoption rates remain low due to various factors, including lack of awareness, insufficient training, and limited access to resources. Many farmers are hesitant to shift from traditional practices to agroforestry due to perceived risks and uncertainties about yields. During consultations with community members, it was noted that many farmers feel uncertain about switching to agroforestry because they fear it may not yield enough food for their families, highlighting the need for targeted education, capacity building and demonstration projects.

Aligned with this, cultural resistance was also a factor. Traditional agricultural practices, such as bush burning, non-selective tree felling or making charcoal are deeply rooted in local culture. Changing these practices requires not only sensitisation but also community engagement to demonstrate the long-term benefits of agroforestry. Feedback from focus groups indicated that they have always farmed this way; so it's hard to change. This underscores the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to promote agroforestry.

Underlying the low adoption rates and cultural resistance were economic constraints. Farmers in the Acholi sub-region often face economic barriers that prevent them from investing in agroforestry systems. Community members underlined that they need to prioritise immediate economic benefits over

environmental efforts and conservation. The initial costs for planting trees and integrating them into existing agricultural systems can be prohibitive without financial support or incentives. Community discussions revealed that the cost of seedlings and tools is too high for them, indicating a significant barrier to entry for many potential adopters.

Barriers to effective reforestation were discussed and included land tenure issues. Unclear land user rights can deter communities from investing in reforestation efforts. Without secure land tenure, farmers may be reluctant to plant trees that take years to mature. Community members expressed concerns during consultations, stating that if we don't own the land, why should they invest in planting trees?

Added to that, the farmers face resource limitations, as effective reforestation requires access to quality seedlings, water for irrigation, and knowledge about suitable tree species for local conditions. Many communities lack these resources. Participants highlighted that they need better access to seedlings and training on which trees grow best here," pointing out specific gaps in support. Climate change impacts and climate variability pose significant challenges for successful reforestation efforts.

In addition, climate variability is increasingly affecting reforestation success. Changing rainfall patterns, prolonged dry spells, and rising temperatures were cited as major challenges during community discussions. Participants emphasized the need for access to drought-resistant tree species and better training to ensure survival rates and long-term reforestation success. Mercy Corps' GESI assessment in April 2024 (and updated in July 2024), revealed deep inequalities in the ability of different groups to engage in climate adaptation activities, especially in relation to agroforestry and forest resource management.

Women in the Acholi sub-region, despite being primary agricultural labourers, face significant barriers in accessing land, training, and inputs. Gendered land ownership patterns and entrenched cultural norms limit their decision-making power and reduce their ability to invest in long-term land use strategies such as tree planting or soil rehabilitation. Additionally, while women possess detailed knowledge about local ecosystems and forest products, they are often excluded from formal planning processes and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Youth face similar marginalization, often lacking access to land, finance, and extension services, despite their potential role as agents of change in sustainable land management.

Without targeted interventions to overcome these structural barriers, national reforestation and agroforestry strategies will continue to exclude the most climate-vulnerable populations, reinforcing existing inequalities and undermining the long-term sustainability of restoration efforts.

3. 2 Desired change:

The ACCESS (Agroforestry, Community, and Climate-resilient Ecosystem Sustainability Solutions) project is a community-driven, ecosystem-based adaptation initiative designed to enhance climate resilience in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda. Developed in close collaboration with local authorities, civil society organisations, and community members, the project aims to restore degraded landscapes and improve the adaptive capacity of communities through nature-based solutions such as reforestation, agroforestry, and Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). These interventions will increase tree cover, restore soil fertility, improve water retention, and strengthen biodiversity—all of which are essential to supporting climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods.

By building local capacity for sustainable land and ecosystem management, ACCESS will promote long-term shifts in land use practices while addressing the root causes of land degradation and vulnerability to climate change. The project places a strong emphasis on inclusive community engagement and knowledge transfer, ensuring that both women and youth are actively involved in designing and implementing solutions. Through training, demonstration plots, and targeted support, the project will encourage the adoption of agroforestry systems and sustainable land use models that are culturally sensitive, economically viable, and environmentally regenerative.

ACCESS is expected to generate a range of positive outcomes, including enhanced food security, improved soil and water systems, diversified income sources, and stronger local governance around natural resource use. These improvements will collectively reduce vulnerability to climate shocks and stresses, particularly in Gulu, and the whole of Acholi sub region. By creating enabling conditions for agroforestry and ecosystem restoration, the project aims to support sustainable, community-led adaptation pathways that improve overall well-being and resilience for present and future generations in the Acholi sub-region.

Project / Programme Objectives:

The proposed project seeks to enhance the climate resilience of smallholder farmers in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda through the adoption of ecosystem-based adaptation measures that address water scarcity, reduce vulnerability to flooding and drought, and strengthen the resilience of agricultural livelihoods. The project promotes integrated watershed management and sustainable land use practices that improve soil stability, restore ecosystems, and enhance watershed function. It will also strengthen inclusive, gender-responsive governance systems to enable smallholder farmers to access timely climate information, financial resources, and technical assistance for planning and implementing adaptation actions at scale. These efforts will be supported by robust project management systems, continuous learning and adaptation, and evidence-based policy engagement aligned with Uganda's national adaptation priorities (NAP, NDC). ACCESS' **Theory of Change** (ToC) states that:

IF communities in the Acholi sub-region actively engage in ecosystem-based adaptation approaches, including Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry and water conservation, with a focus on economically valuable trees, and IF participatory land use planning and sustainable land management practices are implemented, supported by inclusive community structures and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and IF market systems for tree products and ecosystem services are developed, enhancing economic opportunities for local communities, IF local governance platforms are strengthened to coordinate catchment-level water and land resource management informed by real-time climate data and early warning systems, and IF project learnings and best practices are gathered, applied, and disseminated to influence wider stakeholders and policy-making, THEN communities in the Acholi sub-region will experience increased climate resilience, improved ecosystem services, enhanced livelihoods, and reduced deforestation, leading to overall improved living conditions and sustainable adaptation to climate change.

The ToC is broken down as it follows:

Goal*:* To enhance the climate resilience of smallholder farmers in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda by promoting integrated watershed management, addressing water scarcity, and improving food security

through sustainable land use practices, ecosystem restoration, and access to climate-resilient technologies. This will be supported by strengthened local planning and governance systems that empower communities to implement adaptive strategies at the landscape level.

Project ComponentsSO1: Reduction in exposure and sensitivity to water scarcity, flooding, and drought for smallholder farmers through the implementation of ecosystem-based-adaptation.

SO2: Local and regional institutions enable smallholder farmers to access climate information, financial resources, and technical support for planning and implementing wide-scale, ecosystem-based restoration and adaptation actions. These efforts are guided by climate risk-informed, gender-responsive governance frameworks that foster inclusive, market-oriented, and scalable adaptation across landscapes, while aligning with national priorities (NAP, NDC).

SO3: Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy Engagement. The project's proposed duration is 36 months, running from 1 January 2026 until 29th of February 2028.

Project / Programme Components and Financing:

Project/Programme Components	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Countries	Amount (US$)
Component 1 - Reduction in exposure and sensitivity to water scarcity, flooding, and increased drought for smallholder farmers through the implementation of ecosystem-based-adaptation.	**Outcome 1** Smallholder farmers adopt and benefit from ecosystem-based adaptation measures focused on water conservation, enhance soil stability, create buffers for flash floods, and improve watershed function, resulting in reduced vulnerability to water scarcity, flooding, and prolonged drought, and strengthened resilience of	**Output 1.1** Enhanced community implementation and benefits from Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and integrated water conservation practices, including on-farm rainwater harvesting, soil moisture retention, and small-scale watershed restoration, to	Uganda	2,512,847

	agricultural livelihoods.	strengthen climate resilience and sustainable water **use.** **Output 1.2:** Local governance systems and community planning platforms are strengthened to coordinate and sustain ecosystem-based adaptation, integrating solar irrigation and other water-use technologies with water conservation, equitable access, and catchment-level resource management in water-stressed areas.		
Component/Specific objective 2: Local and regional institutions enable smallholder farmers to access climate information, financial resources, and technical support for planning and implementing wide-scale, ecosystem-based restoration and adaptation actions. These efforts are guided by climate risk-informed, gender-responsive governance frameworks that foster	**Outcome 2:** Smallholder farmers are equipped with climate information, financial tools, and technical assistance through inclusive, gender-responsive governance systems that enable scalable, market-driven climate resilience	**Output 2.1**: Local institutions deliver climate-smart extension services, tailored technical support, and inclusive access to timely climate information, enabling the widespread adoption of ecosystem-		1,590,988

inclusive, market-oriented, and scalable adaptation across landscapes, while aligning with national priorities (NAP, NDC).	aligned with national priorities.	based water and land adaptation practices. **Output 2.2**: Market systems are strengthened to ensure the availability and affordability of climate-resilient agricultural inputs and water-saving technologies that boost smallholder productivity and sustainable resource use.		
Component 3 - Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy Engagement	**Outcome 3**: Promote evidence-based policy engagement through strengthened learning, knowledge management, and dissemination framework	**Output 3.1** Relevant knowledge products prepared and disseminated to key Stakeholders to inform practice, influence policy, and attract investment.	Uganda	106,211
6. Project/Programme Execution cost				399,953
7.Total Project/Programme Cost				4,610,000
8. Project/Programme Cycle Management Fee charged by the Implementing Entity				390,000
Amount of Financing Requested				5,000,000

Executive Entity Projected Calendar:

Milestones	Expected Dates
Project Start Date	**1st January 2026**
Semi-Annual Report 1 (Narrative and Financial) - 1st January 2026 – 30th July 2026	30th September 2026

Annual Report 1 2026- (Narrative and Financial) - 1st January2026 – 31st December 2026	28th February2026
Semi-Annual Report 2 (Narrative and Financial) - 1st January 2027 – 30th July 2027	30th September 2027
Annual Report 2 2026-2027 (Narrative and Financial) - 1st January 2027 – 31st ***December*** 2027	29th February 2027
Semi-Annual Report 3 (Narrative and Financial) - 1st January 2028 – 30th July 2028	30th September 2028
Project End Date	**31st December 2028**
Final Project Completion Report (Narrative and Financial) - 1st January 2029 – 28th February 2029	30th April 2028

PART II: PROJECT / PROGRAMME JUSTIFICATION

A. PROJECT/ PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

ACCESS is a Large Innovation Project (as per screening process classification) that aims to enhance climate resilience to hazards which affect smallholder farmers in the Acholi sub-region. The project will focus its efforts within water-stressed and hazard-prone landscapes through an integrated approach combining agroforestry, community empowerment, and ecosystem-based adaptation. The project applies sustainable land management, integrated watershed management, and market systems development (MSD) to promote inclusive, scalable, and climate-resilient technologies and practices.

ACCESS will be implemented across eight districts in the Acholi sub-region: Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya, Pader, and Omoro.

The project is structured around three components: (1) Reduction in exposure and sensitivity to water scarcity, flooding, and increased drought for smallholder farmers through the implementation of ecosystem-based-adaptation. (2) Local and regional institutions enable smallholder farmers to access climate information, financial resources, and technical support for planning and implementing wide-scale, ecosystem-based restoration and adaptation actions. These efforts are guided by climate risk-informed, gender-responsive governance frameworks that foster inclusive, market-oriented, and scalable adaptation across landscapes, while aligning with national priorities (NAP, NDC). (3) Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy Engagement

In Outcome 1, the ACCESS project aims to restore 6,800 hectares of degraded landscapes across the Acholi sub-region, including Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya, Pader, and Omoro, through an integrated ecosystem services approach. This will reduce smallholder farmers' vulnerability to water scarcity, flooding, and prolonged drought, while strengthening the resilience of agricultural livelihoods. To achieve this, ACCESS will enhance community capacity to adopt and benefit from Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and integrated water conservation practices. This includes conducting comprehensive baseline and ecosystem service assessments, establishing community-led tree nurseries, and training farmers on FMNR and value-added agroforestry systems. Market assessments for tree-based products will inform value chain development and linkages between farmers and buyers.

Sustainable land restoration will be supported through the revival or establishment of inclusive community land and water management committees, training in conflict resolution, and participatory land-use and water mapping to guide equitable, climate-resilient planning. The project will promote the adoption of soil moisture retention techniques, rainwater harvesting, and the integration of small-scale watershed interventions to enhance on-farm water availability. ACCESS will apply gender-sensitive approaches, ensuring women, youth, and vulnerable groups are meaningfully engaged in decision-making and benefit-sharing. Community bylaws and benefit-sharing mechanisms will be co-developed to strengthen collective ownership and accountability. To sustain progress, the project will also introduce financing schemes for climate-smart livelihoods, and support advocacy for inclusive and sustainable land and water governance at local and district levels.

Under Outcome 2, ACCESS will strengthen the adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers and local institutions by enhancing access to climate information, technical support, and financial tools needed for effective climate risk management. The project will establish compact weather stations and localized Climate Information Hubs powered by AI to generate real-time, location-specific forecasts and seasonal advisories in local languages. These services will enable timely, informed decision-making for farmers, extension agents, and local authorities, particularly during periods of drought, floods, or shifting growing seasons.

ACCESS will also build the capacity of local extension agents, with a focus on women and youth, to deliver climate-smart agricultural practices, water-use efficiency strategies, and early warning dissemination. Demonstration sites will showcase sustainable land and water management techniques, fostering farmer-to-farmer learning and behaviour change. Through seasonal climate planning forums, the project will bring together local leaders, extension workers, and farmer groups to co-design anticipatory actions and align resource distribution with seasonal risks.

To ensure farmers have the tools to act on climate information, ACCESS will strengthen market systems for resilient inputs. This includes supporting agro-dealers and suppliers to stock and distribute drought-tolerant seeds, solar-powered irrigation kits, and water harvesting tools through flexible payment models. A token-based incentive system, triggered by climate alerts, will enable vulnerable households to access these inputs affordably. By integrating inclusive planning, market access, and tailored services, Outcome 2 will build a foundation for scalable, market-driven climate resilience aligned with Uganda's NAP and NDC priorities.

Outcome 3 focuses on enabling continuous learning, adaptive management, and policy engagement to strengthen the effectiveness and scalability of the ACCESS project. A centralized knowledge and project management system will be established to coordinate implementation across partners, track progress, and generate real-time insights. This system will guide evidence-based decision-making and ensure flexibility in responding to emerging climate risks, while fostering collaboration and accountability.

To inform strategic engagement, the project will conduct a policy and institutional landscape analysis across the Acholi sub-region. This will identify key barriers and opportunities for scaling ecosystem-based adaptation and inclusive governance models. Findings will shape targeted advocacy efforts aimed at aligning local adaptation planning with national frameworks such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

ACCESS will also prioritize the development and dissemination of diverse knowledge products, including policy briefs, technical reports, practice notes, and case studies, to document and share lessons learned.

Through multi-stakeholder learning events and policy dialogues at national and regional levels, the project will contribute to stronger institutional coordination, influence climate adaptation agendas, and showcase the value of community-led, gender-responsive, and market-based resilience strategies.

Youths: The Acholi region is characterised by high unemployment rates among youth, who face limited educational and employment opportunities, a lack of vocational skills, and restricted access to quality education. Through the ACCESS project, youths will be integrated into the EBA agroforestry value chain, providing them with job opportunities in commercialising climate-resilient technologies, such as the, installation, sales, distribution, and maintenance of SWPs. Additional training in modern agricultural techniques and business management will equip them to capitalize on market opportunities within the agroforestry sector, fostering entrepreneurship and employment while contributing to sustainable environmental management. The youths will be involved in agroforestry projects that will train them in modern farming techniques and business skills, enabling them to earn a livelihood while contributing to environmental conservation.

Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs); The ACCESS interventions will also focus on the elderly and PWDs, who are among the most marginalised in the community and often dependent on others for their basic needs. The project will prioritise providing these groups with incentives to acquire easy to use climate-resilient technology. This initiative aims to reduce their dependence on others, improve their health status, and enhance their overall quality of life and resilience capacity.

Component 1: Reduction in exposure and sensitivity to water scarcity, flooding and increased drought for smallholder farmers through the implementation of ecosystem-based-adaptation.

Outcome 1: Smallholder farmers adopt and benefit from ecosystem-based adaptation measures focused on water conservation, enhance soil stability, create buffers for flash floods, and improve watershed function, resulting in reduced vulnerability to water scarcity, flooding, and prolonged drought, and strengthened resilience of agricultural livelihoods.

The principal objective of this intervention is to increase climate resilience and sustainable ecosystem services management through Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry and sustainable land and watershed restoration. Mercy Corps, in collaboration with a local partner to be identified during the project's inception phase, will employ a Market System Development (MSD) approach to develop agroforestry systems with economically valuable trees that will foster demand-activation. This strategy aims to boost the local economy by linking farmers directly with markets for tree products, providing comprehensive training on sustainable agricultural practices and market navigation. Additionally, it will foster environmental sustainability and enhance the region's resilience to climate change by improving green coverage and promoting biodiversity. Ultimately, the project seeks to create a symbiosis between economic development and environmental stewardship, ensuring long-term sustainability and prosperity for the communities involved.

Output 1.1 Enhanced community implementation and benefits from Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and integrated water conservation practices, including on-farm rainwater harvesting, soil moisture retention, and small-scale watershed restoration, to strengthen climate resilience and sustainable water use.

Output 1.1 aims to enhance the community's ability to implement and benefit from Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and watershed conservation leading to strengthened climate resilience through improved environmental sustainability and livelihoods. By empowering local farmers with the knowledge and tools to manage natural resources effectively, the project fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards land restoration and sustainable practices. This approach not only revitalizes degraded landscapes but also creates economic opportunities through the cultivation and marketing of valuable tree products. The comprehensive capacity-building efforts and tools provided ensure that communities are well-equipped to sustain these practices independently, thereby increasing their resilience to climate change and contributing to long-term ecological and economic stability.

Activity 1.1.1 Conduct an ecosystem service valuation with a focus on water (through Mercy Corps participatory approach), looking at future climate scenarios.

To understand the key ecosystem services, particularly for smallholder farmers, we will conduct a participatory approach to Ecosystem Service Valuation (ESV). This will involve using groundtruthed data from smallholder farmers and community members on environmental conditions, combined with Earth Observation, Remote Sensing, ecosystem model data such as InVEST and base outputs on future climate scenarios. This will create an understanding of key ecosystem services, their market and non-market values and their risks based on future climate projections. Such outputs will help plan subsequent ecosystem-based adaptation activities whilst serving as a support to making economic cases for investments in this area.

Activity 1.1.2: Participatory mapping and validation of community, local and national government processes within watersheds (local governance and national policy), (including linkages between National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), NDCs monitoring frameworks and how these devolve actions and implementation).

This activity will lead 12 structured, participatory consultations with national, district, and community-level institutions to map governance responsibilities for watershed and land management. Through these multi-stakeholder engagements (300 local stakeholders involved), we will document existing institutional mandates, coordination gaps, and current implementation status of adaptation measures under National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The process will validate roles and responsibilities across governance levels, enabling the development of coordination tools and frameworks (an institutional arrangement including roles and responsibilities especially in terms of how decisions are made and who is consulted; guidelines including checklist on aligning local land use practices with national adaptation goals and community action plans) to enhance integrated water and land resource management in climate-vulnerable catchments.

Activity 1.1.3. Participatory water mapping and planning for seasonal water availability. With technical support, communities will conduct four participatory sessions per year to generate localized water resource data, identify recharge zones, pinpoint irrigation needs, and highlight priority areas for water conservation and management.

Through these sessions, at least 300 local stakeholders (disaggregated by sex and age) will be engaged in inclusive water planning processes. The outputs will inform integrated land and water-use plans tailored to seasonal variability and local watershed characteristics. Mercy Corps will consult with the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) to identify the most suitable tree species for the Acholi sub-region, considering factors like climate, soil conditions, and market potential. Mercy Corps will employ best agroforestry practices tailored to the local context, including FMNR techniques. Utilising ICRAF's research and knowledge base, the baseline assessment of existing tree covers, and soil conditions will be informed. Additionally, research from the National Forestry Resources Research Institute (NaFORRI) and other research organisations such as Makerere University's Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation and the Uganda Agroforestry Development Network (UGADEN) will also be included. This foundational activity will provide data to guide effective land restoration and agroforestry initiatives, ensuring they are tailored to the local context and have the best chance of success in both environmental and economic terms.

Activity 1.1.4: Implement farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) programmes focusing on reforestation or riparian buffer restoration upstream to slow runoff and increase infiltration. - with capacity building, knowledge sharing and Technical Assistance (TA) for implementation. This activity will support the rollout of FMNR practices to restore degraded landscapes, focusing on reforestation and the regeneration of riparian buffer zones to reduce surface runoff, enhance soil infiltration, and increase water retention across priority micro-watersheds. 12 training and knowledge-sharing sessions will be conducted with local institutions to strengthen technical understanding of FMNR and agroforestry practices. These trainings will benefit 200 individuals and will focus on value addition and processing techniques to increase the profitability of tree products and create alternative income sources for participating households Community groups will receive tailored TA to implement restoration plans and integrate FMNR into broader land-use and catchment management strategies. To ensure sustainability and economic incentives, the activity will facilitate 18 market linkages between farmers and buyers of agroforestry and water conservation products (e.g., tree seedlings, fodder, fuelwood, fruits).

Activity 1.1.5 Develop agroforestry systems with economically valuable trees
This activity involves implementing FMNR programs through comprehensive training sessions led by the LNGO to the 60 community-based agents that will then train the 167 farmer groups, targeting a total of 5,000 farmers, 60% of which are women. These sessions will be led by the community-based extension agents supported by the LNGO, and will cover essential FMNR techniques, including the identification and protection of naturally occurring tree seedlings and stumps, as well as sustainable land management practices. To reinforce learning and demonstrate the benefits of FMNR, 55 demonstration plots will be established, with one plot for every three groups. These plots will showcase FMNR practices in action, allowing beneficiaries to observe and engage in practical applications of the techniques they have learned. Additionally, ACCESS will provide necessary tools and equipment to support FMNR implementation. Each group will receive a kit containing hoes, rakes, shovels, and machetes, ensuring that community members have the resources needed to carry out FMNR effectively.

Activity 1.1.6 Revival or establishment of inclusive community land management and water resource management committees, within community bylaws and enforcement mechanisms

This activity involves reviving or establishing 36 inclusive community committees focused on land and water resource management at the local level. These committees will be established or reactivated within the framework of existing community bylaws, with clear enforcement mechanisms to ensure accountability, equitable decision-making, and adherence to land and water management practices. A total of 540 committee members will be trained on key themes such as conflict-sensitive land restoration, climate-smart resource use, and participatory governance approaches. The training will also build capacity to address competing land-use interests and strengthen local enforcement of conservation measures.

In parallel, 18 Natural Resource Officers (NROs) will be trained on sustainable land and watershed governance to reinforce local-to-district coordination and provide technical backstopping to community committees. This activity will lay the foundation for stronger, more inclusive institutions capable of sustaining ecosystem-based adaptation efforts and improving resilience to water-related climate risks

Output 1.2 Local governance systems and community planning platforms are strengthened to coordinate and sustain ecosystem-based adaptation, integrating solar irrigation and other water-use technologies with water conservation, equitable access, and catchment-level resource management in water-stressed areas.

This output promotes the institutional and participatory foundations required for sustainable water governance. It strengthens local water governance structures and supports integration of solar irrigation and other water-saving innovations into broader ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) planning. Activities will ensure equitable representation, data-informed planning, and alignment with catchment-level priorities, enhancing water security and adaptive capacity in vulnerable farming communities.

Activity 1.2.1 Establishment or strengthening of local water governance committees with participation from solar irrigation users and vulnerable groups

This activity will support the formation or revitalization of inclusive local water governance committees to manage shared resources, resolve conflicts, and guide sustainable abstraction. Committees will be gender-responsive and include solar irrigation users, pastoralists, and marginalized groups, ensuring broad representation and community legitimacy. A total of 36 facilitated committee meetings will be held to define governance roles, water allocation rules, and community by-laws, ensuring that decision-making structures are clear and transparent. The committees will be inclusive, with at least 50% of members representing women, youth, and other vulnerable groups, to reflect diverse community needs and promote equitable participation. Thirty technical sessions will be conducted with solar irrigation users and smallholder farmers to improve understanding of water conservation techniques and responsible water use. In addition, 20 capacity-building sessions will be provided to committee members on sustainable water management practices and inclusive decision-making, strengthening their ability to resolve disputes, manage water allocations, and maintain solar irrigation infrastructure.

Activity 1.2.2. Integration of solar irrigation systems and natural rainwater harvest systems rainwater harvesting and other on-farm water conservation practices into broader catchment management plans and EbA interventions.

This activity promotes the harmonization of on-farm water-saving technologies with upstream and downstream water management strategies. It ensures solar irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and other conservation techniques are embedded in catchment-level EbA plans, maximizing synergies between productivity and resource sustainability. Three catchment management plans will be reviewed or updated to incorporate solar irrigation and water harvesting interventions. Four sets of technical guidelines or planning tools will be developed to support the integration of these water-saving practices into EbA frameworks, ensuring alignment with watershed hydrology, climate projections, and land use priorities.

To foster cross-sector collaboration, two multi-stakeholder coordination meetings or workshops will be held each year, bringing together actors from the agriculture, environment, and water sectors. These engagements will strengthen institutional linkages and promote unified, climate-resilient water management strategies at the catchment level

Activity 1.2.3. Establishment of water use efficiency such as use schedules based on seasonal or weather data, sustainable abstraction. management practices.

This activity will support the development and implementation of site-specific water use schedules designed to optimize irrigation efficiency and prevent over-abstraction, particularly in climate-vulnerable catchments. Local communities, governance committees, and technical partners will co-develop at least two water use schedules per site per year, guided by real-time weather forecasts, seasonal rainfall projections, and hydro-climatic data. These schedules will define appropriate timing, frequency, and volume of water extraction for agricultural use, helping to align water demand with ecosystem recharge capacity.

Activity 1.2.4 Facilitate community-based water and land-use planning that incorporates irrigation expansion, recharge zones, and flood buffers

Working with local communities, technical experts, and relevant authorities, four community land-use maps will be developed or updated to integrate sustainable irrigation zones, natural water retention areas, and protective buffer strips along flood-prone areas. Community planning workshops will combine indigenous knowledge with hydrological assessments to ensure that proposed land-use strategies reflect both local realities and climate resilience needs. As a result, four formalized community planning documents or agreements will be produced, embedding these priorities into governance frameworks and guiding future land and water investments

Activity 1.2.5 Capacity building for local institutions to track water usage, recharge, and ecological indicators (e.g., vegetation cover, soil moisture)

This activity strengthens the ability of community institutions and local governments to monitor critical water and ecosystem indicators. Through targeted training sessions, 100 local stakeholders will be equipped to track variables such as water usage, groundwater recharge, vegetation cover, and soil moisture—providing the foundation for evidence-based, adaptive resource management. To ensure sustainability and local ownership, two practical guidance tools will be developed to support ongoing

learning and institutionalize monitoring practices. These tools will include simple, locally appropriate methodologies for data collection, interpretation, and use in community decision-making processes

Activity 1.2.6. Catchment-level water planning workshops that include communities using solar irrigation and those upstream/downstream.

This activity will facilitate six multi-stakeholder workshops at the catchment level to improve coordination and inclusive planning around shared water resources. The workshops will engage at least 200 participants from upstream, midstream, and downstream communities (disaggregated by sex and age) to identify water use priorities, align management approaches, and reduce tensions between water users. Special attention will be given to the participation of solar irrigation user groups, with at least 15 such groups directly involved in the planning processes. Discussions will focus on equitable access, seasonal allocation, sustainable abstraction, and joint strategies for maintaining ecosystem services.

Component 2: Local and regional institutions enable smallholder farmers to access climate information, financial resources, and technical support for planning and implementing wide-scale, ecosystem-based restoration and adaptation actions. These efforts are guided by climate risk-informed, gender-responsive governance frameworks that foster inclusive, market-oriented, and scalable adaptation across landscapes, while aligning with national priorities (NAP, NDC).

Outcome 2: Smallholder farmers are equipped with climate information, financial tools, and technical assistance through inclusive, gender-responsive governance systems that enable scalable, market-driven climate resilience aligned with national priorities. This component catalyzes transformative climate resilience across all eight districts of Uganda's Acholi sub-region—Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader, Agago, Amuru, Nwoya, and Omoro. It equips smallholder farmers—especially women, youth, and vulnerable groups—with the climate information, financial resources, and technical assistance needed to adapt effectively under changing climatic conditions. The approach is grounded in innovative, gender-responsive, scalable, and evidence-driven principles, ensuring sustainable impact aligned with Uganda's NAP and NDC frameworks.

Output 2.1: Local institutions deliver climate-smart extension services, tailored technical support, and inclusive access to timely climate information, enabling the widespread adoption of ecosystem-based water and land adaptation practices.

This output focuses on building the capacity of local institutions to deliver climate-smart extension services, timely technical assistance, and inclusive access to locally relevant climate information. The aim is to equip smallholder farmers, particularly women, youth, and other vulnerable groups, with the knowledge and tools to adopt ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) practices that improve land and water management under changing climatic conditions.

By strengthening the extension system, improving early warning and advisory services, and enhancing multi-stakeholder coordination at district and sub-county levels, this output promotes responsive and community-driven adaptation planning. It will also foster regional learning and systems alignment by building synergies with ongoing initiatives in neighbouring Karamoja, creating a broader ecosystem for anticipatory action and climate-informed decision-making.

This output directly supports Uganda's climate resilience agenda by embedding inclusive, gender-responsive, and locally anchored services into formal and informal governance structures, ensuring sustainability and scale.

Activity 2.1.1: Set up compact weather stations in strategic community locations to collect real-time weather and climate data, define local drought thresholds, and trigger early action protocols including token-based access to adaptation resources.

This activity will install and operationalize community-level weather stations capable of generating real-time agroclimatic data. Data will inform drought thresholds and local triggers for anticipatory actions, such as the release of adaptation inputs (e.g., drought-tolerant seeds, water containers) using token-based distribution systems. It will strengthen early warning and enable proactive, equitable responses to climate stressors in agriculture.

To address the growing unpredictability of rainfall and drought in Acholi, evident in erratic seasons and flash floods, six compact weather stations will be strategically installed, one per two districts. These stations will gather real-time climate data, enabling the co-definition of drought thresholds with local leaders and smallholder farmers. The stations will directly trigger early action mechanisms, such as token-based distribution of drought-tolerant seeds, water containers, and emergency advisory outreach, benefiting approximately 2,000 farming households. This system marks a shift from reactive disaster response to proactive anticipatory adaptation.

Activity 2.1.2: Establish localised Climate Information Hubs within sub-counties using AI-powered forecasting and seasonal advisory bulletins in local languages.

This activity will develop accessible Climate Information Hubs at sub-county level to disseminate climate forecasts and advisories in formats appropriate for local communities, including AI-enhanced, location-specific bulletins in local languages.

Four sub-county-level Climate Information Hubs will translate global and national climate data into actionable, local guidance. Featuring AI-enhanced forecasting and seasonal bulletins in Acholi and other local dialects, these hubs will operate in the region's key agro-ecological zones, considering soil types, rainfall variability, and land-use patterns. Gender and youth-focused channels, radio dialogues, SMS alerts, and community forums, will ensure women and younger farmers receive timely planting, pest, and water management advisories tailored to their needs.

Activity 2.1.3: Train local extension agents (especially women and youth) in delivering integrated climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices and early warning messaging.

The activity builds local extension capacity by training agents, prioritizing the inclusion of women and youth, to promote ecosystem-based climate-smart agricultural practices. Agents will be equipped with tools and knowledge to interpret and relay early warning messages, conduct on-farm coaching, and promote the adoption of integrated land and water conservation methods aligned with climate forecasts.

A total of 60 community-based extension agents, at least 50% of whom will be women or youth, will be trained in ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) practices, climate-smart agriculture principles, and risk communication. This training emphasizes empowering female extension workers to overcome land

ownership biases, enabling more equitable reach. Agents will conduct on-farm coaching, facilitate farmer field schools, and align cropping calendars with seasonal forecasts to reduce gender disparities in advisory uptake.

Activity 2.1.4: Establish community-based demonstration sites showcasing water conservation techniques and sustainable land management practices

Demonstration sites will be established in representative agro-ecological zones to display scalable, low-cost EbA technologies, such as soil moisture retention pits, agroforestry, mulching, and rainwater harvesting. These sites will function as living labs for peer learning, community mobilization, and farmer-to-farmer extension, enabling practical exposure to proven adaptation methods.

Eight demonstration plots, one in each district, will showcase practices like soil-moisture pits, agroforestry, rainwater harvesting, mulching, and conservation tillage. These “living laboratories” will host seasonal field days, engaging over 15,000 farmers across Acholi in hands-on learning, peer-to-peer exchange, and market linkages for EbA benefits. Demonstration sites will encourage participatory innovation, with farmers tailoring adaptations to their land tenure and agro-ecological specifics.

Activity 2.1.5: Coordinate multi-stakeholder platforms involving local government, NGOs, and private sector to support inclusive adaptation planning and resource mobilisation.

This activity will establish or strengthen multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms at the sub-county and district levels to harmonize adaptation planning, align with national climate strategies (NAPs/NDCs), and catalyse financial and technical support. These platforms will promote private sector engagement in resilience investments and ensure gender-equitable participation in adaptation governance.

Four multi-stakeholder platforms will be established or strengthened to drive inclusive, coordinated adaptation governance. These platforms bring together traditional leaders, government, private sector actors, women’s groups, and youth councils to co-develop local adaptation plans aligned with national priorities. This process ensures gender-responsive and inclusive decision-making while catalyzing resource mobilization from diverse actors, fostering a scalable and strategic adaptation governance model that can be replicated beyond Acholi.

Activity 2.1.6: Organise seasonal climate planning forums that bring together local leaders, extension workers, and farmer group representatives to co-develop anticipatory actions and coordinate the timing of input distribution, training, and early warning dissemination.

Seasonal planning forums will be convened prior to key agricultural seasons, using forecast information to align adaptation support with climate risks and cropping calendars. These forums will enhance coordination across actors and ensure that climate services, input distribution, and training activities are timely, inclusive, and responsive to community-identified priorities.

Seasonal forums held four times per year will facilitate collaborative anticipatory planning, aligning inputs, training, and early warning dissemination with climate forecasts. These forums empower local leaders, extension agents, and farmers—especially women and youth—to synchronize actions and resources, enhancing timely and equitable delivery of adaptation support. This reflects the project’s evidence-driven approach, leveraging local climate data and community knowledge for responsive planning.

Output 2.2: Market systems are strengthened to ensure the availability and affordability of climate-resilient agricultural inputs and water-saving technologies that boost smallholder productivity and sustainable resource use.

This output seeks to strengthen local market systems across the Acholi sub-region to ensure that climate-resilient agricultural inputs and water-saving technologies are both available and affordable to smallholder farmers. It aims to build inclusive, responsive, and adaptive agricultural markets by addressing structural barriers on both the supply and demand sides, such as limited access to finance, weak vendor networks, and poor farmer awareness.

Emphasis is placed on working through and with the private sector to unlock investment and promote innovation in input distribution, financing models, and bundled service delivery. The approach intentionally prioritizes women, youth, and low-income farmers who often face disproportionate challenges in accessing agricultural technologies and services.

By focusing on affordability, distribution efficiency, and end-user capacity, the output will contribute to more sustainable and scalable adaptation outcomes. All interventions will be aligned with national climate strategies (NAPs and NDCs) and local development priorities to ensure coherence and long-term impact.

Activity 2.2.1 Conduct market assessment for technology inputs (including seeds) and nature-based products Gulu/ the Acholi sub-region (Gulu, Omoro and Nwoya) - climate resilient value chains.

This activity will undertake a comprehensive market assessment to identify supply chain gaps, pricing dynamics, and barriers to uptake of climate-resilient technologies and nature-based products (e.g., agroforestry inputs). The findings will inform tailored interventions to strengthen local value chains and unlock opportunities for private sector investment in resilient agriculture in the Acholi sub-region. Two detailed market assessments will map value chain opportunities and constraints across eight districts, identifying gaps in access, affordability, and supply of climate-resilient inputs. This evidence base enables strategic, gender-responsive market interventions that target women, youth, and low-income households, fostering inclusive growth of climate-smart agricultural markets.

Activity 2.2.2: Deploy a token-based incentive system that is triggered by weather station alerts (e.g., early signs of drought) to enable timely access to subsidized climate-resilient inputs like drought-tolerant seeds and water harvesting tools.

This activity will operationalize a weather-indexed token system, whereby digital vouchers ("tokens") are distributed to vulnerable farmers when early warning systems detect an impending climate stress event. These tokens can be redeemed at participating agro-dealers for subsidized, climate-resilient agricultural inputs. By linking early warning alerts to input delivery, the system supports anticipatory adaptation, improves affordability, and ensures the timely uptake of critical tools. These tokens can be redeemed through local agro-dealers and service providers for immediate-use adaptive inputs such as rainwater harvesting tanks, tarpaulins for silage-making, and organic mulch or crop residue covers to retain soil moisture. By linking early warning alerts to the distribution of such inputs, the system enables anticipatory adaptation that helps farmers protect existing crops and livestock assets rather than relying solely on seasonal planting cycles. This mechanism is expected to support 2,000 vulnerable farmers, especially women and youth, by improving affordability, ensuring rapid access to critical tools, and enhancing

climate risk preparedness. It also creates a scalable, responsive bridge between early warning systems and real-time resilience building.

Activity 2.2.3: Support agro-dealers and input suppliers to stock and distribute climate-resilient seed varieties and solar-powered irrigation kits with flexible payment schemes.

This activity aims to strengthen the capacity of local agro-dealers and input suppliers across the Acholi sub-region to meet the growing demand for climate-resilient agricultural technologies. By increasing the availability and affordability of key inputs, such as drought-tolerant seed varieties, water-efficient technologies, and solar-powered irrigation kits, the activity will help bridge the gap between smallholder farmers and the products they need to adapt to climate stress.

Support will include tailored business development training, stock financing arrangements, and the design and rollout of flexible payment schemes such as Pay-As-You-Go and seasonal repayment models. These models will be adapted to the cash flow realities of smallholder farmers, making it easier for them to invest in long-term productivity and resilience.

At least ten agro-dealers will be directly supported to expand their product range and outreach, particularly in underserved and remote districts. The intervention will emphasize gender inclusion by encouraging women and youth participation in both supply and demand sides, whether as vendors, distributors, or end-users. It will also promote the development of resilient vendor networks that are embedded within community systems, thus contributing to scalable, inclusive, and sustainable climate-resilient market systems in the region.

Activity 2.2.4: Develop and distribute user-friendly guides and training materials on the selection and use of climate-resilient seeds and water management technologies.

This activity will produce a suite of practical, locally contextualized training materials to enhance smallholder farmers' capacity to adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices. The materials—including step-by-step guides, illustrated manuals, and visual aids, will focus on the effective selection and use of drought-tolerant seed varieties and water-efficient technologies such as solar irrigation and rainwater harvesting.

Designed specifically for low-literacy audiences, the materials will be culturally relevant, gender-responsive, and accessible in local languages. Three user-friendly manuals will be co-developed and validated with local communities to ensure they reflect real-world farming contexts and address the diverse needs of women, youth, and other marginalized groups.

To broaden reach and reinforce key messages, the printed materials will be complemented by engaging audio-visual content, including radio dramas and community theatre performances, which have proven effective in enhancing comprehension and promoting behaviour change. Together, these tools will be integrated into existing extension systems, enabling widespread dissemination through farmer groups, vendor networks, and local leaders.

This approach is expected to empower at least 75% of targeted users to make more informed decisions on input use and farm management, accelerating the adoption of climate-resilient innovations and supporting evidence-based adaptation at scale.

Activity 2.2.5: Pilot bundled services models integrating seeds, tools, and technical advisory support into commercially viable packages offered through local vendors or platforms, and contribute to the development of local, national, and regional adaptation innovation ecosystems

This activity will design, pilot, and scale bundled service models that integrate climate-resilient seeds, water-efficient technologies, tailored technical advisory, and flexible financing into accessible and commercially viable packages. Delivered through trusted community-level vendors and emerging digital platforms, these packages will address key affordability, knowledge, and access barriers that limit smallholder farmers' ability to adapt to climate change.

By reaching at least 1,500 smallholders during the pilot phase, the activity will demonstrate the viability and value of holistic, farmer-centric service delivery that blends products, information, and finance. These models are expected to catalyze localized innovation ecosystems, attracting private sector investment and enabling replication across districts and regions.

The approach prioritizes inclusion by embedding pro-poor design features, such as flexible payment options, gender-responsive advisory content, and partnerships with women- and youth-led enterprises to ensure that bundled services reach traditionally underserved groups.

Beyond strengthening market linkages and private sector engagement, this activity will contribute to the broader development of Uganda's adaptation ecosystem by generating evidence and lessons that inform national and regional efforts to scale climate-resilient agriculture solutions. Through partnerships with government agencies, research institutions, and private sector actors, the pilot will support adaptive learning and policy alignment for sustainable, market-driven resilience building. Activity **2.2.6:** Develop and institutionalize local climate adaptation action plans through inclusive multi-stakeholder processes, ensuring that community-identified priorities inform sub-county and district planning.

This activity will support the development of localized climate adaptation action plans that reflect community priorities while aligning with Uganda's National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and relevant district planning frameworks. Through participatory processes, farmer groups, traditional leaders, local governments, civil society, and private sector actors will co-create six community-owned adaptation plans across eight districts. Twelve inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues will be held to identify and prioritize at least 20 locally driven adaptation needs and ensure their integration into formal sub-county and district development plans.

The activity will strengthen the institutional capacity of local adaptation committees to coordinate implementation, mobilize resources, and monitor outcomes. It will intentionally prioritize gender equity and social inclusion, ensuring that women, youth, and marginalized groups are meaningfully engaged and their voices reflected in the resulting plans. By embedding community-identified priorities into local governance structures, the activity will promote scalable, evidence-based, and sustainable adaptation planning that accelerates resilience-building across the Acholi sub-region.

Component 3: Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy engagement

Outcome 3: Promote evidence-based policy engagement through strengthened learning, knowledge management, and dissemination framework

ACCESS focuses on ensuring efficient and effective project management as the backbone of successful implementation and on continuous learning, both to respond effectively to potential changing conditions and thereby ensure project success, as well as for knowledge transfer across stakeholders. Under this component Mercy Corps and its implementing partners will set up a project management and knowledge management structure (made up of a systemic influence agenda to ensure that assessments and other targeted influence efforts are strategically aligned and integrated across project activities) to ensure lessons learned on Components 1 and 2 throughout the entire project duration. These learnings will directly inform evidence-based policy engagements by generating actionable insights, best practices and success storied that will be shared with local and national government stakeholders, development partners and sector platforms. The project will also engage in targeted advocacy to influence policy and strategies related to climate adaptation and inclusive ecosystem-based solutions

Output 3.1 Relevant knowledge products developed and disseminated to key stakeholders

Under this output the project management unit, in collaboration with Mercy Corps' MEL team, will consolidate and disseminate the information generated from the project.

Activity 3.1.1 Establish a consortium-wide project and knowledge management system to support coordinated implementation, learning, and adaptive decision-making
Mercy Corps, and the implementing partner will set up a project management unit (PMU) with management representatives of each of the partners dedicated to ensuring project quality, external stakeholders' engagement and alignment with agencies and donor requirements.

The ACCESS team will hold internal program review meetings every quarter within the PMU to track progress and document learnings. By convening regular scheduled review sessions, the management representatives of each of the partners (Mercy Corps, and the LNGO) will assess achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement. The documented learnings will serve as valuable resources for informing decision-making and ACCESS adaptation and learning strategy.

ACCESS will develop and implement a learning agenda that will serve as knowledge management system identifying key research and learning questions to be addressed through robust M&E and an emphasis on learning from active experimentation. Throughout the implementation, the project team will identify and document key lessons and best practice.

Activity 3.1.2 Conduct a policy and institutional landscape analysis in target regions to identify enablers and barriers for scaling ecosystem-based adaptation, climate-resilient agriculture, and inclusive governance

To address the unique policy challenges facing the vulnerable communities, especially the most vulnerable as women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs), in accessing energy products and services, ACCESS will carry out a detailed assessment of the existing policies and policy frameworks on energy access, products, and services to identify gaps and solutions to address these gaps. An assessment report will be produced in Y1, alongside two knowledge products explicitly informed by inputs from women leaders and women-led farmer groups, ensuring gender-responsive analysis.

Activity 3.1.3 Produce and disseminate policy briefs and technical recommendations based on project evidence to support national and sub-national climate adaptation planning

ACCESS will share 5 policy briefs over the life of the project to inform national and sub-national climate adaptation planning and align with NDC/NAP processes. These products will include recommendations for improving policies and practices related to reforestation and agroforestry and will be disseminated through 4 advocacy meetings, complemented by four national-level policy dialogues. By disseminating evidence-based recommendations, ACCESS will seek to influence policy reform and implementation processes, foster informed decision-making, and promote sustainable practices in the reforestation and agroforestry sectors.

Activity 3.1.4 Facilitate multi-stakeholder policy dialogues and learning events with government, private sector, and civil society actors to share lessons and strengthen institutional coordination for adaptation

Under this activity Mercy Corps will actively participate and support the coordination of 18 national-level energy and environment working group (WorkGrEEn) coordination meetings amongst the various stakeholders in the energy sector. ACCESS will also organize 6 national-level coordination meetings with multiple stakeholders on issues affecting stakeholders working on restoration and agroforestry. ***Activity 3.1.5*** **Develop** and disseminate diverse knowledge products (e.g., thematic reports, practice notes, briefs) that document innovations, lessons, and challenges across project sites

ACCESS will identify and document key lessons, success, and failure factors and produce briefs for policy and decision-makers, project developers, funding agencies, and the private sector. Under the lead of Mercy Corps, the project will identify and document key lessons, successes, and failures and produce 6 briefs for policy and decision-makers, project developers, funding agencies, and the private sector. The project will aim to develop an open-source blueprint for the sector capturing our learnings in supporting the commercial partners to test, pilot, and iterate on promising go-to-market strategies to reach Acholi sub region with alternative solar technologies and to deploy proven approaches at scale.

ACCESS will develop an open-source blueprint for the sector, which will include guidelines, best practices, methodologies, or other resources intended to support the uptake of Climate-smart agriculture, Ecosystem-based adaptation, Localized climate information services, Watershed governance structures, and Integrated land-use planning in alignment with ACCESS learning agenda.

Activity 3.1.6 Capture and share compelling success stories and case studies that illustrate the social, environmental, and economic value of inclusive, ecosystem-based adaptation and market-driven resilience solutions.

This activity will be undertaken to help stakeholders understand what successful and effective adaptation efforts look like as well as their value. This is critical as climate adaptation is still fairly new to a significant portion of stakeholders. These products will help them better understand what adaptation is, and the value of such investments. Around 10-12 success stories and case studies (approximately one per quarter) that highlight the social, environmental, and economic impacts of inclusive, ecosystem-based adaptation and market-driven resilience interventions. These stories will be thematically disaggregated and used strategically to raise awareness and promote uptake among farmers, local leaders, and policymakers.

B. Describe how the project /programme would promote new and innovative solutions to climate change adaptation, such as new approaches, technologies, and mechanisms.

The ACCESS project brings a layered and integrated model of innovation to climate change adaptation, advancing novel solutions that combine technological, institutional, social, and market-based approaches. Anchored in the Acholi sub-region, the project seeks to foster transformative and community-owned adaptation pathways that are economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially inclusive.

Physical and Technological Innovations: ACCESS introduces a suite of physical and ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) technologies that support climate-resilient livelihoods. These include Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, integrated rainwater harvesting, and small-scale watershed restoration practices. These innovations are designed to improve microclimates, restore soil health, stabilize watersheds, and increase water availability during prolonged dry spells, an essential buffer against climate-induced risks. To ensure the appropriateness of these technologies, the project will collaborate with leading research institutions including CIFOR-ICRAF, NaFORRI, Makerere University's Faculty of Forestry, and the Uganda Agroforestry Development Network (UGADEN). These partnerships will help identify climate- and market-appropriate species, enhance seedling survivability, and integrate evidence-based practices tailored to Acholi's unique ecological and socio-economic contexts.

Additionally, ACCESS will deploy solar-powered irrigation systems among the smallholder farmers in Acholi subregion to improve agricultural productivity These are not just technological fixes, they represent a shift toward decentralized, community-owned climate solutions. To address cost barriers, the project will partner with private sector actors to provide targeted subsidies, flexible payment models, and bundled service packages combining seeds, tools, and advisory services.

Community Capacity and Skills Development: ACCESS will equip local communities with the skills and knowledge to adopt and sustain these innovations through a robust climate-smart extension system. Training programs will emphasize water conservation, sustainable land use, soil moisture management, and the establishment of community-led demonstration plots that showcase integrated agro-ecological practices. Recognizing that knowledge is power, the project will also operationalize localized Climate Information Hubs. These hubs will use AI-powered seasonal forecasts translated into local languages, helping farmers make timely, climate-informed decisions around planting, water use, and resource management.

Community-based early warning and anticipatory action systems will also be developed. These systems will be linked to compact weather stations installed in key locations and tied to token-based incentive mechanisms. When drought or extreme weather thresholds are triggered, alerts will release subsidized inputs (e.g., drought-tolerant seeds or water-harvesting kits), enabling just-in-time adaptation.

Institutional and Market-Based Innovations: At the institutional level, ACCESS applies a market systems development (MSD) approach that strengthens the climate resilience of agroforestry and sustainable agricultural and water production value chains. It builds on Mercy Corps' extensive experience in private sector engagement in Northern Uganda and focuses on addressing both demand and supply-side constraints. The project will strengthen agro-dealers and input suppliers to stock climate-resilient inputs and promote commercial viability through bundled services and flexible financing. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will receive business development support, and market assessments will be conducted to explore viable value chains for nature-based products. Token based incentives, will support adoption and social innovations that reward community-led stewardship of ecosystems. These incentives not only encourage behaviour change but also crowd in private sector investments.

ACCESS will also support the creation of inclusive local adaptation action plans embedded in district and sub-county governance frameworks. These plans will institutionalize participatory decision-making, particularly for vulnerable groups, and align with Uganda's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

Social Innovation and Inclusion: Beyond technology and markets, the ACCESS project prioritizes social transformation as a pillar of innovation. Acholi communities face cultural resistance to shifting from extractive to regenerative land-use practices. ACCESS responds with an intensive community engagement model that centers on inclusion, education, and the integration of local ecological knowledge. Focus group discussions and formative research have shown that women, youth, and persons with disabilities often possess intimate knowledge of natural resource use but face exclusion from decision-making. ACCESS will ensure these groups are active agents of change, not passive recipients, by building their leadership capacities, supporting alternative livelihoods, and integrating their voices into governance platforms.

Gender-sensitive training will also elevate women's role in forest and water resource management. This will contribute to reducing deforestation, lightening women's workloads, and improving health outcomes, addressing multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously.

Policy and Conflict-Sensitivity as Adaptive Innovation: Institutionally, the project will advocate for policy reforms that incentivize reforestation and sustainable agriculture. It will collaborate with local governments to enforce land-use regulations, support community bylaws for sustainable water abstraction, and facilitate the establishment of community-managed forest reserves. Crucially, ACCESS integrates a conflict-sensitive lens throughout. Climate stressors in Acholi, like water scarcity and land degradation, intersect with local tensions. The project builds peace dividends into adaptation activities by ensuring equitable benefit sharing, participatory governance, and inclusive planning. In doing so, it addresses climate as a risk multiplier and ensures that adaptation strengthens not undermines social cohesion

C. Describe how the project/programme aims to roll out successful innovative adaptation practices, tools, and technologies and/or describe how the project aims to scale up viable innovative adaptation practices, tools, and technologies.

ACCESS employs a scalable, systems-based approach to rolling out and institutionalizing climate adaptation innovations that are inclusive, evidence-driven, and market-relevant. Central to this approach is the use of community-based demonstration sites across the Acholi sub-region. These sites showcase

water-saving and land restoration practices such as Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), riparian buffer zones, and agroforestry. Functioning as practical learning hubs, they provide experiential training for farmers, extension agents, and local leaders. These hubs are embedded within local governance structures, strengthening community ownership and ensuring that innovations are aligned with local priorities. Seasonal climate planning forums and Climate Information Hubs further integrate climate services and risk-informed adaptation planning into sub-county and district-level decision-making processes.

To restore degraded ecosystems and strengthen the resilience of water systems, ACCESS integrates nature-based solutions with catchment-level water resource planning. Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) interventions, including soil and water conservation, vegetation regeneration, and improved land-use management, are coupled with participatory water mapping and recharge zone planning. These efforts enhance watershed function and community resilience to droughts and floods, while also contributing to landscape-level climate benefits. By embedding restoration in local planning frameworks, ACCESS ensures that environmental gains are retained and equitably distributed across communities.

ACCESS also facilitates the market-based rollout of climate-resilient technologies that are critical to building adaptive capacity. The project strengthens local value chains for seeds, and solar-powered irrigation systems by supporting agro-dealers and input suppliers to stock and distribute these goods. Flexible payment models and bundled service packages ensure that even low-income households can access climate-smart inputs. A market systems assessment conducted in the Acholi sub-region informs these interventions, guiding strategic investments and partnerships to improve both the supply and demand for adaptation technologies.

To further incentivize adaptive behavior, ACCESS introduces a weather-station-triggered early warning and token system. Localized climate intelligence, including rainfall and temperature forecasts, is used to release tokens to participating households and groups when extreme weather thresholds are forecasted. These tokens can then be exchanged for subsidized, climate-resilient inputs such as drought-tolerant seeds, rainwater harvesting kits, or soil conservation tools. This innovation shifts the paradigm from reactive crisis response to proactive risk management, enabling communities to act in anticipation of climate shocks.

Strengthening institutional capacity and embedding adaptation in policy frameworks is another core strategy of the project. ACCESS collaborates with local governments, civil society organizations, and community groups to develop and institutionalize inclusive climate adaptation plans. Through technical assistance and targeted training, the project builds the capacity of local governance bodies to monitor ecological indicators, enforce sustainable land use practices, and foster accountability in the use of natural resources. Lessons from these processes will be captured and synthesized into technical briefs, case studies, and success stories that feed into national policy dialogues. These knowledge products will help inform Uganda’s National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and broader policy and investment frameworks.

To support scaling and replication beyond the immediate project areas, ACCESS establishes a robust knowledge management and learning system. This system captures project outputs, including practice notes, technical manuals, and policy recommendations, and disseminates them through digital platforms, multi-stakeholder learning forums, and consortium-wide knowledge exchanges. By facilitating adaptive management and real-time learning, the project enhances its ability to pivot in response to evolving

climate risks and stakeholder feedback. Moreover, by making its innovations visible and accessible, ACCESS creates the enabling conditions for broader uptake and long-term sustainability.

By embedding its innovations within local institutions, market systems, and participatory planning processes, ACCESS ensures that successful adaptation practices are not only scalable but also sustainable, equitable, and resilient to future climate shocks. This integrated model lays the foundation for systemic transformation across the Acholi sub-region, where communities are not only adapting to a changing climate but shaping the pathways to a more resilient and inclusive future.

D. Describe how the project provides economic, social, and environmental benefits, with reference to the most vulnerable communities, and vulnerable groups within communities, including gender considerations. Describe how the project will avoid or mitigate negative impacts, in line with the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund.

Economic benefits:

The ACCESS project is designed to deliver robust and sustainable economic benefits by enhancing climate-resilient livelihoods in the Acholi sub-region through integrated watershed management, ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), and market system development (MSD). Central to this design is the promotion of Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and integrated water conservation practices, which together restore land productivity and diversify household income streams. By integrating economically valuable tree species into agroforestry systems, such as fruit trees, timber, and medicinal plants, the project will support productive and climate-resilient income generation for smallholder farmers. A systems approach will be employed to link community-level interventions with private-sector actors, including commercial nursery operators and financial service providers, thereby strengthening nature-based value chains while facilitating access to climate-resilient inputs and financial products.

The project will specifically support women and youth-led groups through targeted business development services, including training in nursery management, product marketing, and climate advisory services. These efforts will address underlying structural inequalities in access to productive assets, markets, and decision-making platforms. At least 40 percent of the direct economic interventions will prioritize the inclusion of women, youth, and other marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities. In addition, the project will introduce token-based incentive mechanisms, triggered by AI-enhanced weather stations, to enable timely access to bundled climate-resilient inputs such as drought-tolerant seeds, soil moisture conservation tools, and solar-powered irrigation kits. These packages will be made accessible through established agro-dealers and community vendors, reducing risk and improving smallholder resilience.

Social benefits:

The project delivers strong social benefits that span inclusion, empowerment, food security, and institutional strengthening. By improving on-farm water availability through rainwater harvesting, solar irrigation, and soil moisture retention technologies, and by restoring degraded landscapes, the project will stabilize food production and reduce seasonal hunger, particularly in the food-insecure districts of Gulu, Omoro, and Nwoya.

Institutional strengthening will be achieved through capacity building of local governance platforms to promote gender-responsive, inclusive, and transparent resource management. Women and youth will be supported to take on leadership roles in local water user committees, climate adaptation planning bodies, and agroforestry cooperatives, thus increasing their participation in governance and decision-making processes.

Social cohesion will be strengthened through participatory watershed planning and the revival of community by-laws governing land and water use, which will promote equitable access to resources, reduce competition, and mitigate the risk of localized conflict. These measures will be complemented by multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms to enhance accountability and cross-sector coordination.

The project will further expand access to localized climate information and knowledge through the establishment of sub-county Climate Information hubs and on-farm demonstration sites. These platforms will promote knowledge sharing, peer learning, and anticipatory planning among vulnerable and remote communities. Improved access to water and resilient cropping systems will reduce the labor and time burden associated with household tasks such as water collection and firewood gathering, responsibilities largely shouldered by women and girls. This will allow more time for education, community participation, and income-generating activities.

Environmental benefits:

Environmentally, the project contributes to long-term ecosystem restoration, climate regulation, and biodiversity enhancement. Through Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and soil and water conservation interventions, the project will increase vegetation cover, regulate runoff, and improve infiltration, thereby reducing the severity of floods and droughts while restoring hydrological balance in micro-catchments.

Soil fertility will be enhanced through cover cropping, vegetative buffer zones, and the use of organic matter, while biodiversity will increase due to the reintroduction of native species and habitat restoration. Microclimate regulation will be supported through increased vegetative cover and diversified land-use practices, leading to moderated surface temperatures and improved evapotranspiration balance.

By promoting alternative energy-saving technologies such as solar-powered irrigation systems, the project enhances water security by providing consistent water for irrigation even during the dry spells, reducing pressure on natural water resources and ensuring consistent plant growth which helps increase soil organic matter and reduces erosion. reduces reliance on fossil fuels for water pumping, thereby supporting emission avoidance and contributing to Uganda's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Additionally, improved soil and water conservation practices, agroforestry, and the application of organic soil amendments enhance soil organic carbon stocks, reduce land degradation, and strengthen ecosystem resilience. These interventions provide measurable environmental co-benefits, including improved soil health, water retention, and vegetation cover, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation outcomes.

Environmental, Social, and Gender Safeguards

The project will adhere strictly to the Adaptation Fund's Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) and Gender Policy through a risk-based and participatory safeguards process. Localized Environmental and

Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) will be conducted to identify and mitigate risks related to land use, water resource management, and biodiversity conservation. Landscape restoration activities will be ecologically appropriate and avoid the introduction of invasive species.

All water infrastructure and land-use interventions will be guided by hydrological assessments and implemented with the full participation and consent of local communities. Equitable water allocation plans will be developed in collaboration with water governance committees to prevent downstream harm.

Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) will guide all interventions involving land use, ecosystem restoration, or infrastructure development, with special safeguards in place for customary tenure systems and vulnerable groups, including women, Indigenous communities, and pastoralists. A Gender Action Plan will be implemented to ensure equitable participation, benefits, and leadership across all project activities. Monitoring and evaluation indicators will be disaggregated by sex, age, and vulnerability, and periodic Gender and Social Inclusion Audits will inform project learning and adaptation.

A transparent and accessible grievance redress mechanism (GRM) will be established at both community and district levels, with trained facilitators and local champions supporting its operationalization and documentation. This approach ensures that the ACCESS project will deliver strong climate adaptation outcomes while transforming the economic, social, and ecological systems that underpin resilience in the Acholi sub-region.

E. Describe or provide an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project / programme.

The proposed project employs a suite of ecosystem-based and community-driven interventions that offer strong cost-effectiveness relative to their impact on climate resilience, food security, and sustainable water resource management in the Acholi sub-region. The design prioritizes low-cost, scalable practices with high returns in ecosystem services, agricultural productivity, and community well-being.

Agroforestry practices are cost-effective as they combine tree planting with agricultural production. This integrated approach provides multiple benefits from the same land area, maximising resource efficiency. By incorporating trees into farming systems, farmers can improve soil fertility, increase crop yields, and diversify income sources. The initial investment in agricultural equipment, tree seedlings and training is relatively low compared to the long-term benefits of improved ecosystem services, increased agricultural productivity, and enhanced climate resilience.

Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) is a highly cost-effective reforestation technique as it leverages existing tree stumps and root systems to regenerate vegetation. This approach requires minimal external inputs, relying instead on local knowledge and labor. The cost per hectare for FMNR is significantly lower than traditional tree planting methods, making it an economically viable option for large-scale landscape restoration. Additionally, FMNR can rapidly increase tree cover, providing quicker returns on investment in terms of ecosystem services and livelihood benefits.

Developing Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) value chains is a cost-effective strategy for enhancing the economic value of restored landscapes. By creating markets for products such as honey, or shea nuts, the project can generate income for local communities without the need for extensive infrastructure or technology investments. This approach incentivises conservation efforts by demonstrating the

economic value of intact ecosystems. The cost-effectiveness is further enhanced as NTFPs often require minimal processing and can be harvested sustainably, providing long-term income streams with relatively low ongoing costs.

Solar-powered irrigation systems and rainwater harvesting structures represent cost-effective climate-resilient technologies. Although their upfront investment is higher than diesel-based systems, they offer long-term savings by eliminating fuel costs, supporting dry-season cultivation, and improving yield stability. The project promotes access through bundled service models and market-based delivery, reducing reliance on subsidies while enhancing sustainability.

The project also integrates localized climate information systems, including compact weather stations, community climate hubs, and token-based early action protocols. These enable anticipatory action and efficient resource targeting, significantly reducing the cost of emergency responses and post-disaster recovery. Climate planning forums, inclusive governance platforms, and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms help optimize planning and reduce duplication, improving resource use efficiency and institutional sustainability.

By aligning activities with Uganda's National Adaptation Plan and Nationally Determined Contributions, the project leverages national systems and policies, opening avenues for co-financing and integration into longer-term development plans.

In summary, the project maximizes value for money by:

- Leveraging low-cost, high-impact practices like FMNR and agroforestry
- Promoting technologies with long-term operational savings such as solar-powered irrigation
- Strengthening local institutions and governance systems to sustain adaptation investments
- Using anticipatory planning and information systems to avoid costly climate shocks
- Supporting market-based delivery models to reduce dependency and improve scalability

The emphasis on integrated watershed management ensures that cost-effective adaptation outcomes are achieved at landscape scale, benefiting both upstream and downstream communities. Overall, the project demonstrates a high degree of cost-effectiveness through its strategic combination of nature-based solutions, local capacity building, climate-smart technologies, and inclusive governance structures.

F. Describe how the project / programme is consistent with national or sub-national sustainable development strategies, including, where appropriate, national, or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national communications, or national adaptation programs of action, or other relevant instruments, where they exist. If applicable, please refer to relevant regional plans and strategies where they exist.

The project is expected to contribute to the various relevant national policies; including the Uganda Vision 2040 whose goal is to transform Uganda from a predominantly low-income country to a competitive upper middle-income status country by 2040. It provides the overall leadership and policy direction for job creation and priority setting. The Uganda Vision 2040 sets out the country's commitment to efforts to attain a green and clean environment. The project contributes to the Kyoto Protocol an international treaty that extended the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that commits state parties like Uganda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, based on the scientific

consensus that 1) global warming is occurring and 2) that human-made CO2 emissions is driving it. The project strives to contribute to Uganda's Vision 2040 and the Kyoto Protocol, by creating clean and green jobs for the youths of Uganda and at the same time reducing carbon emissions through the operationalization of the vertical shaft brick kiln technology. The project contributes to Social Development Goals (SDGs) specifically SDGs 1, 13, 15, and 17[25] which aim at eliminating poverty, climate action life, and land, and promoting partnerships for developing the knowledge base and effective capacity development, Environment, and social policies which the projects allude to. The project is in line with the Climate Change Policy (NCCP) 2015.

Uganda's National Adaptation Plan for Agricultural sector (NAP-Ag) 2018 highlights the negative impacts of climate change on agricultural production and calls for adaptation measures that can boost both cash and food crops, especially building capacity of smallholder farmers to increase yields, and better understanding the impact of temperature rise and rainfall variability on key crops. The plan has specific targets on promoting conservation agriculture practices such as agroforestry and sustainable land management and promoting sustainable forestry, land use and water management that enhances the resilience of agriculture and agrarian communities to a changing climate through climate resilient technologies to improve livelihoods and the environment. This proposed project contributes towards achieving these plans.

Furthermore, Uganda is developing a National Agricultural Policy (NAP), with a major focus on food security, increased household incomes, improved value chains, increased domestic and international trade, and improved sustainable natural resource management. This project aligns with key NAP objectives by promoting ecosystem-based adaptation, integrated watershed management, and sustainable land use practices to reduce deforestation, enhance soil and water conservation, and improve agricultural productivity. By supporting climate-resilient agricultural value chains, strengthening local governance systems, and increasing access to climate information and finance, the project contributes to NAP's goals in both the forestry and natural resource sectors, ensuring sustainable resource use and enhanced resilience of smallholder farming communities to climate shocks.

The project contributes to the updated Uganda's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). The country recognizes that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. The overarching policy objective is to ensure that all stakeholders address climate change impacts and their causes through appropriate measures while promoting sustainable development. The NDC targets to scale up climate smart agriculture including agroforestry (70.7% of farmers, practicing sustainable land management practices by 2030, and 51.2 by 2025, with a baseline of 31.7 in 2022). In the forestry sector, the NDC sets a target of establishing 1.3 million hectares under agroforestry systems by 2030. This project is aligned with these commitments by promoting ecosystem-based adaptation approaches, such as agroforestry and Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), that enhance soil health, restore degraded landscapes, and improve the resilience of rural livelihoods.

The Uganda Technology Needs Assessment report 2020 identified promotion of farmers managed natural regeneration for forest landscape restoration as a climate change adaptation priority towards improving the productivity of agricultural lands while increasing tree cover and biodiversity. This project will focus heavily on this aspect towards increasing tree cover in Acholi sub region.

[25] https://pesitho.com/sustainability-2/

The National Environment Management Policy 1995 sets out the overall policy goals, objectives, and principles for environmental management in Uganda. Its overall goal is sustainable social and economic development, which maintains and enhances environmental quality and resource productivity to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It recognizes that Uganda faces several environmental issues including soil degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, increasing pollution, and environmentally related diseases. These problems are compounded by poverty, low amounts of environmental awareness, and low levels of technology. The policy recognizes climate as a vital natural resource that needs to be monitored to better direct land use, encourage sustainable economic development, manage air pollution and GHG emissions in future programs; and accelerate project financing for NDC implementation. All project components 1, 2, and 3 are in line with the objectives of this overarching policy. The key issues addressed by The National Forest Policy 2001 include maintenance and enhancement of the Permanent Forest Estate, improve the management of forest resources on private and customary land, addressing the underlying causes of deforestation, including lack of policy support, market failure, weak regulation, and rural poverty, capitalise on the economic, social and environmental opportunities in forestry without undermining the resource base, ensure the survival of forest biodiversity and to balance this with the pressing development needs of the country, how to rehabilitate and conserve key watershed forests, how to promote and maintain the greening of the urban environment, as well as ensuring improved tenure to land and trees that act as an incentive for individuals, and women in particular, and communities to invest in forestry among others. Forestry plays a very important role in enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and some of the activities under component 2 are confirmed to be in line with this policy.

The project is gender-sensitive, as it emphasises and recognizes "gender" as a development concept useful in identifying and understanding the social roles and relations of women and men of all ages, and how this impacts development. This applies to all three project components and efforts shall be made to ensure that all categories of people benefit from the project without discrimination. In this regard, the Uganda National Gender Policy 2007 is an integral part of the national development policies and is a framework for redressing gender imbalances as well as a guide to all development practitioners.

G. Describe how the project / programme meets relevant national technical standards, where applicable, such as standards for environmental assessment, building codes, etc., and complies with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund.

The project rigorously adheres to all relevant national technical standards and regulatory frameworks in Uganda to ensure environmental sustainability, social inclusiveness, and legal compliance throughout implementation. Key standards and policies considered include environmental impact assessment regulations, water resource management guidelines, land use planning protocols, and climate adaptation policies.

Specifically, the project will comply with Uganda's National Environment Act and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations by conducting participatory environmental and social risk assessments prior to all major interventions such as solar irrigation installation, watershed restoration, and infrastructure development. These assessments will identify potential negative impacts and prescribe mitigation measures consistent with national laws and best practices.

For water infrastructure components, including solar-powered irrigation and rainwater harvesting systems, the project will follow the Uganda National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) standards and Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) guidelines on water abstraction, use, and conservation to ensure sustainable water resource management and avoid over-extraction or contamination risks.

Land use and ecosystem restoration activities, including Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry, will be aligned with national land management policies and community-based natural resource governance frameworks. The project will work closely with local government institutions and community committees to ensure that all activities are integrated within existing catchment management plans and respect customary land tenure arrangements.

Regarding technical standards for infrastructure and technology deployment, solar irrigation systems will be sourced and installed according to Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) certifications to guarantee safety, durability, and performance. Training and capacity-building efforts will emphasize adherence to operational and maintenance best practices consistent with manufacturer and national guidelines.

In alignment with the Adaptation Fund's Environmental and Social Policy (ESP), the project incorporates a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) designed to identify, avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential adverse impacts on environmental and social well-being. Key principles such as stakeholder engagement, gender equity, protection of vulnerable groups, and grievance mechanisms are embedded in project design and operational procedures.

The project specifically addresses the Adaptation Fund's ESP safeguard categories by:

- Conducting thorough social assessments to ensure free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of affected communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups.
- Implementing gender-responsive approaches to ensure equitable participation and benefit-sharing.
- Safeguarding natural habitats and biodiversity by avoiding activities in protected or ecologically sensitive areas and promoting restoration of degraded ecosystems.
- Managing potential labor and health risks associated with construction and technology installation through strict adherence to occupational health and safety standards.
- Establishing transparent grievance redress mechanisms accessible to all stakeholders for timely resolution of concerns.

By integrating national technical standards with the Adaptation Fund's rigorous environmental and social safeguards, the project ensures that all interventions are socially inclusive, environmentally sound, legally compliant, and contribute positively to sustainable climate resilience outcomes.

The project is compliant with the Environmental and Social Policy of the adaptation fund. The project falls under category C as it has no adverse environmental or social impacts. The project has been designed and will be implemented in such a way that both women and men are able to participate fully and equitably and receive comparable social and economic benefits not causing any disproportionate adverse effects during the development process.

H. Describe if there is duplication of project / programme with other funding sources, if any.

The proposed project is not duplicative of existing initiatives but rather strategically builds on and complements ongoing and past efforts by government agencies, development partners, and NGOs in Northern Uganda. It introduces a focused and integrated climate resilience approach grounded in ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), inclusive governance, and market systems development—thereby enhancing and scaling the outcomes of earlier interventions while avoiding redundancy.

The project design incorporates a thorough review of existing and past programmes to ensure alignment, foster collaboration, and maximize synergies. This approach will help consolidate climate adaptation efforts in the Acholi sub-region and amplify impact across landscapes and communities.

Key complementary initiatives include:

1. **Powering the Uptake of Climate Change Mitigating Pumps (PUMP-UP), funded by DANIDA and implemented by Mercy Corps (ongoing) (2023-2026)**
   The PUMP-UP project implemented in Northern Uganda (Yumbe and Gulu) seeks to enable 2,300 small holder farmers including women, youth, and refugee communities—to build resilient livelihoods and to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change through access to solar water pumps (SWPs), climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and integrated water resource management. The PUMP-UP project is primarily focused on accelerating the adoption of solar irrigation technologies among rural farming communities in Northern Uganda through a private sector-led market systems approach. While the project integrates elements of climate-smart agriculture (CSA), its core emphasis remains on the promotion and uptake of solar water pumps (SWPs) and the associated financing and technical delivery mechanisms.
   The ACCESS project complements and expands this effort by extending geographic coverage to additional districts in the Acholi sub-region (including Omoro and Nwoya) and scaling ecosystem-based adaptation approaches such as Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry (Output 1.1). ACCESS also enhances decentralized access to climate information and early warning systems (Output 2.1) and introduces token-based systems for distributing climate-resilient inputs and technologies (Output 2.2). Coordination between the two projects will ensure alignment and leverage learning across interventions, contributing to a cohesive climate resilience strategy.

Key lessons from PUMP-UP and their integration into ACCESS:

- ***Enhancing Water Security through Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)-*** PUMP-UP demonstrated that water scarcity—exacerbated by unreliable or seasonal sources—is a key vulnerability for smallholder farmers in the northern Uganda and a barrier to productive agriculture. To address this, ACCESS will adopt a holistic water management approach that combines ecosystem restoration (e.g., farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) programmes focusing on reforestation or riparian buffer restoration, water catchment level resource management) with efficient irrigation technologies such as solar water pumps (SWPs). This dual approach will ensure sustainable use of water resources while mitigating the risks of drought and seasonal variability. Community-level water governance will also be strengthened to reduce competition over shared water points, a source of conflict in past contexts.

- ***Linking Ecosystem based adaptation with access to quality input and climate smart agriculture services-*** Drawing from PUMP-UP experience, the effectiveness of irrigation and other climate smart technologies depends on access to reliable, high quality agricultural inputs and services. ACCESS will work closely with certified agro-input suppliers to deliver improved inputs and agronomy services to the districts not targeted by PUMP-UP. These will be integrated with EbA and CSA techniques, including agroforestry, mulching, and intercropping, to build soil health, enhance water retention, and increase resilience to climate shocks. After-sales support and field-based demonstrations will ensure proper input use and adoption of sustainable practices.

- ***Improving Affordability and Financial Access for Smallholder Farmers*** PUMP-UP identified affordability as a major barrier to the uptake of solar irrigation systems, particularly among women, youth, and refugee populations. Building on this insight, the ACCESS project will leverage existing partnerships with financial service providers established under PUMP-UP in Gulu and expand them to other districts across the Acholi region. The project will further engage these providers to co-design flexible and inclusive financing mechanisms tailored for ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) investments. These may include seasonal repayment plans, group-based asset financing, and microcredit schemes with low upfront costs. By aligning loan repayment schedules with agricultural cycles, the project aims to ease the financial burden on smallholder farmers, enabling them to adopt ecosystem restoration technologies and practices more effectively and sustainably.

2. **Promoting Rural Development in Northern Uganda (PRUDEV II), implemented by GIZ in partnership with District Local Governments (ongoing)**
   PRUDEV II aims to improve incomes and employment through sustainable natural resource management, market access, and agriculture-based growth. ACCESS complements this work by strengthening agroforestry value chains and promoting diversified and climate-resilient agricultural practices (Output 2.2). Where PRUDEV emphasizes market development and CSA, ACCESS layers in watershed management, inclusive governance structures (Output 1.2), and tailored early warning information (Output 2.1). The project will also leverage PRUDEV's market linkages to improve the commercialization of agroforestry and climate-resilient inputs, avoiding duplication while supporting a shared objective of building resilient rural livelihoods.

Through these linkages, the ACCESS project will enhance coordination through joint planning and beneficiary mapping between Access and PUMP-UP teams to ensure alignment on geographical focus and target groups, integrate work planning and harmonized extension efforts to ensure farmers accessing solar irrigation under PUMP-UP can benefit from the ecosystem restoration and climate information services supported under Access. Regular coordination's and joint cross learning events involving project teams and relevant stakeholders will be strengthened to align strategies, share progress, and identify synergies in order to contribute to scaling successful practices across Northern Uganda. This approach will ensure that investments are complementary, not duplicative, and aligned with national and regional climate adaptation priorities.

I. Describe the learning and knowledge management component to capture and disseminate lessons learned.

The learning and knowledge management of this project falls under Component 3 (Ensure robust learning, knowledge management, and dissemination framework) and will be managed closely by ACCESS Program Managers from Mercy Corps, dedicated MEL Officer, and Program Communication Assistant with the support of the Country MEL Manager. The learning and knowledge management side of this component focuses on:

Continuous Monitoring: Monitoring activities will feed into an iterative process to continually improve the project activities through real-time analysis of data and the production of relevant reports. ACCESS will begin with analysing existing Market Assessment, Willingness to Pay assessment, and Market Segmentation analysis reports that Mercy Corps has been leading in the Acholi sub region. The findings of which will add to the vulnerability criteria used for the selection of project beneficiaries and will be followed by a Baseline and Mapping Assessment. Throughout the project, routine data collection will take place monthly to track progress towards our indicators through surveys, FDGs, KII, and spot checks, among others. ACCESS will also conduct Midline and Endline Assessments to check progress towards outcomes and the extent of the intervention in reaching the overall goal. The data and information from the midline and endline are important for learning and that will feed into improving programming.

Furthermore, a Community Accountability Reporting Mechanism (CARM) has been developed in Uganda as part of Mercy Corps' global initiative to prevent exploitation and abuse. CARM provides a channel for all community members to provide feedback, suggestions, complaints, and concerns, in a manner that is safe, confidential, transparent, and accessible, enabling Mercy Corps to make adaptations to program activities and/or address any safeguarding concerns. The proposed project will collect feedback through a toll-free number, WhatsApp, and email and by setting in place a context-appropriate structure (e.g., community ambassadors, etc.). The feedback will then be safely stored in a centralised database for further analysis and closure of the feedback loop. For any feedback - positive or negative - related to the implemented activities the program team and CARM focal point will meet monthly to address the issue and make necessary programmatic adaptations to make sure that the project remains responsive to the community needs. These observations will constitute an essential part of the lessons learned during program implementation.

Learning and Adapting: This will involve a process of systematically documenting all aspects of the project implementation through a well-articulated Knowledge Management Strategy and Learning Plan that will be revisited quarterly to ensure that the strategy remains relevant to the project objectives and evolving context. Learning questions and learning agenda will be established to guide the documentation of evidence and products /materials to be utilised for learning. The project will operationalize monthly meetings and quarterly review sessions with its PMU that will capture lessons learned to be shared with key partners and stakeholders (to be identified in the project inception phase, when finalising the learning agenda) through three national learning events, two regional learning events and seven learning reports (2 per implementation year). This will foster broader knowledge sharing and adaptive management. The program will ensure documentation of best practices, lessons (learning products), and development of policy briefs and publications in partnership with research institutions or industry groups. Mercy Corps will use its existing network of contacts to disseminate knowledge. Mercy Corps sits on the steering committee of the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy in Situations of Displacement; is part of the Action Group of the Smart Communities Coalition, and co-chairs the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy

working group. The dissemination will take the form of online and/or in-person workshops. At project closure, ACCESS will develop a comprehensive Endline and Learning report.

J. Describe the consultative process, including the list of stakeholders consulted, undertaken during project / programme preparation, with particular reference to vulnerable groups, including gender considerations, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund.

To develop the project idea, multiple consultations were made with the Ministry of Water and Environment (MoWE) and Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) as the key national authority overseeing the implementation of climate change initiatives and the NDC. in line with the government's priorities on building climate-resilient livelihoods, improving natural resource governance, and enhancing ecosystem restoration and resilience The recommendations and suggestions from the two ministries were used to inform the initial design for this project in line with the government policies and priorities on building a climate resilient sector and improving ecosystem resilience towards addressing climate change*.*

This was then followed by a one-day refinement workshop in Gulu that brought together all the district heads. The main purpose of the workshop was to obtain the inputs and contributions of the district level stakeholders in terms of overall design and relevance of interventions in line with the district plans. In addition, the consultation was aimed at ensuring and facilitating alignment, alliance and compliance with national and local policies, rules, regulations as well as ongoing programmes and projects in line with the AF's. 30 participants (19 men and 11 women) attended the consultation workshop including technical staff from environment, forestry, and agricultural departments from Gulu and the neighbouring districts (of Omoro and Nwoya), farmer cooperatives and CSOs involved in environmental conservation. with a focus on integrated watershed management, Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and access to climate-resilient technologies. The participants deliberated and discussed the intervention framework,. The participants deliberated and discussed the intervention framework. The participants appreciated the proposed project and confirmed that the project aligns with the district's plans. Participants were then split into groups to discuss different aspects of the project. This was followed by plenary discussions where all the participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback. Participants in the discussion provided several key recommendations for the project. These included the importance of involving the government in the selection of institutions to be included in the project, particularly schools and tertiary institutions. It was also suggested that beneficiaries should encompass both rural and urban populations, with a focus on rural communities due to their involvement in charcoal production, a significant factor in deforestation. Notably, urban populations were identified as key consumers of charcoal, suggesting a high willingness to pay for alternative technologies. Sensitization efforts were deemed necessary not only for promoting the new technology but also for encouraging tree planting activities to replace lost trees. To facilitate adoption, financing plans should allow for seasonal payments and consider incorporating insurance into the model. Women were highlighted as important targets for the project, given their direct involvement as users. The selection of geographies for intervention, particularly degraded land, should involve a catchment system and consultation with the government. It was recommended to ensure that local farmers benefit from carbon credits as an incentive for tree planting. Moreover, government involvement in the identification of tree species was deemed essential. Collaboration with Financial Service Providers (FSPs), Savings and Credit Cooperative

Organizations (SACCOs), and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) for access to finance was also encouraged. Lastly, behaviour change activities were underscored as critical, considering the prevalent dependency on traditional practices.

Upon receiving the initial feedback from the Government and districts, Mercy Corps revised the project proposal and in October 2023 conducted a rapid Environmental and social impact assessment that included detailed stakeholder engagement. The Consultations were done at the district level through key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in the districts of Nwoya, Gulu, Omoro, Pader, and Kitgum. Both international and local organizations operating in the Acholi sub region were also interviewed. The consultations aimed to:

i) Gather inputs on the approaches implemented, gaps and challenges, and the most relevant interventions aligned with district plans and community needs.
ii) Ensure alignment, alliance, and compliance with national and local policies, regulations, and ongoing programs in line with the Adaptation Fund (AF)'s guidelines

A total of 50 participants (38 men and 12 women) from Nwoya, Gulu, Pader, Kitgum and Omoro were consulted through the FGDs. The consultations were led by the Mercy Corps team and provided an inclusive platform for community members to share their experiences, identify local challenges, and propose actionable solutions aligned with their community needs and priorities. The table below summarizes key findings from community consultations conducted in the proposed project target areas and outlines how these findings have been incorporated into the project design. Detailed feedback from the stakeholder consultations has been provided in the ESIA section 4.1

Thematic Area	Key Findings from Community Consultations	Integration into Project Design
Impact of Deforestation on Livelihoods	Severe deforestation due to charcoal production, firewood collection, and population pressure. Resulting impacts include loss of biodiversity, reduced rainfall, declining crop yields, and ecosystem degradation.	Prioritization of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) measures including agroforestry, FMNR, and reforestation using indigenous species. Restoration activities will enhance local microclimates, reduce soil erosion, and contribute to long-term livelihood and environmental resilience.
Land Ownership and Conflict Dynamics	Land is mostly under customary and clan-based tenure systems, with cases of land disputes related to inheritance, boundaries, and exclusion of women.	Integration of community-based land use planning processes. Engagement of customary leaders and local authorities to resolve conflicts. Activities will promote gender-inclusive access to restoration initiatives and decision-making.
Community-Proposed Sustainable Solutions	Recommendations included tree planting (native species), agroforestry, clean energy alternatives, awareness campaigns, and training on land regeneration and conservation.	These inputs are directly reflected in project activities, including: community-led reforestation and agroforestry programs; awareness and training sessions on sustainable land management; and use of

		climate resilient technologies to reduce pressure on natural water sources and increase vegetation cover
Land Use Pressures and Competing Interests	Widespread land degradation from overgrazing, sand mining, brickmaking, and charcoal production. Competition for land between agriculture and extractive uses.	Promotion of sustainable land management and alternative livelihoods. Support for community bylaw development and enforcement on land use practices. Encouragement of integrated approaches that balance production with restoration.
Forest-Based Livelihoods and Value Chains	Communities depend on forest products such as charcoal, firewood, poles, and medicinal plants. Gendered roles noted: men in charcoal production; women in collection and sales. Declining availability of forest resources.	Project will promote alternative income-generating opportunities (e.g., nurseries, agroforestry products). Emphasis on inclusive capacity-building for women and youth. Support for community forest management and sustainable harvesting practices.
Community Involvement in Project Design	Strong interest in participating in all project phases. Communities requested training, financial support, land use bylaws, and local monitoring structures.	The project design embeds participatory planning and implementation mechanisms. Establishment of Community Adaptation Committees (CACs). Resources allocated for training, community monitoring, and bylaw development.
Barriers to Reforestation	Limited access to quality seedlings, high costs, and poor post-planting care. Land tenure issues, especially among women and displaced groups. Resistance due to preferences for non-native species and low awareness. Tree loss due to termites, livestock, and wildfires.	Establishment of community-based nurseries to improve seedling access and quality. Provision of training on tree management and maintenance. Stakeholder engagement and sensitization to build support for reforestation. Identification and protection of reforestation sites through inclusive planning.

K. Describe how the project/programme draws on multiple perspectives on innovation from e.g., communities that are vulnerable to climate change, research organisations, or other partners in the innovation space, in the context in which the project/programme would take place

The ACCESS project integrates multiple perspectives on innovation rooted in the lived experiences of vulnerable communities, supported by research institutions, and co-developed with private sector and civil society actors, ensuring that adaptation solutions are locally relevant, sustainable, and scalable

Community-led innovation for locally appropriate adaptation: The project recognizes vulnerable communities as key sources of innovation in the adaptation space. Through inclusive structures such as Climate Resilience Clubs, the project will elevate community knowledge and practices, including indigenous early warning systems, communal land use rules, and women-led ecosystem restoration initiatives. These structures provide a platform for communities to co-design, test, and iterate adaptation solutions that respond directly to their needs, particularly in the context of water stress, declining soil productivity, and unreliable rainfall. For example, the token-based input access model, which allows vulnerable farmers especially women and youth to redeem climate-resilient seeds and technologies, emerged from participatory consultations and is tailored to address financial and logistical barriers.

Collaboration with research institutions and technical bodies: The project will work closely with national research institutions such as Makerere University, NARO, and the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) to incorporate cutting-edge science and local climate data into adaptation planning. This collaboration supports innovation in climate-smart agriculture, ecosystem-based adaptation including Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration and agroforestry, and localized climate information services. These research partnerships ensure the project's innovations are scientifically robust while tailored to specific ecological and socio-economic contexts.

Technological innovation through private sector partnerships: ACCESS leverages partnerships with innovation-driven private actors such as Crypto Savannah and Ezy Agric to pilot and scale digital tools for adaptation. These include deployment of compact weather stations and AI-powered forecasts for hyper-local climate information, blockchain-based token systems for input access and traceability, and mobile platforms for real-time agricultural advisories and behavior-change messaging. These technologies are designed with local users in mind and provide innovative channels to reduce barriers to adaptation, particularly for remote or marginalized groups.

Policy and institutional innovations: ACCESS introduces institutional innovations at the landscape level, such as multi-stakeholder watershed governance structures and integrated land-use planning models. These will be developed in partnership with district and subcounty governments and align with Uganda's National Adaptation Plan, NDCs, and policies under the Climate Change Act. The project ensures coherence between formal policy frameworks and community practices, bridging gaps that often undermine climate resilience.

Adaptive learning and innovation uptake: The project includes an adaptive learning framework that captures feedback from community pilots, district-level innovation platforms, and multi-actor reflection workshops. Lessons from these processes will inform course correction, scale-up strategies, and broader knowledge dissemination. This ensures ACCESS remains dynamic and responsive, fostering a culture of continuous innovation in the adaptation space.

L. Provide justification for funding requested, focusing on the full cost of adaptation reasoning

The proposed project activities comply with the full cost of adaptation reasoning because the costs proposed are interpreted as "the costs associated with implementing concrete adaptation activities that address the adverse effects of climate change," as specified in the OPG main text. This states that in the

OPG Annex 5 “the proposal should demonstrate that the project/program activities are relevant in addressing its adaptation objectives and that, taken solely, without additional funding from other donors, they will help achieve these objectives.

Component 1. Smallholder farmers adopt and benefit from ecosystem-based adaptation measures focused on water conservation, enhance soil stability, create buffers for flash floods, and improve watershed function, resulting in reduced vulnerability to water scarcity, flooding, and prolonged drought, and strengthened resilience of agricultural livelihoods.| $ 2,512,847*.*

The funding requested under this component represents the full cost of adaptation required to enable smallholder farming communities to manage the intensifying effects of climate change on local water systems and land productivity. These costs are not part of routine development investments; rather, they address the additional burden imposed by climate impacts—particularly water scarcity, flash floods, and land degradation.

The component initiates with activities that build an evidence and governance foundation for EbA. This includes a participatory ecosystem service valuation focused on water and future climate scenarios. By co-producing this assessment with communities, the project identifies priority ecosystem functions, such as groundwater recharge and flood regulation, that are critical for resilience. Participatory watershed and water planning activities follow, ensuring that water governance structures align with seasonal variability and incorporate projections of climate-induced shifts in water availability.

Restorative landscape interventions are core to this component. Farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry investments promote reforestation and riparian buffer restoration, critical for reducing runoff, increasing infiltration, and stabilizing soil. These nature-based solutions require dedicated resources for technical assistance, community capacity building, and initial inputs—costs beyond what subsistence farmers or local institutions can bear without external adaptation support.

Strengthening inclusive governance is another pillar of Component 1. The project supports the revival or creation of community land and water management committees with formalized roles and bylaws, ensuring long-term stewardship of shared resources. Similarly, the establishment or strengthening of local water governance groups that include solar irrigation users and vulnerable populations promotes participatory decision-making around water access and use in a changing climate.

The component also addresses the systemic integration of adaptation practices. Solar-powered irrigation systems, rainwater harvesting technologies, and on-farm water conservation practices are linked to broader catchment-level planning frameworks. Community-led water and land-use planning processes will incorporate recharge zone protection, flood buffer establishment, and sustainable irrigation expansion, supported by workshops that convene upstream and downstream users to align priorities.

Lastly, the component invests in institutional capacity to monitor water trends and ecological indicators. In equipping local actors with the knowledge and tools to track variables such as soil moisture, vegetation cover, and recharge rates, the project enhances accountability and adaptive learning within the watershed.

In sum, the requested funding covers the full incremental cost of delivering EbA interventions that are tailored to climate risks, locally grounded, and systemically linked. Without this investment, smallholder farmers—particularly those already marginalized—would remain vulnerable to hydrological extremes, land degradation, and loss of agricultural productivity. The activities collectively build resilient, inclusive, and climate-responsive systems that underpin long-term adaptation across target landscapes.

Component 2: Smallholder farmers are supported by accessible climate information, financial resources, and technical assistance, within gender-responsive governance frameworks that promote inclusive, market-driven, and scalable climate resilience aligned with national priorities. | $ 1,590,988

This component targets the systemic barriers faced by smallholder farmers in responding effectively to climate variability and long-term change. The proposed activities directly address these barriers by delivering specialized, climate-specific services and resources that are not part of business-as-usual development efforts. The funding requested reflects the full cost of adaptation, as these interventions represent additional investments required to protect livelihoods, build adaptive capacity, and ensure food security in the face of accelerating climate threats.

For example, Activity 2.1.1 introduces community-based compact weather stations to generate hyperlocal, real-time data. These systems—along with clearly defined drought thresholds and early action protocols—establish a foundational pillar of anticipatory adaptation. Similarly, the establishment of Climate Information Hubs (Activity 2.1.2) leverages AI forecasting and local language translation to ensure that climate advice reaches marginalized communities in usable form. These actions go beyond existing extension services, requiring dedicated climate infrastructure and content.

In addition, Activities 2.1.3 to 2.1.6 build human and institutional capacity. By training local extension agents—especially women and youth—in climate-smart practices and early warning messaging and setting up demonstration sites for sustainable land and water practices, the project fosters broad-based ownership of climate adaptation strategies. Inclusive platforms and seasonal planning forums ensure that diverse stakeholders coordinate action in a timely, climate-informed manner. These governance and planning mechanisms are not currently resourced through local public finance but are critical to delivering equitable and effective responses.

On the resource access side, Activities 2.2.1 to 2.2.6 focus on climate-resilient value chains and innovation. The project proposes a token-based subsidy system triggered by climate alerts to ensure timely distribution of drought-tolerant inputs. Agro-dealers are supported to stock climate-smart products, while user guides and training materials help farmers adopt them effectively. Furthermore, bundled service models and market assessments reduce adoption costs and promote private sector participation. Institutionalizing local adaptation plans grounds all interventions in community priorities, strengthening policy responsiveness at sub-county and district levels.

The component’s design reflects the full incremental cost of equipping vulnerable farming communities with the information, governance mechanisms, and adaptive assets they would not otherwise access. These costs are essential to enable transformational, inclusive, and sustainable climate resilience aligned with national policies and international adaptation priorities.

Component 3: Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy Engagement. | $ 106,211

Costs under this component cover:

- Component 3 enables the ACCESS program to function as a learning, influencing, and strategically adaptive platform. The proposed investments under this component are essential for supporting real-time knowledge capture, coordination across stakeholders, and structured policy engagement—all of which represent the full cost of adaptation not covered under typical development budgets.
- The establishment of a consortium-wide Project Management Unit and knowledge system will ensure coordinated implementation, quarterly learning reviews, and adaptive program management. This infrastructure allows the consortium to generate timely insights that inform implementation adjustments and policy engagement strategies.
- A detailed policy and institutional analysis will uncover enabling and constraining factors for ecosystem-based adaptation and inclusive governance, with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. These findings will underpin targeted advocacy and generate evidence to support systems change.
- Evidence from project implementation will be translated into policy briefs and technical recommendations that feed into national adaptation processes, including Uganda's NDC and NAP frameworks. These briefs will form the backbone of ACCESS's influence efforts.
- The project will convene learning dialogues and coordination platforms across energy, agriculture, and environmental sectors. These spaces allow for alignment of policy and implementation priorities and elevate voices from the field into national conversations.
- ACCESS will also produce thematic briefs, practice notes, and an open-source adaptation blueprint designed for replication by other actors. Capturing and documenting success stories will further demonstrate the value of inclusive and ecosystem-based adaptation practices, promoting uptake across communities and institutions.
- Collectively, these investments ensure that learning and policy engagement remain central to ACCESS's approach—supporting a systems-level shift toward evidence-based, inclusive, and scalable adaptation outcomes.

M. Describe how the sustainability of the project / programme outcomes has been taken into account when designing the project / programme.

The ACCESS project ensures long-term sustainability by embedding ecosystem-based adaptation practices into natural and community systems. It supports the restoration and protection of critical watersheds through farmer-managed natural regeneration, agroforestry, and integrated water conservation techniques. These include on-farm rainwater harvesting, soil moisture retention, and small-scale watershed restoration as outlined in Activity 1.1.1 and 1.1.4. Restoration planning is informed by ecosystem service valuation and participatory mapping processes (Activities 1.1.1 to 1.1.3), ensuring that interventions align with local conditions and build upon community knowledge. By promoting these landscape-level practices, the project reduces the vulnerability of smallholder farmers to climate-related risks such as drought, floods, and land degradation.

Sustainability is reinforced through inclusive community governance structures. The project establishes or strengthens Community Land and Water Management Committees (Activity 1.1.6), with broad representation including women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. These committees lead in co-

developing community bylaws and enforcement systems that promote sustainable land use and restoration. In sub-counties like Omoro, Nwoya, and Gulu, where environmental degradation has been most acute, committees will spearhead tailored restoration plans, supported by capacity building and training sessions (Activity 1.2.5). Additionally, community-led water and land-use planning (Activity 1.2.4) and participatory water mapping (Activity 1.1.3) ensure that knowledge and leadership reside locally, fostering lasting stewardship of natural resources.

Institutional sustainability is embedded by building the capacity of district government actors, particularly Natural Resource Officers and extension personnel, to deliver technical support and implement integrated watershed plans. Through Activities 2.1.3 and 2.1.5, local government staff are trained in climate-smart extension delivery, climate information dissemination, and participatory planning. These efforts are linked to district and regional development processes via inclusive catchment-level workshops (Activity 1.2.6) and coordinated through eight landscape-level management plans aligned with national climate priorities such as Uganda's NDCs and NAPs. An institutional and policy landscape analysis (Activity 3.1.2) will identify structural enablers for mainstreaming and sustaining the approaches introduced by the project.

To promote financial sustainability, the project strengthens both market systems and community financial platforms. Village Savings and Loan Associations are leveraged to support community members' investment in restoration inputs and practices. These are complemented by market systems strengthening efforts, including engagement with agro-dealers and input suppliers to stock and distribute drought-tolerant seeds and solar irrigation kits using flexible financing models (Activity 2.2.3). Additionally, a token-based early action system (Activity 2.2.2) will be used to trigger subsidized access to adaptation inputs when early warning thresholds, detected via weather stations, indicate rising climate risk. These mechanisms foster a self-sustaining cycle of investment and adaptation support.

Technical sustainability is achieved by embedding localized climate information systems and anticipatory planning into community structures. The project establishes compact weather stations (Activity 2.1.1) and climate information hubs in each sub-county (Activity 2.1.2), offering tailored forecasts and seasonal advisories in local languages. These are linked to seasonal planning forums (Activity 2.1.6), where communities, local leaders, and extension workers coordinate early action and resource distribution. Local extension agents, particularly women and youth, are trained in climate-smart agriculture and early warning dissemination (Activity 2.1.3), while community demonstration sites (Activity 2.1.4) showcase restoration practices. These tools and platforms are designed to remain operational and useful long after the project's close.

Finally, the project includes a co-created exit strategy to ensure that the approaches, systems, and benefits are sustained. Knowledge products such as policy briefs, success stories, and technical notes (Activities 3.1.3, 3.1.5, and 3.1.6) will capture key learnings and inform scale-up by regional governments and development partners. A knowledge management system (Activity 3.1.1) and a series of policy engagement events (Activity 3.1.4) will further facilitate replication and institutional integration. By building the technical, institutional, and financial foundations for continued implementation, and by aligning all activities with district, national, and regional frameworks, the ACCESS project establishes strong and scalable pathways for sustained climate resilience across Uganda's Acholi sub-region.

N. Provide an overview of the environmental and social impacts and risks identified as being relevant to the project.

The project has been screened for environmental and social risks as per the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund. The project does not pose any significant adverse environmental or social impacts. Any potential negative effects are expected to be small, confined to the project area, reversible, and can be avoided, minimised, or addressed through established environmental and social management practices.

Ecological risk: Introducing new crops or tree varieties could disrupt local ecosystems and harm biodiversity. Non-native species might outcompete native flora, leading to a reduction in biodiversity. This can disrupt ecological interactions, potentially leading to the decline of certain species. To mitigate the potential risks associated with promoting new crops or tree varieties, the ACCESS project will adopt a science-based approach to ensure ecological compatibility and sustainability. The project will prioritise the use of native species and those well-adapted to local conditions, minimising the risk of introducing invasive species that could disrupt local ecosystems and harm biodiversity. Thorough ecological assessments will be conducted before introducing any new crops or tree varieties to evaluate their potential impacts on local biodiversity and ecosystems. This data-driven approach will help identify and mitigate risks early on. The project will implement diverse planting schemes rather than monocultures, supporting a wider range of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem resilience. Establishing buffer zones around sensitive natural habitats will further protect these areas from potential negative impacts of new species. If any negative effects are detected, adaptive management strategies will be implemented promptly to address these issues. This ensures that the project can respond to unforeseen challenges and adjust practices as needed. The project will also incorporate traditional ecological knowledge from local communities, ensuring that introduced species and practices are compatible with existing ecosystems and conservation efforts. Engaging local stakeholders helps identify potential risks early and develop culturally appropriate solutions. By emphasising agroforestry systems that combine trees with crops, the project aims to create a more diverse and resilient landscape that supports both agricultural production and biodiversity conservation. Training local communities and project staff on sustainable land management practices will ensure long-term protection of natural habitats. This capacity-building effort empowers local stakeholders to manage and protect their environments effectively. Additionally, the project will engage with local and international conservation experts such as Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry to provide guidance on species selection and management practices, ensuring that the project benefits from the latest scientific knowledge and best practices. Through these measures, the ACCESS project aims to promote new crops and tree varieties in a way that supports biodiversity, conserves natural habitats, and benefits all community members equitably, minimising the risks of maladaptation and ensuring sustainable and ecologically sound interventions.

Social risk: If new crop or tree varieties are not carefully selected and managed, they could reinforce existing inequalities. Marginalised groups might not have access to the benefits of these new species, or they might bear the brunt of any negative ecological impacts, such as reduced access to forest and land resources. To mitigate the risk, the project will deliberately and carefully target women, youth, and marginalised groups, following the principle of ‘do no harm,’ and train them and equip them so that they can economically benefit. Sensitisation with the community will be conducted so that they have a sustained access to forested areas.

Beneficiaries Engagement: Based on the initial baseline assessment, segmentation, and willingness to pay the assessment, the program will target all categories of household (HHs) especially those with

persons with special needs (physically disabled, chronically ill, living with orphans <18 years, elderly > 65+ years), female headed HHs, HHs with pregnant and/or lactating women, and HHs with children <5 years. The program's target groups include individuals that are part of VSLAs, cooperatives, SMEs, and local authorities (formal and informal). The action will use proven approaches in identifying the target population and ensuring their input and participation, which includes a step-by-step vulnerability mapping, stakeholder input, and verification process. This process will be supported by Mercy Corps' robust M&E systems. The targeting approach will involve multi-stakeholder participation and engagement throughout the lifecycle. This includes a consultation process with local community members and leaders and government agencies and development partners.

In line with AF guidelines, the table below outlines the approach in addressing those risks identified that require mitigation.

Checklist of environmental and social principles	Risk analysis and Likelihood	Impact	Potential impacts and risks – further assessment and management required for compliance
Compliance with the Law	*The risk of not being compliant is low.* *The project is aligned with the National and international laws. A detailed analysis of compliance is detailed in the Environmental and social Impact Assessment attached as an annex.*	High	The project will ensure compliance with all international, regional, and national laws and regulations. Participatory consultations with all related ministries and other key stakeholders will be conducted at the inception and throughout the project implementation period to ensure compliance with the national and international laws and standards.
Access and Equity	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure access and Equity*	Medium	The project will ensure that women and men participate fully and equitably throughout the project cycle in order to ensure gender responsive outcomes and results. A Gender Assessment and Gender Action Plan have been developed to ensure that women and men are meaningfully engaged in project activities and realise an equitable share of project benefits.
Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to*	Medium	The project will target the vulnerable communities in the Acholi sub-region (Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya, Pader and Omoro). Further consultations will be made during full

	ensure access and Equity		proposal development to find the best approach and criteria to reach these groups particularly focusing on women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous groups to ensure participation and equal access.
Human Rights	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure access and Equity*	Low	The project will respect international human rights. Human rights principles will be integrated in the project implementation to enhance climate change resilience in the targeted region.
Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure gender equity and women empowerment*	Low	A further detailed gender analysis has been carried out to ensure that all gender aspects are fully incorporated.
Core Labour Rights	*The risk is low.* *The project will be implemented in close collaboration with the district and local authorities and Uganda labour laws will be considered*	Low	Uganda Labour laws will be considered and adhered to during project implementation All appropriate health and safety measures will be taken into consideration in accordance with both national and international standards. Compliance will be monitored through progress reports, supervision missions, the mid-term review, and terminal evaluation.
Indigenous Peoples	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure inclusion of all beneficiaries*	Low	The project will target all groups including indigenous and minority groups. A wide and targeted stakeholder consultations will be undertaken at the inception of the project to ensure inclusion of these groups in the target beneficiaries.

Involuntary Resettlement	*Low risk.* *The project activities target communities in their locations*	high	No involuntary resettlement is foreseen. The project will work with communities in their location and on voluntary basis
Protection of Natural Habitats	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure protection of natural habitats*	High	The proposed project is designed to undertake Nature-based Adaptation solutions that will bring positive benefits to degraded ecosystems. Further environmental assessments will be conducted during the project implementation to identify any potential risks to the natural habitats. y
Conservation of Biological Diversity	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure protection of natural habitats*	High	There is no risk to the conservation of biodiversity as no invasive plant species will be planted. Reforestation will use indigenous species and will be designed in consultation with the government and other key stakeholders ensuring compliance with the national laws on biodiversity conservation.
Climate Change	*The risk is low.* *The project is designed to address climate change impacts*	High	The project is designed to reduce the negative impacts of climate change and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and populations to Climate.
Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and no risk to this aspect was identified*	Low	The project activities will contribute to sustainable land management, efficient water use and prevention of water and indoor air pollution
Public Health	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and no risk to this aspect was identified*	Low	The project activities do not lead to any negative impact on public health.
Physical and Cultural Heritage	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and*	Low	The project will promote local knowledge on reforestation and agroforestry and train communities to handle the new technologies without affecting cultural heritage. The programme will not

	no risk to this aspect was identified		implement activities that will target specific physical assets in the project sites
Lands and Soil Conservation	*The risk is low.* *An initial ESIA has been conducted and a ESMP developed to ensure protection of land and soil conservation*	Medium	The project aims to improve vegetative cover, plant resilient and diverse indigenous plant species and improve soil management and fertility through agroforestry practices

K. Grievance Mechanism

A mechanism will be established to effectively address grievances or answering questions from project affected people as well as indirect stakeholders. The mechanism will be a core component for managing operational risks, enhancing community engagement, social inclusion, promoting accountability and transparency, to support the project's achievement of its objectives and enhance social and environmental sustainability according to AF guidelines.

Complaints will be addressed by different stakeholders—Mercy Corps, and other project partners. Mercy Corps will oversee the implementation of the grievance mechanism through its Community Accountability Reporting Mechanism (CARM), developed in Uganda as part of Mercy Corps' global initiative to prevent exploitation and abuse. CARM provides a channel for all community members to provide feedback, suggestions, complaints, and concerns, in a manner that is safe, confidential, transparent, and accessible, enabling Mercy Corps to make adaptations to program activities and/or address any safeguarding concerns.

All direct beneficiaries of the project and other related stakeholders will be informed about the CARM mechanism for resolution of conflicts and the complaint-handling mechanism of the project. Mercy corps with project partners will develop public information materials (leaflets and brochures) that explain the project, roles and responsibilities complete with detailed contact information of persons in charge (name, position, address, phone, email), and including access to information regarding the ad hoc complaint handling mechanism for the AF.

PART III: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

A. Describe the arrangements for project/programme management at the regional and national level, including coordination arrangements within countries and among them. Describe how the potential to partner with national institutions, and when possible, national implementing entities (NIEs), has been considered, and included in the management arrangements

The project implementation is arranged as below:

No	Organisation	Roles and Responsibilities
1	Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)	• National Implementing Entity (NIE) • Oversee overall financial and project management. • Coordinate project management and implementation • Report consolidated project results to the Adaptation Fund • Approve project annual work plan and budgets from the Executing Entity • Approve annual financial and technical reports from the Executing Entity • Provide administrative and management support to the Executing Entity
2	Mercy Corps	• Executing Entity • Lead reporting and submission of consolidated reports to MWE • Ensure project creates meaningful impact on target communities • Lead Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), learning, and Community Accountability • Ensure compliance with national frameworks and environmental and social safeguards • Design and oversee agroforestry systems and FMNR (Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration) practices • Train extension workers and lead farmers on climate-resilient agriculture and restoration practices • Lead knowledge management and documentation of best practices • Provide technical support for establishing community nurseries and restoring degraded landscapes • Coordinate with local authorities and stakeholders for catchment-based planning • Prepare and submit semi-annual and annual work plans and budgets to MWE • Provide personnel including Project Manager, Officers, and M&E staff
3	Crypto Savannah	• Deploy compact weather stations and IoT systems in project areas • Collect and analyze real-time weather and microclimate data

		• Use AI tools to improve forecasting and advisory services • Support digital token release systems for accessing climate-resilient technologies • Train climate clubs on interpreting climate information for decision-making
4	Ezy Agric	• Facilitate access to climate-smart inputs through digital platforms • Support token-based input distribution using CryptoSavannah's data systems • Link farmers to extension agents, agro-dealers, and markets • Provide backend support for tracking farmer practices and adoption trends • Generate field-level data to support adaptive management and M&E
5	Local NGO (to be identified), supported by Mercy Corps	• Map communities and identify sites for nurseries and demonstration plots • Support community mobilisation and sensitisation on restoration and sustainable land use • Identify degraded areas for reforestation and restoration in collaboration with local authorities • Promote behaviour change through education and communication campaigns • Support follow-up with farmers and groups on adoption of agroforestry and water conservation practices
6	Retailers and VSLAs	• Support implementation of project activities such as tool and seedling distribution • Facilitate access to restoration inputs and agroforestry materials • Collaborate in planning and disseminating project-related messages
7	Beneficiaries (Women, Youth, People with Disabilities, Smallholder Farmers)	• Participate in training, consultations, and project implementation activities • Engage in tree planting, soil and water conservation, and restoration of degraded land • Share feedback to support inclusive and context-relevant implementation
8	Financial Service Providers (FSPs)	• Develop and offer tailored financial products for smallholder farmers and groups • Collaborate with VSLAs to improve financial access for ecosystem restoration and SLM practices

B. Describe the measures for financial and project/programme risk management

Principle	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation measures	Responsible
Financial Risk	**Fraud and aid diversion:**	Low	High	Mercy Corps has robust policies that include prohibitions against all forms of fraud, corruption, diversion, and the provision of resources to, or transactions with, sanctioned groups. To ensure compliance with these policies, Mercy Corps has in place a variety of systems, internal controls, and due diligence measures. Mercy Corps assesses the context and risks in any geographical area in Uganda where we operate or plan to operate. Potential risks to programme staff or resources, including the risk of aid diversion are then determined. A range of due diligence checks, including restricted party screenings, are intended to minimise the risk of engaging with potentially sanctioned or prohibited parties. Mercy Corps will only work in areas where we can be reasonably assured that beneficiaries can be selected, and programme activities delivered without interference from or benefit to prohibited parties. A stakeholder engagement approach is	Mercy Corps

				used to prevent interference and adjust to shifting dynamics in the area of operation. Monitoring: The implementing partners, under the leadership of the MC Finance & Compliance Director, will develop a protocol for monitoring of financial and programmatic interventions. The MEL team carries out programme monitoring throughout the lifetime of the programmes. MEL staff monitor activity attendance lists, collect associated reports from programming staff, and conduct post-distribution monitoring for cash, vouchers, grants, in-kind distributions to verify quality and quantity of the support provided. MEL staff are not under the supervision of direct programme staff to ensure segregation of duties between the project staff setting up and conducting the distributions and the staff checking and confirming distributions. Mercy Corps and partners will also conduct regular data quality checks of key MEL data to examine data accuracy, consistency, integrity, and protections	

				throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. Moreover, during major data collection activities, such as the baseline survey, reflection events are held to interpret the data, provide feedback on data collection methods and course correct, if needed. These systems also serve as early detection mechanisms for potential challenges. Community Accountability Reporting Mechanisms are an essential part of Mercy Corps and the consortium' commitment to excellence and integrity, and are one of the key tools for tackling any needless, careless, or extravagant expenditure of donor funds, the mismanagement of donor funded resources/property, the intentional, wrongful, or improper use or destruction of donor-funded resources or any abuse of a position of influence.	
Institutional Risk	Safeguarding violation	low	High	At Mercy Corps, safeguarding is an umbrella term that refers to the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking and exploitation, internal sexual misconduct and	Mercy Corps

				child abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We have zero tolerance toward any form of harm, abuse, or exploitation. Our Safeguarding Core Standards Policy outlines a set of 10 Standards detailing the minimum requirements for safeguarding across our operations and programmes in line with IASC and CHS Alliance standards. Due to the inherent power imbalances between aid workers and beneficiaries, the risk of safeguarding violations is always present. In addition to the risks faced by women and girls, the risk of harmful child labour and improper labour practices are high. The in-country safeguarding team will lead efforts mitigate safeguarding risks through the establishment of safe recruitment and onboarding processes, development of key safeguarding messages to programme beneficiaries and staff and staff- ensuring they are aware of their rights and ensure reporting systems are operational, accessible and communicated, integrate mitigation measures the program lifecycle, creation	

				of partner capacity building plan to support around key prevention and response measures are in place, provision of mandatory code of conduct trainings and face to face Safeguarding trainings to all team members and regular updates to current Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) referral pathways, ensuring survivors receive appropriate support. Mercy Corps will collaborate with partners around our shared commitment to prevent and respond to safeguarding violations. Subrecipients PSEA systems will be assessed during the due diligence stage to determine areas where support might be needed to ensure we all have the necessary policies, procedures, and practices to prevent and respond to PSEA violations, in collaboration with program and CARM teams. The project will ensure signatory and compliance with Mercy Corps Code of Conduct for all staff and key partners, followed up by Safeguarding training and regular	

				coaching/mentoring on safeguarding.	

C. Describe the measures for environmental and social risk management, in line with the Environmental and Social Policy for the Adaptation Fund.

Principle	Residual risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation measures	Responsible
Environmental Risk Protection of natural habitats	Some EbA interventions e.g. reforestation or agroforestry may involve planting non-native or fast-growing species that could outcompete indigenous biodiversity	Low	High	The project will promote use on locally adapted non-invasive species for reforestation and agroforestry activities and will partner with national forestry institutions to validate species selection	Mercy Corps
Social Risk Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment	Women's status and representation may limit their meaningful participation in project activities	Medium	High	The project will ensure that women and men Participate fully and Equitably throughout the project cycle in order to ensure gender responsive outcomes and results. In addition to the consultations done already, women will be consulted on-site, during deployment of various project components. A Gender Assessment and Gender Action Plan have been developed to ensure that women and men are meaningfully engaged in project activities and realise an equitable share of project benefits. Gender disaggregated data on gender responsive indicators and integrating of gender mainstreaming is reporting of all	Mercy Corps

				components will be adopted.	
Financial Risk	Misuse, corruption, fraud, and bribery	Low	High	Mercy Corps have rigorous financial controls in place for their operations and monitoring for its partners, reducing the risk of fraud occurring and also increasing its likelihood of detection if it does. This will be monitored in the project-specific risk register and issues log.	Mercy Corps
Institutional Risk	Safeguarding violation	low	High	The project will ensure signatory and compliance with Mercy Corps Code of Conduct for all staff and key partners, followed up by Safeguarding training and regular coaching/mentoring on safeguarding.	Mercy Corps

D. Describe the monitoring and evaluation arrangements and provide a budgeted M&E plan

Monitoring and Evaluation

MEL System Overview: Mercy Corps, in collaboration with relevant private sector partners will lead the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) component of the ACCESS program. The MEL system will integrate process monitoring, performance tracking, and adaptive learning to effectively measure progress toward the programme's goal of enhancing climate resilience among smallholder farmers in Uganda's Acholi sub-region. The system will enable evidence-based decision-making, support adaptive programme management, and ensure accountability to stakeholders, including target communities and the funder.

During inception, in consultation with the funder, a robust MEL system will be developed, including a MEL plan, indicator management plan (data collection & analysis plan), a learning agenda, reporting schedules, and clarification of responsibilities. This system will track progress, generate evidence of contributions to enhancing climate resilience for smallholder farmers in Uganda's Acholi sub-region, validate assumptions, and foster continuous learning. Mercy Corps' MEL Policy (with 15 Minimum Standards) and associated standard operating procedures will guide implementation, ensuring rigor and data quality.

Staffing: A dedicated MEL Officer, with support from the Project Manager, will lead all ACCESS MEL activities and serve as the primary focal point for Mercy Corps and its implementing partners. The MEL Officer will drive the harmonization and standardization of tools and data management systems across the program to ensure consistent and accurate routine monitoring, data collection, quality assurance, and reporting of activities and milestones. The Mercy Corps Uganda Country MEL Manager will provide overarching technical guidance and backstopping support.

Performance Measurement: The ACCESS MEL approach will focus on process monitoring (tracking activities and outputs) and performance monitoring (assessing progress against the log frame targets). A comprehensive baseline study will be conducted during the inception phase to generate key reference values across relevant indicators. This will combine household surveys, market assessments, institutional assessments, and geospatial analysis to measure climate resilience outcomes (e.g., income diversification, GBV risk perception, governance inclusion, vegetation cover, soil moisture levels, etc.) and to assess the accessibility, affordability, willingness to pay for, and effectiveness of climate-resilient technologies. Midline and endline surveys will generate deeper insights into outcome-level change and contextual factors.

The MEL system will track both quantitative and qualitative data across all result levels (goal, outcome, outputs). This will include baseline, midline & endline household surveys to gather data on adoption rates and program impacts, alongside key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to provide in-depth qualitative insights into community experiences and stakeholder perspectives. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) analysis will support the monitoring of land use and vegetation changes, while routine monitoring, field observations and site inspections will serve to verify physical infrastructure developments and shifts in practices at the community level. Official documents, policy checklists and institutional records will be systematically reviewed to track policy integration, governance strengthening, and the uptake of climate information by institutions. Data collected through these primary sources will be triangulated with secondary sources and validated through participatory methods to ensure accuracy and local relevance.

To ensure that the MEL system reflects and supports inclusive development, data will be disaggregated by sex, age, location disability status and other relevant markers specific to each indicator. This approach will help to capture differential impacts and promote equitable outcomes across diverse population groups.

Learning: ACCESS will embed continuous learning and adaptive management as core principles throughout the programme lifecycle. A structured Learning Agenda, developed during inception, will guide inquiry into priority themes such as climate resilience, governance, technology uptake. This agenda will link inquiry methods with dissemination pathways to ensure insights are actionable and widely shared. Learning will be embedded through regular learning loops, including quarterly programme review

meetings, district, regional & national learning events and community feedback validation sessions. These structured forums will bring together consortium partners and other stakeholder representatives (NGOs, INGOs, and PSAs, government officials) to test assumptions to the theory-of-change, reflect on emerging evidence, and adapt strategies in response to evolving contexts and community priorities.

The MEL system will go beyond compliance and actively support learning through outcome tracking, experimentation, and reflection. Lessons learned, including those from community-led innovations and implementation experiences, will be continuously documented and integrated into programme planning, delivery. This participatory and adaptive approach will ensure ACCESS remains agile, contextually relevant, and aligned with community needs. It will also build a robust, actionable evidence base to inform programme decisions and contribute to policy and practice in climate resilience at local and national levels.

Community Accountability and Reporting Mechanism (CARM): The program will adopt Mercy Corps' CARM system to integrate community voice and accountability. CARM has been developed in Uganda as part of Mercy Corps' global initiative to prevent exploitation and abuse. CARM will enable members of targeted communities, more so women and any vulnerable groups, to provide f feedback, suggestions, complaints, and concerns, through safe, accessible, and confidential channels. CARM information will enable Mercy Corps to take safeguarding decisions and community-informed program adaptations to the proposed ACCESS activities.

Dissemination Strategy: ACCESS will implement a targeted dissemination strategy to ensure that MEL insights inform programmatic improvement, influence policy, and contribute to wider sector knowledge. Learning products (e.g. policy briefs, case studies, success stories, outcome snapshots, etc.) will be tailored to diverse audiences, including implementing partners, district authorities, national policymakers, and climate resilience platforms. These products will be developed jointly with partners and disseminated through community forums, district, regional & national learning events, policy dialogues and other multistakeholder forums. The program will also leverage existing coordination mechanisms and networks, including government planning platforms, CSO coalitions, and private sector forums, to share evidence and promote uptake of proven practices.

Key learning will be shared through quarterly reports, annual learning summaries, and stakeholder convenings, ensuring that findings are accessible, actionable, and aligned with Uganda's national climate adaptation priorities. This approach will ensure ACCESS delivers not only results but also continuous insight—informing policy, strengthening climate adaptation systems, and building resilience at scale.

Quality Assurance, Data, and Information Management

ACCESS will implement a rigorous and systematic approach to data management, beginning with the use of standardized data collection tools. All tools, including surveys, checklists, and interview guides, will be pre-tested to ensure consistency, reliability, and contextual relevance.

To support integrated and efficient data management, ACCESS will adopt Mercy Corps' recommended MEL technology suite. Data will be collected using ComCare via tablets or smartphones, enabling streamlined field data capture. Collected data will be cleaned and processed through Microsoft Azure and visualized via Power BI dashboards. This digitized system will facilitate near real-time monitoring and analysis, supporting evidence-based reflection and adaptive program management. Results will be updated monthly and tracked in Tola Data, Mercy Corps' indicator management system, where each

result will be linked to supporting evidence to enable timely decision-making and reporting. SharePoint will serve as a centralized repository for MEL documentation, protocols, and audit trails, ensuring secure storage and easy access.

All programme consortium staff and enumerators involved in data gathering will undergo comprehensive training to support accurate and ethical data collection. This will include guidance on data collection methodologies, the ethical handling of information, the effective use of digital tools and safeguarding. Regular refresher trainings will be conducted to maintain high standards and address any emerging capacity gaps.

A multi-layered data validation and verification process will be implemented to ensure the accuracy of collected information. This will include real-time data checks through built-in validation rules in CommCare, as well as randomized spot checks conducted by the MEL Officer to compare field data with original sources. Triangulation of data from multiple sources, such as household surveys, direct field observations, and project records, will be used to cross-verify findings. Periodic Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) will be conducted to ensure the integrity, validity, reliability, precision, and timeliness of indicator data.

The digitalized MEL system will incorporate robust security protocols, including role-based user access, data encryption, and regular system backups. All data will be managed in alignment with GDPR standards and Mercy Corps' Data Protection Policy, with reference to participants personal identifiable' data. Anonymization and aggregation will be applied where necessary, particularly for sensitive indicators such as gender-based violence (GBV).

To further strengthen data quality, quarterly internal data review meetings will be convened with project management and technical teams. These sessions will be used to assess data trends, identify anomalies, and address any emerging quality concerns, thereby ensuring that data remains a reliable foundation for decision-making and adaptive programming.

Below a table capturing the reporting timelines the Executing Entity (Mercy Corps)' M&E plan will commit to:

Reporting requirement	Submission schedule
Project/ Programme Inception Report	Inception Workshop: by 30 April 2026 Inception Report Submission: by 15 May 2026
Project/ Programme Performance Report (PPR)	Year 1 - 30 Apr 2026 – 29 Apr 2027 | 29 June 2027 Year 2 - 30 Apr 2027 – 29 Apr 2028 | 29 June 2028 Year 3- 30 Apr 2028 – 29 Apr 2029 | 29 June 2029 Final Report: 30 Apr 2029 – 31 Oct 2029 (6 months) | 31 Oct 2029
Project/ Programme Mid-term and Terminal Evaluations	Mid-term evaluation is – *28 February 2027* Aligning ACCESS start date with the Inception Workshop, the Terminal Evaluation will happen by 31 October 2029 - same deadline as final PPR.

Audited Financial Statement	31 December 2029
Project Completion Summary	31 October 2029 (within 6 months of completion)

Project monitoring and evaluation costs | $ 130,54

Key Monitoring and Evaluation activities are highlighted in the table below and the attached budget for a total cost of $ 130,544 for 36 months of implementation to cover: Inception Studies, M&E technology and digitalization, CARM Budget (toll-free line rollout, training, IEC material), Regular monitoring (spot check, etc.), Midline, Endline & Learning Reports, Program quarterly internal review meetings targeting all relevant stakeholders aimed at tracking progress and documenting learnings, Communication Materials, Graphic Design, Video/audio Production, Including, Final Performance Internal Review (FIPR), Closeout meeting.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning					
Deliverable	**Deliverable breakdown**	**Method of data collection**	**Frequency of data collection**	**Responsible**	**Budget**
Inception Studies Baseline and Assessment studies	- 4 Assessment reports produced: - 1 Baseline Assessment - GESI assessment - Risk and vulnerability assessments - Market & institutional assessment	Surveys, FDGs, KII	Inception	Mercy Corps	**USD 21,000**
Quarterly joint monitoring, spot checks and reviews	- 8 joint monitoring and spot checks	Observation, pre-post assessments, asset registries, etc. Monitoring & spot-check reports produced	Quarterly	Mercy Corps + Implementing Entity	**USD 7,044**
Data Quality Assessments	- 5 DQA exercises conducted to verify indicator data and tools' use	Document reviews, tool audits	Biannually	Mercy Corps	**USD 7,500**
Lessons learned briefs	- 6 lessons learned briefs produced	Learning briefs produced.	Bi-annually	Mercy Corps	**USD 8,000**
CARM sensitization and feedback collection	- At least 8 CARM sensitization and feedback sessions held	Hotline, help desks, suggestion boxes, feedback forms. CARM reports produced	Quarterly	Mercy Corps	**USD 6,000**
Midline Assessment	- 1 midline conducted to assess outcome-level performance and program review	Repeat of baseline tools, qualitative and geospatial analysis. Midline report produced.	After 15 months	Mercy Corps	**USD 17,000**
Final Internal Performance Review (FIPR)	- 1 FIPR process conducted for program staff to reflect on all MEL data against program objectives, indicators, and targets.	Staff KIIs and FGDs.	After 27 months	Mercy Corps	**USD 10,000**

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning					
Deliverable	**Deliverable breakdown**	**Method of data collection**	**Frequency of data collection**	**Responsible**	**Budget**
Endline Evaluation	- 1 endline conducted for impact assessment and gauge program's contribution to change	Repeat of baseline tools, qualitative and geospatial analysis. Endline report produced.	End of project (36 months)	External Evaluator	**USD 25,000**
Reduced Access Analysis Monitoring (RAAM)	- To allow for geospatial analysis of specific indicators (vegetation cover in disaster-prone areas, land areas under improved natural resource management)	GIS mapping, Remote sensing, or satellite imagery analysis	Continuous	Geospatial Technologist or RAAM Specialist	**USD 10,000**
Soil moisture content Measurement	- Soil moisture levels in fields using conservation techniques compared to baseline	Soil moisture sensors or manual sampling with probes in representative plots	Baseline and biannually	Environmental Monitoring Specialist (with expertise in soil moisture measurement)	**USD 10,000**
Mobile Data Collection Platform - CommCare	- Subscription over 3 years	Supports digitilized data collection	Continuous	Mercy Corps	**USD 7,200**
Database platform (Azure + TolaData)	- Subscription over 3 years	Supports digitalized data cleaning & processing	Continuous	Mercy Corps	**USD 1,800**
Phones or Tablets	- Mobile devices	Supports all data collection	Continuous	Mercy Corps	**USD 1,600**
Procurement of core administrative costs					
Payment of Staff Salaries – **M&E**	Dedicated Project staff and Support staff	Staff Contracts	Daily	Mercy Corps	**USD 151,57**

E. Include a results framework for the project/programme proposal, including milestones, targets, and indicators.

Result Level	Indicators	Target	Data Collection Method
Goal: To enhance the climate resilience of smallholder farmers in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda by promoting integrated watershed management, addressing water scarcity, and improving food security through sustainable land use practices, ecosystem restoration, and access to climate-resilient technologies. This will be supported by strengthened local planning and governance systems that empower communities to implement adaptive strategies at the landscape level.	**Indicator 1:** Number of participants (direct and indirect) **Donor Indicator**	Direct: 157,753 - 40% male (63,101) & 60 % female (94,652) Indirect: 788,765 - 40% male (315,506) & 60 % female (473,259)	Direct: Project registration records; activities' attendance records. Indirect: Household surveys, , partner & local government records of campaign efforts job creation tracking templates, market assessments,
	Indicator 2: Net additional full time/part time/short term/seasonal equivalent jobs created in target enterprises as a result of the program or intervention per year and cumulatively	90 - 40% male (36) & 60 % female (54)	Annual enterprise surveys; income/employment diaries; key informant; Business record review.
	Indicator 3: % of participants who report a perceived reduction of the risk of gender based violence as a result of access to climate-resilient technologies	60%	Household surveys (baseline, midline, endline) and focus group discussions conducted using GBV-sensitive tools
	Indicator 4: % of participants reporting improved resilience to climate shocks (e.g., droughts, floods) as a result of the intervention	80%	Household resilience surveys conducted with SADD data; supplemented by key informant interviews and climate impact tracking.
	Indicator 5: % increase in income from agroforestry products (e.g., fruits, shea butter) for participating households	50%	Household income surveys, market price monitoring, farmer group/cooperative sales data, income diaries.
	Indicator 6: % increase in vegetation cover in disaster-prone areas (serving as natural buffers against hazards)	20%	Satellite imagery analysis to calculate vegetation indices (e.g. NDVI); Ground-truth remotely sensed data with field visits, photo documentation, and vegetation transects.
Component/ Objective 1 - Reduction in exposure and sensitivity to water scarcity, flooding, and increased drought for smallholder farmers through the implementation of ecosystem-based-adaptation.			
Outcome 1. Smallholder farmers adopt and benefit from ecosystem-based adaptation measures focused on water conservation, enhance soil stability, create buffers for flash floods, and improve watershed function, resulting in reduced vulnerability to water scarcity, flooding, and prolonged drought, and strengthened resilience of agricultural livelihoods.	**Indicator 1.1:** Hectares of lands under improved natural resource management	6,800	GIS mapping, Remote sensing, or satellite imagery analysis for area measurement; validated by ground truthing field visits
	Indicator 1.2: % of households reporting diversified income sources from ecosystem-based activities (e.g., agroforestry products, beekeeping)	40% of 5,000HH (2,000)	Household surveys (income questions); validated by income diaries & market transaction logs for detailed income data.

Result Level	Indicators	Target	Data Collection Method
	Indicator 1.3: Number and type of ecosystem-based adaptation assets maintained or improved, specifically those enhancing water regulation (e.g., restored riparian buffers, agroforestry plots, swales, check dams).	800	Asset registry maintained; validated by site inspection checklists, photo logs, and key informant interviews.
Output 1.1 Enhanced community implementation and benefits from Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and integrated water conservation practices, including on-farm rainwater harvesting, soil moisture retention, and small-scale watershed restoration, to strengthen climate resilience and sustainable water use.	**Indicator 1.1.1**: % increase in knowledge among people adopting reforestation and agroforestry practices	80%	Household surveys (knowledge questions); pre- and post-training knowledge tests; focus groups for qualitative validation.
	Indicator 1.1.2: % of women farmers adopting and benefiting from Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, and integrated water conservation practices (e.g., rainwater harvesting, soil moisture retention).	70%	Household surveys (farm practice questions); validated through farm observation visits
	Indicator 1.1.3: # of households practicing reforestation and agroforestry	5,000	Household surveys (farm practice questions); verified through field visits
	Indicator 1.1.4: % of smallholder farmers reporting improved resilience to droughts or floods (e.g., less yield loss, fewer crop failures) due to ecosystem-based practices.	70%	Household surveys (resilience perception questions);
	Indicator 1.1.5: % of women and youth actively participating in land restoration committees	60%	Committee membership lists; validated with meeting attendance records & minutes.
	Indicator 1.1.6: % increase in soil moisture content (e.g., volumetric water content) measured in fields with conservation techniques compared to baseline.	15–20%	Soil moisture sensors or manual sampling with probes in representative plots; Baseline & biannual data collection.
Output 1.2: Local governance systems and community planning platforms are strengthened to coordinate and sustain ecosystem-based adaptation, integrating solar irrigation and other water-use technologies with water conservation, equitable access, and catchment-level resource management in water-stressed areas.	**Indicator 1.2.1:** Score for local governance and community planning platforms on the Degree of IWRM (e.g., use SDG 6.5.1 methodology).	Baseline + 30% improvement in score by endline	Annual institutional assessment using SDG 6.5.1 scorecard;
	Indicator 1.2.2: % of targeted local governance institutions incorporating both solarpowered irrigation and ecosystembased adaptation in official guidelines, bylaws, or operational plans.	≥ 60% of targeted sub-county/district institutions	Review of official documents; policy checklist for coding provisions; validated via key informant interviews.

Result Level	Indicators	Target	Data Collection Method
	Indicator 1.2.3: Change in the percentage of solar irrigation-equipped households reporting fair and equitable water access, disaggregated by gender and socio-economic groups.	25% increase	Household surveys among solar irrigation users (questions on access equity & disaggregation).
	Indicator 1.2.4: Annual number of convenings engaging farmers, technical staff, water users, and local institutions to plan, review, and coordinate integrated water, land, and irrigation interventions.	8	Event logs (date, attendance, agenda, minutes); validated through spot-check of events.
Component/Specific objective 2: Local and regional institutions enable smallholder farmers to access climate information, financial resources, and technical support for planning and implementing wide-scale, ecosystem-based restoration and adaptation actions. These efforts are guided by climate risk-informed, gender-responsive governance frameworks that foster inclusive, market-oriented, and scalable adaptation across landscapes, while aligning with national priorities (NAP, NDC).			
Outcome 2: Smallholder farmers are equipped with climate information, financial tools, and technical assistance through inclusive, gender-responsive governance systems that enable scalable, market-driven climate resilience aligned with national priorities.	**Indicator 2.1:** Percentage of targeted local governance institutions that apply climate information and gender-responsive approaches in planning or service delivery.	60%	Annual institutional survey (standardized tool for climate & gender integration); validated by review documented plans & key informant interviews
	Indicator 2.2: Percentage of women smallholder farmers accessing and utilising climate information, financial services, or technical assistance through gender-responsive governance frameworks.	70%	Household surveys (financial services focus); triangulated with finance provider records of service uptake.
Output 2.1: Local institutions deliver climate-smart extension services, tailored technical support, and inclusive access to timely climate information, enabling the widespread adoption of ecosystem-based water and land adaptation practices.	**Indicator 2.1.1**: Percentage of local extension institutions actively integrating climate information into their advisory content or planning tools.	70%	Audit of extension manuals & tools; Key informant interviews with extension officers to confirm integration.
	Indicator 2.1.2: Difference in service uptake between female and male farmers (e.g., % of female-headed households adopting advice vs. male).	Gap reduced by 20%	Household surveys (service update focus), disaggregated by gender & computation of uptake differentials.
Output 2.2: Market systems are strengthened to ensure the availability and affordability of climate-resilient agricultural inputs and water-saving technologies that boost smallholder productivity and sustainable resource use.	**Indicator 2.2.1:** Percentage of agro-dealers stocking certified climate-resilient seeds or water-saving tools.	80%	Market survey (agro-dealer stocks focus); validated through inventory audits at sampled agro-dealer outlets using standardized checklists
	Indicator 2.2.2: Share of inputs accessed or purchased by female	50%	Market survey (input purchase from agro-dealer by demography

Result Level	Indicators	Target	Data Collection Method
	farmers, youth, or low-income households.		questions); validated by disaggregated input purchase records & farmer surveys
Component/Specific objective 3 - Ensure efficient and effective Project Management and continuous learning and adaptation and policy engagement			
Outcome 3: Promote evidence-based policy engagement through strengthened learning, knowledge management, and dissemination framework	**Indicator 3.1** # of Policy reforms or initiatives implemented or influenced on off grid energy solutions	1 policy initiative adopted	Policy implementation tracker - documentation of reforms and adoption records.
Output 3.1: Relevant knowledge products are developed and disseminated to key stakeholders to inform practice, influence policy, and attract investment.	**Indicator 3.1.1:** # of learning events conducted at district, regional and national level	6 learning events (3 national, 3 regional)	Events tracker - session records (attendance sheets - with institution categorization, event learning groups; & event minutes/reports)
	Indicator 3.1.2: # of NGOs, INGOs and PSAs actively participating in Energy & Environment Group	20	Events tracker - session records (attendance sheets - with institution categorization, event learning groups; & event minutes/reports)

F. Demonstrate how the project/programme aligns with the Results Framework of the Adaptation Fund

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Project Objective(s)	Project Objective Indicator(s)	Fund Outcome	Fund Outcome Indicator	Grant Amount (USD)
Goal: To enhance the climate resilience of smallholder farmers in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda by promoting integrated watershed management, addressing water scarcity, and improving food security through sustainable land use practices, ecosystem restoration, and access to climate-resilient technologies. This will be supported by strengthened local planning and governance systems that empower communities to implement adaptive strategies at the landscape level.	**Indicator 4:** % of participants reporting improved resilience to climate shocks (e.g., droughts, floods) as a result of the intervention	**Outcome 1:** Reduced exposure to climate-related hazards and threats	**1.** Relevant threat and hazard information generated and disseminated to stakeholders on a timely basis	4,610,000
		Outcome 2: Strengthened institutional capacity to reduce risks associated with climate-induced socioeconomic and environmental losses	**2.1.** Capacity of staff to respond to, and mitigate impacts of, climate-related events from targeted institutions increased	
		Outcome 3: Strengthened awareness and ownership of adaptation and climate risk reduction processes at local level	**3.1.** Percentage of targeted population aware of predicted adverse impacts of climate change, and of appropriate responses	
			3.2. Percentage of targeted population applying appropriate adaptation responses	
		Outcome 4: Increased adaptive capacity within relevant development sector services and infrastructure assets	**4.1.** Responsiveness of development sector services to evolving needs from changing and variable climate	
	Indicator 6: % increase in vegetation cover in disaster-prone areas (serving as natural buffers against hazards)	**Outcome 5**: Increased ecosystem resilience in response to climate change and variability-induced stress	**5.** Ecosystem services and natural resource assets maintained or improved under climate change and variability-induced stress	
		Outcome 7: Improved policies and regulations that promote and enforce resilience measures	**7.** Climate change priorities are integrated into national development strategy	
	Indicator 2: Net additional full time/part time/short term/seasonal equivalent jobs created in target enterprises as a result of the program or	**Outcome 6:** Diversified and strengthened livelihoods and sources of income for vulnerable people in targeted areas	**6.1** Percentage of households and communities having more secure access to livelihood assets	

	intervention per year and cumulatively		**6.2.** Percentage of targeted population with sustained climate-resilient alternative livelihoods	
Project Outcome(s)	**Project Outcome Indicator(s)**	**Fund Output**	**Fund Output Indicator**	**Grant Amount (USD)**
Outcome 2: Smallholder farmers are equipped with climate information, financial tools, and technical assistance through inclusive, gender-responsive governance systems that enable scalable, market-driven climate resilience aligned with national priorities.	**Indicator 2.1:** Percentage of targeted local governance institutions that apply climate information and gender-responsive approaches in planning or service delivery.	**Output 1.1:** Risk and vulnerability assessments conducted and updated	**1.2.** No. of early warning systems (by scale) and no. of beneficiaries covered	1,590,988
		Output 2.1: Strengthened capacity of national and sub-national centres and networks to respond rapidly to extreme weather events	**2.1.1.** No. of staff trained to respond to, and mitigate impacts of, climate-related events (by gender)	
			2.1.2. No. of targeted institutions with increased capacity to minimize exposure to climate variability risks (by type, sector, and scale)	
		Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity of national and subnational stakeholders and entities to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning	**3.2.2.** No. of tools and guidelines developed (thematic, sectoral, institutional) and shared with relevant stakeholders	
	Indicator 2.2: Percentage of women smallholder farmers accessing and utilising climate information, financial services, or technical assistance through gender-responsive governance frameworks.	**Output 2.2**: Increased readiness and capacity of national and sub-national entities to directly access and program adaptation finance	**2.2.1** No. of people benefitting from the direct access and enhanced direct access modality	
Outcome 1. Smallholder farmers adopt and benefit from ecosystem-based adaptation measures focused on water conservation, enhance soil stability, create buffers for flash floods, and improve watershed function, resulting in reduced vulnerability to water scarcity, flooding, and prolonged drought, and strengthened resilience of agricultural livelihoods.	**Indicator 1.3:** Number and type of ecosystem-based adaptation assets maintained or improved, specifically those enhancing water regulation (e.g., restored riparian buffers, agroforestry plots, swales, check dams).	**Output 4:** Vulnerable development sector services and infrastructure assets strengthened in response to climate change impacts, including variability	**4.1.2.** No. of physical assets strengthened or constructed to withstand conditions resulting from climate variability and change (by sector and scale)	2,512,847
	Indicator 1.1: Hectares of lands under improved natural resource management	**Output 5:** Vulnerable ecosystem services and natural resource assets strengthened in response to climate change impacts, including variability	**5.1.** No. of natural resource assets created, maintained or improved to withstand conditions resulting from climate variability and change (by type and scale)	

	Indicator 1.2: % of households reporting diversified income sources from ecosystem-based activities (e.g., agroforestry products, beekeeping)	**Output 6:** Targeted individual and community livelihood strategies strengthened in relation to climate change impacts, including variability	**6.2.1.** Type of income sources for households generated under climate change scenario	
Outcome 3: Promote evidence-based policy engagement through strengthened learning, knowledge management, and dissemination framework	**Indicator 3.1** # of Policy reforms or initiatives implemented or influenced on offgrid energy solutions	**Output 7:** Improved integration of climate-resilience strategies into country development plans	**7.1.** No. of policies introduced or adjusted to address climate change risks (by sector)	106,211
			7.2. No. of targeted development strategies with incorporated climate change priorities enforced	

G. Include a detailed budget with budget notes, broken down by country as applicable, a budget on the Implementing Entity management fee use, and an explanation and a breakdown of the execution costs.

The budget and budget description are attached.

H. Include a disbursement schedule with time-bound milestones

	Upon signature of Agreement	One Year after Project Start a)	Year 2b)	Year 3	Year 4 c)	Total
Scheduled date	September-25	September 26		September 27		
Project Funds	1,688,902	1,519,863		1,401,235		4,610,000
Implementing Entity Fees	142,879	128,578		118,543		390,000
Total	1,831,781	1,648,441	0	1,519,778	0	5,000,000

PART IV: ENDORSEMENT BY GOVERNMENTS AND CERTIFICATION BY THE IMPLEMENTING ENTITY

A. Record of endorsement on behalf of the government[26] *Provide the name and position of the government official and indicate date of endorsement for each country participating in the proposed project / programme. Add more lines, as necessary. The endorsement letters should be attached as an annex to the project/programme proposal. Please attach the endorsement letters with this template; add as many participating governments if a regional project/programme:*

(Enter Name, Position, Ministry)	Date*: (Month, day, year)*

[26] 6. Each Party shall designate and communicate to the secretariat the authority that will endorse on behalf of the national government the projects and programmes proposed by the implementing entities.

(Enter Name, Position, Ministry)	Date*: (Month, day, year)*
(Enter Name, Position, Ministry)	Date*: (Month, day, year)*

B. Implementing Entity certification Provide *the name and signature of the Implementing Entity Coordinator and the date of signature. Provide also the project/programme contact person's name, telephone number and email address*

I certify that this proposal has been prepared in accordance with guidelines provided by the Adaptation Fund Board, and prevailing National Development and Adaptation Plans (……list here…..) and subject to the approval by the Adaptation Fund Board, commit to implementing the project/programme in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund and on the understanding that the Implementing Entity will be fully (legally and financially) responsible for the implementation of this project/programme.	
Name & Signature Implementing Entity Coordinator	
Date: *(Month, Day, Year)*	Tel. and email:
Project Contact Person:	
Tel. And Email:	

Letter of Endorsement by Government

[Government Letter Head]

[Date of Endorsement Letter]

To: The Adaptation Fund Board
c/o Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat
Email: Secretariat@Adaptation-Fund.org
Fax: 202 522 3240/5

Subject: Endorsement for [Title of Project/Programme]

In my capacity as designated authority for the Adaptation Fund in [country], I confirm that the above (select national or regional) project/programme proposal is in accordance with the government's (select national or regional) priorities in implementing adaptation activities to reduce adverse impacts of, and risks, posed by climate change in the (select country or region).

Accordingly, I am pleased to endorse the above project/programme proposal with support from the Adaptation Fund. If approved, the project/programme will be implemented by [implementing entity] and executed by [national or local executing entity].

Sincerely,

[Name of Designated Government Official]
[Position/Title in Government]