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# Botswana

Country case study report • March 2025

Independent Evaluation of the Green Climate  
Fund's Approach to Indigenous Peoples



GREEN CLIMATE FUND  
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT

# Evaluation of the GCF's Approach to Indigenous Peoples

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COUNTRY CASE STUDY REPORT: BOTSWANA

03/2025

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AAF</b>	Affirmative Action Framework
<b>AE</b>	Accredited entity
<b>CI</b>	Conservation International
<b>CBNRM</b>	Community Based Natural Resources Management Programme
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus group discussion
<b>FPIC</b>	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
<b>GAP</b>	Gender action plan
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GoB</b>	Government of Botswana
<b>IEU</b>	Independent Evaluation Unit
<b>IPs</b>	Indigenous Peoples
<b>IPP</b>	Indigenous Peoples Plan
<b>IPPs</b>	Indigenous Peoples Plans
<b>KII</b>	Key informant interviews
<b>NDA</b>	National designated authority
<b>RADP</b>	Remote Area Development Programme
<b>RAVCs</b>	Remote area vulnerable communities
<b>REDD+</b>	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Results-based payments
<b>RRADP</b>	Revised Remote Area Development Programme
<b>SPR</b>	Second Performance Review
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDRIP</b>	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples





## A. INTRODUCTION

This country case study has been conducted as an input into the independent evaluation of the GCF's Approach to Indigenous Peoples (IPs). The GCF's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) is undertaking the evaluation. It focuses on objectively assessing the GCF's approach towards IPs, focusing on the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of the Indigenous Peoples' Policy. Multiple data sources and methods, including country case studies, inform the evaluation. The country case study visit was conducted by Rishabh Moudgill, Policy and Evaluation Specialist of the IEU and Ketsile Molokomme, independent consultant. The country visit was undertaken from August 15-21, 2024 and included visits to Gaborone to meet the relevant ministries and stakeholders alongside visit to the villages of Nokaneng and Habu in the Okavango Delta region of North-West District of Botswana.

### 1. CASE STUDY PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY, AND LIMITATIONS

#### a. Botswana case-study objectives

The evaluation had the following objectives:

- a) Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Fund's approach to IPs
- b) Internal and external coherence of the GCF's Indigenous Peoples Policy (IPs Policy) and the extent to which the implementation of the IPs Policy has guided GCF results.

#### b. IPs-relevant project in Botswana

This section introduces the IPs relevant to GCF-funded projects in Botswana.

Botswana has six GCF readiness activities for a total of USD 2.3 million and 3 GCF-funded projects for USD 81 million. The most relevant project for this evaluation case study is GCF's project FP158 on 'the Ecosystem-Based Adaptation and Mitigation in Botswana's Communal Rangelands.' This project is classified as a public project implemented through a partnership between the Government of Botswana (GoB) and Conservation International (CI) as the accredited entity (AE).

GCF's FP158 aims to restore vegetation in communal grazing lands particularly impacted by climate change. FP158 will improve the restoration and management of grazing vegetation, which will increase the amount of moisture the soil holds. This will make cattle-raising more resilient to drought while at the same time enhancing soil carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The project was approved in March 2021 for a project duration of eight years and five months, and it aims to benefit approximately 247,000 people directly and 2.29 million people indirectly. The total amount of GCF-committed funds for this project is USD 36.76 million, while the total financing is USD 97.63 million. So far, only USD 6.7 million have been disbursed by the GCF: 18% of GCF committed funding.

FP158 is explicit on the issue of IPs. The terminology of IPs, communities, populations, groups, plans, and cultures receives twenty-four mentions in this project document. The Environmental and Social Risk Assessment document for this project also highlights the issue of IPs and the critical area of Labour and Working conditions where cattle herding involves a notable number of IPs. Table 1 below provides the documented risks and their mitigation measures.

**Table 1. Documented risks and mitigation measures related to IPs in FP158**

RISK	MITIGATION MEASURES
<p><b>Indigenous Peoples (IPs):</b> The project design triggers environmental and social safeguards to protect IPs as interventions target RAVCs’ communities. Those who live as herders at cattle posts owned by more populous ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization.</p>	<p>An Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) has been developed to mitigate this risk. Participatory stakeholder mapping of IPs will be carried out to provide baseline information on the spatial location of people, resources, demographic profiles, economic profiles, and relations to other communities and resource users. Additionally, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) will be embedded in all project’s training programmes, with an awareness of the human rights of minorities rooted in the training materials. Before working in areas with IPs, a complete FPIC process will be implemented. To ensure the project supports RAVCs’ communities in Kalagadi, the number of Eco-rangers deployed will be proportionate to Indigenous RAVCs in the targeted areas.</p>
<p><b>Labor and working conditions:</b> There are risks related to the commitment to gender parity in employment creation because of the project. As pastoralism is currently a male-dominated livelihood in Botswana, there is also the risk of sexual harassment at work. Additionally, there is the risk of women and children being exploited as free labor.</p>	<p>Mitigation measures to address these risks include: i) developing a baseline assessment to determine the prevalence, nature, and causes of labor and gender equity issues to identify the most effective ways of eliminating harmful practices; ii) incorporation of prohibitions into conservation agreements, training materials, human resource policies and codes of ethics; iii) embedding penalty clauses for non-compliance with employment standards in the conduct of business, the code of ethics and training materials; iv) explicitly prohibiting sexual harassment and gender violence in the code of ethics; and v) sensitizing value-chain stakeholders to legal prohibitions. Ipelegeng’s general policies governing labor and working conditions will also apply. All project stakeholders, including women, will have access to the project-level grievance mechanism, allowing for anonymous submission of grievances.</p>

Source: IEU evaluation team

FP158 was suspended in November 2023, and the AE formally notified the GCF about this in February 2024. The suspension arose from concerns raised by the government, particularly the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, about insufficient communication and unclear roles in the planning and implementation stages. According to the AE, significant progress had been made at the district level, including plans to engage government-run Public Works Program personnel. Still, this information had not been adequately shared with central government authorities, prompting the Ministry to pause the project. A Project Steering Entity (PSE) was established, and a joint review process involving the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture and the PSE was conducted to evaluate the project's "fit for purpose." Following this assessment, the project is set to resume implementation.

## B. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### 1. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Government of Botswana (GoB) states that all citizens are Indigenous. In Botswana, 3.4% of the population identifies as belonging to Indigenous groups, such as the San, who 1999 numbered approximately 48,000 people (Hitchcock, 2002). The San in Botswana have been traditionally seen as hunter-gatherers. Still, the vast majority today are small-scale agro-pastoralists, herders in cattle posts, and people with mixed economies who reside in rural and urban areas, especially in the Kalahari Desert and the eastern part of the country. Lee and Daly (1999; 3) define “foraging” (a term used synonymously with hunting and gathering) as “subsistence based on hunting of wild animals, gathering of wild food plants, and fishing, with no domestication of plants, and no domestication of animals except the dog.” IPs in the Botswana landscape are subdivided into many

groups using diverse names, most of whom speak their mother tongue. These groups include the Ju/'hoansi, Bugakhwe, //Anikhwe, and Tsexakhwe!Xoo, Naro, G/ui, G//ana, Tsasi, Deti, †Khomani, †Hoa, //Xau†esi, Shua, Tshwa, DanisiLan and /Xaisa. IPs are among the most underprivileged people in Botswana, with a high percentage living below the poverty line (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), 2023). The assumptions about IPs' homogeneity have vastly underplayed the diversity within the approximately two dozen other IPs' linguistic groups found all over Southern Africa.

The insufficient spatial mapping of key resource locations (such as mines of the Ju/'hoansi) and excessive dependence on descriptive studies have been a persistent concern in nearly all anthropological literature. The lack of spatial mapping of territories and land and resource use must be considered an essential factor in the ongoing dispossession and fragmentation of IPs' spaces in the region and in Botswana. This is because the spatial reference of the areas they have relied upon in the past and continue to use today have never been shown on a map. Indeed, Botswana IPs today remain “abstract,” as depicted in the work of Laurens van der Post.

Interviewees in this case study described sensitivities surrounding the term Indigenous noting: “the correct terms to use through the lens of the Botswana government are Remote Area Communities or Remote Area Vulnerable Communities. Vulnerable herein used to refer to their economic strata.” This report will use RAVCs to refer to IPs, also known as the people of Khoisan origin.

Despite not explicitly recognizing IPs, Botswana has, for many decades, had programs and policies targeting RAVCs. Key GoB Policies and Projects have changed over time, including the Revised Remote Area Development Programme (RRADP) (Ministry of Local Government, 2009) and the Affirmative Action Framework (AAF) (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2014). The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has also developed the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) 10-Year AAF Matrix, with five goals to guide implementation. These goals encompass infrastructural development, building sustainable livelihoods through economic empowerment initiatives, promoting community participation, endorsing social and essential services, and fostering networking with development partners and other stakeholders. The AAF further recognizes the actions required across sectors to close key gaps in implementing the RADP.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION

Botswana has not signed the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 (International Labour Organization, 1989). There are no specific laws on IPs' rights in the country. Botswana took part in the 20th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) held (virtually) in New York from 19–30 April 2021. Although Botswana officially supported the UNDRIP, it has not implemented policies targeting IPs.

## 3. NATIONAL LEGISLATION

The GoB emphasizes equality and equal treatment, but it does not refer to targeted support or attention to IPs' needs as a distinct group. Since 1953, Botswana's national census has omitted questions regarding language, tribe, or ethnicity to promote national unity and a sense of nationhood. Since independence in 1966, the government's official stance has been that all policies benefit everyone equally.

NDeane and Solo (2023) highlight that several policies, including the Remote Area Development Policy, the National Health Policy, the National Policy on Destitute Persons 2002, the National

Social Protection Strategy 2019, NDP 11, and Vision 2036, target the advancement of marginalized ethnic minorities, including the San. These policies, which have evolved, are interdisciplinary and have recently been associated with attaining the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

The 2009 RRADP (para. 12.1.1.) states that specific communities “find particular and intractable disadvantages, either for logistical reasons or because of long-standing historical prejudice and subjugation by the dominant groups” (GoB, 2009). The RRADP thus adopts affirmative action across various sectors to improve those communities’ access to education, health, employment, economic development opportunities, and socio-political institutions. The benefits of the programs are in many ways self-evident, but as Ntseane and Solo (2023) point out, there are challenges and weaknesses.

#### 4. LEGISLATION IMPACTING RAVCS’ NATURAL RESOURCE USE

Many RAVCs’ existence is intimately intertwined with their environment. As a result, legislation affecting the distribution and use of vital natural resources, especially fauna and flora, will disproportionately influence the livelihoods of RAVCs. Over the past 50 years, Botswana has undergone significant changes. RAVCs, particularly in the North-West and Okavango Districts, have historically been surrounded by abundant wildlife resources, which are now diminishing: they lived in symbiosis with nature in the 1970s but now find themselves in areas dominated by cattle and crops.

The increasing restrictions on the movement of game across wildlife areas, such as through the erection of veterinary fences for disease control, have combined with the decline in wildlife to have a detrimental impact on communities. This state of affairs has led to several legislative measures to reverse this trend. For RAVCs, the most profound change has been the near eradication of hunting from their culture due to stricter wildlife conservation laws. The introduction of ostrich farming in the 1990s, marked by the collection of wild eggs and chicks, prompted the establishment of the Ostrich Management Policy in 1994, mandating permits for such activities. Since then, broken ostrich eggshells, which RAVCs traditionally collected to make jewellery, can no longer be picked as this is considered poaching. Similarly, permits are now required for RAVCs to collect certain medicinal plants and veld products.

The Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programme<sup>1</sup> it has been hailed as a positive development that has enabled communities to conserve natural resources while at the same time deriving benefits from them. Many RADP settlements have registered Community Trusts that are involved in the implementation of CBNRM. It is important to note that Community Trusts aiming to maximize their financial returns often find it most beneficial to allocate their annual quotas to “trophy animals,” typically by tendering these quotas. Elephants have been considered the most valuable trophy animals since the prohibition of lion hunting in 2005. Community Trusts can form partnerships with trophy hunting companies, employing some Village Policemen as trackers and assisting in skinning and meat processing. Commonly, plains game such as eland, gemsbok, and kudu – included in the quotas – are bundled with a more prized animal, like an elephant, for trophy hunters. These animals are usually sold to the highest bidder. Apart from this sanctioned activity, hunting is illegal. Due to increased legislation and regulation, RAVCs in the San community have experienced significant limitations on its traditional hunting and gathering practices. The growing

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<sup>1</sup> The programme has been adopted in mid-1980

elephant population in the country's North-West and Okavango districts has been considered a conservation success but has not benefited the RAVCs.

## C. KEY FINDINGS

This section evaluates the effectiveness of GCF-funded projects in addressing RAVCs' needs. Specifically, it assesses stakeholder engagement, the relevance and impact of interventions, country ownership, and RAVCs' access to GCF resources. It also details the efficiency of this project, its replicability and scalability, and its consideration of gender issues, aiming to highlight key lessons and outcomes.

### 1. EFFECTIVENESS, RELEVANCE, EFFICIENCY AND COHERENCE

#### a. Stakeholder engagement

**FP158 was designed with a robust, culturally sensitive framework for stakeholder engagement—aiming to involve RAVC and vulnerable groups. However, key implementation barriers have limited the effectiveness of RAVC engagement. These challenges reveal a critical gap between the project's initial engagement intentions and the reality of its execution.**

The context where RAVC were included in FP158 encompassed adaptation and mitigation at district levels (Okavango and North-West; Bobirwa and Kgalagadi). The project implementation areas were stated to have been “selected in 2016 by national stakeholders as being home to the most climate-vulnerable populations in Botswana based on the proportion of land in communal land tenure and the highest proportion of rural poor dealing with severe climate impacts, particularly drought” (FP 158 Approved Funding Proposal). These FPs further mentioned extensive consultations with stakeholders across the project areas. The IPP associated and developed with FP158 signified good intent. In the project's planning phase, CI, in collaboration with the GoB, recognized RAVCs as Indigenous groups potentially impacted by the proposed initiative. In partnership with these communities, they assessed the anticipated direct and indirect impacts—economic, social, cultural (including cultural heritage), and environmental—on the RAVCs residing in or collectively connected to the project's area of influence.

#### *Box 1. Selection of villages*

The assessment of land degradation, how the land was utilized, whether access to livestock was available, the poverty level, and the community's willingness to engage in the project were all factors considered. These were aggregated to create a score, enabling their categorization as highly vulnerable communities and/or highly affected, among other possibilities. Following this, the final 104 villages were selected through multiple workshops.

The vulnerability criteria used to select the project intervention area and its subsequent implementation stages identified six RAVCs' settlements (recognized in international frameworks as IPs and Remote Area Communities in Botswana) beneficiaries of the project's second phase. Consequently, all activities during this phase were expected to focus on RAVCs' communities residing in regions most severely impacted by climate change. The approved funding proposal recognized amongst the critical stakeholders of the project, “members of this Indigenous

community, who serve as herders at cattle posts owned by the predominant ethnic groups, are especially susceptible to exclusion and marginalization.”

The subsequent ongoing stakeholder identification and analysis process suggests the active involvement of RAVCs to obtain:

- 1) their FPIC,
- 2) consideration of their needs,
- 3) identification of any potential risks,
- 4) detailed consideration of their participation in project implementation, and
- 5) equitable sharing in the project's benefits.

As a result, an IPP has been developed to address the project's potential risks and impacts through culturally appropriate measures and actions.

### ***Box 2. FPIC***

The AE conducted FPIC consultations in selected communities under the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP). These consultations gathered opinions on local rangeland management practices and the extent of their reliance on rangelands. Processes were undertaken to establish community-level stakeholder interests, expectations, and perspectives on the project's potential benefits.

KIIs highlighted key processes such as stakeholder identification, establishing livelihood activities, interactions among RADP communities and others, patterns of cooperation and conflict, and existing grievance redress mechanisms. The shared use of rangelands by multiple stakeholder communities and social groups has raised important questions regarding land ownership and the utilization of natural resources, including access to and rights over water.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) outlined robust measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts while enhancing positive outcomes and opportunities to ensure equitable benefit sharing. Although the SEP itself could not be accessed or reviewed, the 2022 Annual Performance Report (APR) references records of stakeholder engagement. These engagements predominantly involved national and district-level institutional stakeholders, which aligns with expectations for the project's start-up phase.

The APR also mentions community-level engagements and road shows that were mainly delayed. Engagements with RAVCs (leaders, advocates, eco-rangers, herders, and their households) are not explicit in the APR. Aside from one Kgosi<sup>2</sup> who was closely involved during the project design phase; community-level stakeholders interviewed during the fieldwork (North West and Okavango Districts) showed limited awareness of the GCF project in the area. Direct engagement with project personnel at the broader, multiple-community level also appears minimal. FP158, like many other community development programmes/projects, relies on the traditional Kgotla assembly as the focal point of broad-based consultations with the community.

### ***Box 3. Kgotla***

A Kgotla is a traditional gathering place where community members come together to discuss important issues, resolve disputes, and make decisions. The Kgosi typically leads it and serves as a forum for

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<sup>2</sup> In Southern Africa, Kgosi is the title of hereditary leader of a Botswana and South Africa tribe.

participatory decision-making, often involving local governance, justice, and social issues. However, in some RADP communities, the Kgotla is not considered accessible or effective in giving RAVCs sufficient input. Perspectives from some KIIs regarding the extent to which the Kgotla is an effective engagement platform for RAVCs, or vulnerable social groups are provided below:

The Kgotla is not always representative or enables all voices to be heard. Some stakeholders in rural communities feel that some social groups are not always heard. As intermediary organizations, we must also use alternative methods to undertake KII and FGD outside the Kgotla to ensure more open, participatory engagements and gain their trust.

Community members are involved in consultation processes. We hold community conversations at this Kgotla, where community members provide input. However, it is essential to note that not all points of view may be fully and equally considered.

Delays in project implementation and the ongoing suspension of FP158 have led to limited stakeholder engagement, particularly among RAVCs and vulnerable social groups. Furthermore, the lack of progress in signing the IPP is hindering the prospects for successful project implementation.

Regarding the scope of the IPs Policy, the GCF acknowledges and widely utilizes criteria for identifying IPs, using self-identification as Indigenous or tribal as a key criterion for policy implementation. However, in the case of Botswana's FP158, the AE has not thoroughly understood the context of IPs. The correct names of their ethnic groups should be noted, as should ensuring these are respected by all implementing agencies involved in the FP158. The term "Basarwa," used in the documentation of FP158, may not be considered respectful amongst all RAVCs, and the AEs should provide a broader and more profound assessment of all RAVC groups involved.

A recurring theme across stakeholders engaged during the fieldwork was a deficiency in the historical approach of bottom-up planning, where communities established village development plans that fed into district development plans and, ultimately, the National Development Plan. Box 4 below provides this perspective on the increasing dearth of participatory and bottom-up planning.

#### ***Box 4. Participatory development approaches in Botswana***

Historically, Botswana used participatory development approaches. [These] started at the village level and moved to the district and national levels. Changes currently show communities being passive recipients of development initiatives/projects, limiting their buy-in into village development plans. The Public Service was reportedly not fully consulted and involved in planning processes. Village Development Plans are no longer being developed to feed into District Development Plans.

#### **b. Relevance of interventions**

**The GCF-funded activities in Botswana through FP158 are relevant to RAVCs' needs. In this context, the relevance of interventions emanates from the fact that the project concept, project proposal, and baseline studies have identified RAVCs as key stakeholders in the project's area of influence.**

The GCF IPs Policy recognizes that RAVCs often have identities and aspirations distinct from mainstream groups in national societies and are disadvantaged by traditional mitigation, adaptation, and development models. Although the national policy and legislative framework does not recognize the term "Indigenous Peoples," it makes provision for vulnerable social groups in RAVCs. The GCF IPs Policy rightly defines those people as communities or groups of IPs who maintain a collective attachment, namely those whose identity as a group or community is linked to distinct habitats or ancestral territories and natural resources. It may also apply to communities or

groups that have lost collective attachment to different habitats or ancestral territories in the project area, occurring within the concerned group members' lifetimes, because of forced severance, conflict, government resettlement programmes, dispossession of their lands, natural disasters or incorporation of such territories into an urban area.

In many instances, RAVCs are among the most economically marginalized and vulnerable segments of the population. Their economic, social, and legal status frequently limit their capacity to defend their rights to – and interests in – land, territories, and natural and cultural resources. This status may also restrict their ability to participate in and benefit from development initiatives and climate change actions.

### c. Country ownership

**Robust government coordination mechanisms are in place in Botswana, and the placement of the NDA within the Ministry of Finance (MoF) further strengthens the influence of GCF projects. While institutional stakeholders are actively engaged, non-state actors, including NGOs, CBOs, and RAVCs, lack meaningful involvement in shaping national climate strategies. This gap in inclusivity risks undermining the participatory ethos promoted by GCF policies and limits the reach and impact of FP158 on vulnerable and underrepresented communities.**

Situating the NDA within the MoF is evidence of its importance and significantly enhances the influence of GCF projects. The coordination mechanisms involve many stakeholders that are relevant to the climate agenda and sustainable development. These include the MoF, Lands and Agriculture, Local Government and Traditional Affairs (where district-level authorities are lodged), Environment and Tourism; Water and Human Settlement.

According to respondents, the principle of country ownership is being effectively implemented at certain levels. The roles and responsibilities of the Accredited Entity (AE)—in this case, CI—as the conduit to GCF financing and the National Designated Authority (NDA) for providing leadership and oversight are clearly defined and functioning well. However, this clarity is not reflected in the broader country programme processes, which many describe as ad hoc and unsystematic due to challenges stemming from unclear roles and responsibilities. Notably, the Government of Botswana's commitment to the global climate agenda is evident through its allocation of significant resources—USD 54 million in co-financing to FP158—demonstrating its dedication to working with GCF.

Evidence from the accessed monitoring reports and field-level interviews reveals that consultations with institutional stakeholders at the national and district levels have been significant. On the other hand, engagements with non-state actors have been minimal, as evidenced by the general lack of knowledge or awareness of projects among local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). Engagement with RAVCs and their representatives appears minimal so far, primarily during the project design phase, through consultations with a few villages classified as RADP settlements. Being homogenous, these settlements have community-based trusts implementing natural resources management initiatives (trophy hunting safaris, cultural heritage promotion, veld product utilization, and photographic safaris). Because the RADP settlements are multi-ethnic, with community power relations often skewed more towards the more dominant groups, RAVCs can experience exclusion and lack of voice. The lull in project activities during the fieldwork and the plan to engage RAVCs during the second year of implementation point to a nascent level of outreach to RADP communities and associated stakeholders.



Through the FP158, RAVCs are not proactively or sufficiently engaged. The limited project reach of RAVCs takes place against a background of the GCF IPs Policy explicitly stating:

*This Policy informs national designated authorities and focal points that any consultative process through which national climate change priorities and strategies are defined must also consider applicable national and international policies and laws for IPs." Further, "the criteria and options for country coordination through consultative processes should appropriately include IPs.*

#### **d. Access to GCF**

**FP158 is well-resourced to create an impact in RADP communities. Still, delays, a lack of transparency, and weak adherence to FPIC principles hinder RAVCs' access: the pending IPP and agriculture-focused design further limit resource accessibility for these vulnerable groups.**

The FP158 has adequate resources with the potential to make a difference in the project's area of influence and impact, which encompasses several RADP communities. Plans are in place for the inclusion and participation of vulnerable communities, mainly during the medium to long-term phases of the project. However, the budget for FP158 is not RAVC sensitive and does not contribute to advancing Indigenous self-determination in livelihood security and RAVCs' contribution to the climate agenda.

The current suspension of the project comes with delayed interventions that manifest as key obstacles to vulnerable communities' access to the resources available through FP158.

For stakeholders of FP158, systemic and project-related vulnerabilities are apparent. RAVCs often face marginalization from mainstream society, exclusion from community activities, and limited participation in critical conversations. Fear of retaliation, deeply entrenched inequalities, and a sense of inferiority often silence their voices. Additionally, practical barriers such as lack of knowledge, awareness, or resources, high costs of travel, illness or disability, and conflicts with livelihood or work responsibilities frequently prevent their involvement in community engagement processes. Access to pertinent information also poses a significant challenge for RAVCs. Limited literacy, isolation, and lack of access to internet or mobile connectivity often exclude them from communication channels. Furthermore, using official languages in engagement forums without translation into local mother-tongue languages exacerbates their exclusion.

The primary sector that FP158 focuses on is agriculture, from which very few RAVCs derive livelihood. It is also the case that the project's risk assessment takes cognizance of RAVCs who "work as herders at cattle posts owned by larger ethnic groups and their susceptibility to exclusion and marginalization." However, the mitigation measure to address this risk is riddled with complexity, given that the NDA could not approve the IPs plan due to using the term "Indigenous" in the document's title and was unaware that alternative terms prescribed in the Policy could have been applied.

Some stakeholders engaged with FP158 noted that greater transparency and compliance with the principles of FPIC are still to be ensured. Following some community participation in the design phase of this project, funding became available, and stakeholder communities started getting sidelined. Employment opportunities also became exclusive as local resources with the capacity to work were ignored.

### e. Effectiveness, efficiency, monitoring and evaluation

**The suspension of FP158 has hindered its effectiveness, halting community-level activities and leaving key interventions unimplemented. The lack of recognition of the IPP and the predominance of national policies over it have undermined participatory monitoring and accountability to RAVCs. Without community engagement or baseline data collection, the effectiveness of project outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups, remains unmeasurable. Limitations in the GCF's monitoring framework have exacerbated these challenges: delayed recognition of project issues, limited oversight, and a lack of timely responses highlight risk assessment and reporting systems gaps.**

The project's suspension has halted activities, particularly those involving RAVCs scheduled for the second year of implementation. This issue and the pending IPPs make assessing the existing monitoring framework and its tools challenging. Also, considering the project's nascent state, the effectiveness and efficiency of the project in terms of interventions that deliver results for RAVCs have not yet been determined. According to some grassroots stakeholders, there is no indication that monitoring and reporting project outcomes is participatory or inclusive of community-level stakeholders. The same respondents noted that, at this stage of project implementation, RAVCs have benefited the least from the project, while intermediary-implementing organizations have benefited the most from GCF funding.

The implementation of FP158 demonstrates how national policies and legislation have taken precedence over and replaced the IPs Policy.

As the project resumes implementation, FP158 plans to monitor and evaluate RAVCs' participation regularly, tracking their benefits and reporting these aspects. A distinct set of indicators for RAVC will be incorporated into the Rangeland Stewardship Information Portal. AEs and NDA anticipate that this integration will enable the separate capture of information pertinent to RAVCs, thus aiding tracking, evaluation, and reporting. Baseline data for RAVCs was also gathered from the outset through Grazing Area Baseline Assessments and then uploaded to the Rangeland Stewardship Information Portal. As a good practice, monitoring plans were projected to be developed to inform Indigenous communities by periodically providing them with reports of project outcomes in appropriate accessible formats and languages.

Research on RAVCs in Botswana is sensitive and strictly regulated. Even when working with international partners who have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the government, obtaining official authorization is typically required. While institutions such as Statistics Botswana; BIDPA do conduct researches as and when required, including on social welfare issues, disaggregated and meaningful data on vulnerable communities that include ethnicity as a variable is not collected in national statistics, presenting a significant challenge.

At the GCF level, it appears that the monitoring framework and tools had limitations regarding the capacity to recognize red flags and address issues such as the pending IPP. The monitoring, evaluation, and reporting section of the IPP has limited information and only mentions establishing a separate category of indicators for RAVCs under activity 2.2.1 of FP158.

Most key informant interviews with GCF project partners indicated that GCF's presence was notably lacking during the prolonged lapse in project activities. It wasn't until February 2024 that GCF was notified and became aware of the anomaly. In response, the GCF assumed responsibility for reducing administrative expenses and safeguarding its assets. While there was a willingness to grant extensions for FP158, no additional funding could be provided. Stakeholders felt that adequate risk management tools were not in place to anticipate such issues and implement corrective measures.

## f. Gender considerations

**The project GAP does not address the unique gender dynamics of Indigenous livelihoods, such as CBNRM, or the specific needs of RAVC stakeholders, leaving critical gaps in promoting gender-sensitive, inclusive climate resilience. This oversight diminishes the project's ability to contribute to the Project's goals of equity, equality, and long-term sustainability.**

FP158 incorporates a Gender Action Plan (GAP) aligned with national gender commitments. Still, it has a limited focus on RAVCs and vulnerable communities, thus reducing its potential to advance gender equity within the climate agenda.

In pursuing gender inclusion in climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation strategies, the GCF has developed and implemented gender mainstreaming guidelines for country programmes to adhere to. Botswana has signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and has a Gender and Development Policy. In line with the government, these commitments and plans, along with the gender assessment and GAP for the "Ecosystem and Livelihood Resilience in Botswana's Communal Rangelands" project, have been reviewed by the Gender Affairs Department (GAD). The contribution of GAD to the process sought assurance that the GAP aligns with the national climate change priorities.

The development of the GAP demonstrates good practice. However, the Plan makes no specific reference to RAVCs' stakeholders, apart from a few impact statements recognizing vulnerable female and male farmers experiencing the negative impacts of climate change. The GAP is also silent on the gender ramifications in key climate-dependent livelihood security practices pursued by RAVCs and vulnerable social groups. CBNRM, including veld product utilization for household food and medicinal and craft production purposes, is relevant.

## g. Innovation

**The Herding 4 Health initiative offers a unique blend of Indigenous knowledge and modern techniques, aiming to professionalize herding and deliver tangible benefits to Indigenous herder households. This innovation can potentially transform livelihoods and rangeland management if effectively implemented.**

Some innovative approaches to benefit RAVCs in FP158 have been mainly identified at the project design level. The 'Herding 4 Health initiative' is a creative approach, particularly given the planned investments in training and capacity building around the concept. The approved funding proposal speaks to:

...marginalized rural individuals receiving training and employment as professional restoration workers and Eco-rangers, leveraging Indigenous knowledge systems alongside modern technologies. This dual approach aims to rehabilitate and sustain the rangeland ecosystem, enhance livestock health, and refine herd management through meticulous record-keeping and strategic offtake.

It could be interpreted that there is some direct benefit delivery to RAVCs' herder households, given that herding is one of the major employers of RAVCs in communal areas. This is particularly so as the project intends to professionalize herding, reframing herders as "Eco-rangers" through hands-on training from recognized institutions with a track record of achievement.

## **h. Sustainability**

**FP158's robust sustainability strategy, supported by significant government co-financing and private-sector collaboration, aims to transform communal rangeland management and market access. However, while RAVCs are recognized as critical stakeholders, their role as primary beneficiaries remains uncertain, with the project potentially reinforcing traditional, marginalized roles rather than creating long-term change.**

Although the project has stalled and experienced extensive delays, the sustainability plan is robust. It has the potential to benefit RAVCs, who are recognized as critical stakeholders in the FP158 communal rangelands landscape. However, what cannot be predicted is the extent to which RAVC will be major participants and beneficiaries at the implementation stage of FP158. Furthermore, the project reinforces the status quo of RAVCs being farmhands, herders, or resource-poor farmers to some extent.

The FP158 prioritizes the sustainability of interventions at every level, as it recognizes the critical need to address the market's demand side. The Approved Funding Proposal stipulates how CI and its partners will collaborate with the private sector and government to enhance the value of livestock and directly provide market access to communities. This approach aims to reduce farmers' reliance on intermediaries and the need to travel extensive distances to sell their livestock—a crucial intervention during climate crises, when livestock may perish due to lack of sustenance and water. Initiatives such as awareness campaigns, market readiness training, support for offtake agreements, and the establishment of financial aid and operational guidelines for the private sector will facilitate the transition to low-emission, climate-resilient meat products. This will ensure the project's long-term viability.

Having actively participated in the project's development, the GoB has demonstrated strong support for its approach. The government has pledged USD 54 million to co-finance the project, covering Eco rangers and related staff training and deployment through its Ipelegeng public works programme. This funding is nearly 60% of the total project cost and is vital to its Theory of Change. The investment by the GoB will build the necessary human resource capacity for the project's successful adaptation and mitigation outcomes. The Ministry of Lands and Agriculture will spearhead the project's government coordination and establish a steering committee with members from various ministries, including Local Government, Environment, Trade and Entrepreneurship, Water and Human Settlement, and Youth and Gender Affairs. Such government involvement is crucial for the project's success. It will aid the government in aligning climate response strategies across communal rangelands and duplicating effective project coordination and interventions in other parts of the country. Private sector partners have also been deeply involved in developing strategy and policy reforms to open market opportunities for communal farmers and enable purchases from the project's agricultural communities.

### **i. Unintended effects**

**On the positive side, GCF support for FP158 highlights the potential to professionalize herding for RAVCs and reinforces their relevance in global climate change efforts. However, implementation delays, the non-binding nature of the IPs Policy, and the government's reluctance to fully recognize RAVCs risk perpetuating systemic inequities. These issues could undermine RAVCs' participation, ownership, and benefits while maintaining their marginalized roles within Botswana's rangelands.**

On the positive side, FP158 could create opportunities to professionalize herding – a significant livelihood for RAVCs in Botswana – transforming it into more sustainable and sufficient work.

Additionally, the initiative might reaffirm the relevance of RAVCs in the global climate change discourse, recognizing their potential contributions to ecosystem adaptation and mitigation within Botswana's rangelands.

However, several adverse unintended effects could arise if challenges remain unaddressed. The project risks perpetuating the status quo, where RAVCs and their households might continue serving as laborers for cattle barons or resource-poor small farmers, reinforcing systemic inequalities. Delays in implementation could result in many RAVCs from RADP settlements joining as "newcomers." other social groups might be seen as "pioneers." This dynamic could undermine RAVCs' participation, ownership, and ability to benefit from the initiative entirely.

In Botswana, the pending IPP might lead to the non-implementation of critical measures to safeguard RAVCs' interests. Additionally, the government might be reluctant to formally recognize RAVCs, even after receiving GCF financial support for FP158. The requirement of the Policy might act as a negative incentive and placing the government in a defensive stance, rather than a valuable framework for advancing the RAVCs issues in Botswana.

These unintended effects could pose significant challenges and highlight the potential for corrective action. If the project resumes equitably, renewed efforts to prioritize inclusivity, implement RAVCs-sensitive measures, and adhere to global and national commitments could allow it to benefit all stakeholders. While some impacts would be negative, these will not be entirely irreversible, and there could still be opportunities for positive outcomes if the project resumes.

## D. LESSONS LEARNT

In the Botswana context, the analysis of the GCF IPs Policy implementation process shows tension between the GCF IPs Policy and the GOB approach to IPs. It is conceivable that the RAVCs could be considered as IPs in the definition of the GCF IPs Policy. However, the government does not recognize specific groups as Indigenous. This GCF IP does not contribute to or advance this discourse specifically. Therefore, an unacknowledged difference persists in the two approaches.

The key takeaways from the Botswana case study are the subtle stakeholder tensions, values, and interests displayed in the FP158 project's governance context. This finding is based on an analysis model that shows the difficulties in effectively following the rules of governance, along with the processes of adjustment and addressing cultural mismatch. The model also highlights the political and economic influence on the implementation process. These findings from the FGDs and KIIs were held with stakeholders, some of whom have played a role in different stages of project design/planning, implementation, monitoring, review, and reporting. This process also involved a review of several GCF and FP158 documents.

### 1. SAFEGUARDING

The measures undertaken include selecting project sites with a significant population, recognizing RAVCs' Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and recognizing RAVCs' role and contribution to the climate change agenda. The FP158 appears to have gotten it right at the design stage of the project cycle, demonstrating the critical importance of this phase in a project with an IP component.

The GCF IPs Policy in the context of Botswana is the most complex of safeguards, given the sensitivities it comes with, as well as the rare skills, specialized expertise, and experience required for its effective implementation. At the application stage of the project, The FP158 has focused extensively on its technical and coordination elements and given minimal attention to stakeholders

in RAVCs. Based on our review of the documents, stakeholder interviews, and other data collected, in our assessment, the anticipated environmental and social safeguards may not be sufficiently implemented in RAVCs due to the complex power relations in these areas.

## 2. BENEFITS

Since only 18% of GCF funding has been disbursed to date and given the implementation challenges, FP158 will still deliver benefits to RAVCs. Current known benefits to RAVCs have been through a partnership with one organization with limited human resources in one of the three districts identified for the project. The AE supports this organization with minimal inputs while it experiences constraints to funding its ongoing activities for pioneering the Herding for Health approach. With the AE's support, these initiatives employ four RAVCs. This is a positive development but insufficient for this group: delivering culturally appropriate benefits is essential to RAVCs experiencing vulnerability across social, economic, human, physical, and natural capital. The time spent on the project kick-off for FP158 and establishing the coordination mechanisms for its implementation in 2021 resulted in significant delays. It failed to fully onboard RAVCs by incorporating interests like veld product utilization. The policy has, therefore, not been effective in delivering benefits to RAVCs at this stage of project development.

## 3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The lessons learned about engagement and participation have predominantly been at the institutional and organizational levels. What has worked well and could be used as recommendations for the future have not been RAVCs-focused and have mainly included the issues below at the design stage of project development.

- Conduct review missions: Review missions should accurately assess on-the-ground realities and convey community perspectives to development partners.
- Critical safeguards: Implementing safeguards and projects targeting vulnerable populations is crucial in Botswana. Full engagement and participation of these communities are key to the success of such initiatives.
- Inclusive processes: Processes that genuinely involve people—rather than imposing top-down development programs—are vital for sustainable development.
- Cultural appropriateness: Projects must be culturally appropriate to avoid imposing external ways of working on local communities, which can create resistance and hinder success.
- Funding challenges: Botswana's status as an upper-middle-income country limits access to grants for vulnerable communities, challenging efforts to reduce vulnerability and increase social protection among RAVCs.
- Contextual implementation: Project implementation without effective engagement and a deep understanding of the national context is problematic. Deficiencies in stakeholder engagement and participation, as experience has shown, can lead directly to project failure.

## 4. USE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The Herding for Health approach recognizes the importance and relevance of Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). The model speaks to “using donor funding and government investments in job creation to expand the capacity building and career development in professional herding and rangeland rehabilitation, incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices.” Much like the GCF IPs Policy, the FP158 has mentioned the use of IKS in management strategies several times.

However, the application and scalability of traditional knowledge in the implementation phase of FP158 remain to be observed when the project's activities resume.

## E. CONCLUSIONS

- AEs working with the GCF should consider adopting terminology such as "remote, rural, and vulnerable communities" to make policies more context-sensitive for African nations. GCF support for an enabling environment that advances IP rights in Botswana would be beneficial, including fully implementing IPPs for current projects with IP considerations.
- RAVC' influence on the design and implementation of FP158 has been mixed. In the future, RAVCs' engagement and participation must be inclusive—and, in some cases, driven by RAVCs themselves—and involve them in decision-making processes.
- Proper Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) protects RAVCs and their rights.
- Appropriate community consultation forums and platforms are key to RAVCs participation, empowerment, and benefit sharing. While the traditional Kgotla serves as the central consultation platform in Botswana communities, RAVCs attendance and participation are usually low. The FP158 implementation phase should assess how effectively RAVCs are engaged in traditional forums like the Kgotla. The AE must support RAVCs' participation or identify alternative mechanisms to ensure RAVCs are heard in comfortable settings.
- The FP158 IPP commendably highlights full RAVC involvement in its development. Project information should be fully disclosed in culturally appropriate ways, including using RAVCs languages. Effective feedback mechanisms are critical for building RAVCs confidence and project ownership. Plans regarding the implementation or non-implementation of IP initiatives need to be clearly communicated to RAVCs.
- The current suspension of FP158 significantly impacts project outcomes, including benefit delivery to RAVCs and other vulnerable groups. Assessing national policy, legislative, and institutional frameworks is critical to identifying gaps and opportunities for implementing the GCF IPs Policy. The FP158 experience suggests that the GCF should strengthen risk assessments and develop stringent mitigation measures to avoid future complications during implementation.
- IPPs are key to implementing the GCF IPs Policy. With the project IPP still pending, it will be difficult for benefits to reach RAVCs. The term "IPs" in the document has posed challenges. A compromise must be reached regarding IPP implementation and adjusting the terminology to agreeable terms for IPs and the government.
- At the current stage of project implementation, RAVCs are minimally involved and have yet to benefit from activities sufficiently. Their full and equal participation in implementation and effective monitoring is critical to equitable benefit delivery.
- Facilitating RAVCs' access to natural resources and ensuring their usage rights are protected and respected can contribute to realizing the GCF IPs Policy in Botswana. Given RAVCs' strong attachment to natural resources and FP158's focus on livestock farming—where RAVCs are mainly herders or smallholders—such measures are significant.

## APPENDIX 1. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

*Table A - 1. List of interviewees*

NAME	AFFILIATION
Ms Keineetse Lepekoane	Director, Development Programmes, Ministry of Finance
Ms. Gaanewe Mogotsi	Deputy Director, Development Programmes, Ministry of Finance
Ms Catherine Matongo	Chief Economist, Ministry of Finance
Ms Keneilwe Agnes-Mogatle	Principal Economist, Ministry of Finance
Sergio Rebangwe Sago	Assistant Economist, Ministry of Finance
Mr. Ruud Jansen	Country Director, Conservation International
Dr Okaile Marumo	Acting Deputy Chief of Party, Conservation International
Mr. Randall Tseleng	Area Field Manager, Conservation International
Mr. Nnyaladzi Pabalinga	Range Ecologist, Conservation International
Ms. Tsitsi Moloi	Senior Operations Director, Conservation International
Mr. Kebagaisitse Mapena	Acting Chief for Wildland Fire Management, Department of Forestry & Range Resources
Chimbidzani Bratonozic	Programme Specialist – Environment and Climate Change, UNDP
Mr. Stanley Semetsa	Deputy Director-Sanitation, Department of Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Water and Human Settlements
Mr. Ontlogetse Dikgomo	Principal Engineer, Ministry of Water and Human Settlements
Masaki Mikio	JICA
Hiroyasu Tonokawa	Resident Representative, JICA
Mothusi Tiyedze	Program Officer – Technical Cooperation, JICA
Mme Diutlwetse	Chairperson, Village Development Council
Monty Montshiwa	Programme Strategist and Acting Programme Coordinator, WildEnd Trust
Kgosi Masedi	Kgosi's Advisory Board, Kabihuru
Kgosi Moitshephi Molewa	Kabihuru
Mr. Mesho	DAPO, Acting DAC, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture
Gofaone Sedihe	Programming & Communications Officer, NCONGO
Tebogo James	CBNRM Officer, NCONGO
Job Morris	Community Leaders Network, (CLN) Namibia. Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities
Mr. J. Weldon Mcnutt	Co-director, Wild Entrust
Montshiwa	Programme Strategist - Programme Coordinator
Professor Maitseo Bolaane	Director, San Research Centre, University of Botswana
Mr. Leema Antony Hiri	Administrator, San Research Centre, University of Botswana
Mr. Eric P. Mesho	District Animal Production Officer, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Maun

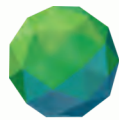


Ms. Kgothatso Changane	Acting District Crop Production Officer, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Maun
Ms Margaret K. Mbakile	Chief Administration Officer, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Maun
Mr. Kenneth K. Matheakgomo	Principal Administration Officer, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Maun
Mr. Akoserabe Mandegu	Senior Plant Health Officer, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Maun
Mr. Balisi J. Gopolang	Climate Change Coordinator, Ministry of Environment & Tourism, Department of Meteorological Services
Ms. Serufo Ruth Ntsabane	Director, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs
Mr. Mmolotsi	Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs
Mr. Robert Kwantle	Principal Community Development Officer, Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs
Mr. Bueno Shanto Mokhutshwane	Chief Scientific Officer – Non-Ruminants, Department of Animal Production, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture

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