

Verified by:



Filosoofi 31  
50108 Tartu  
Estonia  
[www.preferredbynature.org](http://www.preferredbynature.org)

Verification managed by:  
Preferred By Nature  
Tel: +34 682 88 53 10  
Contact person:  
Mateo Cariño Fraise  
Email: [mcario@preferredbynature.org](mailto:mcario@preferredbynature.org)

Ver 17 May 2023

## Ecosystem Restoration Verification

Report for:

**FAO**

(Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations)

in the project

*Restoration for ecosystem functionality  
and climate change mitigation in the  
Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe*

Report Finalised:	29-November-2023
Audit Dates:	24 August-1 September 2023
Audit Team:	Mateo Cariño Fraise (lead auditor), Pablo Rodríguez- Noriega, Angela dos Santos Trindade
Certificate issue/expiry:	30-November-2028
Organisation Contact:	Faustino de Oliveira, Project Coordinator
Contact details:	Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB), São Tomé, <a href="mailto:neto.daconceicao@fao.org">neto.daconceicao@fao.org</a>

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an independent audit conducted by a team of specialists representing Preferred by Nature. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) restoration initiative (Restoration for ecosystem functionality and climate change mitigation in the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe) as defined by the established Ecosystem Restoration Standard Version 3.1 by Preferred by Nature.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Project description

The island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) is home to some of the richest and most diverse forest ecosystems in Africa. The islands' fast-growing human population has had a significant impact on the native forests, which are largely restricted to some remote valleys and inaccessible mountain areas. Higher and increasingly competing demands for food, energy, and space are accelerating the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems, which reduces their resilience to climate change. Approximately one third of the forests have been converted into shade plantations and agro-forestry systems that produce mostly coffee and cocoa, the country's key export crops. STP faces the typical handicaps of a small island economy: high vulnerability to external shocks, the inability to pursue economies of scale, lack of basic infrastructure and services, low human capacity, and a weak private sector. One of the greatest environmental threats is the over-exploitation of forest resources. Fuelwood consumption is very high, and wood is still the main commodity used in the local house construction sector. The deforestation of steep mountain slopes to plant crops and meet the national food demand is increasing the incidence of erosion and further degrading the forest. The Government of STP has identified reforestation and forest and landscape restoration as a strategic priority for the coming years, together with the fight against illegal tree harvesting, and awareness raising measures. Two natural parks were created in 2006, extending on both islands and including all types of terrestrial ecosystem. Unfortunately, the lack of resources is a serious drawback to the effective functioning of the protected areas.

The project, which is framed into the Reforestation Initiative (TRI) led by FAO, IUCN and UNEP, has the objective to promote the restoration and sustainable management of the forest ecosystems of São Tomé and Príncipe to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation, and stop and reverse forest and soil degradation. The project is structured into four interlinked components:

- Policy Development and Integration
- Implementation of Restoration Programs and Complementary Activities
- Institutions, Finance and Upscaling
- Knowledge, Partnerships, Monitoring and Assessments, and linkages with GCP

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, through the Directorate of Forests (DF) is the lead executing partner, advising on the establishment of operational partnerships with a broad array of agents to implement project activities, including other branches of the administration (districts, management bodies of the natural parks, autonomous region of Príncipe), private sector enterprises, NGOs, the cooperatives of the cocoa, coffee and pepper value chains, the communities of the areas where the FLR work is carried out on both islands, and international development agencies.

In the framework of this TRI-FAO project, and specifically in the agroforestry areas, is where this verification report is focused.

The main issues identified in the FAO TRI project in STP are:

1. Customary or tenure rights, cultural heritage sites, or community resources have not been analyzed and documented.
2. No native reference sites to provide target values for establishing recovery metrics in restoration sites have been established.

3. The desired restoration outcomes over an initial 5-year period and a longer term, 20-year period are not explicit or set.
4. Some alien species are currently set as final restoration target.
5. The lessons learnt from the analysis of other relevant restoration projects have not systematically been included in the Restoration Plan.
6. The Restoration Plan does not include an analysis of the potential harm/unintended consequences of the project, and how the restoration effort is addressing them.
7. There isn't a description available of the restoration techniques or practices to be used, sufficient to understand how desired targets, goals and/or objectives will be achieved and to assess the adequacy of performance from technical and field perspectives.
8. There is no documented operational monitoring plan.
9. There is no documented operational dispute resolution mechanism.
10. Occupational work, health and safety need to be monitored consistently by the project team.
11. The project doesn't have a systematic way to identify and document potential benefits and impacts to the communities.
12. Field monitoring does not occur regularly in line with Restoration Plans (particularly targets, goals and objectives, including social and environmental)
13. The project monitoring system does not have metrics for covering the actual objectives of the Restoration Plan, including threats/degradation drivers, social aspects (for example governance, income, equity, health and safety, rights, stakeholder engagement) and environmental aspects (for example soil, water, biodiversity and conservation).
14. Monitoring is not systematically documented.
15. Monitoring is not systematically used to enhance achievement of the restoration targets, goals and objectives.
16. The project does not meet the climate module requirements as it has only recently started looking into these aspects.

# 1 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

## 1.1 Audit Recommendation and Decision

Based on Organisation's conformance with the requirements, the following recommendation is made:

- 
- Verification approved:  
Upon acceptance of NCR(s) issued below
- 
- Verification not approved:  
Conformance with MAJOR NCR(s) required
- 

Additional comments, including issues identified as controversial or hard to evaluate and explanation of the conclusion reached: The Climate Module is optional, so not meeting these requirements does not preclude the project to be verified for the core part of the standard

## 1.2 Non-conformity Reports (NCRs)

*Note: NCRs refer to non-fulfilment of a requirement. In simpler terms this means that some part of the standard has not been correctly fulfilled and need to be corrected in order to maintain the verified/validated status.*

No NCR(s) issued

<b>NCR: 01/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.4.5, 1.4.6
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
The project activities go rather in the direction of increasing the potential use of resources by local communities, as observed both in the field and during the interviews (e.g. in terms of Non Timber Forest Products/NTFPs), and not to undermine them. That said, customary or tenure rights, cultural heritage sites, or community resources are not made explicit in the Restoration Plan nor documented elsewhere (see 1.5.7). It's worth noting that the surveys to the local communities do not include questions on those aspects either.	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.

	Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 02/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.4.8
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
No native reference sites to provide target values for establishing recovery metrics in restoration sites have been established.	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 03/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.5.2
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	

The National Restoration Plan presents a good identification of restoration options for each type of soil cover, including what are the objectives of restoration, intervention options to achieve them, and a list of inclusion and exclusion factors for mapping these options in the territory. The four Landscape Plans identify the targets for restoration for each of the sub-national areas based on the contextual realities and the stakeholders participation, also looking into a fair benefit sharing.

The desired restoration outcomes over an initial 5-year period and a longer term, 20-year period are nevertheless not explicit, or in some cases even set, as per the interviews held with the project management.

<b>Corrective action request:</b>	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 04/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.5.3.
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>The RM refers to the Seedling Production Plan ("Plano de Produccão de Mudás"), which is part of the National Restoration Plan, as the document covering all the aspects in this regard, including the nurseries, the seedlings production system, seeds, etc. The document is very comprehensive and well designed. The last version reviewed is from October 22, so it has been updated overtime. The RM needs to update though how this is taken in to account as the project evolves, either in this plan or in other parts of the Restoration Plan. For example, some of the fruit trees that have been seen in the small nurseries or that are part of the initiative with CIAT are not included. Also, some alien species (e.g. <i>Eucalyptus sp.</i>, <i>Tectona sp.</i>, or <i>Gmelina sp.</i>) are included as main species. While this may make sense in the short term e.g. to produce timber while other natural timber species grow, it isn't clear if they are part of the final restoration target or not. Besides the fact of non being native, or perhaps because of that, some (e.g. the <i>Eucalyptus sp.</i>), have been seen not to work well in some areas (e.g. in the "Fraternidade" state, the Eucalyptus allelopathic effect had negative impacts on the growth of the understory). In summary, the Restoration plan does not include all species used in the nurseries and the field nor clarifies that alien species are not the final restoration target.</p>	



<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 05/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.5.4
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>There have been a number of fruitful exchanges performed by the project at several levels. At local level, for example, the learnings in mangrove production from AARBAI initiatives have been exported to the mangroves in the Angolares area, in terms of the protection of the seedlings against the crabs or finding alternatives to use the mangrove trees bark, that was causing its death, used to dye fishing nets. At regional, e.g., with a training in Mangroves in Guinea Bissau, and at international e.g. through the meetings and exchanges with other TRI projects. While most of the Plan is documented (see 1.5.7), these lessons learnt are not and are at the risk of being lost and not capitalized when e.g. the people involved change their roles in the project.</p>	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 06/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.5.5
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>The Restoration Plans provide an analysis on e.g. the expected benefits of the restoration interventions, but they don't include potential harm/unintended consequences, and how the restoration effort is addressing them. For example, people requesting first to produce seedlings at the communities are the ones selected (and paid for it), while, as per the interviews held at several locations by the audit team, there were others that would have liked to join too but either didn't notice soon enough or misunderstood that it was for some specifically designated people only, which may convert into a problem or power and access the information. The same happened with the people hired in one site in Principe (São Joaquim) to plant and keep the trees standing. The official public tender process was followed, but many people without real connection to these processes mentioned during the interviews that they did not have access to that type of government calls, and that created tensions while the audit team was there. The project team confirmed that the general consultation and awareness raising in Principe is still pending. The case of the eucalyptus mentioned in 1.5.3 is another example where a broader and conscious analysis of potential negative impacts and how to address them can be helpful.</p>	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 07/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.6
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>There is a range of different understandings by the project partners and implementers on how the restoration techniques and practises should be and how this connects with the project goal, but no common description. This is agreed to be a gap when discussing with both the project and DBF team. Some project partners, for example, were assuming that</p>	

workers would know how to do it as it is something very simple, but the restoration practitioners know that this is a key and often tricky aspect for success of e.g. the actual plant survival that need to be specifically defined for the different restoration activities and with a sufficient level of detail both to understand how desired targets, goals and/or objectives will be achieved and to assess the adequacy of performance from technical and field perspectives.

<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 08/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.7
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>There is no documented operational monitoring plan as such. There is a spread sheet (called "Novo Plano") targeted as overall monitoring tool, but that hasn't been used systematically, with only very old records of having used it provided by the project team. The main operational monitoring instrument is the different agreements (LoAs) with the implementing partners, but these are very narrow and focussed on what they are expected to do, not even covering all the aspects involved in the partners activities (e.g. impacts) and with random records to allow actual systematic monitoring.</p>	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING

<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	OPEN
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 09/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 2.5.1
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
While the RM assumed that there must be some high level FAO mechanisms that could be used as a potential tool for responding to disputes, the audit team wasn't provided with any documented operational dispute resolution mechanism by the RM.	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	OPEN
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 10/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 3.3.4
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
In general, the work occurs in accordance with local legal and permit requirements, with the PPEs being minimal, and part of what the workers would use anyway as the restoration activities are just a part and not very different to their daily routines. Several interviewed agroforestry workers were provided indeed with PPEs and other tools needed (e.g. boots, machetes). In one specific case, in the "Angolares" mangrove, the person responsible for the nursery did not have any type of PPE (e.g. boots are very basic for this type of environment) or first aid kit. Being a subcontractor, his contract states that it is his responsibility to bring all the equipment needed, but this is not monitored by the project	

nor there is any support. In any case, the responsibility for meeting the requirements is at the project level, and they need to find the alternatives for it for the different cases.

<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 11/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 3.3.6.1
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>There are a number of benefits to the communities that the project is well aware of, as most are intentional and set out in the National Restoration Plan briefly, as e.g. increasing the diversity of species in the fields with more products and an increase of the productivity, direct income provision, through salaries or support to bankable projects, etc. The project doesn't have nevertheless a systematic way to identify and document additional potential benefits and impacts to the communities.</p>	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 12/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 4.1
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
Monitoring occurs on an ongoing basis but not in line with a plan since the excel showed by the project staff for that objective ("Novo Plano") is not really a tool they use: it doesn't cover all targets, goals and objectives, including social and environmental, nor it's filled with the expected periodicity set as per the interviews with the responsible people (the last record presented to the audit team was very old). This is the case at the project level but also at the partners level, as it's very much dependent on resources that come randomly (e.g. for the monitoring of the illegal timber collection).	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 13/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 4.3.1
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
While the metrics developed for monitoring (not systematically followed, see 4.1 above) include some social components (basically the number of beneficiaries disaggregated by gender) they are set to monitor the activities implementation, and there isn't a more comprehensive set of metrics to monitor the most relevant social or environmental aspects (e.g. governance, income, equity, health and safety, rights, stakeholder engagement, soil, water, biodiversity...)	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as

	the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 14/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 4.5
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
The responsible project staff and partners were able during the audit to provide documented monitoring for some aspects in a systematic way (e.g. for social engagement by the DGF responsible person), but it was random for others (e.g. illegal activities, or periodic project implementation).	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 15/23</b>	<b>MINOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 4.6.1
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	

As per the above (4.6.1.), monitoring is randomly documented for a number of activities and impacts, and it's not systematically used to enhance achievement of the restoration targets, goals and objectives.

<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING
<b>Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:</b>	PENDING
<b>NCR Status:</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>Comments (optional):</b>	

<b>NCR: 16/23</b>	<b>MAJOR</b>
<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, Climate Change Module
<b>Report Section:</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:</b>	
<p>The project has not been designed as a carbon project, therefore, it has not calculated/estimated GHG emissions/removals.</p> <p>In ecosystem restoration projects the identification and quantification of environmental services, such as climate change mitigation, is a potential source of income for the scaling up and monitoring in the long term of project activities, assuring its viability and durability. It is worth noting the good potential the initiative has in terms of carbon, since in combination with this Ecosystem Restoration Verification, Preferred by Nature has performed a Pre-Validation of the TRI-FAO STO initiative as a carbon project following The Acorn Framework. Although it was not designed as a carbon project it has been a good exercise to understand both the good areas and the gaps to fulfill the framework requirements.</p>	
<b>Corrective action request:</b>	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
<b>Timeline for Conformance:</b>	By the next surveillance audit.
<b>Evidence Provided by Organisation:</b>	PENDING



Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

### 1.3 Observations

*Note: Observations are issued for the early stages of a problem which does not of itself constitute a non-conformance, but which the auditor considers may lead to a future non-conformance if not addressed by the organisation; observations may lead to direct non-conformances if not addressed.*

No observation(s) issued

OBS: 01/23	Standard & Requirement:	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.2
	Report Section	Annex I
Description of findings leading to observation:	<p>The project is operationally managed by a Unit (UGP) at FAO and then by a Committee that includes the DGF, recognized as a key actor in this field and at the origin of the initiative. Beyond that, the governance is fully deployed through a National Platform (<i>Plataforma Técnica Nacional de Restauração e Conservação Florestal e Paisagística</i> - PNRFP) composed of public/private institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local Communities, represented by Cooperatives.</p> <p>The audit team reviewed the reports produced at the meetings and also had meetings with representatives of many of the stakeholders groups participating, including e.g. FAO, DGF, UNEP, the Environment Direction (<i>Direccão Geral de Ambiente</i>), all the main agricultural cooperatives (for cocoa, pepper, coffee, timber...), NGOs, regional governments (<i>Câmaras Distritales</i>), etc. The system appears as well set and with a good start and appreciation by the participants.</p> <p>There is a common understanding, by all stakeholders met, that the administrative, political, and projects landscape is often complex, and difficult to navigate, with high risk of miscoordination at the implementors level which then translate in confusion for the political/decision making level and communities level, misuse of the resource due to duplication of activities, lack of synergies, etc.</p>	

	That being said, as it's quite common, things have been evolving overtime, and there has been less focus on these meetings, with an emerging need to think on how to revitalize them both in frequency and in making sure that stakeholders don't lose engagement. The potential of the diversity that the Platform can bring, with different strengths and skills, needs to be recognized looking for further collaboration, beyond information/consultation. Maintaining periodicity while finding ways to make the meetings relevant and efficient seems to be needed, as per stakeholders' comments, to keep transparency, accountability, and engagement, which would lead to a more effective implementation of the project in the mid and long term.
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should revisit the actual application of its governance and engagement system, using or acquiring new competences as needed, to ensure that the engagement with stakeholders remain strong and open for collaboration to the greater extent possible.

<b>OBS: 02/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.2
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	The financial management of the project is very bureaucratic and a barrier for effective implementation, involving FAO in STP, in Rome, and in Gabon, and also UNEP. This has been manageable to date as the activities have been relatively limited, but may become a major barrier as the project scales to its objectives.	
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should seek ways to allow for a more efficient financial management of the project.	

<b>OBS: 03/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.3
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	The geographical location has been identified clearly in the Restoration Plans for the 4 landscapes and also provided in shapefiles. The locations have been sampled and checked in the field by the audit team, and while most of them were coincident with what was expected, a small number fell in other areas, including in the sea.	

<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should review their digital mapping to ensure that all the restoration boundaries are accurate.
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<b>OBS: 04/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.4.1
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	<p>The RM has provided a National Restoration Plan, as a general document, and four Landscape Plans (Center, North, and South of São Tome, and Principe Island), which detail the prior and current conditions and land use for the country. These plans include, among others, a characterization of the landscape both in biophysical and socio-economic terms. They also include a list of potential questions to formulate during the local consultation. While the plans do provide a good general framework for moving forward in this context, to be able to be more specific and targeted, future revisions should go deeper to provide some environmental (e.g. presence of rare or threatened species or their habitats, and other important biological communities) or social (e.g. culturally relevant sites) details, and include them in future template questionnaires to include the communities perspective.</p>	
<b>Observation:</b>	<p>The Organisation should go beyond the current description of prior and current conditions and land use of the larger ecosystem of which the restoration area is a part and provide some environmental (e.g. presence of rare or threatened species or their habitats, and other important biological communities) or social (e.g. culturally relevant sites) details, and include them in future template questionnaires to include the communities perspective.</p>	

<b>OBS: 05/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 1.5.1
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	<p>The Restoration Plans, while missing some details that are only outlined at general level, as explained above, are definitely targeting the main degradation drivers to restore the landscape. Some of the actions that the project is actually undertaking, that may go in the direction of dealing with degradation drivers in the medium and long term through education, awareness raising, and sensitization (e.g. through the NGO Alisei or through the DGF itself), are not included explicitly in the</p>	

	Restoration Plans, while e.g. synergies, leverage, or improvements could be made when analysing actions altogether.
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should ensure that the Restoration Plans encompass all actions directed to restoration.

<b>OBS: 06/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 2.4.1
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	<p>Consultation and engagement have been undertaken at the project planning phase, and are continued on a periodic basis for São Tome. No specific issues have been identified by the audit team during the interviews at the community. However, checking the records and also interviewing both the communities and the staff in charge, including the responsible person at DGF, it's been made clear that no specific considerations have been taken in terms of addressing the power dynamics, while they are always present. It is to be noted that the project activities are only starting to develop and will increase significantly in size for the project to fulfil its objectives, so the affection to stakeholders is likely to increase as well, and hence more attention should be given to this aspect.</p> <p>It is to be noted also that the broader consultation and engagement process has not yet started in Principe, while the activities have, so there is an important gap for that landscape in that sense.</p>	
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should ensure that culturally sensitive engagement taking into consideration the social and economic dynamics is used when engaging with stakeholders.	

<b>OBS: 07/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 2.4.3
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	The RM, through the DFB responsible person, has evidence of the consultation and engagement process, mainly through their monthly reports. They have lost an important part (all the initial consultations done at the planning stage) due to a computer malfunctioning, and it's unclear how the part from Principe, when this happens, will be documented.	

<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should ensure that the relevant parts of the stakeholder engagement process should be documented.
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<b>OBS: 08/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 3.2.2
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	The wildlife pollination/propagation species are known in a general manner and not damaged by restoration activities as per the very low intensity of the restoration. As the activities scale up, there might be further impacts though, and a more specific identification of those species might be useful for their protection.	
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should assess if an increase of the intensity of the restoration activities could have a negative impact on the pollination/propagation species to advance in their identification towards their protection.	

<b>OBS: 09/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 3.3.2.1, 1.6, 3.3.4
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	Children have been observed to be working in one of the restoration sites and have been interviewed, as well as the accompanying adults. It was clear for the audit team that it wasn't a case of child labour, as it was during the weekend (not school attendance wasn't compromised), few hours, in a special moment of harvesting to support their families and not in an ongoing basis, and in a playful and learning experience. No other cases have been seen in any of the sites visited, although it was said at the interviews that doing it in the manner described above is not unusual. During the interviews afterwards with the specific cooperative technical director, that was present during this episode, it appeared that it could make sense to provide the cooperative members with guidance on best practises (e.g. with the LoAs, or at other instances) to better implement the restoration activities, and that this could come in a general manner from the project not to repeat the work by each of the cooperatives.	
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should think on what type of aspects (e.g. workers' rights, including child labour, basic guidance on how to undertake planning activities, PPEs, etc.) would deserve to	

	be provided to project implementers to improve how they undertake the restoration activities.
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<b>OBS: 10/23</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Requirement:</b>	Preferred by Nature Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs. 3.1, 4.6.2
	<b>Report Section</b>	Annex I
<b>Description of findings leading to observation:</b>	It's relatively early stages in the implementation of project still, as a lot of time has been spent in developing the plans and putting the LoAs in to action. A number of actions have been already adapted to the current conditions in the ground after the experienced gained, but there is not a system to use monitoring results to inform revisions to the Restoration Plan, providing identification of, and direction towards enabling conditions that will ensure the restored ecosystem remains after establishment.	
<b>Observation:</b>	The Organisation should design and put into practise a system to inform revisions to the Restoration Plan, providing identification of and direction towards enabling conditions that will ensure the restored ecosystem remains after establishment.	

## 1.4 Stakeholder consultation

The purpose of the stakeholder consultation strategy was threefold:

- To ensure that the public is aware of and informed about the assessment process and its objectives;
- To assist the field assessment team in identifying potential issues; and,
- To provide diverse opportunities for the public to discuss and act upon the findings of the assessment.

This process is not just stakeholder notification, but to the maximum extent possible, detailed and meaningful stakeholder interaction. The process of stakeholder interaction does not stop after the field visits, or for that matter, after even a certification decision is made. Preferred by Nature welcomes, at any time, comments on verified projects and such comments often provide a basis for field assessment.

The majority of the meetings were held on site, either at the capital city or in the restoration sites and neighbouring communities.

Stakeholder Type (NGO, government bodies, local inhabitant, contractor etc.)	Stakeholders Notified (#)¶	Stakeholders consulted directly or provided input (#)
National/International NGOs	2	7

Local/Regional NGOs	1	3
Local Community members		over 30
Government Agency		15
University		2

The table below summarises the issues identified by the assessment team with a brief discussion of each based upon specific interview and/or public meeting comments.

1: Planning	
Stakeholder comment	Preferred by Nature response
2: Tenure, Rights & Engagement	
Stakeholder comment	Preferred by Nature response
<i>We didn't know that we could benefit from doing the nurseries ourselves and get paid for it.</i>	The Restoration Plans provide an analysis on e.g. the expected benefits of the restoration interventions, but they don't include potential harm/unintended consequences, and how the restoration effort is addressing them. See NCR 06/23.
<i>We are learning now that there was a process to provide jobs by the project to plant and maintain trees.</i>	The Restoration Plans provide an analysis on e.g. the expected benefits of the restoration interventions, but they don't include potential harm/unintended consequences, and how the restoration effort is addressing them. See NCR 06/23.
3: Implementation	
Stakeholder comment	Preferred by Nature response
<i>As recognized NGO in the country, we have been engaged in the initiative from start but we now feel that we have been left behind for some reason, maybe because there is a sense of self-sufficiency or maybe competition by some of the partners, that we don't really understand. We have our own areas of expertise (e.g. education and awareness raising) that we would be happy to engage on further, and lately we are even not invited to participate in some</i>	The governance is fully deployed through a National Platform ( <i>Plataforma Técnica Nacional de Restauração e Conservação Florestal e Paisagística</i> - PNRFP) composed of public/private institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local Communities, represented by Cooperatives. The system appears as well set and with a good start and appreciation by the participants. That being said, an emerging need to think on how to revitalize

<p><i>platforms were we would belong (e.g. on Climate Change)</i></p> <p><i>The project should participate in other meetings and initiatives (e.g. some organized the Ministry of Environment on biodiversity) that correlate to the work they are doing and not only in their own.</i></p> <p><i>While we are committed to the TRI Initiative, I have the sense that meetings can be sometimes more a load than anything else when they become merely informative and not engaging, and as we are all very busy it's difficult to support initiatives and think forward from that standpoint.</i></p>	<p>stakeholders engagement with some parties is acknowledged. The potential of the diversity that the Platform can bring, with different strengths and skills, needs to be recognized looking for further collaboration, beyond information/consultation. See OBS 01/23.</p>
<p><i>The TRI National Restoration Plan is very nice in paper, but it's staying in the drawer.</i></p>	<p>The TRI National Restoration Plan is a framework that has been developed into the four Landscape Plans (Centre, North, and South of São Tome, and Principe Island), and the audit team has confirmed in the field that these have been then operationalized in the agreements (LoAs) with a number of partners for its implementation. The audit team acknowledges, after a number of interviews, that communication with some stakeholders is to be improved (see OBS 01/03), and also that the TRI project has grown quite large in building the network of partners and activities and now needs scale-up to reach its objectives in terms of ha under restoration.</p>
<p><i>We are very happy to have been engaged in the process so far, we just need to get beyond the actual support we get to improve what we do</i></p>	<p>NA</p>
<p><b>4: Monitoring and Reporting</b></p>	
<p><b>Stakeholder comment</b></p>	<p><b>Preferred by Nature response</b></p>



## 1.5 Actions taken by Organisation Prior to Report Finalisation

NA

## 2 AUDIT PROCESS

### 2.1 Standard Used

<b>Standards Used (including version):</b>	PbN Ecosystem Restoration Standard – A Social and Environmental Standard for Field Verification of Restoration Initiatives version 3.1
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### 2.2 Audit Team and accompanying persons

Name	Role and qualifications
Mateo Cariño Fraisse	Lead Auditor. The expert has over 20 years' experience in forestry, ecosystem services, stakeholder engagement, social issues, ecosystem restoration, training, and certification in Europe, Africa, and America, and Asia. Mateo speaks Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese, and is currently responsible for the PbN Ecosystem Restoration Program.
Pablo Rodríguez-Noriega	Pablo Rodríguez-Noriega has a background in forestry with more than 15 years of experience in forest management planning. For more than ten years he has been working in the Forest Carbon sector. He has led the development of carbon footprint and forest carbon projects in several countries (Africa, Asia, LATAM and Europe). Pablo works at Preferred by Nature as Carbon Project Manager, responsible for Validation and Verification services for Nature based solution carbon projects.
Angela dos Santos Trindade Lima	Angela is graduated in environmental engineering and has a professional training in forest and environment. She has worked directly in national forest, in the study and conservation of (terrestrial) biodiversity. She participated in the forest inventory for the carbon monitoring in São Tomé in the Obo Carbon Project as a junior consultant. Recently she has participated in the survey of the flora of São Tomé and Príncipe for the characterization and classification of the threatened flora of STP, within the scope of the project Characterization of the Threatened Flora of STP.
Hernán Zaldívar	Report reviewer. Hernán has a background in forestry with more than 15 years of experience in forest management, agribusiness and restoration. He was FSC's Market Development Manager in the Latin America Regional Office and leader of Climate-Smart Agriculture at Solidaridad Network. Hernán also has a master's degree in Agribusiness from the Tropical Agronomic Research and Higher Education Centre – CATIE in Costa Rica and coordinates the Monitoring and Transparency Working Group of the 20x20 Initiative.

## 2.3 Audit Overview

*Note: The table below provides an overview of the audit scope and auditors. See standard checklist annex for specific details on people interviewed and audit findings per site audited.*

Location / Main sites	Date	Main activities	Auditors
<b>São Tome</b>			
São Tomé/ BirdLife Office	24/08/2023	Interview with BirdLife's Policy Manager and Sustainable Finance Manager	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Travel to Principe Island	24/08/2023		Mateo, Pablo, Angela
<b>Principe</b>			
Regional Secretariat for the Biosphere for Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development	24/08/2023	Interview with the Regional Secretary for the Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Regional Directorate for Environment and Nature Conservation/Regional Department for Forests and Biodiversity	24/08/2023	Meeting with a team from the Department of Forests and Regional Biodiversity and S. Tomé, with the TRI team. Audit opening meeting	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Principe Foundation Office	25/08/2023	Interview with the Focal Point between Fundação Príncipe and Here Be Dragons (HBD), and the Environmental Manager of HBD	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Paciência / To be restored plot/HBD	25/08/2023	Degraded plot of HBD planned for restoration/ Secondary Forest	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Ponta do Sol/ Community/HBD	25/08/2023	Visit to one of the HBD nurseries	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Ponta do Sol/ Community	25/08/2023	Interview with a resident of the community	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
São Joaquim/Restored area/DFB Regional	25/08/2023	Land visit, Secondary Forest, public consultation with DFB worker in the community of S. Joaquim	Pablo, Angela
São Joaquim/ Community	25/08/2023	Public consultation with a group of women	Mateo, Angela

Location / Main sites	Date	Main activities	Auditors
Bela Vista/ Bankable project of Bela Vista Florestal	25/08/2023	Visit to the project, construction of pigsty, composting area, and forest plantation, interview with the owner of the company	Pablo
Futuro/ Farmer's plot/CEPIBA	26/08/2023	Field visit, coffee plantation and agro-forestry, interview with the Director of CEPIBA and with the farmer of the cooperative	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Mangrove of the Abade River/ARBIP	26/08/2023	Field visit, mangrove, interview with the president of ARBIP	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Água-Grande de Abade/ Bankable project	26/08/2023	Land visit, forest plantation, interview with Mr. Daniel's worker	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Santo António	26/08/2023	Meeting of the team of auditors	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
Santo António	26/08/2023	Interview with the Director of Sustainability and Chief of Staff of HBD	Mateo, Pablo
Travel to São Tome	27/08/2023		Mateo, Pablo, Angela
<b>São Tome</b>			
São Nicolau/Restored area /AMP	28/08/2023	Interview with the president of the Monte Pico Association, Visit of land, degraded agricultural land	Pablo, Angela
Ubá- Budo Roça/Farmer's plot/DFB	28/08/2023	Field visit, Cocoa plantation, interview with Mr. Eduardo's worker	Pablo, Angela
Mendes da Silva/ Restored area/CECAQ 11	28/08/2023	Terrain tour, Secondary Forest	Pablo, Angela
Mendes da Silva/Farmer's plot/CECAQ 11	28/08/2023	Field visit, cocoa plantation, interview with CECAQ11 technician and 3 small farmers members of the cooperative	Pablo, Angela
TRI/DFB Project Office	28/08/2023	Interview with the DFB responsible person for the Department of Forestry, Awareness Raising, and Studies	Mateo

Location / Main sites	Date	Main activities	Auditors
FAO STP Office	28/08/2023	Interview with the FAO representative for STP	Mateo
Environment Directorate Office	28/08/2023	Interview with the Director of Environment for STP	Mateo
UNDP Office	28/08/2023	Interview with the UNDP representative	Mateo
Monte Café / Degraded sites with restoration activities, Farmers plots, Cooperative Office/CECAFEB	28/08/2023	Field visit, Agroecology sites, Plantations, Farmers plots of coffee, restoration of erosion sites, Interview with the CECAFEB Executive Director and Workers, Document review at the CECAFEB Office	Mateo
São Carlos / NTFP projects	28/08/2023	Visit bee keeping and honey production project and interview with the workers	Mateo
Neves / District Chamber of Lembá	29/08/2023	Interview with the Mayor of Lembá	Pablo, Angela
Neves / Restoration area - Morro Pôcô Muála / District Chamber of Lembá	29/08/2023	Visit to the restaurant area, interview with locksmiths	Pablo, Angela
Água Telha /community nursery/CECAB	29/08/2023	Visit to the nursery, interview with the head of the nursery and with the vice-president of CECAB	Pablo, Angela
Água Telha /Farmer's Plot/CECAB	29/08/2023	Field visit, cocoa plantation, interview with farmer member of the CECAB cooperative	Pablo, Angela
Pedra Maria/Farmer's plot/CECAB	29/08/2023	Land visit, cocoa plantation, interview with the president of the Community Association, owner of the plot, member of the CECAB cooperative	Pablo, Angela
Mangrove of Micoló/ WACA Project	29/08/2023	Visit of land, nursery and mangrove plantation, interview with menbra of the WACA collaborating community	Pablo, Angela
Praia das Conchas Roça/ Savana Beach/DFB	29/08/2023	Field visit, savanna restoration area,	Pablo, Angela

Location / Main sites	Date	Main activities	Auditors
		interview with DFB manager	
Mangrove of Angolares / Nursery /DFB	29/08/2023	Field visit, restoration practises, nursery, interview with the responsible staff from DFB and nursery contractor	Mateo
Fraternidade 2 / Medium size company	29/08/2023	Field visit, restoration practises, agricultural areas, interview with the responsible staff from DFB and company	Mateo
Macuru Protected area	29/08/2023	Field visit, protected species, interview with the responsible staff from DFB and neighbouring agricultural areas	Mateo
Fraternidade 1 / Medium size company	29/08/2023	Field visit, restoration practises, agricultural areas, interview with the responsible staff from DFB and company worker	Mateo
Telephone interview	30/08/2023	Interview with the president of Roça Sundy	Angela
National Institute of Meteorology	30/08/2023	Interview with UNFCCC National Focal Point	Pablo
Potó/ Madalena/ CIAT	30/08/2023	Interview with the Director General and the Scientific Director	Pablo
University of São Tomé and Príncipe/ Faculty of Science and Technology (FCT)	30/08/2023	Interview with the vice-president of FCT	Pablo
Biotech Bankable Project	30/08/2023	Field visit, production site, interview with beneficiary	Mateo
Project Office TRI/ CSMPM	30/08/2023	Meeting with the President and Secretary of the Timber Cooperative	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
TRI Project Office	31/08/2023	Documentation review and interview with TRI and DFB team	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
TRI Project Office	31/08/2023	Audit team meeting	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
TRI/DFB Project Office	31/08/2023	Training section on ecosystem restoration	Mateo, Pablo, Angela

Location / Main sites	Date	Main activities	Auditors
		and carbon projects with DFB and TRI team	
TRI Project Office	31/08/2023	Audit waxing meeting	Mateo, Pablo, Angela
CECAB Office	31/08/2023	Interview with President and 2 Technical Secretaries	Pablo
Alisei Office	1/09/2023	Interview with NGO representatives	Mateo
Hotel Avenida	1/09/2023	Audit team meeting	Mateo, Pablo, Angela

## 2.4 Description of Overall Audit Process

### 2.4.1 List of sites selected for evaluation.

Area	Logic used for selection
HBD, several areas	Interviews and visit to the nursery and some areas of intervention in a private organization in Principe with tourism as main business.
Alto Bandeira	Fieldwork verification and interviews with bankable projects beneficiaries.
Campo Político	Interviews and visit to the DFB Regional forest nursery.
Community of São Joaquim	Verification of fieldwork and interaction with the community and small farmers.
Abade Community	Interviews with local NGO and visit to the mangrove ecosystem.
CEPIBA	Fieldwork verification and interviews of a pepper cooperative managed area, with agroforestry areas with their own products and particularities.
CECAQ 11	Fieldwork verification and interviews of a cocoa cooperative managed area, with agroforestry areas with their own products and particularities.
Ass. Monte Pico	Fieldwork verification and interviews
Macuru Protected area	Field visit, protected species, interview with the responsible staff from DFB and neighboring agricultural areas.
CECAFEB	Fieldwork verification and interviews of a coffee cooperative managed area, with agroforestry areas with their own products and particularities.
Fraternidade area	Visit of medium size owners and interviews with workers/community members.
San Carlos	Fieldwork verification and interviews with bankable projects beneficiaries.
Savannah	Interviews and visit to the restored area in a savannah ecosystem.
Angolares	Interviews with subcontractor and visit to the mangrove ecosystem.

## 2.4.2 List of management aspects reviewed by assessment team

Type of site	Sites visited	Type of site	Sites visited
Road construction	2	Illegal settlement	
Soil drainage		Bridges/stream crossing	
Workshop		Chemical storage	
Tree nursery	6	Wetland	
Planned harvest site		Steep slope/erosion	
Ongoing harvest site		Riparian zone	2
Completed logging		Permanent Monitoring Plot	
Soil scarification		Direct seeding	
Planting site	10	Weed control	6
Felling by harvester		Natural regeneration	6
Felling by forest worker		Endangered species	1
Skidding/Forwarding		Wildlife management	3
Clearfelling/Clearcut		Nature Reserve	1
Shelterwood management		Key Biotope	1
Selective felling		Special management area	3
Sanitation cutting		Historical site	3
Pre-commercial thinning		Recreational site	1
Commercial thinning		Buffer zone	3
Logging camp		Local community	4
Native reference sites			



## 3 ORGANISATION DETAILS

### 3.1 Organisation specific background information

#### Ownership and land tenure description (legal and customary)

Recognizing the need to stop and revert the land degradation and deforestation, the administration of São Tomé and Príncipe has defined reforestation and forest and landscape restoration along with the fight against indiscriminate tree felling as a strategic priority for the decade 2021-2030. In this context, performing a baseline assessment of the country's forest resources and proposing measures for the restoration of degraded areas are pillars of the new policy for the recovery of forests and landscapes in São Tomé and Príncipe. The National Forest and Landscape Restoration Plan was produced to meet the above challenges and provide the necessary technical and science-based support. The exercise was carried out by the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB), with the participation of technicians from the Central Administration of the State, the Autonomous Region of Príncipe and the District Chambers, within the scope of the project "Landscape Restoration for Ecosystem Functionality and Climate Change Mitigation in São Tomé and Príncipe", one of the eleven projects nested within The Restoration Initiative (TRI) led by FAO, IUCN and UNEP, and executed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development. The National Platform for Forest and Landscape Restoration, set up thanks to the TRI project, was instrumental in the elaboration of the work, together with the input of local communities and stakeholders.

The land system of São Tomé and Príncipe was influenced by old agricultural companies or farms that came into existence after colonization. Over the period 1993/1995 these companies were dismantled and distributed in the form of small family plots and medium companies. Part of these, better preserved, were transformed into areas of public domain or reserved.

In turn, the forros (native creoles) managed to acquire, preserve and lease lands peripheral to the plantations, even after post-independence land reforms. The plots constituted approximately 10% of cultivated land outside the space occupied by farms (Tenreiro, 1961 cited by Berthet, 2012). To this day, these lands are essentially located in the surroundings of the capital São Tomé and on the banks of the old farms.

Thus, based on this historical and land management factor in the country, they were considered the following land use categories:

- Obô de São Tomé Natural Park (PNOT) – Protected area in the public domain;
- PNOT Buffer Zone – Zone surrounding the PNOT whose purpose is to minimize the impacts of human action on this;
- Agripalma – Palm area concessioned to the company Agripalma;
- Lands – Private areas that have never been nationalized;
- Medium-sized companies – distributed areas with a surface area between 9-20 ha.
- Agricultural parcels – parcels of land from former farms allocated to small farmers, with areas between 0.5-4 ha.

#### Legislative and government regulatory context

São Tomé and Príncipe benefits from a political and legal basis that supports resource management forestry and biodiversity conservation. According to Fernandes (2020), in the legal system São Tomé legal system, the problems of forest protection and conservation as well as of reforestation (RFP) find shelter, directly and indirectly, in various devices

legal and regulatory. In order of hierarchy of legal norms, we can find normative references in instruments such as the Constitution, Laws and Decrees-law, Decrees, Regulations and Ministerial Orders.

Of these legislative texts, the following stand out:

- Law No. 10/1999 – Basic Environmental Law: it is the legislative diploma that defines the bases environmental policy for sustainable development in São Tomé and Príncipe;
- Law No. 11/1999 - Law on the Conservation of Fauna, Flora and Protected Areas: aims to conservation of floristic and faunal species, their habitats and establishes the basis for the creation of Protected Areas;
- Decree-Law nº37/1999 – Regulation on the Environmental Impact Assessment Process: Establishes the standards for implementing activities that, in turn, nature, size or location are likely to cause impacts significant to the environment;
- Law No. 5/2001 – Forest Law: this is the law that establishes the general framework for conservation and forestry exploitation in the country, creates the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity, the duties and competencies;
- Law No. 6/2006 - São Tomé Natural Park Law: it is the legislative text that officially legalizes the institutionalization of the Obô de São Tomé Natural Park, the its limits, exploration and management;
- Law No. 7/2007 - Obô do Príncipe Natural Park Law: is the legislative text that officially legalizes the institutionalization of the Príncipe Natural Park, its limits, exploration and management;

Decree-Law nº19/2009 – Import Control, Acquisition and circulation of Chainsaw in the Country: establishes standards for the acquisition of chainsaws, equipment and forestry exploration accessories and criteria for their circulation in the country;

- Decree-Law nº20/2009 - Regulation for Licensing Import of Wood: Establishes the procedures for importing wood and the tax benefits of importers of wood and other woody materials;
- Decree-Law 01/2016- Regulation on hunting: aims to establish the legal regime for hunting conservation and exploitation of hunting resources;
- Law nº7/2018 – Water Resources Framework Law: establishes the framework for the management of public domain waters, whether surface waters, namely inland, transitional and coastal waters, and groundwater;
- Law No. 9/2020 – Approving the Legal Regime for Exploration and Extraction of Inert Materials: It aims to adopt a legal regime for the exploration and extraction of aggregates and defines the conditions under which its exploration and extraction is permitted in the national territory.

### **Environmental Context**

São Tomé and Príncipe does not have a large number of native mammals (although the São Tomé shrew and several bat species are endemic). The islands are home to a larger number of endemic birds and plants, including the world's smallest ibis (the São Tomé ibis), the world's largest sunbird (the giant sunbird), the rare São Tomé fiscal, and several giant species of Begonia. São Tomé and Príncipe is an important marine turtle-nesting site, including the hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*).

São Tomé and Príncipe has a diverse plant heritage, with different formations forests, from humid mountain forests, mangroves, to the most arid savannas.

These ecosystems play a determining role in the country's ecological balance, contributing to the mitigation of the effects of climate change as a CO<sub>2</sub> sink.

Furthermore, the São Tomé forests are home to a floristic and faunal diversity exceptional, which provide considerable resources in wood and forest products non-woody, which have contributed significantly to the country's economy and improving the living conditions of local populations. Forests occupy around 52% of the country's territory, reaching 84%, if

we include shade forests. However, inappropriate use of the soil, the indiscriminate felling of trees and the ungoverned implementation of crops agriculture, has negatively influenced the ecosystems and landscapes of the islands.

Shade plantations, which once constituted the main production forest, are now entirely composed of low quality wood. In other forest formations, native and secondary forest, there is still a considerable volume of wood of high commercial value. However, poor knowledge of the islands' flora makes it difficult to assess which of the its species may be threatened by logging.

On the islands one can also observe a diversity of forest types, ranging from dense and humid forests, to semi-arid savannah areas. However, as explained in point previous, these plant formations are in degradation, both in terms of forest surface, as in the floristic composition. The São Tomé Government defined the reforestation and restoration of forests and landscapes as a strategic priority for the coming years (2021-2035), together with with the fight against illegal and indiscriminate felling of trees, encouraging actions to information, education and communication about forests and their resources. Two natural parks were created in 2006, extending across both islands and including terrestrial ecosystems more representative. However, the lack of resources remains a serious obstacle to functioning and effective control of protected areas and land management.

### **Socioeconomic Context**

Since the 19th century, the economy of São Tomé and Príncipe has been based on plantation agriculture. At the time of independence, Portuguese-owned plantations occupied 90% of the cultivated area. After independence, control of these plantations passed to various state-owned agricultural enterprises. The main crop on São Tomé is cocoa, representing about 95% of agricultural exports. Other export crops include copra, palm kernels, and coffee.

Domestic food-crop production is inadequate to meet local consumption, so the country imports a lot of its food. As of 1997, an estimated 90% of the country's food needs were met through imports. Hence, in recent years, social pressure has grown on the indiscriminate exploitation of forests, with a very negative impact in environmental and economic terms. It appears that the growing and increasingly competing demands for food, energy and urbanization are accelerating the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems, which reduces considerably improve its resilience to climate change. Although it is estimated that the rate of deforestation is relatively low, there are signs of marked degradation in forest ecosystems, mainly derived from the illegal felling of trees, for the production of construction materials, and the opening of new agricultural areas.

There is a conflict of interest between institutions in land management, so the civil society, increasingly attentive and concerned about environmental problems, demands a greater protagonism in decision-making moments and in land management in the country. For example, the authorizations for the extraction of aggregates and construction of infrastructures overlap with environmental objectives.

Other than agriculture, the main economic activities are fishing and a small industrial sector engaged in processing local agricultural products and producing a few basic consumer goods. The scenic islands have potential for tourism, and the government is attempting to improve its rudimentary tourist industry infrastructure.

## 3.2 General overview of the organisation and scope

The National Forest and Landscape Restoration Plan was produced to meet the above challenges and provide the necessary technical and science-based support. The exercise was carried out by the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB), with the participation of technicians from the Central Administration of the State, the Autonomous Region of Príncipe and the District Chambers, within the scope of the project "Landscape Restoration for Ecosystem Functionality and Climate Change Mitigation in São Tomé and Príncipe", one of the eleven projects nested within the Restoration Initiative (TRI) led by FAO, IUCN and UNEP, and executed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development. The National Platform for Forest and Landscape Restoration, set up thanks to the TRI project, was instrumental in the elaboration of the work, together with the input of local communities and stakeholders.

The TRI project is a 5-year project (2019/2025), financed by the GEF, implemented by FAO and with technical execution by the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity. The same aims to contribute to the restoration and sustainable management of São Paulo's forest ecosystems Tomé and Príncipe in order to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation forestry, as well as halting and reversing forest and soil degradation. The project aims to restore around 12.000 hectares of forests and landscapes and involve approximately 17,000 members of rural communities and other actors actors in the restoration of forests and landscapes. It is estimated that these actions may contribute to the sequestration of more than 295 thousand tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

