



SAHARA
AND SAHEL
OBSERVATORY



ADAPTATION FUND

RICOWAS

Scaling up Climate Resilient Rice Production in West Africa
Mise à l'Échelle de la Production de Riz, Résiliente au Climat en Afrique de l'Ouest

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

DELIVERABLE 3 - FINAL REPORT OF THE RICOWAS PROJECT MID-TERM EVALUATION

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BASIC INFORMATION ON THE RICOWAS PROJECT

The table below summarizes the key information related to the RICOWAS project, “Scaling-up Climate-Resilient Rice Production in West Africa”, subject of this Mid-Term Evaluation.

Table 1. Basic Information on the RICOWAS Project

Type of information	Information
Project title	Scaling-up Climate-Resilient Rice Production in West Africa (RICOWAS)
Funding source	Adaptation Fund
AF Project ID	AFR/RIE/Food/2019/PPC/1
Implementing Entity	Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)
Regional Executing Entity	A regional unit based at the Regional Center of Specialization on Rice, sponsored by ECOWAS (RCoS-Rice/IER), Mali
Regional Technical Partner	Cornell University (USA): Climate-Resilient Farming Systems Program
National Executing Entities	▪ Benin: General Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (SG/MAEP); National Agricultural Research Institute of Benin (INRAB) ▪ Burkina Faso: Ministry of Agriculture and hydro-agricultural Development; Directorate General for Sectoral Studies and Statistics ▪ Côte d’Ivoire: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; National Agency for Rural Development Support (ANADER) ▪ The Gambia: Ministry of Agriculture ▪ Ghana: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research – Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (CSIR-SARI) ▪ Guinea: Guinean Institute of Agronomic Research (IRAG) ▪ Liberia: Community of Hope Agriculture Project (CHAP) ▪ Mali: National Directorate of Agriculture (DNA) ▪ Niger: National Institute of Agronomic Research of Niger (INRAN) ▪ Nigeria: Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) ▪ Senegal: National Agency for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (ANCAR) ▪ Sierra Leone: Rokupr Rice Research Centre / Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute ▪ Togo: Technical Advisory and Support Institute (ICAT)
Beneficiary Countries	Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
Project Sector	Food Security
Project Themes	Food Security – Rice Production – Community Resilience
Beneficiaries	Smallholder rice farmers / Private sector / Civil society
Implementation Period	2023 – 2027 (Expected closing date : 08/24/2027)
Mid-Term Evaluation Timeline	Mission : 2025 – 2026
Total Budget	USD 14 million (Adaptation Fund)
Mid-Term Evaluator	Mr. Yadh LABANE, International Consultant

This table was compiled based on information available online from the Adaptation Fund website (<https://www.adaptation-fund.org/project/scaling-up-climate-resilient-rice-production-in-west-africa-benin-burkina-faso-co%CC%82te-divoire-the-gambia-ghana-guinea-liberia-mali-niger-nigeria-senegal-sierra-leone-and-togo/>), and the OSS website (https://www.oss-online.org/fr/ricowas_fr).

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABM	Adaptation Benefits Mechanism
AF	Adaptation Fund
ANADER	National Agency for Support to Rural Development – Côte d'Ivoire
ANCAR	National Agency for Agricultural and Rural Council - Senegal
ARCN	Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria
AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CAB	Certified Adaptation Benefits
CC	Climate Change
CHAP	Community of Hope Agriculture Project (Liberia)
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CORAF/WECARD	West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development
CRE-Rice	Centre of Regional Excellence in Rice
CRRP	Climate-Resilient Rice Production
RCoS-Rice	Regional Centre of Specialisation in Rice (hosted at IER)
CSIR-SARI	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research – Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (Ghana)
DNA	National Directorate of Agriculture - Mali
DPS	Direct Project Services
ECOWAP	Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EE	Executing Entity (NEEs and REE)
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FO	Farmer Organization
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
ICAT	Institute for Consulting and Technical Support - Togo
IER	Institute of Rural Economy – Mali
INRAB	National Institute of Agricultural Research of Benin

INRAN	National Agronomic Research Institute of Niger
IRAG	Guinea Agronomic Research Institute.
KM	Knowledge Management
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MIF	Monthly Interim Financial
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEE	National Executing Entity
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NO	No-Objection (request)
NPMU	National Project Management Unit
NRDS	National Rice Development Strategy
NSC	National Steering Committee
OSS	Sahara and Sahel Observatory
PO	Producers Organisation
PP	Procurement Plan
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RAIPFNS	Regional Agriculture Investment Plan for Food and Nutrition Security
RCP	Representative Concentration Pathway
RCoS-Rice	Regional Centre of Specialisation in Rice
REE	Regional Executing Entity (RCoS-Rice/IER)
RIE	Regional Implementing Entity (OSS)
RICOWAS	Scaling-up Climate-Resilient Rice Production in West Africa
RPMU	Regional Project Management Unit
RSC	Regional Steering Committee

RTIG	Regional Technical Innovation Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG/MAEP	General Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Benin)
SLWM	Sustainable Land and Water Management
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
SRI-WAAPP	System of Rice Intensification – West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
USD	United States Dollar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and rationale of the project

This consultancy mission is part of the evaluation policy of the Adaptation Fund (AF). Its objective is to conduct the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the RICOWAS project “Scaling up climate-resilient rice production in West Africa”. Funded by the AF and implemented by the OSS, this project covers 13 West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo).

The **RICOWAS** project builds on the **SRI-WAAPP**¹ project by capitalizing on acquired knowledge, tested innovations, and strengthened institutional capacities. It aims to enhance food security and climate resilience for **153,000 smallholder rice producers** across the **13 beneficiary countries** through the adoption of **Climate-Resilient Rice Production (CRRP) practices**, namely the **System of Rice Intensification (SRI)**.

Even though it operates at the regional scale, RICOWAS keeps a local level and covers 396 communes distributed across 173 districts and 89 regions in the 13 ECOWAS member countries. Project areas were selected through consultative processes, considering national priorities, climate vulnerability of rice production systems, and adaptation potential. The main direct beneficiaries are smallholder rice producers, including women and youth, who are among the most vulnerable to climate risks. Indirect beneficiaries include extension agents, technicians, local institutions, and other actors in the rice value chain.

Objective and framework of the Mid-Term Evaluation

This MTE was conducted between September 2025 and April 2026, at the request of the OSS, the Implementing Entity (IE) of the RICOWAS project. It aims to:

- Assess the relevance and coherence of the project design in line with regional and national priorities, climate risks, and beneficiaries’ needs;
- Check the implementation effectiveness, including progress towards expected results and the performance of institutional arrangements;
- Analyze the efficiency of the resource use and management systems;
- Identify initial results, best practices, challenges, and constraints affecting the project implementation;
- Provide operational recommendations to improve the project performance, support adaptive management and strengthen the sustainability of the results.

Methodological approach adapted to the project context

¹ The SRI-WAAPP project (2014–2016) is a regional initiative aimed at increasing rice production in 13 West African countries through the adoption of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). Funded by the World Bank and managed by CORAF/WE CARD, it was part of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program, with the objective of improving food security.

The methodology adopted for this MTE is structured around the following principles:

- **A multi-level consultation approach (regional, national and local)** was implemented with all stakeholders of the RICOWAS project through direct contacts with the OSS, online meetings, and questionnaires tailored to each partner for data collection;
- **A documentary review and analysis** covering: (i) project documents, (ii) a RICOWAS documentary database provided by the OSS, and (iii) a bibliographic review that complemented the available information;
- **A detailed analysis of the collected data** through: (i) a combination of quantitative statistical data and survey results with qualitative information (stakeholder interviews, case studies), and (ii) a comparative analysis to assess progress against baseline indicators defined in the results framework.

Establishment of a consultation and coordination process

An ongoing consultation and coordination process was established with all RICOWAS stakeholders:

- Discussion and consultation meetings at the OSS headquarters, along with a questionnaire and two follow-up information requests;
- Separate remote meetings with the Regional Executing Entity (REE) and Cornell University, along with a questionnaire and two follow-up information requests;
- Remote meetings with the NEEs, grouped into French-speaking and English-speaking countries, along with an adapted questionnaire (English and French).

Furthermore, given the huge geographical extent covered by RICOWAS, it was impossible to conduct field visits within the framework of this MTE. Therefore, a data collection process based on surveys and tailored questionnaires for the different partners was implemented. All expressed views were treated impartially and with the required confidentiality.

The survey content was adapted to the specificities of each stakeholder:

1. **A questionnaire dedicated to the OSS:** focusing on implementation arrangements, monitoring and evaluation, and the link between the different levels (regional, national, and local);
2. **A questionnaire dedicated to the REE:** focusing on regional-level activities, support provided to NEEs, and prospects for improving regional dynamics;
3. **A questionnaire dedicated to the regional implementing partner (Cornell University):** focusing on technical contributions and support provided;
4. **A questionnaire dedicated to NEEs:** focusing on national management frameworks, successful experiences, challenges encountered, and relations with the local level;

5. **A questionnaire dedicated to a sample of rice farmers/beneficiaries in each country:** focusing on the level of adoption of the CRRP practices, access to inputs, equipment and services received, capacity building, and project support.

The questionnaires dedicated to NEEs and rice farmers/beneficiaries in each country were converted into KoboCollect format. They were analyzed using the RStudio integrated development environment, thereby ensuring high-quality statistical processing and an appropriate presentation of the results.

Data limitations and quality

The consultation process was exhaustive but particularly time-consuming and had to contend with some shortcomings:

- **Differentiated reactivity:** Out of the 13 NEEs, only 11 responded to the questionnaires. Similarly, only rice farmers from 11 out of 13 countries provided answers. Some countries responded on time, whilst others experienced significant delays, which considerably prolonged the data collection process;
- **Differentiated response quality:** Some countries provided appropriate and detailed answers to the questionnaires, while others submitted superficial responses;
- **Non-compliance with sampling guidelines:** Responses to the questionnaires show that the recommendations regarding sampling of rice farmers were not considered.

Lack of data, particularly disaggregated at country and activity levels

Due to the absence of an operational monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, the OSS had to rely on country reports to obtain the mid-term indicator values (February 2025), which were not disaggregated at country and activity levels. This limitation affected the quality of the MTE.

That being said, this MTE mission was conducted under satisfactory conditions and faced no major difficulties affecting its implementation.

Proven strategic relevance at regional and national levels

The relevance of the project has been proven at several levels:

1. **Strong regional strategic coherence:** The design of the RICOWAS project is fully aligned with regional agricultural policies, namely (i) the ECOWAP/Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), (ii) the ECOWAS Regional Offensive for Sustainable Rice Production in West Africa, and (iii) the Regional Agricultural Investment Programme and Food and Nutrition Security Plan. In addition, RICOWAS also effectively contributes to the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy and its Action Plan.

2. **Alignment with national climate change priorities:** The RICOWAS project document highlights its effective contribution to national and sub-national sustainable agricultural development strategies, particularly rice development, with the aim of achieving food self-sufficiency. Furthermore, a more specific review of national strategic documents related to climate change (CC) shows the RICOWAS alignment with national climate priorities defined at the level of: The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the 13 countries and the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) / National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) of said countries.
3. **Local acceptability:** Farmers recognize the added value of CRRP/SRI practices, even though partial adoption is influenced by other constraints. Likewise, Training of Trainers (ToT) and Regional Technical Innovation Group (RTIG) activities are highly appreciated by stakeholders at both national and local levels.

Slow progress in achieving the mid-term targets

A partially achieved overall objective with a membership drive, currently underway: With **50,745 direct beneficiaries** (72% of the mid-term target) adopting SRI and CRRP practices, the objective is partially achieved. The average yield increase, estimated at 11%, remains below the 25% target and must be considered with caution, as available data are still incomplete and require methodological consolidation. An adoption dynamic among the farmers is emerging; however, it has not yet translated into technical performance improvements at the expected level. Finally, the lack of disaggregated data by country and gender has made it impossible to properly assess how the mid-term target has been achieved.

Achievement of the 1st component: This component, focused on regional institutional strengthening and the integration of CC into policies, shows a considerable delay.

Key structural prerequisites (studies, regional validations) have not been initiated, while the integration of the climate dimension into rice strategies is already being addressed in several countries through other national initiatives. In this context, the specific added value of this result at regional level is somehow limited and requires adjustment.

The establishment of the RTIG represents a structuring achievement and a technical coordination lever. However, capacity building remains significantly below the mid-term target. This delay is likely to have chain effects, particularly on the ability of extension institutions and Executing Entities (EEs) to support CRRP scaling. In addition, field deployment capacity is limited by the modest number of trained trainers as well as the absence of training kits.

Overall, these results highlight the challenges in establishing a regional dynamic and call for a targeted adjustment of higher value-added activities during the remaining implementation period.

Achievement of the 2nd component: Although operational, this component reveals agronomic potential constrained by material and organizational bottlenecks.

The 41,060 farmers adopting CRRP practices and the 16,745.6 ha of areas concerned represent 101% and 67% of the mid-term targets respectively, reflecting an overall positive adoption dynamic. These results indicate that the spread in terms of number of farmers has not progressed at the same pace as spatial scaling.

The major warning point concerns the weak increase in incomes, far below the mid-term target (8% against a target of 40%). This situation suggests that:

- adoption is often partial or not sufficiently intensive to generate tangible economic gains, and/or
- the enabling conditions (production costs, access to equipment, water management, availability of organic inputs, post-harvest services and market access) are not yet in place to translate technical progress into financial benefits.

Regarding the strengthening of the rice value chain through the creation of Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) and the consolidation of farmers’ associations and cooperatives, progress is significantly delayed, unlike the formalization of Farmers’ Organizations (FOs) that exceeds the mid-term target (120 compared to 39, i.e. 308%). However, this dynamic has not yet translated into an economic approach through developed business plans and access to credit/subsidies.

Achievement of the 3rd component: Communication, advocacy, and partnership activities supporting the scaling-up of CRRP/SRI are significantly delayed.

With 24 knowledge products disseminated out of 60 expected and only 6 sharing events organized out of 28 expected, knowledge production and dissemination remain weak. In addition, three key structural elements are in a critical situation:

- The absence of the project portal, which severely limits knowledge sharing and the promotion of best practices in the region;
- The low number of field visits (7 compared to 26 expected), which are nevertheless an important tool for capitalization and stakeholder motivation;
- The absence of a regional policy brief, which significantly weakens advocacy.

Finally, the almost non-existent regional partnership dynamic: no collaborative activity or coalition has been initiated, and only two national CRRP networks are operational. This inability to communicate results and to bring stakeholders together across the borders significantly limits the visibility and sustainability of the RICOWAS project achievements.

Main obstacles to achieving mid-term objectives

The mid-term review highlights a combination of constraints beginning with a delayed start at both regional and national levels, followed by insufficiently structured coordination, resulting in heterogeneous national implementation and, consequently, cascading effects at the local level (delayed access to productive inputs, discontinuous technical support, and difficulties in fully adopting the practices).

Insufficient regional coordination and planning: Even though it is a central technical coordination body at regional level, the REE has not been able to fully assume its role:

- **Structural delay in the REE's operational start:** The effective launch of the REE was delayed due to administrative and financial constraints. In fact, this entity only became operational upon receipt of the first funds on November 23, 2024.
- **A formally established but weakly operational Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) due to:**
 - Limited functional integration (staff not fully dedicated to RICOWAS, variable availability, limited logistical resources);
 - On startup, absence of key operational mechanisms (regular consultation framework, shared schedule, monitoring and reporting tools);
 - Lack of coordination procedures with the NEEs;

It is clear that the weak coordination and planning capacities of the REE did not allow the establishment of the regional dynamic foreseen under the RICOWAS project. Indeed, this regional dynamic has been limited to a few training activities organized in collaboration with Cornell University and the OSS that had to take over part of the REE's activities (coordination, technical support, reporting, and M&E).

Distinct commitment among the countries: Although all countries have signed agreements, national implementation has been characterized by contrasting dynamics and the MTE observed a low level of commitment in some countries, which has resulted in:

- Delays in establishing the National Project Management Unit (NPMU);
- Staff not fully dedicated to the RICOWAS project;
- Inability of some countries to comply with contractual provisions due to limited capacities;
- Weakly functional systems leading to low responsiveness and limited effectiveness;
- A reactive approach combined with weak planning capacities.

This low level of commitment in some countries has hindered harmonized implementation.

Cascading effects at local level: logistical delays and incomplete adoption conditions

The combination of the above factors has generated cascading effects at local level:

- Delays in seasonal operational planning;
- Delays in procurement and distribution of equipment and inputs;
- Irregular technical advisory services;
- Poor capacity to quickly address the farmers' constraints.

Feedback from rice farmers confirms the impact of institutional and operational delays that prevented the project from delivering enabling conditions on time:

- **Agricultural equipment:** a cross-cutting and systemic constraint largely due to procurement delays and administrative bottlenecks.
- **Inputs and labor:** feasibility and seasonal timing constraints related to peak agricultural labour periods without adequate service organisation or input availability.
- **Organic matter and water management:** structural constraints, particularly in Sahelian areas.

Implementation hampered by constraints

Although formal management arrangements are clearly defined in the project document, implementation is proving challenging due to the linkage between regional, national, and local levels, as well as the limited planning and execution capacities of the REE and the NEEs.

- **A cumbersome but necessary no-objection procedure:** No-Objection (NO) request procedure, while relevant as a control and compliance tool, is perceived by 9 out of 11 countries as the main cause of delays in the project's implementation. This situation is largely linked to the difficulties faced by NEEs in producing requests and reports that meet the technical quality standards required to obtain NO request. In this context, it appears relevant to maintain the use of NO request while introducing targeted technical support for NEEs in order to strengthen their capacities and assist them in preparing compliant documentation.
- **Limited disbursement at country level:** As of the mid-term evaluation (February 2025), the actual disbursement rate is low (65% in Year 1, 28% in Year 2). In fact, only Ghana benefited from two disbursements at mid-term, whereas Burkina Faso only received its first disbursement at the end of Year 2. This reflects highly uneven execution capacities between countries but also raises questions regarding each country's level of commitment:
 - The Ghana NPMU has likely mobilized Staff with the required technical capacities to plan and implement activities in accordance with the project rules and procedures;
 - Other countries have not mobilized Staff with the required technical capacities, or with the necessary availability, as they are not fully dedicated to the project.

- **Similarly limited regional disbursement:** At regional level, the overall allocated budget is USD 1,022,201. Due to administrative procedures, the REE took one year to become operational, and it received a disbursement of USD 200,000 only during the second year. The only conclusion is that the REE has not mobilized Staff with the required technical capacities and/or that Staff was not fully dedicated to the RICOWAS project.
- **Low financial absorption rate:** At mid-term, the project shows a low level of financial absorption. Cumulative expenditures of all EEs (USD 1,114,000.63) represent only about 38% of the disbursed amounts. This confirms the MTE findings regarding delays in REE operationalization, planning weaknesses, and uneven execution capacity across the countries. It results in a marked under-implementation of the “enabling” components, particularly Component 3, while expenditures are more concentrated on Component 2 and implementation costs, without yet generating the expected scaling and sustainability effects.
- **Real effects at local level:** The Consultations with rice farmers highlighted the effects resulting from the combination of these constraints:
 - **Access to agricultural equipment** (motorized tillers, threshers): reported in most countries.
 - **Water management:** a critical challenge in Sahelian areas.
 - **Labor shortages:** in coastal and forest zones.

A nuanced integration of gender equity

At the project design level, RICOWAS included a gender action plan with explicit targets for women beneficiaries, and gender-sensitive approaches promoted in training activities, technology dissemination, and value chain development. However, this MTE is not able to qualitatively assess the effective level of implementation of this gender action plan, for two main reasons: i- **Absence of an operational M&E system** and ii- **insufficiently disaggregated data**.

The OSS initiative: the OSS contributes to the implementation of this gender action plan, on the one hand, through the integration of gender aspects and socio-environmental standards into NO requests, and on the other hand, through the review of workshop/activity reports to verify the participation of women and young rice farmers.

Positive perception at national and local levels: information collected from EEs and field feedback from rice farmers indicate that in most countries, inclusion mechanisms are applied, particularly through participation quotas (generally 30% to 35% of women) in training sessions and some activities.

Capitalizing on successful activities and lessons learned

The MTE highlights several activities that have been widely successful among the stakeholders:

- An operational cascade training system (ToT, local trainers and farmers trainers);
- The RTIG as a structuring lever;
- Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and demonstration plots: an effective approach that should be strengthened.

The remaining phase would benefit from further capitalizing on these achievements through stronger alignment and integration: (i) strengthening field coaching, (ii) producing and disseminating harmonized RTIG materials, and (iii) using the training/demonstration system as a foundation to accelerate the adoption of CRRP practices.

Regarding lessons learned, the consultation with rice farmers/beneficiaries confirms that the adoption of the SRI/CRRP is a relevant climate resilience measure, improving yields and strengthening production stability. It is also strongly recommended to enhance capitalization capacities through an operational M&E system and a structured knowledge management framework.

Unanticipated risk in the project document

Within the framework of this MTE, some risks identified in the project document, such as “NEEs inadequate Staff who cannot meet operational needs” has indeed appeared. However, **“the limited capacity of the REE in terms of regional coordination and facilitation”** emerged as a major risk during this MTE, which had not been anticipated in the project document.

Sustainability facing a number of risks which can be mitigated

Midway through the project, the sustainability of the project is affected by financial, socio-economic, and institutional risks. However, they can be mitigated if the remaining period is better planned, with a greater focus on implementation, and supported by strengthened regional governance.

Financial risk

Financial sustainability remains fragile, as the development of PPPs and economic services is not yet sufficiently operationalized. Indeed, the enabling conditions for PPP development are not yet in place (strengthening of local dynamics and support for the creation or structuring of agricultural associations and cooperatives). Moreover, the project has not yet been able to catalyze access to credit, equipment, and remunerative markets. As a result, the project’s ability to generate a sustainable leverage effect remains limited.

Socio-economic risks

The socio-economic conditions required for the sustainability of CRRP are still insufficiently consolidated (business plans, access to loans/subsidies, member services). In addition, post-harvest and market components (collection, processing, marketing) remain largely primitive

in most countries. This limited expected income gains and hinders even partial adoption of CRRP practices. These socio-economic constraints represent a risk to the sustainability of the project.

Institutional risks

The main challenge relates to the institutionalization of the established entities. The transition from NPMUs to permanent structures is not yet secured, in addition to post-project capacity erosion, particularly in coordination, M&E, capitalization, and knowledge sharing functions. At the regional level, difficulties in operationalizing the REE and weak inter-country coordination constitute an additional vulnerability factor, which may limit mutualization and scaling effects.

Environmental risks

The environmental profile of CRRP/SRI remains overall positive, focusing on efficient water use, promotion of organic soil fertilization, and agro-ecological practices. Although this approach is generally environmentally friendly, sustainable, and climate-resilient, some environmental risks could affect its long-term sustainability if not properly managed and anticipated.

Project rating

A global score of 58/100 is assigned to the RICOWAS project. Based on expert judgment, this reflects a mid-term average performance. The rating criteria combine (i) the degree of achievement and quality of activity implementation, (ii) stakeholder feedback, particularly questionnaire responses, and (iii) consideration of implementation challenges and delays encountered during the project's start-up phase, especially at regional level.

This rating highlights areas of relative satisfaction and areas requiring corrective actions:

- **Project design and strategy: 17/20** – The relevance is confirmed, particularly the CRRP/SRI approach, which shows strong local acceptance.
- **Progress towards positive results: 9/20** – Some progress has been made, notably in the number of rice farmers adopting CRRP/SRI practices; however, several key structural results remain insufficiently advanced.
- **Implementation: 10,5/20** – Despite some achievements, regional coordination challenges, limited reporting, and the non-operationalization of the M&E system have hindered implementation.
- **Sustainability: 11/20** – Financial, socio-economic, and institutional risks remain high but could be mitigated if appropriate corrective measures are implemented promptly.

Need for a targeted adjustment of the RICOWAS project

The CRRP/SRI strategy remains relevant, and field-level relative progress confirms its impact potential. The identified challenges are mainly related to implementation factors (regional governance, inter-country coordination, M&E, capitalization, and implementation pace), rather than a structural inadequacy of the intervention framework.

Accordingly, the MTE recommends a targeted and limited adjustment focused on:

- i- Relaunching key regional functions (coordination, M&E, communication);
- ii- Strengthening the quality of field-level adoption;
- iii- Activating sustainability levers (PPPs, value chain, access to finance).

In this regard, a specific adjustment is proposed for Output 1.1.1, whose regional added value has become less critical given existing initiatives led by other actors and the urgent priorities of the remaining implementation period. The corresponding resources are reallocated toward high-impact and demonstrably effective activities (ToT, inter-country technical support/RTIG) and toward a structuring innovation (ABM/CAB approach) to strengthen the reliability of adaptation benefit reporting and support the sustainability strategy.

A 12-month no-cost extension to secure final objectives

Given the initial project delays, dependence on the agricultural calendar, and the late activation of several key mechanisms (M&E, capitalization, PPP/value chain development), the MTE recommends a 12-month no-cost extension.

Strategic recommendations for a better performance

Achieving the core objectives during the remaining implementation period requires a package of 11 realistic and directly actionable recommendations, recommended by the MTE and structured around three priorities:

1. **Strengthen regional governance and inter-country coordination:** Enable the REE to achieve a reasonable level of operational capability by reinforcing regional technical support, including an expanded role for Dr. Erika Styger as a key resource person. The secure implementation of critical regional tasks would also be ensured through direct support from the OSS, notably via the “Direct Project Services” (DPS) mechanism, where appropriate.
2. **Improve project steering:** Rapidly operationalize a functional M&E system, improve planning (AWBP/PP), strengthen reporting quality, and reduce delays related to NO procedures through harmonized tools and targeted technical support to countries.
3. **Secure sustainability and scaling-up:** Relaunch PPPs and access to financing, accelerate value chain components (post-harvest, services, markets), and upgrade “multiplying functions” (external communication, knowledge management, capitalization, and partnerships), prioritizing simple but regular mechanisms (light portal, standardized content, targeted events).

I. INTRODUCTION

From October 2023, all ongoing projects must comply with the Adaptation Fund's (AF) evaluation policy².

This consultancy mission falls within this framework, and its objective is to conduct the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the RICOWAS project, *"Scaling-up Climate-Resilient Rice Production in West Africa."* Funded by the AF and implemented by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), the project covers 13 West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Purpose and Objective of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The MTE of the RICOWAS project aims to assess the progress, performance, and emerging results of the project at the midpoint of its implementation period. It provides an independent, evidence-based assessment of the extent to which the project has advanced toward its objectives, expected outcomes, and anticipated impacts in terms of climate resilience and food security.

Specifically, the purpose of this MTE is to:

- Assess the relevance and coherence of the project design with regional and national priorities, climate risks, and beneficiary needs;
- Review the effectiveness of implementation, including progress toward expected outcomes and the performance of institutional arrangements;
- Analyze the efficiency of resource use and management arrangements;
- Identify early results, good practices, challenges, and barriers affecting project implementation;
- Provide operational recommendations to improve project performance, support adaptive management, and strengthen the sustainability of results.

The scope of the MTE covers all components of the RICOWAS project at regional, national, and local levels. It focuses on project design, implementation processes, governance, stakeholder commitment, gender mainstreaming, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

The findings of this MTE are intended to project partners, the AF, and other stakeholders in order to support decision-making for the remainder of the project's duration.

² The Evaluation Policy is adopted in April 2022 by the Adaptation Fund Board through Decision B.38/47.

Structure of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report

This final Mid-Term Evaluation report of the RICOWAS project is structured as follows:

- Part One provides a concise overview of the context and rationale of the RICOWAS project;
- Parts Two and Three are devoted to the methodology adopted and a synthesis of the consultation process established;
- Part Four reviews the MTE findings in terms of: i) project strategy, ii) progress toward achieving results, iii) key obstacles to achieving project objectives, iv) project implementation, and v) sustainability;
- The following section proposes targeted project adjustments along with a rating;
- The final section presents conclusions and formulates recommendations to improve project performance and achieve the expected objectives in a sustainable manner.

II. RICOWAS PROJECT: CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

This chapter presents the contextual framework of the RICOWAS project, particularly the development challenges facing rice production systems in West Africa, the main vulnerabilities and risks linked to climate change (CC), as well as the strategic and institutional framework that guided the project design. It has been synthesized from the RICOWAS project document (https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Clean-OSS_RIE-Revised-Regional_Full_Proposal-RICOWAS_Project-Benin-al-.pdf).

II.1 PROJECT RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Rice Systems Facing Socio-Economic and Climatic Challenges

Rice is a strategic staple crop in West Africa, playing a central role in food security, rural livelihoods, and regional economic stability. It is consumed daily by a rapidly growing population and represents a major source of income for millions of smallholder farmers. Despite its importance, rice production systems remain fragile and highly exposed to climate variability and CC.

Over recent decades, rice production in West Africa has struggled to keep pace with growing demand driven by population growth, urbanization, and changing dietary habits. As a result, the region remains heavily dependent on rice imports, exposing national economies and consumers to international price volatility and supply disruptions.

Across West Africa, rising temperatures, irregular rainfall, prolonged droughts, floods, and extreme weather events are already affecting rice yields, water availability, and farmers' incomes. The expected CC are likely to exacerbate these challenges, with more intense impacts expected in the coming decades, threatening food security and undermining development gains across the region. Rice production systems, predominantly rainfed and highly climate-sensitive, are particularly vulnerable to these changes.

Building on the SRI-WAAPP Project

Although several rice development initiatives have been implemented in West Africa over recent decades, most have not adequately addressed the regional dimension of climate risks and adaptation to the adverse effects of CC. Following the completion of the SRI-WAAPP³ project (2014–2016), no regional initiative has taken over to scale up, in a coordinated manner, Climate-Resilient Rice Production (CRRP).

The RICOWAS project was designed to consolidate the achievements of the SRI-WAAPP project. It aims to scale up CRRP across 13 West African countries in order to strengthen the climate resilience of smallholder farmers' livelihoods. While seeking to improve rice productivity, it ultimately contributes to regional food security. The project builds on existing knowledge and proven innovations while capitalizing on already established institutional capacities.

II.2. VULNERABILITIES, IMPACTS, AND RISKS LINKED TO CLIMATE CHANGE

West Africa: a climate change hotspot

At the global level, West Africa ranks among the most vulnerable regions to CC due to: i) high climate variability, ii) heavy dependence on rainfed agriculture, iii) rapid population growth, and iv) low adaptive capacities at both institutional and local levels. CC is already manifesting through rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns, with direct and indirect consequences on agricultural systems.

Indeed, over recent decades, signs of CC have already appeared in West Africa:

- A significant warming has been observed, with average temperatures increasing by 0.5 to 0.8 °C between 1970 and 2010. In some Sahelian areas, the increase reaches even 1.5 to 2 °C. Hot days and heat waves are more frequent and intense. They occur during critical agricultural periods, particularly during rice flowering and grain-filling stages.
- Rainfall patterns have become irregular, with notably high inter-annual variability, as well as rainy seasons that start later and are shorter. Similarly, dry spells are lengthening while intense rainfall events are becoming more frequent. Long-term trends remain uncertain depending on the area.
- Coastal areas face additional risks linked to sea-level rise. Saline intrusions are progressing, particularly onto low-elevation agricultural lands.

The 2025 climate projections are concerning as the expected average temperature increase would be from 1.5 °C to 3 °C by 2050. By the end of the century, this increase could reach 6 °C under the RCP 8.5 scenario (the most pessimistic).

³ The SRI-WAAPP project (2014–2016) was a regional initiative aimed at increasing rice production in 13 West African countries through the adoption of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). Funded by the World Bank and managed by CORAF/WE CARD, it was part of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP/PPAAO) to enhance food security.

In terms of geographic distribution, warming is expected to be more substantial in the Sahelian zone. Regarding rainfall, climate projections suggest a decrease across the entire West African region, with the decline being more significant in the Sahel region.

Climate risks on rice yields

The expected CC will generate climate risks affecting agriculture, food security, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Their impacts will transcend national borders, spreading through markets, migration, and resource-related conflicts.

Rice production systems are particularly sensitive to these developments. Rice is cultivated in highly diverse agro-ecological zones, including irrigated systems, rainfed lowlands, uplands, and coastal or mangrove areas. Rising temperatures are likely to disrupt crop calendars, while irregular rainfall would shorten growing cycles. Increased frequency of droughts and floods will reduce water availability, while heat stress will increase pest and disease pressure on crops, including rice.

Table 2 presents simulated rice yield variations between 2000 and 2070 covering 11 West African countries under the RCP 8.5 scenario (the most pessimistic). These simulations distinguish between irrigated and rainfed systems, between wet-season and dry-season crops, and account for both lowland and upland environments. Results are presented for two scenarios: with and without CC adaptation measures.

Table 2. Simulated rice yield changes between 2000 to 2070 for RCP 8.5 for 11 West African countries

	Rice yield changes 2000 to 2070. RCP 8.5							
	Without adaptation				With adaptation			
	Irrigated		Rainfed		Irrigated		Rainfed	
	Main season (wet)	Off season (dry)	Lowland	Upland	Main season (wet)	Off season (dry)	Lowland	Upland
Country								
Benin	-0.13	-0.59	-0.21	-0.25	0.13	-0.41	0.13	0.11
Burkina Faso	-0.23	-0.49	-0.31	-0.28	0.07	-0.33	0.07	0.12
Côte D'Ivoire	-0.13		-0.13	-0.28	0.17		0.11	0.08
Cameroon	-0.04	-0.52			0.14	-0.31		
Ghana	-0.20	-0.36	-0.18	-0.37	0.13	-0.16	0.11	0.07
Gambia	-0.25	-0.30	0.29	0.85	0.06	-0.05	0.18	0.26
Mali	-0.33	-0.80	-0.09	-0.17	-0.07	-0.70	0.04	0.00
Mauritania	0.07	-0.14			0.21	0.02		
Niger	-0.29	-0.45			-0.10	-0.48		
Nigeria	-0.30	-0.42	-0.25	-0.27	0.06	-0.18	0.11	0.04
Senegal	0.04	-0.10			0.18	0.06		
Total	-0.20	-0.43	-0.18	-0.25	0.07	-0.27	0.10	0.07

Source: RICOWAS project document

Without CC adaptation measures, simulations highlight a particularly significant vulnerability in rice yields. This vulnerability is more pronounced during the dry season than during the wet season. On average, yields could decline by 5 to 25%, while in some irrigated systems in the Sahel, reductions could reach 40 to 80%. This is notably the case in Mali, especially during the

hot dry season. Rainfed systems in the Sudanian and Guinean zones are also heavily exposed to climate risks. Coastal rice systems face additional risks, particularly from floods and saline intrusion.

Urgent need for adaptation to climate change risks

These particularly alarming projections underscore the urgent need to tackle climate risks addressed by the RICOWAS project that aims to promote crop risk management practices tailored to different agro-ecological contexts, with a view to reducing yield losses and stabilizing production. This is likely to strengthen the livelihood resilience of smallholder rice farmers under current and future climate conditions.

Two main adaptation approaches have been adopted:

- **The System of Rice Intensification (SRI):** It is a low-input, knowledge-based method that increases yields whilst reducing the use of seeds, water and chemical inputs.
- **CRRP systems:** These combine SRI with sustainable land and water management practices. They also include, where necessary, integrated pest and disease management.

The combination of these two approaches produces positive effects. It improves soil fertility while optimizing water management and enhances the capacity of rice systems to withstand droughts, floods, and other climate stresses.

II.3. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The RICOWAS project builds on the achievements of the SRI-WAAPP project to scale up CRRP. It is a regional initiative implemented across 13 ECOWAS member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The project is financed by the AF with a total budget of USD 14 million and extends over a five-year implementation period (2023–2027).

The OSS is the Implementing Entity responsible for the overall project coordination. The Regional Centre of Specialization in Rice (RCoS-Rice/IER), acting as the Regional Executing Entity (REE), ensures technical coordination among the countries. Cornell University provides regional technical support. At the national level, National Executing Entities (NEEs) lead the implementation in each country.

The RICOWAS project directly contributes to ECOWAS regional priorities. It aligns with the ECOWAP agricultural policy and the “Rice Offensive” and ensures coherence with national rice development strategies. Its regional design allows for a harmonized approach, promotes cross-country learning, and enables the coordinated scale-up of already proven CRRP practices.

II.4. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The overall objective of the RICOWAS project is to strengthen food security and climate resilience in West Africa through the scaling-up of CRRP systems. To achieve this objective, the project relies on three specific objectives:

- Increasing the productivity and stability of rice production under climate stress through the adoption of CRRP practices.
- Strengthening the adaptive capacity of rice farmers, extension services, and value chain actors in the face of climate variability and climate change.
- Promoting regional harmonization of the approaches, knowledge sharing, and policy integration for climate-resilient rice systems.

By the end of the project, RICOWAS aims to support more than 153,000 rice farmers in adopting CRRP practices across approximately 71,000 hectares. With at least 37% of direct beneficiaries being women, the RICOWAS project reaffirms its commitment to gender equity and inclusive development.

The project's objectives and expected outcomes are operationalized through three complementary components, each designed to produce measurable adaptation results at the institutional, agricultural, and regional levels. The logical links between the components, expected outcomes, and allocated funding are summarized in Table 3, extracted from the RICOWAS project document.

Table 3. Project components, expected outcomes, outputs, and funding

Project Components	Expected outcomes	Expected outputs	Countries	Amount (US\$)
C1: Strengthening human and institutional capacity in CRRP	1.1. Climate change dimension in the regional Rice Offensive strategy and the National Rice Development Strategies are integrated	1.1.1. Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated into the regional and national rice strategy documents	All 13 Countries	300,000 (3%)
	1.2. Key stakeholders operating in different climate zones and rice systems gained tools, knowledge and skills to successfully address climate threats and implement CRRP in a sustainable way	1.2.1. Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened	All 13 Countries	322,000 (3%)
		1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	All 13 Countries	461,500 (4%)
		1.2.3. Extension institutions involved in the development and dissemination of SRI and CRRP strengthened	All 13 Countries	565,000 (4%)
Subtotal component 1				(14%) 1,648,500
C2: Assisting farmers to scale-up CRRP	2.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones successfully adopted SRI and CRRP practices, achieved higher rice productivity, and improved their incomes and livelihoods.	2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	All 13 Countries	6,383,000 (54%)
		2.1.2. SRI and CRRP practices - adopted by smallholders in the project zones - monitored, analyzed and the results widely shared	All 13 Countries	815,000 (7%)

Project Components	Expected outcomes	Expected outputs	Countries	Amount (US\$)
	2.2. Rice value chain strengthened through public-private partnerships (PPP) and agricultural associations and cooperatives, and thus improved the resilience of smallholder rice farmers to the harmful effects of climate change	2.2.1. Rice production and post-harvest components of the rice value-chain strengthened	All 13 Countries	1,035,000 (9%)
		2.2.2. Agricultural associations and cooperatives of the rice value chain strengthened in their operations	All 13 Countries	887,500 (7%)
Subtotal Component 2				(77%) 9,120,500
C3: Strengthening communication, advocacy and partnerships to scale-up CRRP	3.1. Awareness and knowledge of CRRP in West Africa greatly increased	3.1.1. Knowledge and awareness materials developed and widely disseminated, in response to the demand and needs of different stakeholder groups	All 13 Countries	515,000 (4,5 %)
	3.2. Partnerships and coordination strengthened to enable the mainstreaming of CRRP in West Africa.	3.2.1. Synergies among partners established to mainstream CRRP in West Africa	All 13 Countries	515,000 (4,5%)
Subtotal Component 3				(9%) 1,030,000
4. Project Execution cost (9,5%)				1,120,905
5. Total Project Cost (100%)				12,919,905
6. Project Cycle Management Fee charged by the Implementing Entity (8,34%)				1,080,095
Total				14,000,000

Source: RICOWAS Project Document

Building on the achievements and lessons learned from the SRI-WAAPP project and other national initiatives, the RICOWAS project has adopted an intervention logic that combines technical, institutional, and policy actions to address the multiple dimensions of the climate vulnerability of rice systems.

Field-level interventions

The project promotes CRRP practices adapted to various rice systems, including irrigated, rainfed lowland, upland, and mangrove systems. These practices include: the SRI, the Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM), the soil fertility enhancement through organic matter and the integrated pest and disease management. Together, these measures aim to increase yields, reduce water use, lower production costs, and enhance ecosystem resilience.

Institutional-level interventions

RICOWAS focuses on strengthening the capacities of extension services, research institutions, Producer Organizations (POs), and value chain actors. Approaches such as Training of Trainers (ToTs), the development of harmonized training modules, and support for Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are used to ensure that CRRP knowledge is sustainably embedded in national systems.

Regional-level interventions:

At the regional level, the project facilitates coordination, learning, and harmonization among the countries. Regional platforms, knowledge products, and exchange visits support inter-country learning and promote the integration of CRRP practices into both regional and national policies.

II.5. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE AND BENEFICIARIES

The RICOWAS project operates at the regional level while maintaining strong local commitment. It covers 396 communes across 173 districts in 89 regions of the 13 ECOWAS member States. Project areas were selected through consultative processes, considering national priorities, the climate vulnerability of rice systems, and the potential for adaptation gains.

The primary direct beneficiaries are smallholder rice producers, particularly women and youth, who are among the most vulnerable to climate risks. Indirect beneficiaries include extension agents, technicians, local institutions, and other actors along the rice value chain.

Overall, the project targets more than 153,000 direct rice-producing beneficiaries and reaches a population of over 35 million people living in the project areas. Detailed country-level information on geographic coverage and beneficiaries is presented in the following table.

Table 4. Characteristics of the RICOWAS project areas across 13 countries

Country	Regions	Districts	Communes	Total population	Total Direct Beneficiaries	Men	Women	Women (%)	Total Rice area (Ha)
Benin	4	9	23	2,432,899	7,128	3,299	3,829	54	7,061
Burkina Faso	6	17	22	7,748,307	6,830	3,923	2,907	43	2,142
Côte d'Ivoire	25	32	32	1,050,242	3,392	2,869	523	15	3,199
The Gambia	4	6	18	252,501	8,485	1,575	6,910	81	2,122
Ghana	7	16	54	12,800,659	13,173	10,246	2,927	22	10,176
Guinea	4	6	6	540,215	5,600	4,050	1,550	28	2,200
Liberia	6	14	35	1,379,688	13,620	4,602	9,018	66	2,741
Mali	4	10	11	521,016	18,164	15,439	2,725	15	9,403
Niger	4	8	9	571,405	10,981	10,519	462	4	3,241
Nigeria	5	5	15	2,458,044	30,000	20,000	10,000	33	15,000
Senegal	11	23	102	2,073,541	14,245	6,094	8,151	57	6,213
Sierra Leone	4	10	38	1,674,078	15,000	13,585	1,415	9	3,000
Togo	5	17	31	2,234,710	6,513	3,116	3,397	52	4,742
Total	89	173	396	35,737,305	153,131	99,317	53,814	37	71,240

Source: RICOWAS Project Document

II.6. INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The RICOWAS project is structured around a multi-level institutional organization designed to ensure effective coordination, accountability, and alignment with regional and national priorities:

- **The OSS** acts as the Regional Implementing Entity (RIE) and is responsible for fiduciary management, overall coordination, monitoring, and reporting.
- **At the regional level**, the Regional Rice Center (RCoS-Rice), hosted by the Institute of Rural Economics (IER), serves as the Regional Executing Entity (REE). It ensures technical coordination and the coherence of activities among beneficiary countries.
- **At the national level**, the National Executing Entities (NEEs) lead the project execution, supported by National Steering Committees that validate annual work plans and ensure stakeholder participation.
- **At the local level**, Project Focal Points coordinate activities and facilitate interactions with farming communities, women, youth, vulnerable groups, and smallholder rice producers.

Roles and responsibilities of the project entities:

The main entities involved in RICOWAS operate at regional, national, and local levels, each with clearly defined roles to ensure effective coordination, implementation, and monitoring. Their primary responsibilities are summarized in the table below, extracted from the project document.

Table 5. Roles and responsibilities of the project entities

Entity	Roles and responsibilities
Implementing Entity (OSS)	• Reviews and approves the Annual Work Plans and Budgets (national and regional) • Reviews and approves reports (annual progress and completion reports) • Provides recommendations and issues decisions on the orientation and management of the project and M&E implementation • Undertakes supervision missions • Undertakes project audits • Monitors the implementation of the recommendations and decisions
Regional Steering Committee	• Reviews and approves the regional Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB) • Reviews and approves the regional Procurement Plan • Reviews and approves reports (annual progress and completion reports) • Provides recommendations and issues decisions on the orientation and management of the project and M&E implementation • Monitors the implementation of the recommendations and decisions • Continuously meets with key stakeholders

Entity	Roles and responsibilities
Regional Executing Entity (RCoS-RICE)	• Prepares regional annual work plan and budget • Organizes and provides support to RSC meetings • Prepares the regional procurement plan • Elaborates the Project Implementation Manual • Monitors the implementation of regional and national annual work plans and budgets • Develops the project M&E System, including the data collection, analysis and dissemination tools • Organizes trainings for NEEs and national data collection Staff to execute the M&E system • Oversees national M&E system development and execution • Prepares and consolidates reports (quarterly activity reports, semi-annual and annual progress reports, and project completion report.) • Disseminates the project evaluation and monitoring reports
National Steering Committee	• Reviews and approves the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB) • Reviews and approves the procurement plan • Reviews and approves the annual progress and completion reports • Provides recommendations and issues decisions on M&E system's orientation and management • Monitors the execution of the recommendations and decisions
National Executing Entities (13 countries)	• Prepare the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB) • Elaborate the procurement plan • Monitor the project execution at the national level and in all project zones at the local level. • Train and oversee data collection Staff at local level • Supervise specific studies • Prepare and transmit quarterly and annual reports to the REE • Continuously collect, manage and analyze project data of the project's M&E reports and transmit the results • Implement the recommendations and decisions from the OSS, REE and NSC by adjusting the M&E system at national and local levels

Beyond these clearly defined institutional roles, the project also promotes partnerships with key stakeholders to strengthen implementation and mobilize complementary expertise. Thus, RICOWAS is expected to collaborate effectively with regional and international research institutions, NGOs, POs, and private sector actors.

By building on existing initiatives and avoiding duplication, RICOWAS reinforces ongoing efforts and enhances their climate resilience dimension. Figure 1 below illustrates this multi-level institutional structure, as well as the flow of responsibilities and coordination from the AF down to the local project sites.

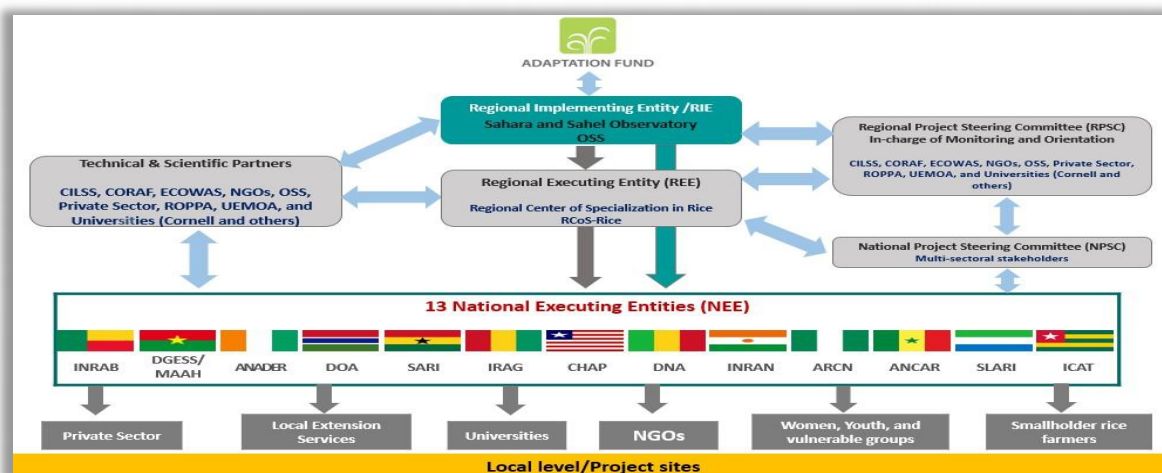


Figure 1. Organizational Chart of the RICOWAS Project Institutional Structure
(Source : RICOWAS Project Document)

II.7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

The RICOWAS project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is designed to systematically collect data and produce analyses on project processes and results in order to support learning, enable continuous improvement through adaptive management, and ensure accountability. It operates at the same three levels as project implementation: regional, national, and local/project area. Information is expected to flow vertically between levels and horizontally within each level, ensuring that knowledge from regional entities reaches the end beneficiaries, including rice farmers in targeted areas.

The M&E system uses shared data collection tools that allow aggregation of information at national and regional levels, while also collecting locally relevant data to strengthen stakeholder engagement and improve data quality. The M&E system also allows for adjustments through a participatory process involving all partners.

II.8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES: GENDER, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Gender equity is integrated throughout the design and implementation of the project. Explicit targets for women beneficiaries are set, and gender-sensitive approaches are promoted in training, technology dissemination, and value chain development. Particular attention is given to reducing labor constraints and improving economic opportunities for women and youth.

Environmental and social safeguards are applied in accordance with AF policies and OSS standards. The promotion of agro-ecological practices, reduction of chemical inputs, and improved water management contribute to environmental sustainability and co-benefits in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation.

Sustainability is also addressed through the strengthening of institutional capacities, policy integration, and fostering of CRRP practices local ownership. Learning and knowledge management are embedded in the project to support sustainable scaling-up beyond the project's duration.

III. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

III.1. ADOPTED METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the implementation of this MTE mission is structured around the following principles.

III.1.1. Consultative approach

Consultation with all partners and their effective participation are key to the success of this MTE. For this purpose, a multi-level consultation approach was implemented with all RICOWAS project stakeholders:

- **Ongoing consultation & coordination with the OSS/RIE:** In addition to regular meetings, continuous contact was maintained via email, WhatsApp, and other communication channels. This ensured ongoing exchanges and effective coordination of the MTE implementation.
- **Consultation with all Executing Entities (EEs: NEEs and REE):** Remote meetings were scheduled with all EEs, including semi-structured interviews via teleconference, online meetings, written feedback, and online surveys. A participatory consultation process was established, described in detail later in this report.

III.1.2. Document review and analysis

This review and analysis covered the following documents:

- **Project documents:** A review and analysis of the project document, results framework, and project agreements.
- **A document database for the RICOWAS project provided by the OSS:** Including i) country activity reports, ii) national agreements, iii) OSS-related documents, and iv) annual or semi-annual technical and financial reports from some countries.
- **Bibliographic research:** Complemented the available information.

In a second step, a detailed analysis of the collected data was conducted through:

- **Combination of quantitative statistical data and survey results** with qualitative information (interviews with stakeholders, case studies).
- **Comparative analysis** to assess progress against baseline indicators defined in the RICOWAS results framework.
- **Identification of key trends, strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement.**

III.1.3. Quality assurance

The quality of this evaluation was ensured by considering the following principles:

- **Highlighting legitimate plurality:** Different viewpoints expressed by partners were considered in a balanced manner, and the MTE was conducted impartially. Whenever possible, this legitimate plurality was reflected by involving different stakeholders in the evaluation process.

- **Synthesis of factual, reliable, and useful information:** This MTE aimed to provide factual information that is reliable, and useful. All relevant information sources were consulted and pertinent documents analyzed, with due diligence to ensure an acceptable level of reliability.
- **Information triangulation:** In order to accurately reflect the reality of the facts, the collected information was cross-checked. The triangulation of this information made it possible to identify some inconsistencies and to have them checked.
- **Representative sampling:** The project operates across 13 West African countries. Therefore, for this MTE, sampling of rice farmers, primary project beneficiaries, was necessary. The quality of the evaluation largely depends on the representativeness of this sampling.
- **High-quality recommendations** that are:
 - Based on MTE findings and conclusions;
 - Clear, concise, constructive, and relevant to the intended users;
 - Realistic and feasible.
- **Highlighting co-benefits:** Rice production has a significant carbon footprint, mainly due to methane emissions from flooded fields. However, SRI practices based on sustainable agriculture, such as intermittent irrigation, are likely to reduce this carbon footprint. This evaluation emphasizes sustainable practices initiated under RICOWAS that provide such co-benefits.
- **Evaluation aimed at improving project performance:** The analysis of project context, design and formulation, logical framework, financial arrangements, and performance is intended to provide actionable recommendations to enhance project performance and accelerate activity implementation to achieve the expected results.

III.2. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION PROCESS

Ongoing consultation and coordination were ensured with all RICOWAS project stakeholders, including: i- **OSS** as the RIE, ii- **At the regional level:** The REE and Cornell University as a regional execution partner, and iii- **At the national level:** the 13 NEEs representing the 13 beneficiary countries.

Given the regional scope of the RICOWAS project across 13 African countries, field visits as part of this MTE could not be conducted. Therefore, a data collection process based on surveys with questionnaires tailored to each type of stakeholder was implemented. This process was particularly important as it enabled all RICOWAS project partners to share their opinions and feedback. All viewpoints expressed in the survey questionnaires were treated impartially and with full confidentiality.

III.2.1. Survey Questionnaire structure

For the purpose of this MTE, a project-context-specific questionnaire was structured around the following sections:

- **Project strategy:** To what extent is the strategy aligned with national priorities, national ownership, and the best means to achieve the expected results?
- **Progress toward the results:** To what extent have the project's achievements and expected objectives been met so far?
- **Project implementation and adaptive management:** Has the project been implemented efficiently and cost-effectively? Has the project been able to adapt to new circumstances, where necessary?
- **Sustainability:** To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks affecting the sustainability of the project results?

The survey content was adapted to each stakeholder type, particularly rice farmers, whose needs and expectations differ significantly from other stakeholders.

III.2.2. Questionnaire tailored to the specificities of every partner

For each stakeholder, the survey questionnaire (Annex 1) focused on the following aspects:

1. **Questionnaire for the OSS as Regional Implementing Entity (RIE):** Emphasis on implementation modalities, M&E, inter-level relationships (regional, national, and local), and any adjustment to the logical framework (See annex 1.1).
2. **Questionnaire for the REE (RCoS-Rice/IER):** Focus on regional activities, execution, M&E, and relations with the NEEs (See annex 1.2).
3. **Questionnaire for the regional execution partner (Cornell University):** Emphasis on the various technical contributions and support provided for project activities (See annex 1.3).
4. **Questionnaire for the NEEs:** Focus on national-level management, successful experiences, challenges encountered, and relations with the local level (See annex 1.4).
5. **Questionnaire for a sample of rice farmers/beneficiaries in each country:** Emphasis on CRRP adoption and its performance compared to conventional farming, access to inputs, equipment, and services, capacity-building and project support, and relations with the national level (See annex 1.5).

The questionnaires for NEEs and rice farmer beneficiaries were converted into KoboCollect⁴ format. This software, already used in the RICOWAS project, allows easy data management for comprehensive comparative analysis.

⁴ Based on the open-source application ODK Collect, KoboCollect is used for collecting primary field data in challenging environments. It allows the entry of data from interviews or other primary data sources, both online and offline.

III.2.3. Sampling criteria

The RICOWAS intervention area covers 89 regions, 396 communes, with a total population of 35,737,305 and 153,131 direct beneficiaries. Sampling was therefore essential, and the involvement of the NEEs was crucial for its implementation. A target of 8 to 10 rice farmer beneficiaries per country was set.

Proposed sampling criteria included:

- Representing all regions of the country;
- Reflecting the national percentage of rice farmers who have fully or partially adopted CRRP;
- Reflecting the national distribution of SRI practices (rainfed lowland, irrigated, plain/plateau, mangrove);
- Reflecting the national gender ratio of the project beneficiaries.

III.2.4. Main steps of the consultation process

The stakeholder consultation process was structured around:

- Discussion and coordination meetings at the OSS headquarters, combined with a questionnaire and two information supplements;
- Remote meetings with the REE and Cornell University, with a questionnaire and two information supplements;
- Remote meetings with the NEEs, grouped by French and English-speaking countries, with adapted questionnaires.

The main steps of this consultation process are summarized in the table below.

Table 6. Description of the Consultation Process

Date	Activity
13 September 2025	Kick-off meeting of the mission with the RICOWAS project management team at the OSS, focused on reviewing the methodological and organizational aspects of the MTE.
26 September 2025	Validation meeting of the initial MTE report after integrating all observations and recommendations provided.
21 October 2025	Sharing with the OSS of 4 questionnaires dedicated respectively to the OSS, REE and Cornell University, NEEs, and rice farmers.
28–29 October 2025	Organization of two remote meetings via Google Meet: • First meeting with French speaking national coordinators (28 October) • Second meeting with English speaking national coordinators (29 October) These meetings were used to present and discuss the questionnaires, exchange information, and clarify the sampling methodology for rice farmers.
24 October 2025	Sending the questionnaire to Cornell University.
24 October 2025	First remote meeting with Dr. Erika Styger (Cornell University), who committed to completing the questionnaire within two weeks.

Date	Activity
27 October 2025	Sending the questionnaire to the REE.
27 October 2025	First remote meeting with Dr. Karim Traoré, regional coordinator of the RICOWAS project, based at IER – Bamako, Mali.
28 October 2025	First meeting with French speaking national coordinators.
29 October 2025	Second meeting with English speaking national coordinators.
30 October 2025	Meeting with French speaking coordinators absent during the first meeting to present the questionnaires and collect their contributions.
31 October 2025	Sharing the two questionnaires (NEE and rice farmers) in four separate files (02 in French, 02 in English) with the 13 national coordinators for review, comments, and adjustments.
From 5 November 2025	Progressive collection of the contributions from national coordinators to improve and finalize the questionnaires.
10 November 2025	Conversion of finalized questionnaires into XLSX files, compliant with KoboCollect format.
11 November 2025	Import of forms into KoboCollect and creation of two links: • NEE questionnaire (FR/EN): https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/achsCxLx • Rice farmers questionnaire (FR/EN): https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/XdTPfmQw
11 November 2025	Sending KoboCollect links to national coordinators with instructions to forward them to beneficiaries.
13 November 2025	Progressive receipt of the responses on KoboCollect.
21 November 2025	Deadline for submission of the questionnaires completed by the NEEs.
25 November 2025	Deadline for submission of the questionnaires completed by rice farmers.
24 November 2025	Analysis of the responses from the OSS, REE, and Cornell questionnaires, with requests for additional information to clarify key points.
25 November 2025	Reminder email to NEEs who had not yet submitted responses, including Liberia where the NEE link had been sent to farmers and responses were received via the coordinator's questionnaire.
25 November 2025	Receipt of NEE response from Senegal. The OSS followed up with remaining NEEs who had not submitted responses.
28 November 2025	Collection of responses via KoboCollect, download, and organization of data for analysis.
2 December 2025	Data analysis.
2 December 2025	Requests for clarification sent to the OSS, Cornell University, and REE on specific points.
4 December 2025	Receipt of clarifications from the OSS and integration into analysis.
8 December 2025	Receipt of clarifications from REE and integration into analysis.
19 December 2025	Submission of Deliverable 1 "Report of Key Findings and Draft Recommendations" to the OSS.
9 January 2026	Meeting at the OSS headquarters to discuss and finalize Deliverable 1.

Preliminary conclusions from this consultation process:

- Significant difficulties in data collection and lack of disaggregated data by country and by activity;
- Low responsiveness from some countries and non-compliance with the deadlines; and
- Superficial responses to questionnaires and limited consideration of the sampling process in some countries.

III.3. DATA ANALYSIS

III.3.1. Data processing

For processing the data from questionnaires sent to NEEs and the sample of rice farmers per country, RStudio⁵ was used. After downloading the XLSX files from KoboCollect, the data were imported into RStudio for processing:

- Step 1 – Data cleaning and harmonization: Inconsistent or misspelled values were corrected, and data types were standardized to ensure quality and consistency of the analysis.
- Step 2 – Selection and grouping of thematic variables: Columns were organized into thematic categories to facilitate analysis, such as beneficiaries' feedback, obstacles encountered, and contextual information.
- Step 3 – Transformation into long format: Data were converted into long format (each observation of the same type occupies a separate row), allowing counting of occurrences and calculation of percentages by category.
- Step 4 – Descriptive analysis: General indicators were calculated to examine trends and distributions in the data, by country and by region.
- Step 5 – Visualization of the results: Charts were produced to represent the data in a concise and readable manner, facilitating interpretation of the results.

III.3.2. Variable participation across the countries

The table below summarizes, as of 8 December 2025, the responses received to the questionnaires.

Table 7. Summary of Questionnaire Responses

Country	NEE Response Status	Number of Farmer Responses	Observations
Burkina Faso	✓	1	—
Côte d'Ivoire	✓	10	—
The Gambia	✓	7	The NEE submitted 6 responses from different services of the Ministry of

⁵ RStudio is an integrated development environment (IDE) for R and Python. It includes a console, a syntax-highlighting editor that supports direct code execution, and tools for creating graphics, tracking history, debugging, and managing the workspace.

Country	NEE Response Status	Number of Farmer Responses	Observations
			Agriculture.
Ghana	✓	4	—
Guinea	✓	24	—
Liberia	✗	18	In the NEE folder, questionnaires completed by farmers were found.
Mali	✓	12	—
Nigeria	✓	55	—
Sierra Leone	✓	2	—
Senegal	✓	12	—
Togo	✓	10	—
Niger	✓	0	—
Benin	✗	0	—

Legend:

- ✓ Questionnaire completed by the NEE
- ✗ Questionnaire not completed by the NEE

The table highlights significant variations in participation between the countries, both at the NEE level and among the farmers. Some countries were relatively reactive, others took time to respond, and some did not respond. This heterogeneity affects the representativeness of the data and may impact the quality of the evaluation.

Regarding NEE questionnaires, one questionnaire per country was considered. For Gambia, 6 responses were received from different Ministry of Agriculture services; the most comprehensive response was retained.

Summary:

- Eleven (11) NEEs responded to the questionnaire, except for Benin and Liberia (in Liberia, there was a confusion between the NEE and farmer folders).
- Farmers from 11 countries responded to the questionnaire; only farmers from Niger and Benin did not respond.

III.3.3 – Adjustment of the rice farmer sample

Regarding the analysis of the questionnaires from rice farmers/beneficiaries, the number of responses per country was highly variable, ranging from 55 for Nigeria to 1 for Burkina Faso. This disparity required an adjustment of the sample to ensure reliable, unbiased comparisons and a more coherent interpretation across the countries.

For the data analysis, based on expert judgment, an approach was adopted to guarantee optimal geographic representativeness and better data homogeneity. Respondents were selected proportionally and representatively across the different regions. The adjustment rule was as follows:

- For countries with 8 respondents or fewer, all received responses were retained.
- For countries with more than 8 respondents, a representative sample of 8 respondents was selected, covering the various regions of the country.

IV. MID-TERM EVALUATION RESULTS

For this MTE, the reference document is the official RICOWAS project document, available at the following link : https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Clean-OSS_RIE-Revised-Regional_Full_Proposal-RICOWAS_Project-Benin-al-.pdf

IV.1. PROJECT STRATEGY

The evaluation of the project strategy is conducted in terms of: i- project design and relevance, ii- consistency with regional development policies/strategies, and iii- effective contribution to national policies/strategies. This is complemented by an assessment of the level of acceptability and key issues at the local level.

IV.1.1. Project design and relevance

The RICOWAS project design is sound for it demonstrates logical coherence and a high degree of complementarity between its components, enabling it to achieve the intended objective “To improve climate resilience and increase the productivity of smallholder rice farming systems in West Africa through a climate-resilient rice production approach”. Furthermore, this design also enables the three components of the project to be linked in an integrated manner, as:

- Strengthening human and institutional capacities in CRRP from the regional to the national level;
- Moving to the field to assist smallholder farmers in West Africa in scaling up CRRP, enabling them to improve the productivity of their farming systems and enhance their climate resilience;
- Simultaneously, strengthening the enabling conditions at regional and national levels in communication, advocacy, and partnerships to consolidate the CRRP scaling-up.

Such a design ensures harmonized implementation and effective synergy of interventions across the regional, national, and local levels. However, given its multi-level architecture and decentralized implementation, the RICOWAS project also faces inherent challenges:

- A very large geographical scope, with CRRP scaling up over a total rice-growing area of approximately 71,240 hectares⁶;
- Implementation across 13 countries, making coordination complex due to country-specific contexts and differences.

⁶ Benin (7,061 ha), Burkina Faso (2,142 ha), Côte d’Ivoire (3,199 ha), Gambia (2,122 ha), Ghana (10,176 ha), Guinea (2,200 ha), Liberia (2,741 ha), Mali (9,403 ha), Niger (3,241 ha), Nigeria (15,000 ha), Senegal (6,213 ha), Sierra Leone (3,000 ha), and Togo (4,742 ha).

IV.1.2. Consistency with regional development policies and strategies

As highlighted in the RICOWAS project document, the project effectively contributes to key regional policies/strategies/initiatives related to food security and poverty reduction, notably:

- The ECOWAP (Regional Agricultural Policy for West Africa)/CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program) 2025 process, which aims to achieve sustainable improvements in agricultural productivity and the resilience of food systems;
- The Regional Offensive for Sustainable Rice Production in West Africa, initiated by ECOWAS, which emphasizes regional rice self-sufficiency and value chain competitiveness;
- The Regional Agriculture Investment Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (RAIPFNS), which focuses on the structural transformation of the agricultural sector and the improvement of food security.

In addition to these three initiatives, the RICOWAS project also contributes effectively to the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy and its Action Plan (2022–2030). Indeed, the project aligns with this framework through concrete actions aimed at mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, enhancing adaptation, and strengthening the resilience of rice production systems to climate variability. More specifically, the project contributes to the following strategic objectives:

- **SO3:** Promote institutional and organizational paradigm shifts related to climate change;
- **SO4:** Strengthen the capacities of ECOWAS and its member States to implement climate policies and actions;
- **SO5:** Enhance cooperation and solidarity among member States in addressing climate change.

IV.1.3. Effective contribution to national policies/strategies

As highlighted in Table 18 (*“Development strategy and project consistency for 13 RICOWAS countries”*) of the RICOWAS project document, the project contributes effectively to national and/or sub-national sustainable agricultural development strategies, particularly in the rice sector, with the objective of achieving food self-sufficiency.

In addition, a more targeted review of national climate-related strategic ⁷documents underscores that the RICOWAS project is also aligned with national CC priorities:

- The review of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs⁸) of the 13 RICOWAS countries confirms that CC adaptation in rice farming is a key priority for achieving food self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the CRRP scaling-up clearly constitutes an innovative mitigation measure for reducing GHG emissions;

⁷https://disasterdisplacement.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ECOWAS-Regional-Climate-Strategy_FINAL_compressed.pdf

⁸ National climate action plans developed under the Paris Agreement. They detail measures taken to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to CC impacts, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5 °C in line with the Paris Agreement’s goal. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): Senegal (v1, 2020); Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, Gambia, Ghana (v2, 2021); Côte d’Ivoire (v2, 2022); Guinea, Nigeria (v3.0, 2025).

- Likewise, the review of the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)/National Adaptation Programs of Action (NAPAs⁹), developed and/or under development in the 13 RICOWAS countries, confirms the strong emphasis on adapting rice systems to CC.

Consultations with the NEEs further confirm the relevance of the RICOWAS project with national strategies related to food security/rice self-sufficiency and CC. The Figure below presents the satisfaction score of NEEs regarding the project's relevance, rated on a scale from 1 to 10, based on qualitative feedback provided by NEE representatives. Thus:

- The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, and Mali are fully satisfied with the project's relevance;
- Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo are also highly satisfied;
- The remaining countries are globally satisfied;
- Sierra Leone does not share a positive assessment of the project's relevance.

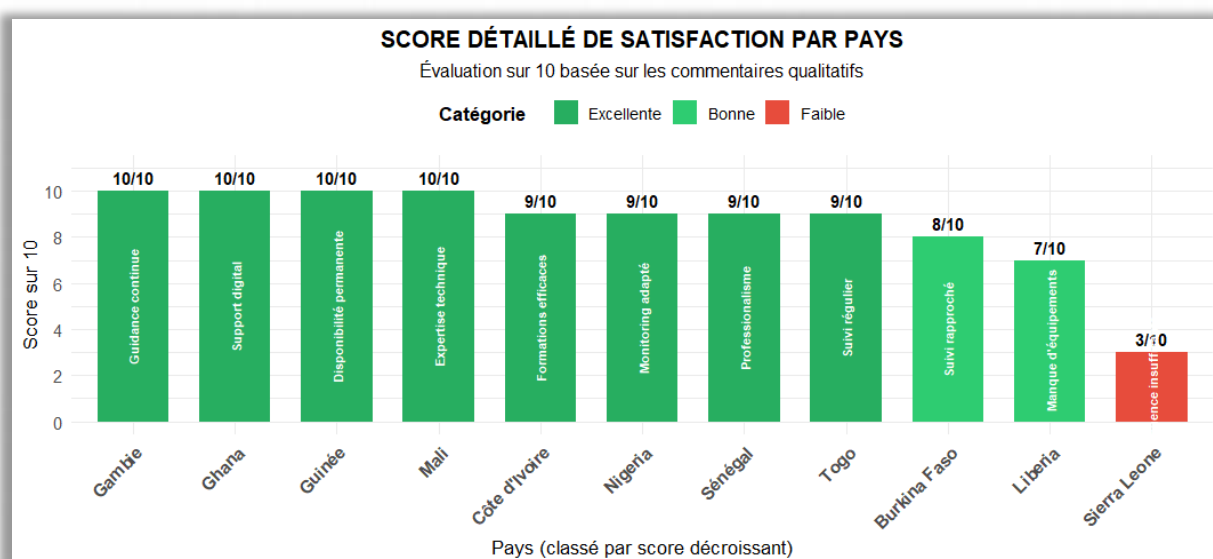


Figure 2. Country-wise satisfaction scores

Particular attention should be given to Sierra Leone to identify the country's specific expectations and assess how the project can address them.

IV.1.4. Local-level acceptability

On the field, rice farmers in 9 out of 11 countries confirm that CRRP practices align with the development priorities of their regions. Figure 3 presents the reasons for farmer satisfaction with the RICOWAS Project interventions in their area:

- Regular monitoring was raised by 5 countries;
- Availability of support was raised by 4 countries;
- Technical expertise, training, and close follow-up were raised by 3 countries.

⁹ Gambia (2007), Burkina Faso (2015, updated 2025), Mali (2013), Togo (2018), Guinea (2020), Liberia (2021), Sierra Leone (2022), Benin (2022), Niger (2022), Côte d'Ivoire (2023), Senegal (Agriculture NAP, 2025), Ghana (2022), Nigeria (2025).

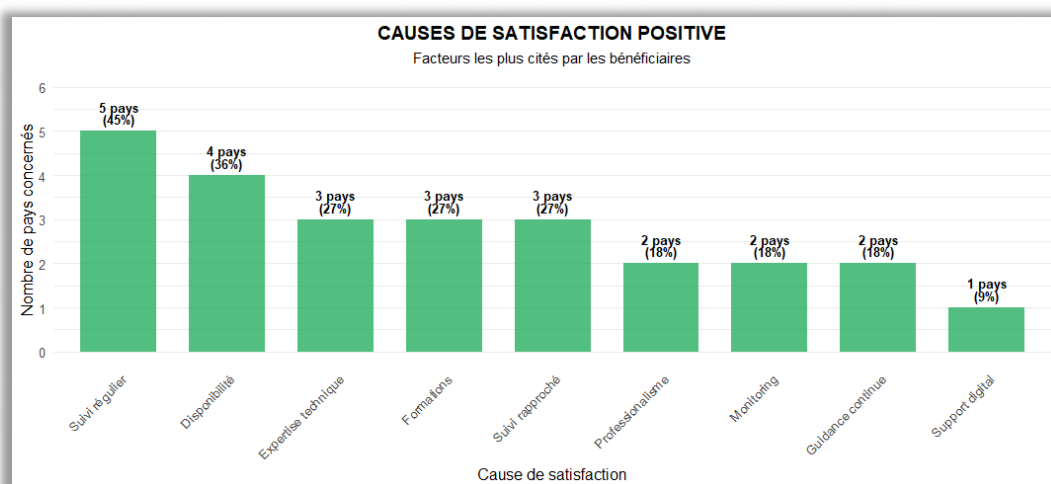


Figure 3. Reasons for satisfaction with the RICOWAS project intervention

IV.1.5. Country-specific ownership dynamics

Although the RICOWAS project effectively addresses the needs and expectations of beneficiaries, the level of ownership demonstrated by some participating countries remains uneven. This is reflected at several levels.

Delays in establishing national project management units

According to the RICOWAS project document, the financing agreement signed between the OSS and the NEEs specifically requires the establishment of a National Project Management Unit (NPMU) responsible for coordinating and executing national project activities. The NPMU must include at least the following key human resources: (i) a national project coordinator, (ii) a monitoring & evaluation expert, (iii) a gender expert, and (iv) an administration and finance expert.

Country commitment at this level varies significantly. While some countries established their NPMUs relatively quickly, others experienced significant delays ranging from one to two years (e.g., Burkina Faso). Such delays, even if institutional or administrative in nature, reflect a low level of project ownership in some countries.

Functionality of the system

In most countries, NPMU Staff are not fully dedicated to the RICOWAS project. This situation causes dysfunctions, resulting in significant delays in the execution of the project activities at the national level. However, this observation contrasts with the NEEs' assessment. In the evaluation of national institutional frameworks, eight (8) NEEs considered their management system functional. In contrast, the NEEs of Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal reported persistent dysfunctions, including irregular meetings, administrative burdens, and insufficient Staff specifically dedicated to the project.

IV.1.6. Better targeted national needs

According to the project document, each country has been allocated a similar budget of USD 908,215, with the same activities planned.

Equal but not equitable budget

While this equal budget allocation was likely chosen to satisfy all countries, it remains inequitable, disadvantaging countries with greater potential for implementing CRRP. In fact, allocating budgets by country based on individual capacities is difficult, as reaching consensus would be challenging.

A budget better targeting country-specific needs

An alternative approach would be to maintain the per-country budget but plan a tailored activity program for each country that considers its specific needs and priorities.

IV.2. PROGRESS TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE RESULTS

The official launch of the RICOWAS project took place in January 2023, however, the actual start dates vary by country, ranging between 2023 and 2025.

IV.2.1. Progress in achieving the results framework indicators

Table 37 of the project document defines the results framework, including key milestones, targets, and indicators for: (i) two years after the start of the project and (ii) at the end of the project.

This results framework is structured around: i- the project objective, and ii- the three components with their outcomes and outputs. The M&E manual, developed at the start of the project, is expected to specify the implementation modalities, including the disaggregation of indicators by country, climate zone, gender, etc.

As there is currently no operational M&E system under the remit of the REE, the OSS, based on country reports, provided us with values for monitoring the results framework indicators, presented in the table (Annex 1). These indicator values reflect the status of the RICOWAS project as of February 2025, marking the end of the second project year, which corresponds to the deadline for this MTE.

Moreover, given that country reporting is not continuous and may sometimes contain errors or incomplete information, the OSS considers these data as subject to verification, completion, and adjustment.

Taking all these considerations into account, this MTE presents the analysis of the achievement status of the RICOWAS project results at mid-term, based on the results framework indicators. The assessment is carried out by systematic comparison between:

- The "achieved" indicator values at mid-term (2-year stage, i.e., February 2025) in the "(Progress at Mid-term review)" column, and;
- The planned indicator values at mid-term in the "(Milestones (after 2 years))" column.

This comparison highlighted the following main results:

IV.2.1.1. Partially achieved overall objective

The project objective is to **“Improve climate resilience and increase the productivity of smallholder rice systems in West Africa through a climate-resilient rice production (CRRP) approach.”** Three indicators measure this objective:

- Number of direct CRRP beneficiaries: 50,745 beneficiaries have adopted CRRP practices, below the target of 70,000, a positive trend given the delays observed.
- Percentage increase in rice yield through CRRP: An observed increase of 11%, below the target of 25%. This Figure represents the average of only 6 out of 13 countries, and some field reports indicate higher increases.
- Number of climate-resilient practices/technologies adopted: only 2 SRI practices adopted instead of the 6 planned.

Moreover, by disaggregating the indicators by country and gender, it should be verified that: i- the beneficiaries who have adopted the CRRP practices are evenly distributed across the countries, and ii- the participation of 25–30% women required under the first indicator is met.

In summary, the overall project objective is partially achieved at mid-term: a dynamic of producer adoption is underway; however, it has not yet resulted in technical performance improvements at the expected level. Analyzing the degree of achievement of the other project components will provide further insight into the prospects of fully realizing this objective by the end of the project.

IV.2.1.2. Degree of achievement of the first component

The first component, titled **“Strengthening Human and Institutional Capacities for Climate-Resilient Rice Production (CRRP)”**, aims to reinforce the regional level to support national-level efforts. It is structured around two outcomes:

Outcome 1.1. Climate change dimension in the regional Rice Offensive Strategy and the National Rice

At mid-term, the integration of climate considerations into rice strategies remains insufficient. Indeed, no national rice development strategy incorporating the CC dimension has been initiated by the RICOWAS project compared to the five expected at mid-term. However, two national rice development strategies incorporating climate considerations have been developed (Benin and Liberia) under other national initiatives.

Output 1.1.1 Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated in the regional and national rice strategy documents

Indicator	Mid-term Target (2 years)	Achieved	Progress vs. Target	Assessment
Numbers of studies	8	0	0%	Critical
Number of national validation meetings	6	0	0%	Critical
Number of regional validation workshops	1	0	0%	Critical
% of women participation	More than 25%	4	16 %	Critical
Number of women interviewed	More than 25%	0	0%	Critical

In terms of scientific output, there are also significant delays. Of the eight studies planned, none have been completed: the RICOWAS Project is failing to make an impact in this field.

Women's participation is almost negligible (4% vs. the 25% target). This Figure needs to be reviewed and adjusted, as field feedback indicates a rather positive perception of gender integration.

This low performance reflects, on one hand, an insufficient regional dynamic to establish a sustainable impact and, on the other hand, raises questions about the relevance of maintaining this result as formulated during the conceptual phase.

Furthermore, discussions with the OSS, REE, and Cornell University highlighted that, in most RICOWAS beneficiary countries, the integration of CC issues into development strategies, particularly in agriculture, is already addressed through other ongoing or planned national initiatives. In this context, the specific added value of this result at the regional level appears limited and calls for adjustment.

A proposed modification is suggested to redirect resources toward more relevant actions that are better aligned with current beneficiary needs. This reallocation will strengthen the coherence of the intervention, increase the expected impact, and, above all, consolidate the achievement of the project's original objectives.

Outcome 1.2. Key stakeholders operating in different climate zones and rice systems gained tools, knowledge and skills to successfully address climate threats and implement CRRP in a sustainable way

Indicator	Mid-term Target (2 years)	Achieved	Progress vs. Target	Assessment
Number of rice value chain actors with enhanced capacities	80	16	20%	Critical delay
Number of institutions with strengthened Staff	26	14	54%	Needs acceleration
Regional Technical Innovation Group (RTIG) on CRRP operational	Operational	1	100%	Achieved

The establishment of the RTIG represents a key structural achievement and a lever for technical coordination. Nevertheless, the capacity building at the individual level remains far below the mid-term target. This delay is likely to have cascading effects on the quality of technical support, scientific production, knowledge capitalization, and the ability of extension institutions and implementing entities to support CRRP scaling-up.

Output 1.2.1 – Strengthening research centers

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Number of research projects implemented	26	2	8%	Critical
Number of training sessions conducted	14	5	36%	Significant delay
Number of new modules developed	6	4	67%	Moderately delayed
Number of scientific articles published	2	3	150%	Very satisfactory
Number of exchange workshops	10	4	40%	Significant delay

Scientific output stands out positively, exceeding the target for publications. However, this result is not fully aligned with Outcome 1.1 and requires more precise evaluation. Conversely, applied research (projects actually implemented) is delayed, limiting the generation of directly useful solutions and operational measures for CRRP scaling-up.

Training and exchange activities continue to face implementation challenges and remain below expected levels. Nevertheless, the development of training modules is advancing steadily and remains broadly aligned with project targets. The priority for the remaining period is therefore to accelerate the implementation of research projects and intensify exchanges to generate applied results in the field.

Output 1.2.2 – Institutional capacities of the implementing entities

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Number of needs assessment studies	14	12	86%	Good trajectory / Close to target
Number of regional technical workshops	2	2	100%	Achieved
Number of field exchange visits	13	11	85%	Good trajectory
Number of data collection kits	13	7	54%	Needs acceleration
Functional regional communication hub	1	0	0%	Critical
RCoS-Rice advanced to CRE-Rice	1	0	0%	Critical

The technical coordination levers dynamic is positive (needs assessment, regional workshops, exchange visits), which are achieved or near targets. However, two structural indicators remain critical (regional communication hub and the institutional transition from CRS-Riz to a Regional Centre of Excellence (CRE-Riz)), while the provision of data collection kits is still insufficient. This situation may limit capitalization, visibility, and the generation of arguments in support of SRI. The priority for the remaining period is to catch up on these structural elements without losing progress on exchanges and technical support.

Output 1.2.3 – Strengthening extension institutions (SRI/CRRP)

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Number of regional ToT workshops	2	2	100%	Achieved
Number of national trainings	20	26	130%	Exceeded
Number of trainers trained	39	26	67%	Moderately delayed
Number of training modules produced	5	5	100%	Achieved
Number of training kits	7	0	0%	Critical

Implementation indicators for training are globally satisfactory, particularly regarding the organization of two regional training-of-trainer's workshops. National trainings (local trainers and producer trainings) exceeded the target, with modules available as expected.

However, field deployment capacity remains limited: the number of trainers actually trained is below the target, and the absence of training kits is a critical issue that may reduce the quality and standardization of the trainings.

IV.2.1.3. Degree of achievement of the 2nd component

The second component, **“Support to farmers for the scaling-up of Climate-Resilient Rice Production (CRRP),”** is central due to its operational focus in the field. It is composed of two Outcomes

Outcome 2.1: In project areas, smallholder rice farmers have successfully adopted SRI and CRRP practices, leading to increased rice productivity and improved income and living conditions.

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Number of producers adopting CRRP	40,000	41,060	103%	Achieved / exceeded
Area under CRRP (ha)	25,000	16,745.6	67%	Needs acceleration
% increase in income	40%	8%	20%	Critical

The adoption dynamic is satisfactory, with the intermediate target exceeded, confirming the acceptability of the CRRP and the effectiveness of dissemination mechanisms (training, demonstrations, support). However, the expansion of cultivated areas remains below the

target, indicating that the increase in the number of adopting producers has not yet translated at the same pace into the spatial scaling of a CRRP.

The major point of concern is the low-income growth, well below the mid-term target. This situation suggests that:

- Adoption often remains partial or insufficiently intensive to generate tangible economic gains, and/or;
- The enabling conditions (production costs, access to equipment, water management, availability of organic inputs, post-harvest services, and market outlets) are not yet in place to convert technical progress into financial benefits.

Output 2.1.1 – Producers’ capacities and productive means

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Number of producer trainings	312	368	118%	Exceeded / satisfactory
% of trainers/producers trained	50%	15%	30%	Critical
Number of extension materials distributed	5	6	120%	Exceeded
% of producers assisted in the field	50%	13%	25%	Critical
% of seed/organic fertilizer production	20%	16%	81%	Close to target
% adoption of Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM)	30%	80%	268%	Exceeded
Number of local nurseries	200	80	40%	Delayed
Number of composting units	100	25	25%	Critical
Number of equipment packages (per country)	7	1	14%	Critical

At mid-term, the degree of achievement of Output 2.1.1 presents a very contrasted profile. Dissemination and facilitation activities show positive momentum: producer trainings exceed the target (118%) and extension materials are also beyond the goal, while the adoption of Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) practices shows good performance that needs to be highlighted. However, the transformation of this dynamic into operational capacity and effective field support remains insufficient: the proportion of trainers/producers actually trained and technical assistance in the field are at critical levels, limiting adoption quality and productivity.

Regarding productive means, seed/organic fertilizer production is on the right track. However, the material pillars for scaling up are significantly delayed: nurseries are behind, composting is low, and especially equipment is very insufficient, representing a major bottleneck for complete and sustainable CRRP adoption.

Output 2.1.2 – Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Functional M&E methodology	Functional	Non-functional	0%	Critical
Tracking mechanism installed	Installed	Not installed	0%	Critical
Baseline studies available	14	12	86%	Good trajectory / Close to target
M&E / data collection trainings	30	40	133%	Exceeded
Annual M&E reports	26	5	19%	Critical

At mid-term, Output 2.1.2 shows a good trajectory regarding:

- Baseline studies (12 out of 13 countries completed, except Burkina Faso, and the regional study compiling all 13 countries),
- Planned M&E trainings, which have been largely carried out.

However, the M&E system is not yet operational and does not produce the expected outputs, notably the annual M&E reports. Indeed, the two foundations of the system, the functional M&E methodology as well as the installed tracking mechanism, remain inactive, hindering data standardization and explaining the weakness of reporting.

The priority for the remaining period is therefore to quickly operationalize the M&E system (methodological validation, installation of the tracking mechanism, reporting protocols, and schedule) to convert the capacities already developed into comparable data and regular reporting.

Outcome 2.2: The rice value chain is strengthened through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and the reinforcement of farmer associations and cooperatives, thereby improving the resilience of smallholder rice farmers against the adverse effects of climate change.

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress	Assessment
Number of successful PPPs with farmer Organizations	26	9	35%	Delayed
Additional (US\$) benefits generated	0	0	0%	Critical / not yet assessed

At mid-term, **Outcome 2.2** is clearly delayed. The percentage of functional PPPs is 35% of the intermediate target (9/26), reflecting a not yet sufficiently structured partnership dynamic. The indicator for additional benefits should be considered with caution, as the project does not yet have quantitative evidence of economic gains from PPPs. Therefore, the expected impact on farmers' resilience through PPP creation is not yet noticeable.

Output 2.2.1 – Strengthened production and post-harvest components

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress (%)	Assessment
Number of engaged private partners	39 (3/country)	13	33%	Very delayed
Number of meetings with stakeholders	52 (4/country)	6	12%	Critical
Number of capacity building workshops	39 (3/country)	8	21%	Critical
Number of direct PPP beneficiaries	390 (30/country)	0	0%	Critical
Number of PPPs supported with equipment	26	0	0%	Critical

At mid-term, the Output 2.2.1 is significantly delayed, reflecting insufficient progress in production processes and post-harvest strengthening. Private sector commitment remains very limited (33%), and the stakeholder consultation/facilitation dynamic (meetings at 12%) is too weak to catalyze PPP agreements.

Similarly, capacity-building workshops (21%) also remain below the target, which limits stakeholders' ability to establish sustainable partnerships. Finally, the two indicators relating to the direct beneficiaries of PPPs and equipped PPPs stand at 0%, reflecting partnerships that are still largely non-operational and intangible for producers (services, equipment, market access, post-harvest). At the mid-term stage, output 2.2.1 therefore remains essentially at the preparatory stage, with a shortfall in implementation regarding the material levers.

Output 2.2.2 – Strengthened Agricultural Organizations/Cooperatives (governance and operations)

Indicator	Mid-term Target	Achieved	Progress (%)	Assessment
Number of new Agricultural Organizations (AOs) formalized	39 (3/country)	120	308%	Exceeded
Number of business plans developed	26 (2/country)	0	0%	Critical
Number of trainings for AOs	52 (4/country)	87	167%	Exceeded
Number of AOs assisted for credit/subsidy access	26 (2/country)	0	0%	Critical

At mid-term, Output 2.2.2 shows strong performance in outreach and basic structuring results: the formalization of Agricultural Organizations (AOs) far exceeds the target, and training activities are also above expectations, indicating a real momentum of mobilization and capacity building. However, this dynamic has not yet translated into operational economic outcomes: business plans and support for access to credit/subsidies have not yet started, limiting the Organizations' ability to invest, enter contracts, improve member services, and capture value.

The priority for the remaining period should be to shift from a mainly “training/structuring” logic toward economic operationalization approach (simplified business plans, financing applications, partnerships with microfinance institutions/banks and market support).

IV.2.1.4. Degree of achievement of the 3rd component

This third component, “**Strengthening communication, advocacy and partnerships for scaling up CRRP**”, aims to establish the enabling conditions for scaling up CRRP. Like Component 1, this third component has a regional and national nature.

Outcome 3.1. “Awareness and knowledge related to CRRP in West Africa have significantly increased.”

Indicator	Mid-term target	Achieved	Progress (%)	Assessment
Number of knowledge products disseminated	60	24	40%	Significant delay
Number of knowledge-sharing events held/participated	28	6	21%	Critical

At mid-term, the dissemination and knowledge-sharing dynamics are insufficient to support the expected scaling effect. The production/dissemination of knowledge products stands at 40% of the planned level, while the organization of knowledge-sharing events is particularly weak, with the number of events (06) significantly below the target (28). Such underperformance limits cross-country learning, the dissemination of context-adapted good practices, and the capacity to support evidence-based advocacy. The priority for the remaining period should be to accelerate the organization of structured (national/regional) events and to better “package” and disseminate existing products through more regular and harmonized channels.

Output 3.1.1 – Knowledge/awareness materials developed and widely disseminated

Indicator	Mid-term target	Achieved	Progress (%)	Assessment
Communication strategies (1 regional + 13 national)	14	7	50%	Delayed
Number of knowledge products produced	60	24	40%	Delayed
Functional project portal (developed)	1	0	0%	Critical
Number of field visits organized	26	7	27%	Critical
Policy briefs written/disseminated	1 (regional)	0	0%	Critical

At mid-term, communication and knowledge management deliverables show overall insufficient progress. The development of communication strategies has reached an intermediate level (7 countries), while the production of knowledge products remains delayed (40% of the target), resulting in limited dissemination.

However, three key elements remain in critical situations:

- The absence of the project portal, which considerably limits knowledge sharing and the promotion of good practices in the region;
- The low number of field visits organized (7 compared to a target of 26), which are essential for capitalization and stakeholder motivation; and
- The absence of a regional policy brief, which significantly reduces advocacy capacity.

The priority for the remaining period should be to operationalize a minimal but functional system:

- Launch a simple portal that can be strengthened in the future;
- Relaunch targeted field visits as a driver for stakeholder motivation;
- Produce/disseminate at least one regional policy brief and one policy brief per country to strengthen advocacy at both regional and national levels.

Outcome 3.2. “Partnerships and coordination are strengthened to enable the integration of the CRRP approach in West Africa.”

Indicator	Mid-term target	Achieved	Progress (%)	Assessment
Number of new regional partnerships established	2	0	0%	Critical
Number of collaborative activities for scaling up	26	0	0%	Critical

At mid-term, the partnership and coordination dimension has not yet started: no new regional partnerships and no collaborative activities at the national level have been recorded. This situation reduces the expected leverage effect (resource mobilization, institutional alignment, technical synergies) while compromising the scaling up of CRRP at the regional level.

Output 3.2.1 – Synergies among partners established to scale up CRRP

Indicator	Mid-term target	Achieved	Progress (%)	Assessment
Coalition-building meetings	4	0	0%	Critical
Participation in international events (persons)	3	0	0%	Critical
Functional national CRRP network	13	2	15%	Critical

At mid-term, Output 3.2.1 is significantly delayed and does not yet play its leverage role for scaling up. Influence and coordination mechanisms (coalition-building and participation in international platforms) are currently non-existent, which limits the project’s capacity to structure alliances, conduct credible advocacy, and attract technical and financial partners. The establishment of two national networks is an initial signal but remains too limited to support a coherent regional dynamic.

The priority for the remaining period is to quickly activate a basic system:

- Formalize national networks;
- Hold targeted coalition-building meetings;
- Position the project in selected regional/international platforms to strengthen visibility, partnerships, and sustainability.

IV.2.2. Qualitative evaluation by component

This qualitative evaluation by component aims to assess, beyond quantitative indicators, the actual progress of the project at mid-term, considering the trajectory followed, the implementation context, observed field dynamics, and the gaps between initial ambitions and actual achievements. It is based on an AF grading scale, which distinguishes at mid-term six levels:

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The planned actions/activities are on track or exceed expectations to achieve all major outcomes/outputs, without major gaps.
Satisfactory (S)	The planned actions/activities are on track to achieve most major outcomes/outputs, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The planned actions/activities are generally on track to achieve most relevant major outcomes/outputs, but with significant shortcomings and/or moderate overall relevance.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The planned actions/activities are not on track to achieve the major outcomes/outputs, present major shortcomings, and/or are expected to achieve only some outcomes/outputs.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The planned actions/activities are not on track to achieve most major outcomes/outputs.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The planned actions/activities are off track and show that the project is failing to achieve its outcomes/outputs, and is not expected to achieve any of them.

The Table below provides a summary of this evaluation for the overall objective and all project components/outcome, along with supporting evidence.

Table 8. Summary Evaluation of Mid-Term Indicator Achievement

Component	Outcomes	Evaluation	Supporting evidence
Overall Objective	Improvement of climate resilience and productivity of smallholder rice systems through CRRP	MS	The overall objective is partially achieved, with a relatively encouraging adoption dynamic of CRRP and beneficiary coverage. However, yield effects remain to be consolidated and better assessed with more complete data. Economic effects in terms of income are significantly below the target, reflecting challenges in the quality/completeness of adoption and production/value conditions (equipment, water,

Component	Outcomes	Evaluation	Supporting evidence
			organic inputs, post-harvest). The trajectory can be corrected through operational catch-up and data-driven management.
Component 1	Outcome 1.1: Integration of the CC dimension into the Regional Strategy and National DRR Plans	U	The expected regional dynamic has not materialized, and technical prerequisites (studies, regional validation, ownership) have not been effectively implemented. The analysis also highlights limited added value of this outcome in several countries where CC integration in agricultural policies is already handled by other national initiatives. Maintaining this outcome under this project is of limited relevance. A realignment and resource reallocation to more priority and impactful actions is recommended.
	Outcome 1.2: Key actors have the tools and capacities needed to sustainably implement CRRP	MS	There are structural achievements, notably the establishment of a regional technical coordination mechanism, which is an important lever for harmonizing approaches and transferring innovations. However, the actual capacity-building of actors remains insufficient and may affect the quality of technical support, capitalization, and large-scale dissemination. This outcome remains achievable through targeted acceleration and a more robust organization of training and mentoring schemes.
Component 2	Outcome 2.1: Adoption of SRI/CRRP by producers, improvement of productivity and income	MS	Producer adoption has been achieved/exceeded, but area expansion needs to be accelerated and income progress is critical (far from target). Yield cannot be robustly concluded (partial data), but productivity constraints align with deficits in field assistance and access to productive means. This outcome is progressing but is not “fully on track” until economic gains and adoption quality are corrected.
	Outcome 2.2: Value chain strengthened through PPPs, associations, and cooperatives	MU	The dynamic is mixed: strong performance in formalizing and training organizations (beyond the targets), but no shift toward structural economic results (business plans, access to credit/subsidies, operational PPPs, and services). The outcome is still recoverable if the RICOWAS project adopts a trajectory aiming at viable PPP development combined with close support for credit/subsidy access and post-harvest service improvement.

Component	Outcomes	Evaluation	Supporting evidence
Component 3	Outcome 3.1: Awareness and knowledge of CRRP increased in West Africa	U	Disseminated knowledge products are limited, while organization of knowledge-sharing events remains critical, reducing inter-country learning and scaling effect. A portal not yet created, a regional policy brief not yet developed, and limited field visits may compromise visibility and regular dissemination. Catch-up is possible with substantial efforts and a “minimum useful” approach (basic portal + standardized content + targeted events).
	Outcome 3.2: Partnerships and coordination strengthened for CRRP mainstreaming	U	Partnership and regional coordination dynamics are almost absent at mid-term. Mechanisms for coordination, influence, and visibility — including coalitions, collaborative initiatives, and international outreach — remain largely inactive, while national networks are still at an early stage of development. Under these conditions, the component cannot act as a “multiplier” to support scaling and sustainability. Without a redesign and intensive catch-up plan, achieving this outcome is highly unlikely.

Summary

Even though the overall objective is relatively on track, some outcomes require attention:

- **Outcome 1.1:** The expected regional dynamic has not been established, and the added value of this outcome is limited. It is recommended that this outcome not be retained.
- **Outcome 3.2:** Despite significant delay, its role as a “multiplier” to support scaling and sustainability of CRRP is critical. Special attention should be given.

Other outcomes are likely achievable by the project end with:

- A renewed dynamic, more effective management and coordination, especially in execution;
- Strong commitment of all partners;
- Intensive catch-up plans for each outcome.

IV.3. MAIN CONSTRAINTS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MID-TERM OBJECTIVES

IV.3.1. Repeated delays

The MTE highlights delays resulting from a combination of institutional, organizational, and operational constraints. The observed pattern begins with an initial delay at the regional level, followed by insufficiently structured coordination, leading to heterogeneous national implementation and, consequently, cascading effects at the local level (late access to productive assets, discontinuous technical support, difficulties in full adoption of practices).

This “chain effect” explains why several outcomes have not reached their mid-term targets, particularly those dependent on weak regional facilitation (strategies, partnerships, communication, knowledge capitalization, harmonized M&E).

IV.3.2. Weak coordination and planning at the regional level

The project document assigns a central role to the REE: regional coordination, steering and harmonization, support to NEEs, facilitation of knowledge management, consolidation of the reports, and strengthening of partnerships. However, at mid-term, the expected regional dynamic has not sufficiently materialized, significantly affecting components with dual (regional/national) scope and activities requiring multi-country orchestration.

IV.3.2.1. Structural delay in the REE operationalization

The effective start of the REE was hindered by administrative and financial constraints, particularly related to the opening of a foreign currency account and public financial management procedures, leading to delays in resource mobilization. In addition, an error in the allocation of the first disbursement further delayed financial resource availability. This initial delay had a systemic effect: it postponed the establishment of coordination mechanisms, delayed regional planning, and weakened inter-country coordination capacity. In fact, the effective start of the REE occurred upon receipt of the first funds on November 23, 2024, amounting to CFAF 115,398,830 (USD 200,000).

IV.3.2.2. A Formally established but weakly operational regional project management unit (RPMU)

According to the project document, an RPMU was to be established or embedded within the REE, comprising key Staff: A Project Coordinator supported by an M&E expert, a gender expert, and an administrative and financial expert. Although the RPMU was formally created and provided with an organizational structure, its effective functioning remained limited due to several factors:

- Insufficient functional anchoring (Staff not fully dedicated to RICOWAS, variable availability, limited logistical resources);
- Lack, at the project start, of essential operational tools (regular coordination framework, shared calendar, monitoring and reporting tools, coordination procedures with the NEEs);
- A reactive or even passive approach, whereas effective regional coordination requires proactive facilitation, dynamic management, and risk anticipation.

As a result, the RPMU was not able to impulse a regional dynamic, particularly for key regional activities (knowledge capitalization, communication, partnerships). This led to significant delays in Component 1 (Outcome 1.1), Component 3 (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2), and the operationalization of the M&E system.

IV.3.2.3. Weak regional coordination and planning capacities

It is plain to see that the REE's limited capacity for coordination and planning has prevented the regional momentum expected under the RICOWAS project. In practice, this dynamic has been limited to a few training activities conducted in collaboration with Cornell University and the OSS.

Consultations with project stakeholders confirmed weak regional coordination, significant delays in regional planning, and limited effectiveness in coordination with the NEEs. In addition to a delay of more than one year in initiating the activities, largely due to contextual constraints in Mali, other contributing factors include:

- Intermittent and sometimes difficult communication with the OSS and Cornell University;
- Low commitment of some NEEs.

Given these considerations, it is reasonable to conclude that the REE is not currently in a position to fully assume its assigned regional roles and responsibilities.

IV.3.3. Variable country commitment

The effective start dates vary across the countries (between 2023 and 2025). These delays, sometimes significant, are linked to the limited capacity of some countries to meet the RICOWAS project requirements. These delays in getting started also provide an indication of each country's level of commitment.

Consultations with country representatives indicate that:

- Some countries adopted a wait-and-see approach, with limited initiative to implement planned activities;
- Others, particularly among English speaking countries, adopted a proactive approach, sometimes advancing independently of regional deliverables.

Combined with weak coordination at regional level, which has failed to boost the commitments of some countries, activities at national level have remained limited. In the absence of strong REE leadership, the OSS played a key role in supporting the NEEs in preparing initial AWPBs and Procurement Plans, as well as technical concept notes for activity implementation.

IV.3.4. Cascading effects at the local level: Logistical delays and incomplete adoption conditions

Incomplete implementation conditions

The combination of the above factors (delays at regional and national levels, weak regional coordination, and variable national commitment) generated cascading effects at the local level, including:

- Delays in seasonal operational planning;
- Delays in procurement and distribution of the equipment and inputs;
- Interruption in technical support; and

- Limited capacity to quickly address the farmers' constraints.

Under these incomplete conditions, beneficiaries were not able to:

- Scale up CRRP implementation in line with mid-term targets (number of farmers and cultivated areas);
- Develop a rice value chain allowing for improvement productivity and income gains.

Constraints reported by smallholder rice farmers

Feedback from smallholder rice farmers confirms that constraints are not only technical and local but also reflect the impact of institutional and operational delays that prevented timely delivery of enabling conditions.

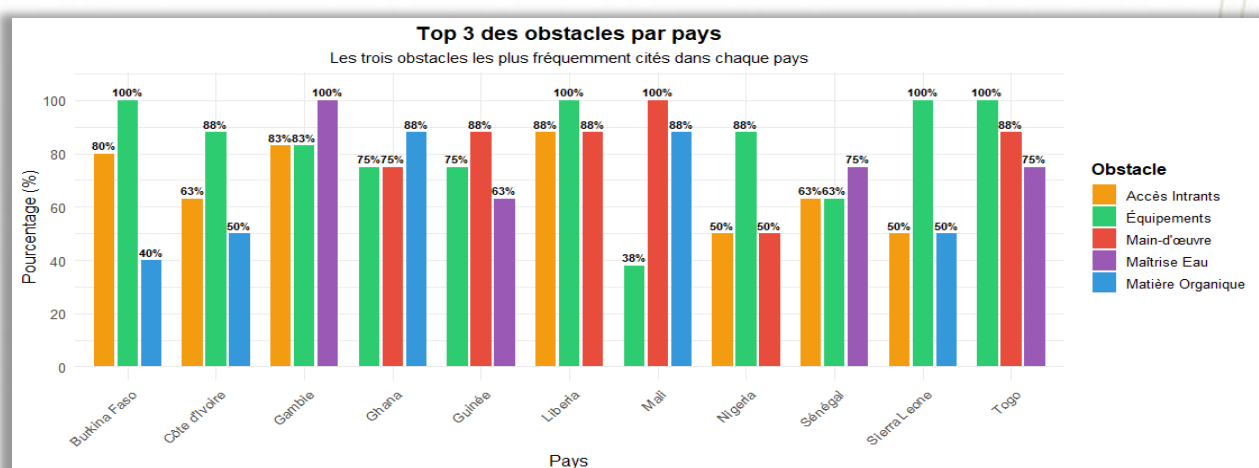


Figure 4 . Most frequently mentioned constraints by country

Three main categories of constraints emerge:

Agricultural equipment: a cross-cutting and systemic constraint

Insufficient availability of the equipment (power tillers, threshers, irrigation equipment, etc.) is reported across all countries. This is a structural constraint affecting the ability to implement technical practices, reduce production costs, and secure productivity. It largely results from procurement delays, logistical bottlenecks, and administrative lags.

Inputs and labor: feasibility and agricultural calendar constraints

Limited access to inputs and labor shortages are major obstacles. These are exacerbated when technical support and facilitation are late, leaving farmers to manage peak labor periods without adequate organization, inputs, or support mechanisms, thereby affecting proper adoption of CRRP practices.

Organic matter and water management: structural constraints, especially in Sahelian zones

The availability of organic matter and water control, particularly in a Sahelian context, are major structural barriers to CRRP adoption. These require integrated responses (planning, infrastructure, local systems, logistics, and organization). Agroecological differences highlight the need for context-specific solutions.

Distribution of local-level constraints by country

The table below presents the distribution of constraints for each country. It confirms the previous analyses and provides more detailed information at country level.

Table 9. Distribution of constraints by country

Country (no. of responses)	Labor	Organic matter	Equipment	Water control	Access to inputs	Other
Guinea (8)	88% (7/8)	25% (2/8)	75% (6/8)	63% (5/8)	38% (3/8)	25% (2/8)
Mali (8)	100% (8/8)	88% (7/8)	38% (3/8)	25% (2/8)	38% (3/8)	0% (0/8)
Côte d'Ivoire (8)	38% (3/8)	50% (4/8)	88% (7/8)	50% (4/8)	63% (5/8)	25% (2/8)
Togo (8)	88% (7/8)	50% (4/8)	100% (8/8)	75% (6/8)	38% (3/8)	25% (2/8)
Senegal (8)	50% (4/8)	38% (3/8)	63% (5/8)	75% (6/8)	63% (5/8)	13% (1/8)
Ghana (8)	75% (6/8)	88% (7/8)	75% (6/8)	63% (5/8)	75% (6/8)	25% (2/8)
Nigeria (8)	50% (4/8)	38% (3/8)	88% (7/8)	25% (2/8)	50% (4/8)	25% (2/8)
Sierra Leone (2)	0% (0/2)	50% (1/2)	100% (2/2)	0% (0/2)	50% (1/2)	0% (0/2)
Gambia (6)	33% (2/6)	0% (0/6)	83% (5/6)	100% (6/6)	83% (5/6)	17% (1/6)
Burkina Faso (5)	20% (1/5)	40% (2/5)	100% (5/5)	40% (2/5)	80% (4/5)	20% (1/5)
Liberia (8)	88% (7/8)	13% (1/8)	100% (8/8)	25% (2/8)	88% (7/8)	13% (1/8)

Key findings from the table:

- In coastal and forest zones (Guinea, Togo, Ghana, Liberia), labor shortage emerges as the second major constraint.
- In contrast, in Sahelian zones (Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso), water control represents a key challenge.

IV.4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

IV.4.1. Significant delays in the project start-up

The table below presents a comparison between:

- The actual implementation dates of the RICOWAS project¹⁰ as indicated on the project page on the AF website;
- The planned dates in the RICOWAS project document.

¹⁰ <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/project/scaling-up-climate-resilient-rice-production-in-west-africa-benin-burkina-faso-co%cc%82te-divoire-the-gambia-ghana-guinea-liberia-mali-niger-nigeria-senegal-sierra-leone-and-togo/>

Table 10. Project implementation and evaluation timeline

Milestones	Planned Date	Actual Date
RICOWAS project approval by the AF Board		October 21, 2021
Start of the project implementation	January 2022	January 2023, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic
Mid-term review (if planned)	February 2024	From September 2025 to January 2026
Expected completion date	February 2026	August 24, 2027
Terminal evaluation	August 2026	

Compared to the initial schedule, there is at least a one-year delay in the project start and about a one-and-a-half-year delay in the mid-term review.

Additional delays were also observed in the actual start dates across countries (between 2023 and 2025), mainly due to:

- Non-fulfillment of conditions for the effectiveness of financing agreements;
- Institutional constraints within the countries, including:
 - Establishment of National Project Management Units (NPMUs);
 - Official decrees for the project creation;
 - Establishment of National Steering Committees; and
 - Opening of bank accounts;
- Other country-specific administrative constraints.

Given these accumulated delays, the timelines defined in the project document are no longer applicable. It is therefore reasonable to consider requesting a one-year no-cost extension to allow for catching up on delays and adjusting the implementation strategy to achieve the initial objectives.

IV.4.2. Relatively slow implementation

Consultations with regional and national partners (9 out of 11 countries) highlight a relative slowness in the OSS implementation. In addition, two major bottlenecks were identified: (i) the No-Objection (NO) request procedure and (ii) disbursement modalities. These factors have affected the execution timeline of AWPBs and, consequently, progress toward mid-term targets.

IV.4.2.1. Streamlining the NO request procedure

Partners identified the NO request procedure as a key factor contributing to delays. Based on consultations with the NEEs and farmers, the observed delays have had concrete impacts on project operations, including:

- Slower procurement and distribution of priority equipment and inputs (power tillers, threshers, irrigation equipment, etc.), limiting farmers' ability to fully apply promoted practices;
- Risk of misalignment with the agricultural calendar, reducing the relevance and effectiveness of interventions when goods and services arrive out of season or after critical periods;

- Weakening of field-level dynamics, with risks of gradual demobilization of implementation teams (NPMUs, technical services, local actors) when planned activities cannot be carried out on time.

It should be noted that the NO request is a prior control mechanism established under the OSS procurement rules. It aims to review and approve procurement-related actions based on technical documents (Terms of Reference (ToRs), concept notes, methodology, criteria, budgets). This process contributes to:

- Ensuring procedural compliance and technical consistency;
- Aligning activities with the project's intervention logic and expected results;
- Validating the relevance of financing modalities and contributions to Outputs/Outcomes; and
- Ensuring integration of environmental, social, and gender dimensions.

According to the OSS, when submitted documents are complete and meet the requirements, the NO requests can be issued within a relatively short timeframe. In practice, delays are often due to multiple revisions linked to insufficiently prepared submissions (quality of the ToRs, budgets, consistency with the results, integration of M&E and gender aspects). However, regional and national implementing entities perceive the NO requests procedure as complex and needs to be simplified.

In light of these findings, it appears relevant to maintain the NO request procedure as a quality assurance tool while introducing operational measures to reduce delays and increase flexibility:

- Use of standardized templates (ToRs, concept notes, budgets, gender and E&S integration);
- Targeted technical support to NEEs/REE (pre-submission quality review, procurement coaching);
- Early planning of NO request files (procurement/consultancy pipeline) to better align with the agricultural calendar.

IV.4.3. Simplification of disbursement modalities

The OSS has recalled that disbursements are governed by contractual conditions defined in the financing agreements, aimed at ensuring compliance, accountability, and sound financial management of resources.

Conditions and sequencing of the disbursements

- The first disbursement is conditional upon the validation of the AWPB and the PP (Procurement Plan), which are necessary instruments for activity alignment and procedural compliance.
- Subsequent disbursements require technical and financial reports accompanied by supporting documents, certification of the use of at least 70% of previously received funds, updates of the AWPB and PP, and, where applicable, the availability of the latest annual audit report.

Limited capacity and impact on processing speed

At mid-term, it appears that the REE and some NEEs, given their limited technical and administrative capacities, face difficulties in meeting these requirements within the required timelines and quality standards. This contributes to extended delays between planning and implementation and increases the gap between planned and actual implementation pace.

These mechanisms (NO request and conditional disbursements) are necessary to ensure procedural compliance and the technical coherence of proposed actions. However, their simplification, while preserving required quality standards, would significantly improve implementation speed during the remaining phase. Possible options include targeted capacity building (procurement and financial/administrative management), standardized documentation, and better anticipation of requests aligned with the agricultural calendar.

IV.4.4. Management methods

IV.4.4.1. Well-defined management arrangements

The management arrangements defined in the RICOWAS project document are clear and relevant:

- Implementation arrangements: Part III “Implementation Modalities” (pages 66 to 102) defines all management modalities, including M&E, social and environmental risks, budget arrangements, disbursement schedule.
- Table 34: Roles and responsibilities of the project entities clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the different entities (the OSS, the Regional Steering Committee (RSC), the REE, the National Steering Committees (NSCs), and the 13 NEEs).

In addition, the RICOWAS project management system is structured across interconnected levels (regional, national, and local) to ensure strategic governance, technical coordination, and operational implementation.

At regional level

The AF finances the project through RIE/OSS, which ensures overall supervision, strategic orientation, and fiduciary accountability.

The OSS relies on a REE/RCoS-Rice, responsible for regional technical coordination, methodological support, and inter-country articulation.

The REE/RCoS-Rice is supported by Cornell University as a regional implementation partner for the technical and methodological component of the RICOWAS project. The RSC is responsible for monitoring, strategic guidance, and multi-stakeholder coordination. It brings together key regional institutions (including CILSS, CORAF, ECOWAS), NGOs, the private sector, professional Organizations, universities (including Cornell).

At national level

Implementation is ensured by 13 NEEs, each responsible for rolling out activities in its country, operational planning, monitoring of the results, and reporting. Each national system is overseen by a NSC bringing together multisectoral stakeholders, responsible for alignment with national priorities, inter-institutional coordination, and ensuring coherence of the interventions.

At local level (project sites)

The NEEs mobilize a field ecosystem of stakeholders (extension services, universities, NGOs, private sector), with particular attention to women, youth, and vulnerable groups, in order to provide technical services, support, and dissemination of practices directly benefiting rice farmers.

The system also integrates M&E mechanisms, environmental and social risk management, grievance mechanisms, and gender mainstreaming, all aligned with the AF policies. It must be acknowledged that this mechanism is defined clearly and precisely.

IV.4.4.2. Challenging operational management

Both REE and some NEEs consider that the formal management arrangements are clear and well defined; however, in practice, overlaps and communication gaps are observed, creating implementation bottlenecks. In contrast, the OSS considers that the limited capacities of the REE and of some NEEs have prevented these partners from fully assuming their responsibilities and fulfilling their assigned roles.

The OSS contribution to regional coordination

Indeed, since the start of the project, the REE has not been able to fulfill its expected role in regional facilitation and coordination:

- Delay in the establishment of the RPMU;
- Only a limited number of activities initiated since project launch;
- The few activities assigned to the REE (training of trainers) were implemented with strong involvement from the OSS and Cornell University, including logistical and communication support.

To address this situation, the OSS had to assume a great part of the REE's responsibilities and functions (coordination, technical support, reporting, and M&E).

REE and Cornell University collaboration

The collaboration between the REE and Cornell University is a complementary partnership based on a clear division of responsibilities: the REE ensures regional coordination, while Cornell University provides technical leadership on a limited number of specialized activities. However, at mid-term, this collaboration appears insufficiently stabilized and is subject to differing perceptions.

The REE considers that the partnership should be redefined and clearly delimited to avoid Cornell University substituting for the regional coordination role. In contrast, the OSS considers that the collaboration is constrained by the weak commitment of the REE, which limits its ability to effectively manage the partnership with this technical partner.

For Cornell University, the assessment is different and more critical. It considers that, in practice, the REE has not sufficiently exercised a proactive regional coordination role. In particular, it highlights the absence of regular initiatives by the REE to organize planning meetings, clarify mutual expectations, share a joint roadmap, request targeted inputs, and communicate on implementation progress. This lack of structured exchanges weakens coordination, reduces partnership efficiency, and increases the overlapping risk.

In the context of accumulated delays at mid-term, this governance gap contributes to weakening regional dynamics and limits the project's ability to fully mobilize Cornell University's technical expertise in support of CRRP scaling priorities.

OSS and Cornell University collaboration

The OSS and Cornell University consider their cooperation to be satisfactory. The OSS emphasizes that a formal agreement governs this relationship and that Cornell University implements assigned regional activities with a level of professionalism and technical rigor consistent with the project expectations.

Similarly, Cornell University considers its collaboration with the OSS to be effective and constructive, while noting occasional delays in responses.

In this context, the weakness of regional dynamics plays a decisive role: the REE tends to focus on task execution without sufficiently ensuring its expected functions in coordination, communication, and NEE mobilization. As a result, despite its technical capacity and strong potential contribution (innovation, M&E methods, capitalization, support to ToT and tools), Cornell University is not yet fully integrated into the regional implementation team. The main challenge at mid-term is therefore to strengthen the integration of this partnership within an effective regional governance framework, in order to optimize technical impact and scaling effects of the project.

IV.4.5. Work planning

Several activities are interdependent, with the implementation of some contingent upon the completion and results of others. Moreover, in a project with a dual regional and national dimension, some national activities depend on upstream regional deliverables, requiring integrated and synchronized planning to avoid bottlenecks.

IV.4.5.1. Planning tools

Operational planning of the RICOWAS project is based on two complementary tools: the AWPB and the PP. Prepared annually by the REE and NEEs, then submitted to the OSS for approval, they are used to program and budget activities, organize procurement and services, and monitor physical and financial implementation.

It should also be noted that once validated, the AWPB and PP can be updated during the year if necessary (adjustments to the agricultural calendar, implementation constraints, reprogramming). This flexibility is essential to maintain alignment between planning and implementation, especially when upstream delays affect dependent activities.

IV.4.5.2. Variable planning capacities across the countries

Consultations with the NEEs highlight varying levels of responsiveness across the countries. The low response rate to data collection exercises (questionnaires) and the non-compliance with sampling guidelines for rice farmers suggest that NPMU Staff are not always fully dedicated to RICOWAS.

These constraints are compounded by weak intrinsic planning capacities in some countries (NPMU/NEEs), which reduce the operational effectiveness of AWPB and lead to delays in PP. In addition, the expected support from the REE, whose role includes assisting the NEEs in planning, coordination, and deliverable quality, has not been sufficiently structured or consistently provided. The combination of these factors limits the effective use of planning tools and explains part of the observed delays.

IV.4.5.3. Limited regional planning

Regional-level planning is significantly delayed. Indeed, the REE has received only one disbursement of USD 200,000, allowing the initiation of a limited number of activities. This regional planning and disbursement dynamic are far below the expectations set in the project document. This represents a major constraint for Components 1 and 3, where regional planning is critical to produce upstream deliverables and provide structured support to countries.

The most critical gap concerns the absence of an operational regional M&E system. This absence has affected the quality of this MTE.

IV.4.6. Financial management

The RICOWAS project has a financial management and control system defined at the design stage, aimed at ensuring transparency, traceability, and compliance of expenditures. Effective implementation of these requirements, by all implementing entities, is a key condition for smooth disbursement flows and consolidated monitoring capacity.

IV.4.6.1. Financial reporting and disbursement performance

A Monthly Interim Financial (MIF) Report is required from each EE and must be submitted on a regular monthly basis, together with supporting documents and bank. This mechanism enables continuous monitoring of the budget execution and serves as a key tool for detecting deviations, anticipating cash needs, and securing financial operations.

In practice, this monthly reporting remains irregular and sporadic. Several EEs do not respect the deadlines, while others use non-compliant MIF templates, making it difficult to establish a reliable consolidated financial tracking system at regional and national levels. This situation

has two direct consequences: it limits financial steering and oversight capacity, and it slows down the disbursement chain.

For planning purposes, the AWPBs and PPs allow for annual budgeting of the activities and procurement planning, enabling monitoring and control of physical and financial implementation. However, annual disbursement to EEs does not facilitate activity-based tracking.

The table below presents programmed versus actual disbursements by year.

Table 11. Programmed vs. Actual Disbursements

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 (ongoing)
Programmed disbursement	3,226,976.25	3,500,976.25	3,425,976.25
Actual disbursement	2,090,000.00	969,388.74	244,762.50
Disbursement rate	64.77%	27.69%	7.14%

The Table highlights a gap between a financial planning and actual project execution capacity over the first two years. While Year 1 shows a moderate execution level, Year 2 records a sharp decline, reflecting a loss of implementation momentum.

This decrease is largely explained by delays accumulated in Year 1, which led to the postponement of activities into the following year. As a result, Year 2 did not require the same level of disbursement. Consequently, planned funds could not be absorbed at the expected pace, revealing more an absorption capacity issue than a planning issue.

IV.4.6.2. Disbursement rate by the Implementing Entity

The project disbursement mechanism is based on a capped and conditional advance system. For the EEs, the first disbursement concerns a standardized budget of USD 190,000 intended to launch a core set of priority activities included in the AWPB. Access to a second disbursement requires at least 70% utilization of previously received funds, within a maximum cash limit of USD 200,000. This mechanism ensures fiduciary security but makes funding continuity highly dependent on execution capacity.

Disbursement by country

Table 12. Disbursement by country (first two years)

Country	Year 1 (Feb. 2023 – Jan. 2024)	Year 2 (Feb. 2024 – Jan. 2025)
Benin	190,000.00	
Burkina Faso		196,397.00
Côte d'Ivoire	190,000.00	
The Gambia	190,000.00	
Ghana	190,000.00	190,000.00
Guinea	190,000.00	
Liberia	190,000.00	

Country	Year 1 (Feb. 2023 – Jan. 2024)	Year 2 (Feb. 2024 – Jan. 2025)
Mali	190,000.00	
Niger	190,000.00	
Nigeria	190,000.00	
Senegal	190,000.00	
Sierra Leone	190,000.00	
Togo	190,000.00	
Cornell University		50,000.00
IER/RCoS-Rice (REE)		234,729.92
Total	2,090,000.00	861,126.92

As of the MTE, only Ghana has benefited from two disbursements. In contrast, Burkina Faso only received its first disbursement at the end of the second year, due to a lengthy project setup process and institutional and administrative constraints.

This reflects highly uneven execution capacities across the countries, but also raises questions regarding the level of commitment of each country. Indeed, Ghana's ability to access two disbursements while others remain at the first stage suggests that:

- Ghana's NPMU mobilized technically capable Staff able to plan and implement activities in line with the project rules and procedures;
- Other countries either did not mobilize sufficiently qualified Staff or did not assign Staff fully dedicated to RICOWAS;
- Although smoother NO request processing would help, it does not explain all observed delays; and
- National procurement and administrative frameworks differ across the countries and must be considered in planning, even if they are outside the project's direct control.

Disbursement at regional level

Out of the USD 1,022,201 total budget to the regional level, USD 762,201 is allocated to the REE and USD 260,000 to the regional technical implementing partner (Cornell University).

Due to administrative constraints, the REE took one year to become operational. During the second year, it received a disbursement of USD 200,000, while USD 34,729.92 was paid by the OSS on its behalf to cover the costs of the first ToT workshop held in Côte d'Ivoire. The same conclusion applies: the REE did not mobilize sufficiently qualified and/or fully dedicated Staff for the RICOWAS project.

Similarly, the contracting process of Cornell University was delayed, and the first disbursement (USD 50,000) was only made in August 2024.

IV.4.6.3. Expenditure status at mid-term

At mid-term, cumulative expenditures (USD 1,114,000.63) represent only 38% of funds already disbursed, confirming weak absorption capacity by the EEs, linked to delayed project start-up.

Table 13. Expenditure by component

Component	Expenditure (USD)
Component 1	338,377.63
Component 2	535,714.00
Component 3	37,296.00
Implementation costs	202,613.00
Total	1,114,000.63

The expenditure structure is consistent with the observed performance:

- Component 1 covers expenditure relating to the activities of GRID and FdF, which have been appreciated by all stakeholders;
- Component 2 accounts for the largest share of expenditures (USD 535,714), reflecting field-driven implementation;
- Component 3 is almost stalled (USD 37,296), with critical delays in communication, capitalization, and partnerships (non-functional portal, limited events, and absence of coalitions).

Finally, the level of implementation costs (USD 202,613) indicates that management functions have been activated; however, this has not translated into equivalent levels of execution and results delivery at mid-term. This gap is explained by the previously identified implementation bottlenecks and weaknesses.

IV.4.6.4. Contrasting perceptions at local level

At local level, financial execution shows differentiated perceptions between allocated resources and real implementation needs:

- Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso consider funding adequate;
- In contrast, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Togo, Senegal, and Guinea consider it insufficient to cover all planned activities or respond effectively to priority demands.

Constraints affecting local implementation

Consultations with beneficiaries identified constraints affecting the promotion of sustainable intensification of SRI practices, presented in Figure 5 below.

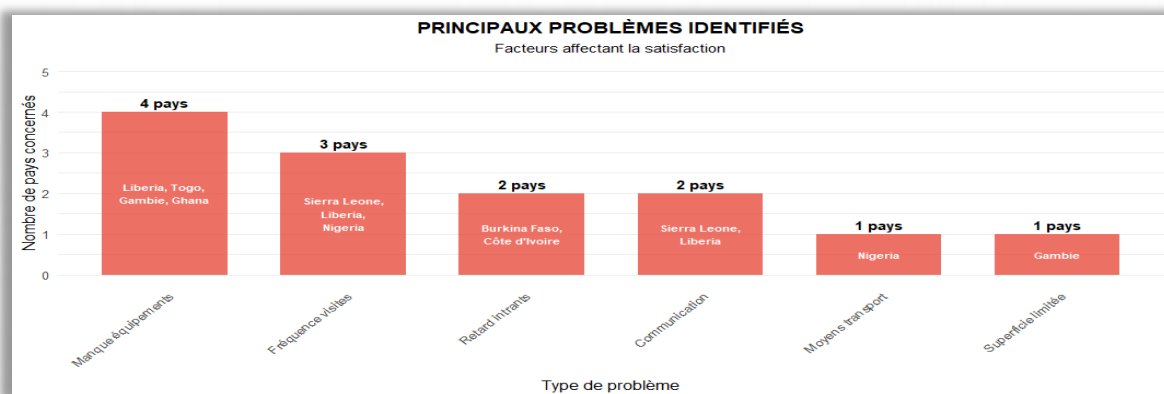


Figure 5. Main problems affecting project implementation at local level

The main problems affecting the implementation of the RICOWAS project at local level are:

- Lack of equipment, mentioned by 4 countries;
- Frequency of visits by project representatives, raised by two countries;
- Delays in input delivery and communication, also mentioned by two countries.

This divergence in local perception highlights an issue of relevance and budget adequacy. Indeed, rice farmers across different countries identified access to agricultural equipment as the main constraint limiting the project's impact. Current planning, characterized by delays, does not always allow the acquisition of sufficient equipment, and especially its timely availability in line with the agricultural calendar. Consequently, the financial constraint is not only related to the available resources, but also to their flexibility, allocation, and ability to respond to operational priorities.

IV.4.7. Monitoring and evaluation systems

The project document (pages 81 to 85) provides for the establishment of an M&E system.

IV.4.7.1. Specific features of the project M&E system

Given the multi-level and decentralized structure of the project, the M&E system must operate at a: i- regional, ii- national, and iii- local level. It must also ensure information flow both vertically across the three levels and horizontally within each level.

Referring to Table 36: Monitoring & Evaluation Work Plan and Budget of the project document (page 86), the M&E system includes: i- development of project implementation and M&E manuals; ii- baseline studies; iii- field monitoring, supervision, quality assurance and compliance with guidelines and gender requirements; iv- annual reports, audits, evaluations, and other reporting activities. Given this multi-level and decentralized structure, the system was allocated a substantial budget of USD 838,000, reflecting its importance.

The responsibility for designing and implementing the M&E system lies with the implementing entities (NEEs), and more specifically the REE, which is responsible for compiling country contributions in order to update the project results framework indicators based on periodic reports submitted by the countries (See Table 5).

This M&E system should have been operational by the end of the second quarter of the project implementation, i.e., by the end of 2023. Unfortunately, it is still not operational, which constitutes one of the main weaknesses of the RICOWAS project.

IV.4.7.2. The system is still at the design stage

The system is still in the early stages of development. Some activities contributing to its implementation have been completed, whilst others are still ongoing.

Thus, a stakeholder assessment (Activity 1.2.2.1) was conducted at the beginning of the project and combined with the baseline study (Activity 2.1.2.2). These were completed at country level, with the exception of Burkina Faso, while the consolidated regional report, which is the responsibility of the REE (See Table 5), has not yet been produced.

The USD 60,000-budget Activity 2.1.2.1 “Develop and test a methodology and data monitoring mechanism for SRI and CRRP implementation” was scheduled, but experienced major delays due to technical failures:

- Poor quality technical documents (including ToRs), delaying consultant recruitment and implementation;
- A **NO request** that did not meet required standards and went through several iterations. Submitted in November 2024, it was approved in July 2025;
- A lengthy selection process, including inconsistencies between the evaluation methodology used by the selection committee and that described in the ToRs.

Regarding the project results framework indicators, progress in establishing the M&E system remains also mixed. The analysis of Output 2.1.2 highlights the following results:

- 40 M&E training sessions were conducted out of 30 planned at mid-term, while the data tracking mechanism is still not installed.
- 5 annual M&E reports were produced out of 26 expected (2 per country). These reports are intended to document SRI and CRRP practices adopted by smallholder farmers, analyze them, and ensure wide dissemination of the results. The consultant was recruited in August 2025. Although deliverables have been produced, the REE has not yet operationalized them to establish the M&E system.

IV.4.7.3. OSS initiative for monitoring and evaluation

The RICOWAS M&E system was expected to provide the necessary information for periodic reporting (semi-annual and annual reports) for reporting to the AF, audits, the mid-term evaluation, and the final evaluation. Its non-operationalization has made data collection for this mid-term evaluation particularly difficult and time-consuming, negatively affecting its overall quality.

In the absence of the M&E system as originally designed, the OSS ensures monitoring of the results framework indicators by collecting data through:

- Periodic reports from the NEEs when submitted;
- Supervision missions to implementing entities to assess progress in implementation, administrative and financial management, procurement compliance, environmental and social safeguards (OSS and AF), as well as gender mainstreaming, and to identify constraints and propose corrective measures.

This OSS-led monitoring initiative is commendable; however, the planned M&E system must be operationalized as soon as possible.

IV.4.8. Stakeholder commitment

Stakeholder engagement depends on national contexts as well as other factors.

IV.4.8.1. Differentiated ownership depending on national contexts

Based on consultations with the NEEs, stakeholder commitment is characterized by generally acceptable mobilization, but with significant variation across national contexts. At the decision-making level, institutional and governmental actors demonstrate active support in most countries, as evidenced in Niger, Sierra Leone, and Gambia, where involvement is strong and institutionalized. However, this perception does not always reflect reality, as in the case of Niger, where no field activities have yet been initiated.

In other countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, commitment is described as partial or limited, often due to internal budget constraints or insufficient allocations affecting the full participation of relevant structures.

The nature of national partnerships also reflects this diversity. Some countries, such as Nigeria and Guinea, have established strong and operational collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector, NGOs, and producer Organizations. In contrast, in other countries, partnerships are still under development or discussion, limiting their immediate impact on project implementation. This mosaic of commitment highlights the importance of context-specific mobilization strategies to strengthen local ownership and ensure an inclusive and sustainable dynamic around project objectives.

In summary, national ownership and the support of governmental and local actors vary significantly between the countries. In some cases, they play an active role in decision-making, contributing to effective and efficient implementation, while in others such involvement remains limited.

IV.4.8.2. Requests for motivation allowances

Despite countries' commitment to mobilizing dedicated expert teams within the NEEs, perceptions among Staff differ. During exchanges with NEE members, a recurring request was frequently expressed: *"As with other projects, members of the EEs provide services to the RICOWAS project, which involves extra effort on their part, yet they receive no remuneration*

for this: a performance-related bonus should be introduced to recognize the services they provide”.

Although this request is not aligned with country commitments and is contrary to AF guidelines, we need to find a way to address this request, which has been raised by several people. Beyond its legitimacy, Staff motivation remains essential for the successful implementation of the remaining project phase.

IV.4.8.3. Ensuring continuity of technical support

From the design phase, Cornell University was identified as the regional technical partner of the REE. CORAF/WE CARD had also been proposed to take on the execution of some regional activities, in the same capacity as Cornell University. However, it preferred a positioning of strategic guidance and support, primarily through its participation in the project's Regional Steering Committee, rather than a direct execution role.

In practice, the regional partnership that has been operationalized at this stage is the one established with Cornell University, particularly through its specialized programs on CRRP and SRI-Rice, which today constitute the main regional technical lever mobilized by the project. It should be noted, however, that during the conduct of the MTE, Cornell University terminated the financing agreement concluded with the OSS, effective from 31/12/2025. This decision follows the termination of the contract of Dr. Erika Styger, who was responsible for directing and steering the implementation of said agreement. Indeed, Cornell University was no longer able to ensure her remuneration, due to US government restrictions affecting the University's financing modalities.

In view of the results obtained and the quality of technical support provided by Cornell University, it is recommended to maintain and consolidate Dr. Erika Styger's commitment as a resource person for the remaining phase of the project. Her recognized expertise on CRRP/SRI, her capacity to produce operational technical guidance, and her support for the regional dynamic constitute major assets for accelerating scaling up and strengthening the quality of practice adoption. In this context, it is proposed that the OSS define, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, the most appropriate modality to capitalize on this expertise, improve the articulation between regional and national levels, and contribute decisively to the success of the second half of the project and the achievement of its objectives.

IV.4.9. Reporting

Limited reporting at national level

Reporting templates for technical and financial reports were developed by the OSS and shared with all EEs. For the first year, due to delays in the project start-up, no semi-annual report was produced, instead, only one annual report was prepared. This report was limited in scope and mainly included information on inception workshops, steering committee meetings, and selected field activities in some countries.

Consultations with NEEs show that despite training sessions (inception workshop, online training for French speaking and English-speaking countries, the OSS supervision missions, and bilateral support), compliance with reporting requirements remains uneven across the countries and constitutes a limiting factor for the project management. In fact, several countries are facing difficulties in reporting, linked to Staff availability, unfamiliarity with reporting formats, data consolidation challenges (especially in the absence of an operational M&E system), and documentation of supporting evidence. Thus, the NEEs describe contrasting situations:

- Some countries, such as Gambia, Mali and Guinea, claim to apply rigorous compliance with reporting procedures and timely submission of complete reports;
- Countries such as Niger and Côte d'Ivoire face major difficulties, with very limited reporting due to administrative constraints, weak M&E structuring, and overburdened NEE teams;
- Countries such as Sierra Leone, Senegal, Nigeria, and Togo show partial compliance, often characterized by delays or incomplete reports.

The OSS nuances this self-assessment by noting that countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone demonstrate relatively strong performance in terms of reporting quality and timeliness, while performance remains uneven elsewhere depending on national contexts.

Differentiated reporting at regional level

At regional level, the OSS information highlights a clear contrast in reporting quality and production. On the one hand, Cornell University stands out for its timely, well-structured and high-quality reports, which provide actionable information for monitoring activities falling within its technical remit. This regularity helps provide visibility on the progress of methodological support. On the other hand, the situation of the REE remains highly concerning. Although contractually responsible for consolidating national reports and producing regional semi-annual and annual reports, the REE has not submitted any such document to date. This absence severely limits regional consolidation, comparative analysis, and knowledge capitalization.

Cross-cutting implications

Discrepancies between the countries' perceptions, the OSS assessment and the actual availability of the reports, are already having a noticeable impact. They highlight the lack of a functioning M&E system likely to systematically documenting and referencing reports, data and lessons learnt (by country, activity and indicator). This shortcoming deprives the MTE of a comprehensive and comparable database and the project of informed management, based on robust information, which would enable it to anticipate risks, prioritize actions and adjust implementation in a responsive manner.

IV.4.10. Successful activities and lessons learned

Successful activities

The MTE highlights a set of core successful activities that have been widely appreciated by the stakeholders. These achievements provide a solid foundation for speeding up implementation during the remaining period:

1. Functional cascade training system (Training of Trainers – local trainers and producers)

The project successfully deployed SRI/CRRP training at multiple levels: The regional ToT workshops met their targets, and national-level training exceeded mid-term objectives, confirming strong stakeholder commitment and effective knowledge dissemination. This achievement should now be further oriented toward improving field-level adoption quality (standardization, toolkits, coaching, and follow-up of trained trainers).

2. Regional Technical Innovation Group (RTIG) as a key driver of technical consistency

The establishment of the RTIG represents a major asset. It has helped harmonize technical content, improve training quality, and structure analytical work on rice systems and field innovations. Facilitated by Cornell University, RTIG outputs provide a credible basis for finalizing technical guidelines and developing a more standardized regional training package.

3. Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and demonstration plots: an effective approach to be strengthened

Farmer support through FFS and demonstration plots is generally considered successful, as it enhances ownership, reduces implementation errors, and supports adoption of SRI/CRRP practices. However, the quality and consistency of implementation vary across the countries.

The remaining phase will benefit from capitalizing on these three achievements by further articulating them: i- strengthening field coaching, ii- producing and disseminating harmonized materials from RTIG, and iii- using the training/demonstration framework as a foundation to accelerate the full and measurable adoption of CRRP practices.

Lessons Learned

Regarding lessons learned, the consultation of rice farmers/project beneficiaries highlights the fact that the adoption of SRI has improved yields in several countries:

- In Sierra Leone, yields increased by at least 20%; in Côte d'Ivoire, from 2.5 to 5 t/ha; in the Gambia, up to 6 t/ha; and in Mali, from 6 to 7 t/ha;
- In Senegal and Guinea, overall productivity improved through training and demonstration activities;
- In Togo, yields increased by 45% in 2024.

In addition to yield improvements, in Niger, SRI adoption has been formalized in the SRI guide with monitoring of pest impacts, while in Nigeria, demonstration plots have shown resilience to climate extremes.

Limited capacities of knowledge management and capitalization achievements

In practice, the main lessons drawn from SRI implementation as a CC adaptation measure are documented by some countries that communicate relatively well in this regard. That said, there is no formal inventory of lessons learned and good practices. This information is primarily documented, shared, and capitalized through reports submitted by the countries, as well as through their communications, articles, photographs, and other documents produced during the activities.

Finally, the capacity to capitalize on the results remains insufficient, due to the lack of a fully operational M&E system and a structured knowledge management framework. Likewise, particular attention should be given to the 3rd Component that aims to strengthen communication, advocacy, and partnerships for the scaling up of CRRP practices.

IV.4.11. Communication

The communication of the RICOWAS project is analyzed from two complementary sides: (i) internal communication between the various project entities, and (ii) external communication aimed at informing the public, showcasing the results, and supporting sustainability.

At mid-term, communication is insufficiently structured, characterized by informal practices, irregular coordination, and the absence of tools and routines to ensure smooth information flow.

IV.4.11.1. Internal communication

Based on consultations with the stakeholders, the project's internal communication remains irregular and largely dependent on one-off initiatives (workshops, bilateral exchanges, ad hoc requests), rather than a formalized coordination framework. This situation undermines implementation coherence, limits inter-country learning, and reduces collective steering capacity.

Communication at the regional level

Communication between OSS–REE and REE–Cornell University is difficult and lacks effectiveness, with persistent misunderstandings regarding the modalities of operational collaboration. In practice, the absence of coordination routines (periodic meetings, shared roadmap, systematic minutes) reduces the effectiveness of the regional interface. By contrast, OSS–Cornell University communication is generally more fluid and effective, with clearer and better-defined collaboration modalities.

Furthermore, in the absence of structured and effective communication tools, countries share field experiences, activity updates, photos, videos, and other content through a few WhatsApp groups (RICOWAS National Coordinators Group, Master Trainers Group, RTIG Group).

The absence of a regional communication strategy (Output 3.1.1) has prevented the structuring and guidance needed to improve this ineffective communication.

Communication at the national and local level

Some NEEs have not yet established appropriate communication channels with the stakeholders at both national and local levels. On the other hand, the REE has not supported and accompanied NEEs in terms of communication with national-level stakeholders. This weak communication is further compounded by the delay in developing the project website (Output 3.1.1), a key tool for organizing exchanges.

Furthermore, only 7 national communication strategies (Output 3.1.1) have been developed, representing progress that remains insufficient. As for knowledge products, 24 have been developed out of 60 planned, resulting in still-limited dissemination.

Likewise, a few national communication initiatives exist (e.g., a Facebook page in Nigeria: <https://www.facebook.com/RicowasNigeria>) that illustrate local dynamics but without real prospects for scale. Such initiatives cannot substitute for a structured communication mechanism.

Few field visits

Out the 26 field visits (2 per country) planned at mid-term, under Output 3.1.1, only 7 have been carried out. These field visits are instrumental in fostering productive communication between the various stakeholders at national and local levels, and also represent a genuine source of motivation for them.

IV.4.11.2. External communication

The regional communication strategy and action plan have not yet been developed and, as a result, communication currently unguided and lacks proper oversight. On its side, the OSS also contributes in its own way to external communication through its own channels¹¹ (website, social media, event-related publications). However, this institutional communication, while positive, does not replace a structured project-specific communication framework oriented toward disseminating the results of SRI and CRRP scaling up.

In order to improve this communication, steps should be taken as soon as possible to establish and operationalize the Regional Communication Hub (1st Component), which constitutes a powerful tool for communication and visibility.

¹¹ http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/ricowas_fr ; <http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/RICOWAS> ; http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/RICOWAS_OSS ; http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/RICOWAS_OSS_2023 ; <http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/ricowas-mali> ; <http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/ricowascloture> ; <http://www.oss-online.org/index.php/fr/ricowas-training>

IV.4.12. Knowledge management

Knowledge management within the RICOWAS project is highly insufficient in more ways than one:

- As part of Outcome 3.1.1, 24 knowledge products were developed out of a target of 60 (4 per country and 8 regional). This situation reflects a poorly structured production dynamic (technical sheets, guides, case studies, lessons learned notes, multimedia materials), even though the project is already generating some field experience feedback and evidence on SRI/CRRP adoption and performance in some countries;
- Regarding Outcome 1.2.1 "Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened", there are significant delays in terms of research projects implemented, training modules organized, and exchange workshops held. Only the indicator relating to the number of scientific articles published has been exceeded;
- The project portal (Outcome 3.1.1) has not yet been developed, depriving the project of a reference platform for organizing content, archiving deliverables, disseminating good practices, and facilitating inter-country learning. Therefore, existing information remains scattered, without the structuring needed for its valorization and use at the regional scale.

In summary, at mid-term, knowledge management within the RICOWAS project remains insufficient, both in terms of production and in terms of capitalization and dissemination. This weakness constitutes a barrier to CRRP scaling up, insofar as the project has not yet succeeded in systematically transforming field experiences, technical learnings, and training achievements into products that can be shared among the countries.

IV.4.13. Innovation

The ecological approach of SRI, promoted within the framework of CRRP, is an innovation in West African rice systems, insofar as it challenges conventional practices in order to improve resource use efficiency. For the beneficiary rice farmers, the RICOWAS project has not only introduced a technique, but has served as an entry point into a package of complementary innovations adapted to local realities. Field feedback provided by rice farmers/project beneficiaries highlights:

- Adaptive agronomic practices (such as early transplanting and basic water management arrangements);
- The integration of lightweight equipment facilitating the proper application of practices (weeders);
- The valorization of local resources to strengthen sustainability (compost, biochar, and biopesticide production);
- Participatory knowledge dissemination modalities, notably through farmer field schools and demonstration plots.

This set of local-level innovations illustrates the adaptive capacity of local stakeholders and provides a wealth of practical solutions for a more resilient and sustainable CRRP. However, at mid-term, their potential remains underexploited: systematic identification, documentation, and sharing at the regional scale remain limited, due to a still-insufficient regional dynamic in communication and knowledge management.

IV.4.14. Gender

From the design stage, the RICOWAS project integrated the gender dimension through an action plan (pages 162 to 164 of the project document). This plan sets out, for each component/Outcome/output/activity, the AF's gender equality principles as well as the expected actions to reduce gaps and the monitoring indicators. Furthermore, the composition of the PMUs includes a gender specialist at both the REE and NEE levels, with responsibility for ensuring the effective mainstreaming of the gender perspective throughout the entire implementation cycle (planning, execution, monitoring, reporting).

The MTE is not in a position to quantitatively assess the degree of effective implementation of this gender action plan, for two major reasons:

- **Absence of an operational M&E system:** This absence limits the regular collection and consolidation of gender-related information;
- **Insufficiently disaggregated data:** As observed in the mid-term indicator achievement analysis, a large proportion of data is not disaggregated by sex (and sometimes by age), which prevents an assessment of the real scope of interventions on women, youth, and other targeted groups.

IV.4.14.1. Monitoring of the OSS implementation

The OSS contributes to quality control and monitoring of the gender action plan through two levers:

- When processing NO requests, the OSS makes sure that concept notes and documents submitted by the countries explicitly integrate gender considerations as well as the associated environmental and social requirements;
- During implementation, it uses workshop reports and other activity reports to verify the effective mainstreaming of gender and compliance with the commitments.

Furthermore, several indicators in the results framework concerning the number of beneficiaries require sex-wise disaggregation, which constitutes a basic principle for attesting to progress on inclusion.

IV.4.14.2. Positive effects at the national level

Information gathered from the NEEs indicates that in most countries, inclusion mechanisms are applied, notably the adoption of participation quotas (generally between 30% and 35% women) in training and some activities. Based on feedback from a majority of rice farmers in 8 out of 11 countries, these arrangements have generated positive effects on gender equality: (i) strengthened participation of women in decision-making processes within farmer groups,

(ii) access to valued technical knowledge, and (iii) increased recognition of their role in rice production. In addition, the majority of NEEs consulted (9 out of 11) do not report any effects indicating a worsening of existing inequalities, even though disparities and challenges persist. However, this progress remains uneven. In some contexts, such as Nigeria, effective female participation, although improved, remains below the targets set, suggesting that quotas alone are insufficient when social, organizational, or resource access constraints persist.

Senegal stands out with markedly more critical perceptions, where only a minority of beneficiaries perceive effective gender mainstreaming and some even report negative effects. This situation highlights social tensions or inclusion modalities that are inadequate to the local context, requiring in-depth investigation.

Thus, while the project has broadly succeeded in creating spaces for inclusion and in valorizing the role of women, the sustainability of these gains will depend on continued attention to their equitable access to productive resources (land, equipment, credit) and to their leadership within rural Organizations.

IV.4.14.3. Positive effects at the local level

Responses from rice farmers/beneficiaries broadly confirm the trend observed at the national level (see Figure below).

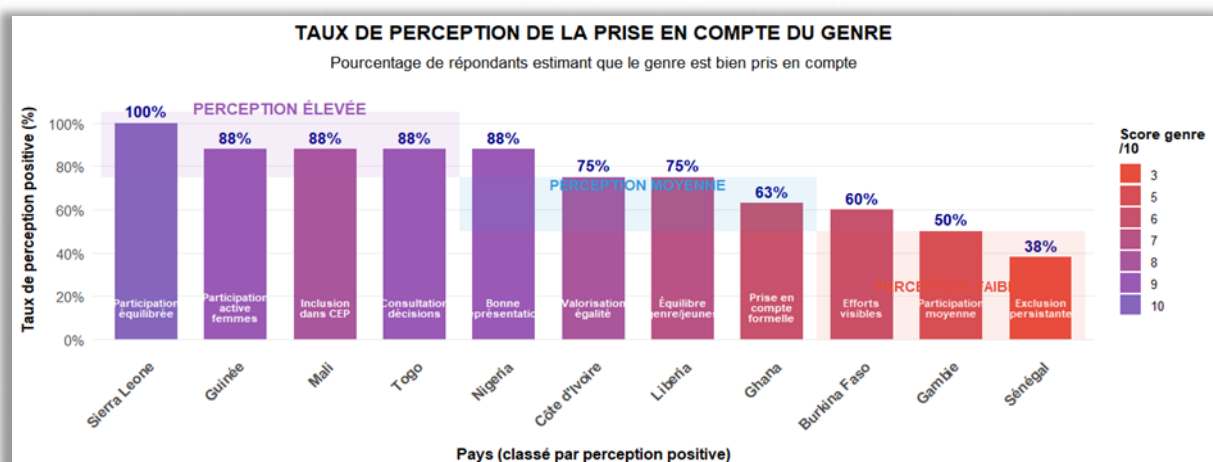


Figure 6. Perception rate of gender mainstreaming

Thus, in 7 out of 11 countries, more than 75% of rice farmers consider that gender is effectively mainstreamed in project meetings and activities. Likewise, 8 out of 11 countries report positive effects on gender equality: improved participation of women in decision-making, increased access to valued technical knowledge, and stronger recognition of their productive contribution. Furthermore, 9 out of 11 countries consider that the project has not worsened existing inequalities, despite the significant persisting disparities.

As at the national level, Senegal also constitutes a case for alert, with only 38% positive perceptions, indicating specific social tensions that require in-depth analysis. Moreover, in countries such as Nigeria, the effective participation of women remains below the targets set. While rice farmers acknowledge that female involvement improves technical effectiveness

and social cohesion, they also highlight a central issue: equitable access to productive resources (land, equipment, credit), which is an indispensable condition for converting current advances into lasting socio-economic empowerment. Thus, despite a well-established inclusion capital, the consolidation of genuine female agency remains a major challenge.

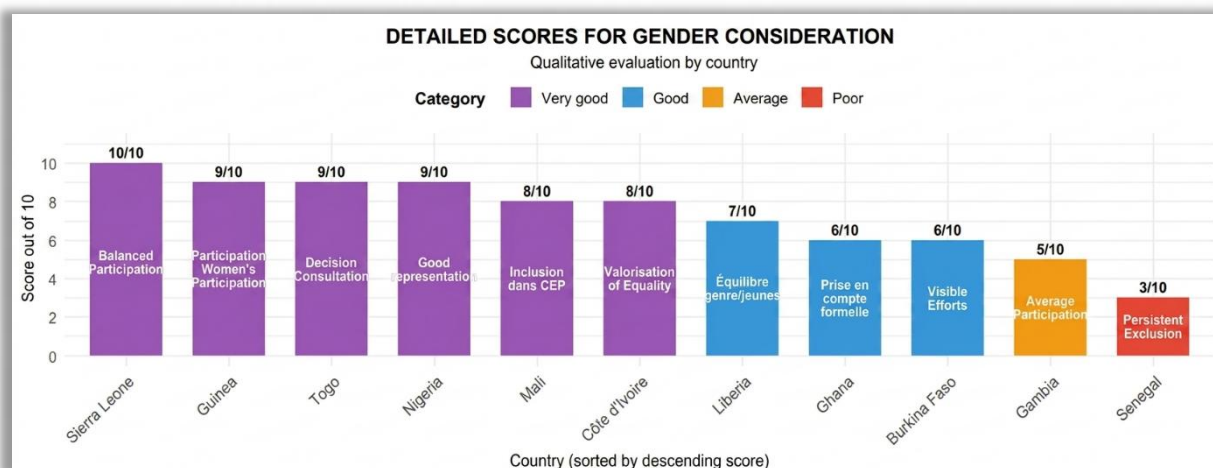


Figure 7. Quantitative assessment by country

Based on these results, a country-specific approach would enable the RICOWAS project to improve its gender performance.

IV.4.15. Grievance mechanism

A grievance mechanism has been clearly defined in the project document. The guidelines for this complaint-handling mechanism are available on the OSS website¹². It is activated as soon as a complaint is submitted by any stakeholder in the context of project implementation. It is structured as follows:

- NEEs are the contact points for any complaint arising at the national level;
- The national project coordination, with the support of the REE, must respond promptly and appropriately, with the assistance of the OSS Social and Environmental Committee;
- When the complaint cannot be handled at the project level, the NEE or REE will direct complainants to the OSS for the necessary action to be taken.

Consultations with the NEEs show that this grievance mechanism is largely unknown or unused at the national level, representing a gap in the accountability and stakeholder feedback framework:

- Only four countries (Niger, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Nigeria) are aware that this mechanism exists and is functional;
- Conversely, it is explicitly reported as non-existent or undocumented in five countries (Mali, Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire);
- Guinea considers it partially operational.

¹² https://www.oss-online.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/OSS-Compr.Social%26Environm.Griev.%26Prot.MechanismProcedure%28CSEGPMP%29_Eng.pdf

This mechanism was presented during working sessions on the sidelines of the launch workshop and recalled during the supervision mission on the sidelines of the 1st ToT workshop. Despite this, the mechanism remains largely unknown or unused at the national level.

In fact, the absence of officially reported complaints does not reflect an absence of problems, but rather an unawareness of an accessible channel through which they can be expressed. This lack of awareness limits the project's capacity to identify and resolve potential problems upstream, to strengthen community trust, and to ensure equitable consideration of the concerns, particularly those of vulnerable groups (women, youth, etc.).

IV.4.16. Risks

Within the project document, Table 32: "*Main financial and project risks and mitigation measures*" presents the main risks likely to jeopardize the project implementation as well as potential mitigation measures. The Table below presents only the risks that have actually materialized and analyses the reasons that caused them:

Table 14. Analysis of the reasons for the occurrence of some risks identified at the project design.

Risks anticipated by the project document	Analysis of the reasons behind the occurrence of some risks identified at the project design
Multiple unstable currencies, exchange rate fluctuations	Financial regulations in Mali delayed the opening of a foreign currency account for the REE. Furthermore, all countries use their local currencies, with the exception of Liberia, which opened a USD account given the high fluctuation of the local currency.
Weak collaboration between competent technical institutions at the national level	The low level of commitment of some NEEs has prevented the development of collaborations with competent technical institutions at national level.
NEEs lack Staff and cannot meet needs	Formally, all countries have established their NEEs and mobilized the necessary Staff. In practice, several indications suggest that the Staff of several NEEs are not fully dedicated to the project.
Delays in disbursements	A delay in disbursement due to: ▪ Weak planning capacity of some NEEs; ▪ Delay in obtaining NOs due to administrative burdens and the inability of NEEs to comply with the requirements ▪ Absence of REE support.
The different implementation pace of each country may delay the overall project implementation and affect regional activities.	A differentiated implementation pace between the countries does exist, even though it is not the main factor that delayed the project implementation and affected regional activities; rather, the REE's weak capacity to drive regional facilitation is the primary cause.
Delays in the implementation of project activities.	Significant delays due to various reasons explained in this report.

Risks anticipated by the project document	Analysis of the reasons behind the occurrence of some risks identified at the project design
Delays in the recruitment or appointment of key project Staff.	Significant delays in some countries, sometimes with the appointment of Staff not dedicated to the project.
Project financial management	Project financial management is based on financing agreements signed between the OSS and the EEs. Some NEEs with weak financial planning capacity, as well as the REE, have only benefited from limited disbursements.
Insufficient M&E and delays in results delivery	Absence of an operational M&E system.

By contrast, two major risks for the RICOWAS project, identified during this MTE, had not been anticipated, namely: (i) deficient regional coordination and facilitation, and (ii) weak planning and implementation capacity in some countries.

These risks have been comprehensively analyzed during this MTE, and specific recommendations will be proposed to mitigate them.

IV.5. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability of the results is analyzed through four types of risks relating to the existence of financial, institutional, socio-economic, and environmental mechanisms likely to guarantee the continuation of the RICOWAS project achievements.

IV.5.1. Financial risks

Initiatives for public-private partnerships (PPPs)

In accordance with the project document, PPP development was to begin with preparatory work at the regional level, which would serve as a basis for the countries to initiate their own national processes. Nevertheless, with the delay of this dynamic at the regional level, some countries have had to engage their processes autonomously. At this stage, three countries (Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria) have already formalized 9 PPPs within the framework of the RICOWAS project. As for the other countries, they are at different levels of progress, with some still in the preparatory phase. This situation reflects a significant delay, given that the RICOWAS project results framework provides for at least 26 new PPP agreements (2 per country) to be concluded and operational.

Insufficient framework conditions for PPP development

The establishment of PPPs relies on a series of preparatory activities beginning with the strengthening of local dynamics and support for the creation or structuring of agricultural associations and cooperatives. This socio-institutional step aims to establish an overall vision of field needs and priorities in order to appropriately guide the design and establishment of PPPs. Within the project results framework, an entire Outcome (2.2) and several outputs are planned to support PPP establishment. The MTE highlighted the following results:

- Output 3.2.1: Strategic partnerships have not been initiated;
- Output 2.1.1: Support to producers is still limited. Indeed, equipment distribution is limited to a single package compared to seven planned, while the creation of compost units remains low (25 out of 100 planned).

Need to catalyze financing and marketing solutions

The most immediate financial risk for rice farmers participating in SRI under the RICOWAS project is that the additional investments required — including time, labor-intensive practices, and, in some cases, specific inputs — may not generate sufficient returns to offset the costs incurred. This risk is significant without affordable access to small-scale mechanization to reduce the workload, combined with strengthened commercial outlets enabling quality SRI production to be valorized. If the project ends without having sustained credit access circuits, equipment access, and remunerative markets, rice farmers could find themselves with improved practices but without the cash flow needed to maintain them. They will face an economic dilemma that could keep them from adopting the SRI approach. Thus, the long-term financial viability of their SRI adoption depends as much on the project's own financing flows as on its capacity to catalyze sustainable financing and marketing solutions within the local agricultural ecosystem.

IV.5.2. Socio-economic risks

The consultation highlighted the satisfactory commitment of national stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of achievements (8 out of 10 countries). Unfortunately, this commitment does not translate concretely in the field, as the consultation highlighted several shortcomings:

- The development of post-harvest components (processing, marketing) is weak or at its early stages almost everywhere, with the exception of a few countries such as Guinea and Nigeria;
- The consolidation of POs and cooperatives remains a lagging workstream in the majority of countries:
 - Creation of Farmer Organizations (FOs): only 13 new FOs have been created whereas 39 (3 per country) were planned at mid-term;
 - No FO created within the RICOWAS project framework has been able to access credit facilities, whereas at mid-term these FOs were expected to access at least 2 credits per country.

Taking all these considerations into account, it must be acknowledged that the socio-economic risks, primarily linked to the fragility of producer structuring and the still-limited strengthening of the value chain, are significant for the sustainability of the RICOWAS project.

IV.5.3. Risks related to the institutional framework and governance

NEE consultations indicate an 8/10 score to the institutional sustainability of the project benefits from a generally favorable foundation in most countries, where the national framework was deemed capable of ensuring the sustainability of the RICOWAS project

achievements. However, this positive assessment must be nuanced in light of the constraints observed at mid-term. The main institutional challenge lies in the transition of NPMUs toward permanent entities and/or mechanisms within national administrations and institutions (extension services, research, sectoral coordination structures, etc.). If this transition is not anticipated and accompanied, there is a risk that achievements will remain strongly linked to project teams, and that the capacities developed (planning, coordination, monitoring, technical facilitation) will progressively vanish after the end of the RICOWAS project financial and technical support.

At the regional level, the governance risk is even more significant. Indeed, the operationalization difficulties and still-limited capacities of the REE to fully play its regional coordination and capitalization role constitute an additional risk, compromising the synergy of efforts and the creation of a sustainable regional ecosystem around SRI.

IV.5.4. Environmental risks

The implementation of SRI within the RICOWAS project presents a positive environmental profile, focused on more efficient water use and the promotion of organic soil fertility. Although the RICOWAS project considers SRI and CRRP as broadly ecological, sustainable, and climate-change-resilient approaches, some environmental risks could compromise their sustainability if not managed and anticipated:

- A first risk concerns water management: Although SRI advocates intermittent irrigation, large-scale adoption without sufficient technical mastery could, in some complex hydrological contexts, disturb groundwater regimes or worsen downstream usage conflicts, particularly during drought periods.
- A second risk concerns the intensification of monoculture. Indeed, the increase in SRI rice productivity and profitability could incentivize an expansion of cultivated areas at the expense of sensitive ecosystems (wetlands, riparian forests), if not governed by appropriate spatial planning. Moreover, increased dependence on monoculture, even under an improved system, could reduce cultivated biodiversity and the agronomic resilience of farms against new pests and diseases.
- Finally, the risk of inappropriate input use persists. If access to mineral fertilizers became easier without continuous technical support, a shift toward these inputs at the expense of organic matter could be observed, compromising long-term soil health.

To anticipate these potential risks, the project provides for environmental and social management measures including farmer awareness-raising and training on good agricultural practices, promotion of organic amendments, prevention of clearing of natural areas, and integration of environmental monitoring into the M&E framework.

Although no incidents have been reported, active vigilance and continuous training on these aspects are necessary for SRI to fully realize its potential as a production system that is both productive and ecologically sustainable.

V. TARGETED PROJECT ADJUSTMENT

The RICOWAS project is particularly ambitious. Moreover, given its multi-level architecture and its decentralized implementation across three levels, regional, national, and local, it inherently presents difficulties to carry out.

V.1. ISSUES AND APPROACH

There is a consensus regarding the findings of this MTE, namely that the review reveals limited progress at the halfway stage, as well as execution difficulties, which have translated into a gap between planned targets and achievements.

As for the post-MTE phase, it presents challenges of different natures:

- By reaching its cruising speed in terms of execution, to what extent will the RICOWAS project objective be satisfactorily achieved by the end of the project?
- Will management, coordination, and communication problems all be resolved in an appropriate and viable manner?
- Will regional coordination and facilitation be able to play their central role in the project execution through a significant contribution from the OSS and a more dynamic REE?
- Will the low level of commitment of some countries be boosted?
- Will the financial, socio-economic, and institutional risks facing project sustainability be mitigated?

The approach to be adopted for the post-MTE period has been the subject of extensive consultation with partners. Two options have been the focus of discussions:

- **Option (1):** Proceed with a targeted adjustment at the Output 1.1.1 level while adopting a pragmatic approach aimed at: i- strengthening and improving governance quality, ii- establishing a dynamic and facilitation at the regional level, iii- operationalizing M&E and capitalization, and iv- boosting the pace of execution at both national and regional levels.
- **Option (2):** Proceed with a comprehensive revision of the activity framework: i- establish a hierarchy of priorities, ii- avoid activities presenting a high level of difficulty, iii- streamline some activities, and iv- strengthen direct support to rice farmers. Needless to say, the results framework will be revised accordingly.

Following consultations with the partners, particularly with the OSS, Option (1) was adopted.

V.2. RATIONALE FOR THE ADJUSTMENT

Output 1.1.1 relating to the integration of the CC dimension into rice strategic documents, whose regional added value as initially formulated has become less decisive in light of initiatives already undertaken by other partners. Combined with the urgent priorities of the remaining phase (CRRP scaling up, adoption quality, coordination, and capitalization), an adjustment is largely justified by:

1. **Existence of parallel initiatives:** Several countries and partners (notably national and regional programs, and actors such as CORAF/WE CARD in its guidance role) are already carrying out actions to integrate CC into agricultural strategies, including rice strategies, reducing the specific added value of the RICOWAS project on this segment.
2. **Priority to the operational impact of CRRP:** The remaining phase must focus on the levers that directly determine sustainable CRRP adoption (cascade training, field support, technical tools, capitalization, economic mechanisms), in order to increase the effect on producers and sustainability.
3. **New regional milestones and valorization opportunities:** The regional SRI Forum held in Bamako (May 2025) produced a short/medium/long-term roadmap, to which RICOWAS already contributes. Among the identified needs are the measurement and quantification of impacts that are still insufficiently documented (e.g. water, GHG). In the same spirit, the opportunity to integrate the ABM/CAB approach (Adaptation Benefits Mechanism / Certified Adaptation Benefits) into the sustainability and value chain strategy constitutes an innovation consistent with the project's objectives.

V.3. PROPOSED CHANGE

The proposed change concerns only a partial replacement of Output 1.1.1 and a budget Reallocation. This Output 1.1.1, with a total budget of USD 300,000.00, will be distributed between USD 170,000.00 for the regional level and USD 130,000.00 for the national level (USD 10,000.00 per country), as follows:

(A) Replacement of Activity 1.1.1.1 by an ABM/CAB activity

- **Activity replaced:** 1.1.1.1 Analysis of CC impacts on rice production in West Africa;
- **New activity proposed:** Pilot deployment of the ABM/CAB approach for the certification and valorization of CRRP adaptation benefits in the rice value chain;
- **Allocated budget:** USD 62,000.

Objective

Implement, on a pilot basis, the ABM/CAB approach in order to design, monitor, validate, and certify the adaptation benefits generated by the CRRP interventions, and to strengthen their visibility, reporting credibility, and sustainability potential (notably through the PPP/value chain strategy).

Activity description

This activity involves adapting and integrating the ABM methodological framework into the RICOWAS project in order to systematically document CRRP-related adaptation results (adaptation benefits, co-benefits, links with SDGs), and to produce CABs in a limited number of pilot countries/sites. It includes the development of an "ABM-compatible" theory of change, the selection of indicators and evidence, the organization of the

validation/verification process, and the production of deliverables usable for reporting, communication, and partnership mobilization.

(B) Reallocation of the budget for Activities 1.1.1.2 / 1.1.1.3 / 1.1.1.4 toward CRRP scaling up

Budget to be reallocated: USD 140,000:

- **USD 123,000** to Output 1.2.3 / Activity 1.2.3.1, SRI/CRRP Training-of-Trainers (ToT), regional component;
- **USD 17,000** to ensure coordination of activities at the regional level.

Rationale: Training-of-Trainers (ToT) is a proven tool that is in high demand among countries seeking to accelerate the CRRP scaling up. Their strengthening directly addresses the operational needs identified at mid-term, consolidating a cascade dissemination system (master trainers → national trainers → producers) that is indispensable for improving the quality of field adoption. Furthermore, the budget initially planned for ToTs has proven insufficient in view of the scale of needs and the logistical requirements associated with organizing regional workshops. Finally, these regional events offer an opportunity for resource optimization: they are systematically used to additionally address other priority themes (M&E, technical innovations, gender, capitalization), which enhances their performance and fully justifies the proposed additional allocation.

(C) Reallocation of the budget for Activity 1.1.1.5 (per country) toward national ToT and RTIG

Budget: USD 10,000.00 per country (initially attached to Activity 1.1.1.5)

New distribution proposed (per country):

- **USD 6,000 to be allocated to Activity 1.2.3.1 — ToT (national level).** This allocation aims to strengthen countries' capacity to organize and deliver ToT at the national level, complementing regional workshops. It will notably cover essential costs such as trainer mobilization, session logistics, adaptation of the support materials to the national context, and facilitation of sessions closer to intervention areas. This reallocation responds to a clearly identified operational need: accelerating the cascade dissemination of CRRP skills (ToT → trainers → producers) and improving the quality of field adoption, a determining condition for achieving sustainable gains.
- **USD 4,000.00 to be allocated to Activity 1.2.1.2 RTIG on CRRP/SRI work.** This allocation aims to consolidate and finalize the technical work already undertaken by RTIG members, with Cornell facilitation. The budget initially planned for this activity appears largely underestimated in view of expectations: harmonization of CRRP/SRI good practices, technical support to countries, consolidation of innovations, and formulation of operational recommendations. The proposed strengthening will support the continuity of the group's work (technical meetings, deliverable production, coordination, and exchanges), improve the quality of technical outputs, and strengthen inter-country harmonization. In practice, this represents a strategic investment: a better-supported RTIG contributes to reducing dispersed approaches, securing technical coherence, and accelerating CRRP scaling up in a structured manner.

VI. PROJECT RATING

A project rating, based on expert judgement, is proposed to allow an assessment, on a scale of 100, of the degree of project progress at mid-term. This rating is structured as follows:

- i. The relevance of the project strategy is rated out of 20 points;
- ii. Progress toward achieving the results out of 20 points;
- iii. Implementation quality out of 40 points;
- iv. Sustainability of the interventions out of 20 points.

As for the assessment criteria, they are defined based on:

- The level of progress observed for each activity and the manner of its implementation;
- Stakeholder feedback, notably responses to NEEs and rice farmer questionnaires;
- Data limitations linked to the absence of a fully operational M&E system.

Besides these technical criteria, the challenges faced and the delays experienced was also considered.

The table below presents the project rating:

Table 15. Project rating

Area	Score	Assessment elements
Project strategy	17/20	The project design is relevant in more ways than one. The CRRP/SRI approach addresses real resilience and productivity challenges at the country level in the region, while local acceptability is confirmed. The multi-level architecture and the decentralized implementation have enabled strong coherence with regional development and food security policies and strategies, as well as an effective contribution to national frameworks. However, this complex organization has also generated some difficulties, notably differentiated ownership across countries and standardized national budgets that are sometimes poorly adapted to local specificities.
Progress toward achieving the Results	09/20	At mid-term, the majority of indicators remain below intermediate targets. Technical progress exists where field activities are active (CRRP/SRI adoption, cascade training, farmer field schools, demonstration plots). However, the structuring outcomes (regional coordination, M&E, communication/knowledge management, partnerships/value chain) are insufficiently advanced to generate the expected scaling effect.
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION		
Management methods	2/5	The project has a clearly defined formal management framework. However, management was laborious, notably due to insufficiently operational regional steering and communication difficulties, particularly between the REE, the OSS, and Cornell University. The OSS assumption

Area	Score	Assessment elements
		of some functions falling under the REE highlights a major institutional dysfunction.
Work planning	3/5	Planning tools (AWPB and PP) are available and can be adjusted during the year, however, their application remains differentiated according to country commitment and capacities. Indeed, planning capacities within some NPMUs/NEEs do not always allow annual programming to be transformed into a realistic operational sequencing (delay in the preparation of files and the effective launch of procurement procedures). Furthermore, the expected support from the REE has not been sufficiently structured and regular which exacerbated the situation at the national level.
M&E system	2/5	The M&E system is not yet operational. Data are incomplete and collected on an ad hoc basis, which limits their use for project steering and performance assessment.
Stakeholder commitment	3/5	Stakeholder commitment remains uneven: while some countries are active, others remain less engaged. At the regional level, REE mobilization remains weak, while Cornell University's technical support remains insufficiently valorized. Furthermore, claims regarding performance incentives have occasionally hindered the project's momentum; project measures likely to boost Staff motivation should be activated.
Reporting	2/5	Reporting is irregular and incomplete. At mid-term, only 5 M&E reports have been submitted out of 26 expected, and no consolidated report at the regional level has been produced, which limits accountability and overall project visibility.
Communication	2/5	Internal communication is irregular and external communication remains insufficiently structured. Structuring tools (strategies, regional hub, web portal) are not yet functional, and the initiatives observed remain ad hoc and isolated.
Lessons learned, knowledge management, and innovation	3/5	Interesting local innovations have been developed, particularly in terms of compost, biochar, and lightweight equipment. However, capitalization and mutualization remain limited. Knowledge management remains weak, and the project has not yet fully exploited its regional dissemination potential.
Gender and grievance mechanism	4/5	The integration of the gender dimension is broadly positive at the local level, although obstacles persist, notably in terms of access to resources. As for the

Area	Score	Assessment elements
		grievance mechanism, it remains little known, thereby limiting its potential use by stakeholders.
Implementation sub-total	21/40	
SUSTAINABILITY		
Financial risks	2/5	The financial sustainability of the project presents a high-risk level. PPP mechanisms remain underdeveloped and the value chain remains insufficiently structured. Support for cooperatives and agricultural associations' access to credit facilities has not yet been initiated.
Socio-economic risks	2/5	Socio-economic risks are significant, insofar as sustainability mechanisms (producer Organizations, post-harvest components, services) are not yet fully activated. These risks are however reducible if the remaining period is better structured and oriented toward the operationalization of economic levers.
Risks related to the institutional framework and governance	2/5	National foundations are broadly favorable in several countries, but there is a risk of capacity erosion after the project if a transition toward permanent arrangements is not anticipated. At the regional level, the weakness of coordination and capitalization represents a major risk for the inter-country CRRP ecosystem.
Environmental risks	5/5	Environmental risks are broadly low. SRI contributes positively to water use efficiency and the improvement of organic soil fertility, while the potential risks related to monoculture or water management remain limited.
Sustainability sub-total	11/20	
TOTAL SCORE	58/100	

With a total score of 58/100, the RICOWAS project presents average performance with some promising prospects for improvement. This score reflects a situation where:

- The project strategy is solid (CRRP/SRI relevance, national and local acceptability, and general coherence), which justifies a good score on this component;
- Progress toward the results remains insufficient at mid-term insofar as the degree of indicator achievement is low. In practice, the structuring components (regional coordination, M&E, communication/partnerships/value chain) are behind schedule and limit the scaling effect;
- Implementation is hampered by delays and constraints, still barely operational regional governance, and variable capacities across countries (planning, operational execution, reporting);

- Sustainability is still "unsecured" insofar as several financial, socio-economic, and institutional levers are still partially activated and need to be structured during the remaining period.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of this MTE of the RICOWAS project are summarized below:

Fruitful consultation and collaboration with all partners

The MTE was carried out thanks to a generally satisfactory collaboration with the key stakeholders. The OSS facilitated access to available information and responded to requests for further details, which enabled the main findings to be documented. The REE demonstrated a good spirit of collaboration. Cornell University provided useful technical inputs and relevant insights for the next stages. The contribution of the NEEs was more variable: some national entities provided useful and relevant inputs and insights, whilst others were less active.

Lack of data, notably disaggregated, at the country and activity level

Given that no operational M&E system exists to date, the OSS, based on country reports, made available to us the mid-term indicator values (February 2025) that needed to be verified, completed, and adjusted. As for the responses to the questionnaires (NEEs and rice farmers), they are sometimes superficial, while the sampling of rice farmers was not properly conducted, affecting the representativeness and quality of the data.

Failing regional coordination and facilitation

The most determining finding at mid-term is the difficulty in operationalizing the REE and, consequently, the weakness of regional coordination and facilitation. This situation has affected inter-country facilitation, harmonization of the approaches, reporting consolidation, and the launch and conduct of structuring regional activities (communication, knowledge management, partnerships, M&E).

Low commitment of some countries

Despite the fact that all countries signed commitments, implementation at the national level has been characterized by contrasting dynamics. Indeed, this MTE noted a low level of engagement from some countries, resulting notably in delays in setting up the NPMU and assigning Staff fully dedicated to the RICOWAS project. This has led to poorly functional arrangements.

Management, execution, and communication problems

While the formal management and control frameworks are clearly defined, their operational implementation proves laborious. Indeed, the REE and NEEs lack the necessary technical capacity to comply with the contractual requirements, which involve high standards of performance (NO request, AWPB, PP, e.g.).

As for internal communication, it is considered irregular and insufficiently structured, particularly at the regional level (OSS-REE-NEE-Cornell interfaces). External communication and knowledge management remain far behind, notably due to the absence of structuring tools (strategies, portal, knowledge products), which limits visibility, capitalization, and regional leverage.

Very average performance in terms of progress toward achieving the results

The majority of the results framework indicators at mid-term have not been achieved, reflecting a significant gap between initial planning and actual execution capacity during the first two years of the project. However, this MTE also highlighted some technical progress at the local level: the start of CRRP scaling up and an increase in yields. As for cascade training and demonstration arrangements, they constitute important achievements that should be valorized.

Non-operational M&E system

The M&E system defined in the project document is not yet operational, which hinders the regular monitoring of indicators and informed decision-making. Despite the OSS initiatives to ensure part of the M&E, no project database disaggregated by country and activity currently exists.

Few innovations remain under-leveraged

The project has fostered the emergence of technical and organizational innovations (adaptive agronomic practices, lightweight tools, organic inputs, participatory dissemination). These innovations constitute a relevant reservoir for strengthening CRRP. However, they remain

insufficiently documented, standardized, and mutualized, which prevents their large-scale replication and limits inter-country learning.

Sustainability confronted with some risks

At mid-term, the RICOWAS project is exposed to the following risks:

- **Financial:** Still-weak value chain structuring with a few barely operational PPPs and non-existent credit access for farmer Organizations;
- **Socio-economic:** Weak structuring of producers and post-harvest components (processing, marketing) in most countries;
- **Institutional and governance:** An uncertain transition of NPMUs toward permanent institutional frameworks coupled with persistent weaknesses in regional coordination.

These risks would however be potentially reducible if the remaining phase is better steered, more oriented toward structuring activities, and supported by strengthened regional governance.

Necessity of a targeted readjustment of the RICOWAS project

The post-MTE phase, presents challenges of different natures, including notably regional coordination and facilitation, the low level of commitment of some countries, and the mitigation of risks facing project sustainability. The success of this post-MTE phase will depend notably on strengthening governance and steering, operationalizing M&E, and relaunching "multiplier" functions (communication, knowledge management, partnerships), in order to translate local achievements into sustainable and replicable regional outcomes.

To this end, it is proposed to proceed with a targeted adjustment at the Output 1.1.1 level while adopting a pragmatic approach aimed at:

- i- Strengthening and improving governance quality;
- ii- Establishing a dynamic and facilitation at the regional level;
- iii- Operationalizing M&E and knowledge capitalization; and
- iv- Boosting the pace of execution at both national and regional levels.

The recommendations that follow have been formulated with a view to enabling the RICOWAS project to implement this targeted adjustment in order to achieve the expected objectives by the end of the project.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are designed to improve the management of the RICOWAS project, support the achievement of its objectives, and ensure the sustainability of its results. They are:

- Grounded in the findings, results, and conclusions of the MTE;
- Clear, concise, constructive, and relevant to the remainder of the project;
- Realistic, directly actionable, and results-oriented.

These recommendations also aim to address the main causes of the delays identified at the mid-term stage, while consolidating the technical achievements of the CRRP on the ground:

- Implementation delays and constraints;
- Weak operationalization of the REE and the deficit in coordination and regional facilitation;
- Low commitment from some countries;
- Monitoring & Evaluation deficits and delays in 'multiplier' functions (communication, knowledge capitalization, partnerships).

These recommendations are grouped into three complementary categories, plus one cross-cutting recommendation.

Category 1 — Governance and inter-country coordination

Recommendation 1. Restructure the regional execution arrangement, reinforce staffing and ensure a targeted technical support

The most critical factor behind the observed delays is the difficulty in operationalizing the Regional Executing Entity (REE), which has weakened regional coordination, inter-country facilitation, and the timely delivery of key regional outputs. To address this, it is recommended to formally restructure the regional execution arrangement by hosting the physical and operational functions of the REE directly within the OSS framework. This hosting arrangement would provide greater operational stability, closer administrative support, improved follow-up, and stronger alignment between regional execution needs and OSS oversight responsibilities.

Within this revised arrangement, the REE would remain the regional operational platform of the project, but its day-to-day functioning would be strengthened through a clearer institutional set-up, dedicated staff, and targeted technical expertise.

Dr. Karim Traoré, the regional project coordinator should maintain its full functions, with a reinforced emphasis on institutional mobilization and strategic facilitation, including relations with CORAF/WE CARD, ministries, regional organizations, technical and financial partners, and other relevant stakeholders. This would help consolidate regional anchoring and support the scale-up of the CRRP across the 13 countries. He will also supervise the implementation of activities related to the upgrading of the Regional Center of Specialization on Rice. Dr. Traoré will be seconded with a permanent, full-time Technical Assistant should be recruited to support and absorb daily administrative, coordination, and management tasks.

Given the end of the institutional contract with Cornell University, it is strongly recommended to re-engage Dr. Erika Styger and Mr. John Davis through clearly defined regional consulting contracts, structured around specific deliverables, timelines, and accountability mechanisms. Their role would be to serve as a core technical pillar within the regional operation, under the REE framework, providing direct support to restore technical momentum and strengthen regional coherence. Their expanded mandate should cover inter-country technical coordination, harmonization of CRRP/SRI approaches, acceleration of key regional functions, M&E support, capitalization of results, development of technical content, support to Training

of Trainers programs, and consolidated regional reporting.

This arrangement should be complemented by direct support from OSS through the activation of a Direct Project Services (DPS) mechanism approved by the Adaptation Fund. Under this mechanism, OSS, as the implementing entity, would be authorized to provide targeted procurement, logistics, and technical execution support to the REE. In practice, OSS could directly handle complex or burdensome procurement and logistics processes on behalf of the REE, including the organization of regional events, recruitment of international consultants, contracting of regional technical services, and other targeted regional activities. This would help reduce operational bottlenecks, accelerate implementation, ensure compliance with funder requirements, and allow the REE to focus more effectively on strategic coordination, technical oversight, and support to national executing entities.

Summary Table (R1)

Element	Content
Objective	Strengthen regional coordination, ensure the effective operationalization of the REE, restore technical momentum, and consolidate support to the 13 countries.
Implementation modalities	▪ Formally host the physical and operational functions of the REE within the OSS framework to ensure operational stability and closer administrative support; ▪ Clarify roles and responsibilities: ○ Dr. Karim Traoré, Regional Coordinator: institutional mobilization, partnerships, strategic support, and implementation of activities related to the upgrading of the Regional Center of Specialization on Rice (Bamako); ○ Technical Assistant: daily administrative, coordination, and management support; ○ Dr. Erika Styger and John Davis: support regional and cross-country coordination; provide regional technical support, monitoring and evaluation, and overall project reporting. ▪ Recruit a permanent, full-time Technical Assistant to support Dr. Karim Traoré and strengthen the day-to-day functioning of the REE. ▪ Re-engage Dr. Erika Styger and Mr. John Davis through clearly defined regional consulting contracts with specific deliverables, timelines, and accountability mechanisms. ▪ Establish regular REE working routines, including coordination meetings, country follow-up sessions, technical planning, and reporting cycles. ▪ Activate a DPS mechanism by requesting authorization from the Adaptation Fund, allowing OSS to provide targeted procurement, logistics, and technical execution support on behalf of the REE.
Deliverables	▪ Formal hosting arrangement for REE operations within OSS. ▪ Updated ToRs and mandates for the REE team, Technical Assistant, Dr. Erika Styger, and Mr. John Davis.

Element	Content
	▪ Recruitment of a full-time Technical Assistant. ▪ Signed regional consulting contracts with clear deliverables and timelines. ▪ Quarterly regional work plan and catch-up plan. ▪ Inter-country technical coordination sessions. ▪ M&E, capitalization, ToT, and regional reporting products. ▪ DPS request submitted to the Adaptation Fund and, once approved, operational DPS procedures established.
Responsible parties	▪ OSS: hosting arrangement, contractual management, DPS request to the Adaptation Fund, procurement/logistics support, and overall oversight. ▪ REE: operational management, regional coordination, country follow-up, and implementation tracking. ▪ Dr. Karim Traoré: institutional partner mobilization and strategic facilitation. Supervising the implementation of activities related to the upgrading of the Regional Center of Specialization on Rice. ▪ Technical Assistant: daily administrative, coordination, and management support to Dr. Karim Traoré. ▪ Dr. Erika Styger and Mr. John Davis: Regional and inter-country technical coordination, harmonization, technical content, M&E/capitalization support, ToT support, and regional deliverables.
Success indicators	▪ REE physically and operationally hosted within OSS. ▪ Full-time Technical Assistant recruited and operational. ▪ Dr. Erika Styger and Mr. John Davis re-engaged with deliverable-based contracts. ▪ Regular regional coordination routines established. ▪ Regional technical deliverables relaunched and delivered on schedule. ▪ Improved inter-country technical support and harmonization. ▪ DPS mechanism approved and used to accelerate procurement, logistics, and regional implementation.

Recommendation 2. Establish streamlined and accountable regional steering mechanism

In order to strengthen regional coordination, enable the REE to fulfil its operational role, and consolidate support to the 13 countries, it is necessary to put in place a streamlined and accountable regional steering mechanism.

Summary Table (R2)

Element	Content
Objective	Establish streamlined and accountable regional steering to accelerate decision-making and strengthen effectiveness and efficiency, reflected in regular meetings, tracked decisions, and systematic action follow-up.
Implementation modalities	▪ Monthly meeting: REE and 13 NEEs; ▪ Quarterly meeting: the OSS, REE ▪ Decision-oriented minutes + systematic action tracker.
Deliverables	Decision-oriented minutes; action tracker (responsible/deadline/status).

Element	Content
Responsible parties	REE and NEEs (participation).
Success indicators	Actions tracked and closed; bottlenecks addressed in a timely manner.

Recommendation 3. Deploy a “24-Month” regional roadmap with quarterly milestones and dependencies

A roadmap tracked quarterly is the most appropriate tool for consolidating regional execution and securing country-level implementation.

Summary Table (R3)

Element	Content
Objective	Synchronize implementation and manage regional/national dependencies.
Implementation modalities	Regional roadmap (milestones by quarter, regional deliverables, country support, agricultural calendar).
Deliverables	Validated 24-month roadmap + quarterly review.
Responsible parties	The OSS (oversight), REE (coordination, technical coherence, mobilization/partnerships).
Success indicators	Milestones achieved; increased coherence across the countries.

Recommendation 4. Consolidate commitment at the national level

Although all countries have signed Agreements, this MTE has observed a low level of commitment from some countries.

Summary Table (R4)

Element	Content
Objective	Consolidate country commitment by ensuring the functionality of national implementation structures.
Implementation modalities	▪ Each country has established its PMU as a condition for the entry into force of the financing agreement. At this level, each country must demonstrate that Staff are fully dedicated to the RICOWAS project; ▪ Ensure operational functionality by: (i) submitting all required prior reports, (ii) participating in scheduled meetings, and (iii) developing comprehensive and ambitious AWPBs within required deadlines; ▪ Each country should consult with national procurement services to simplify administrative procedures, particularly in terms of timelines; ▪ Shift towards annual planning that reflects progress achieved and prioritizes specific activities addressing the priority needs of rice farmers.
Responsible parties	REE, NEEs.
Success indicators	Prior reports submitted / participation in scheduled meetings / AWPBs submitted on time / reduced procurement timelines.

Category 2 — Execution and Steering (M&E, Planning, Reporting)

Recommendation 5. Operationalize a functional Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) System

The short-term objective is to operationalize a simple, harmonized, and decision-ready M&E system. This 'minimum viable M&E system' must be able to produce, each quarter, reliable, comparable, and disaggregated data (by sex/age), and feed a management dashboard to rapidly correct implementation gaps.

Summary Table (R5)

Element	Content
Objective	Make the M&E system operational and enable data-driven management based on reliable, comparable, and disaggregated data.
Implementation modalities	- Finalize harmonized indicator definitions; - Deploy standardized French/English templates (collection, training, adoption, gender, activities); - Ensure mandatory sex/age disaggregation; - Establish a tracking mechanism for sites/FFS/plots and beneficiaries; - Produce a quarterly dashboard and hold a performance review.
Deliverables	M&E kit (definitions + templates + simple procedures) + quarterly dashboard + consolidated minimum database.
Responsible parties	REE (methodological support/quality control, consolidation); NEEs (data collection).
Success indicators	Quarterly dashboard produced on a fixed date; country-consolidated data used for corrective decisions (actions, responsible parties, deadlines).

Recommendation 6. Reduce the processing time for no-objection requests

Obtaining a No-Objection Request is a two-sided issue:

- On one hand, the REE and national partners (9 out of 11 countries) identify it as one of the major causes of delays in the project implementation;
- On the other hand, the analysis shows it is an essential tool for effective project management.

Summary Table (R6)

Element	Content
Objective	Address some implementation delays, reduce administrative lead times, and streamline the NO request process by providing support to ensure its technical content and compliance.
Implementation modalities	- The RICOWAS project team, which is part of the OSS, must be fully dedicated to this project, in order to address delays and accelerate implementation; - Assign a dedicated resource person for processing NO requests, so as to reduce timelines; - Provide the countries with a toolkit containing already-validated NO requests (in

Element	Content
	French and English). Where activities are identical, countries may draw inspiration from these validated No requests. ▪ Dr. Erika Styger and John Davis, in their expanded role as inter-country technical coordinators, will support and guide NEEs in drafting NO requests by providing targeted technical assistance: - Guide and support NEEs in the complete structuring of proposals; - Review and optimize the timeline and phasing of activities to ensure the schedule is coherent and executable; - Provide priority support to NEEs with recurring difficulties in document submission.
Responsible parties	The OSS (NO processing), REE (Dr. Erika Styger & John Davis) (country support, technical review), NEEs (submission).
Success indicators	Reduction in rejections/returns; reduced timelines.

Category 3 — CRRP scale up, sustainability, and visibility

The enabling conditions for PPP development have not yet been created (strengthening local dynamics and support for the creation or structuring of agricultural associations and cooperatives). Similarly, the project has not yet succeeded in catalyzing access to credit facilities, equipment, and remunerative markets. This represents both a financial and a socio-economic risk for the CRRP scale-up.

Recommendation 7. Ensure the Relaunch of PPPs and facilitate access to credit facilities in order to secure financial and socio-economic sustainability

Summary Table (R7)

Element	Content
Objective	Ensure financial and socio-economic sustainability for scaling up the CRRP by strengthening the value chain through the operationalization of PPPs and the development of credit access mechanisms.
Implementation modalities	Return to the RICOWAS project activity framework and prioritize activities that contribute to this objective; ▪ Establish and operationalize PPPs, providing them with the necessary equipment; ▪ Support the creation of POs/cooperatives: legal status/organization; ▪ Accompany POs/cooperatives in developing a simplified business plan, credit file, and/or grant application; ▪ Formalize agreements with MFIs/banks/credit facilities per country.
Responsible parties	NEEs (country-level management), REE (coordination and technical support), private/financial partners (implementation).

Recommendation 8. Establish a regular and effective communication dynamic

Communication within the RICOWAS project remains insufficiently structured, which hampers management and limits the visibility of the results, partner buy-in, and the mobilization of alliances useful for scale-up. It is recommended to adopt a minimal but regular communication system: regular meetings, harmonized messages, a publication calendar, and the use of simple channels (website/portal, social media, short press releases, events). It is also recommended to standardize content (CRRP results, testimonials, demonstrations, innovations) and ensure technical quality.

Summary Table (R8)

Element	Content
Objective	Improve management, coordination, and information flow within the project by establishing a regular and effective communication dynamic, so as to transform local achievements into regional-scale impact.
Implementation modalities	▪ Schedule monthly working meetings between the OSS and the REE to boost regional dynamics; ▪ Schedule quarterly working meetings between the OSS, the REE and the NEEs in order to ensure effectiveness at the national level; ▪ Develop CRRP fact sheets, country case studies, short videos; set up a lightweight portal; organize regional events (capitalization/partnerships); ▪ Learning by doing: organize an annual meeting bringing together all NEEs representatives (2 per country) to exchange on activity progress by country, share lessons and successful experiences, discuss challenges encountered, and learn from others' experience.
Deliverables	▪ Meeting minutes ▪ Operational portal + quarterly content package.
Responsible parties	The OSS/The REE (oversight and technical validation), NEEs (field content).

Recommendation 9. Implement operational knowledge management

Knowledge management is a critical link for transforming local technical achievements into reproducible learnings and regional scale-up. At mid-term, some knowledge exists but remains scattered. It is recommended to structure a lightweight knowledge management system, oriented towards the production of standardized outputs and their dissemination: CRRP/SRI technical factsheets, country case studies, lessons learned, and documentation of innovations (water management, tools, compost/biochar/biopesticides). The challenge is to build a simple inventory, standardize formats, and organize inter-country knowledge sharing.

Summary Table (R9)

Element	Content
Objective	Upgrade knowledge management and strengthen capacity for capitalization and dissemination of CRRP knowledge to accelerate replication and scale-up
Implementation modalities	▪ Define a list of minimum products to be produced by country and regionally (factsheets, case studies, lessons);

Element	Content
	▪ Create a digital library (portal or structured folder); ▪ Organize a quarterly KM review (content selection, validation, dissemination); ▪ Produce one case study per priority country per year; ▪ Systematically document innovations and conditions of success/failure.
Deliverables	KM catalogue; FR/EN templates; library/portal; quarterly product package; annual regional capitalization note.
Responsible parties	REE (coordination, technical validation, content structuring), the OSS (support), NEEs (content production).

Recommendation 10. Bring innovation and motivation into the project

Bringing innovation to the project would add creativity and novelty likely to boost its performance at country level. A reasonable degree of flexibility would allow such innovations to be rewarded within the framework of the logistical and other support provided to beneficiaries under the project.

Summary Table (R10)

Element	Content
Objective	Encourage innovative actions that will strengthen social inclusion, gender equity, and youth commitment, and motivate implementation at national and regional levels.
Implementation modalities	▪ Create a "Young Rice Farmer Innovation Award" and a "Women Rice Farmer Innovation Award" in each country; ▪ Organize an annual competition per country to reward innovative young people and women, with grants in the form of agricultural equipment or technical services; ▪ Create a "Young & Sustainable" Certification rewarding young farmers who adopt sustainable and inclusive practices; ▪ Visibility and Networking: annually reward a woman and a young rice farmer who have made good use of the project's regional hub to promote their best practices and boost the scaling up of a CRRP; ▪ Highlight the co-benefits of scaling up a CRRP as an innovative mitigation measure by calculating the GHG emissions avoided per country during the project period; ▪ Highlight the co-benefits of scaling up a CRRP as an innovative climate change adaptation/resilience measure through the pilot deployment of the ABM/CAB approach for the certification and valorization of the adaptation benefits of the CRRP (newly proposed activity).
Responsible parties	NEEs / OSS / REE.

Cross-Cutting recommendation — project extension

Recommendation 11. Request a 12-month “no-cost extension”.

Given the various delays encountered at the start-up phase, as well as the discrepancies with the agricultural calendar, the RICOWAS project has lost valuable time. Therefore, a 12-month ‘no-cost’ extension is a pragmatic and reasonable measure designed to ensure the achievement of the final objectives. In addition to a regional dynamic that is struggling to take hold, several key sustainability mechanisms (M&E, knowledge management/communication, PPPs/value chain) were activated late and require additional time to produce the expected results. The extension is proposed at no additional cost, as it primarily addresses a need for time, which can be made available through under-spending and the internal reallocations already planned.

Summary Table (R11)

Element	Content
Objective	Secure the achievement of final objectives without additional budget, by compensating for the loss of effective time and aligning implementation with agricultural cycles.
Key arguments	▪ Initial delays having reduced the effective implementation time; ▪ Dependence on the agricultural calendar (adoption/field support/impact measurement); ▪ Delays in structural mechanisms (M&E, capitalization, PPP/value chain) activated late.
Implementation modalities	Official no-cost extension request (12 months) to the AF + revised calendar and updated catch-up plan.
Responsible parties	OSS (submission), REE/NEEs (support).
Success indicators	Extension approved and integrated into the roadmap, with validated milestones for the additional period.

ANNEX 1 - QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS OF THE RICOWAS PROJECT

ANNEX 1.1 - DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE DEDICATED TO THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ENTITY (OSS)

Institution Name	The Sahara and Sahel Observatory
Role	Project Implementation Entity
Contact	

Background

This questionnaire is part of a mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the RICOWAS project that aims to collect the necessary information and data in order to conduct this MTE with all the required data in accordance with the Terms of Reference and international standards.

This questionnaire is structured around four main sections:

- Project strategy;
- Progress towards the achievement of the results;
- Project implementation;
- Sustainability.

All views expressed in this questionnaire will be treated impartially and with full confidentiality.

We invite you to share your assessments and to support your answers as thoroughly as possible. Furthermore, if you feel that a relevant question has not been raised, you are free to include it in the questionnaire.

Project Strategy

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Is the project design and the complementarity/interconnection between the components relevant?				
Do the decision-making processes appropriately consider the different viewpoints of the stakeholders?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve the design and relevance of the project?				

Progress towards the achievement of the results

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Are there any obstacles to the achievement of the project objectives during the remaining duration?	• •	• • • • •	• • •	
Are there positive effects from activities that have already been successful, whose benefits could be	• •	• • • • •	• • •	

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
extended?				
Are there expected impacts and/or unforeseen, negative short and long-term effects?				

Project implementation

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
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Management Methods

Is the collaboration with the Executing Entities at the regional level effective and efficient?				
Is the collaboration with the Executing Entities at the national level effective and efficient?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve collaboration at the project level?				

Work Planning

Are there delays in the implementation of activities in accordance with the planning process? If yes, what are the causes of these delays?				
Do you have any recommendations, including modifications to be made to the project logical framework as a management tool?				

Finance

Does the project have appropriate financial controls, particularly with regard to reporting and planning?				
Do you have any recommendations regarding revisions to certain budget allocations?				

Project-Level Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

Are the current M&E tools relevant in terms of involving key partners and integrating with national systems?				
Is the M&E of financial budget management relevant in terms of timeliness and effective/efficient allocation?				
Do you have any recommendations to make the M&E system more effective, participatory and inclusive?				

Stakeholder Engagement

Has the project succeeded in developing and leveraging all necessary and appropriate partnerships with stakeholders?				
Do national and governmental actors support the project's objectives and play an active role in decision-making?				
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen stakeholder engagement?				

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Reporting				
Do the executing entities at the regional level apply reporting requirements and meet deadlines?				
Do the executing entities at the national level apply reporting requirements and meet deadlines?				
Lessons Learned				
Are the main lessons learned from the implementation of SRI as climate change (CC) adaptation measures properly documented?				
Are the main lessons learned from the implementation of SRI as CC adaptation measures valued and accessible for scaling up and/or other similar projects?				
Communication				
Is internal communication with the stakeholders at regional and national levels regular, effective and efficient for the project implementation?				
Is there a feedback mechanism in place?				
Are there appropriate channels for effective and efficient external communication?				
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen internal and external communication?				
Knowledge Management				
Is the dissemination and sharing of knowledge with the project stakeholders regular and smooth?				
Are the channels to facilitate access to and adoption of good practices effective and efficient?				
Innovation				
Do you consider that the practices and technologies implemented (including SRI) are innovative?				
Gender				
Do you consider that gender issues have been properly addressed in the project implementation?				
Has the implementation of the project generated positive and/or negative effects on gender equality?				
Grievance Mechanism				
Is the grievance mechanism established to handle comments and complaints, especially from women and vulnerable groups, functioning satisfactorily?				

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
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Risks

Has the Covid pandemic, particularly the health restrictions, affected the project implementation?				
Have the necessary measures been taken to overcome the risks identified in the project document?				
Are there any new risks likely to affect the project implementation? If yes, which ones? And what measures should be taken to mitigate them?				

Sustainability

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
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Financial Risks

Are there potential financial resources at the international/regional level likely to sustain the project's achievements?				
Has the project provided incentives for the creation of a viable PPP likely to sustain the SRI?				

Socio-Economic Risks

Are national stakeholders sufficiently engaged to ensure the socio-economic sustainability of the SRI?				
Are there socio-economic and/or political risks likely to affect the sustainability of the project's achievements?				
Has the project provided incentives for the creation of a value chain to ensure the socio-economic viability of the SRI?				

Institutional Framework and Governance Risks

Are there risks of an inadequate institutional framework and/or inappropriate governance likely to affect the sustainability of the project's achievements?				
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Environmental Risks

Are there environmental risks likely to jeopardize the sustainability of the SRI?				
If yes, what are these risks and what mitigation measures should be taken?				

ANNEX 1.2 - DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE DEDICATED TO THE EXECUTING ENTITY AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL (CRS-Riz/IER)

Institution Name	Regional Rice Specialization Center, hosted by the Rural Economy Institute of Mali, under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture (CRS-Riz/IER)
Role	Project Executing Entity at the regional level
Contact	Dr. Karim Traoré, Regional Coordinator – kartraore@yahoo.com

Background

This questionnaire is part of a mid-term evaluation of the RICOWAS project. Its objective is to collect the necessary information and data in order to conduct this MTE with all the required data in accordance with international standards.

This questionnaire is structured around four main sections:

- Project strategy;
- Progress towards the achievement of the results;
- Project implementation;
- Sustainability.

All views expressed in this questionnaire will be treated impartially and with full confidentiality.

We invite you to share your assessments and to support your answers as thoroughly as possible. Furthermore, if you feel that a relevant question has not been raised, you are free to include it in the survey.

Project Strategy

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Does the project design allow for effective implementation at the regional level?				
Do the regional executing entity and its partner have all the required authority to carry out their duties?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve implementation at the regional level?				

Progress towards the achievement of the results

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Are there any obstacles likely to hinder the project implementation at the regional level during the remaining duration?				
Are there positive effects from regional activities that have already been successful, whose benefits could be extended?				
Are there activities that are no longer relevant and that it would be more appropriate to replace with others that would have more impact in achieving the initially set				

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
objectives?				

Project implementation

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
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Management Methods

Is the collaboration with the Project Implementation Entity (OSS) effective and productive?				
Is the collaboration between the Executing Entities at the national level effective and productive?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve this collaboration at the project level?				

Work Planning

Are there delays in the implementation of planned regional activities? If yes, what are the causes of these delays?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve implementation at the regional level?				

Finance

Do you have any recommendations regarding revisions to budget allocations to boost implementation at the regional level?				
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Project-Level Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

Are the current M&E tools effective and efficient in terms of implementation at the regional level?				
Is financial resource availability timely and is their allocation effective and efficient?				
Do you have any recommendations to make the system more effective and efficient in terms of implementation at the regional level?				

Stakeholder Engagement

Has regional implementation succeeded in developing and leveraging all necessary and appropriate partnerships?				
Do national actors support the project's objectives and play an active role in regional implementation?				
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen stakeholder engagement?				

Reporting

Do you apply reporting requirements and meet deadlines?				
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Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
If no, what are the constraints hindering your action?				
Do national implementing partners apply reporting requirements and meet deadlines?				
Are lessons learned at the regional level documented, shared with key partners and internalized by them?				

Lessons Learned

Are the main lessons learned from the implementation of SRI as climate change (CC) adaptation measures at the regional level documented?				
Are the main lessons learned from the implementation of SRI as CC adaptation measures at the regional level valued and accessible for scaling up and/or other similar projects?				

Communication

Is internal communication with the OSS regular and effective in regional implementation?				
Is internal communication with the Executing Entities at the national level regular and effective in regional implementation?				
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen internal communication?				

Knowledge Management

Is the sharing of data and knowledge essential to regional implementation effective and efficient?				
Are the channels to facilitate access to and adoption of good practices at the regional level effective and efficient?				

Innovation

Are there regional innovations that could be leveraged?				
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Gender

Are gender issues properly addressed in the project implementation at the regional level?				
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Sustainability

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Financial Risks				
Are there potential financial resources at the regional level likely to sustain the adoption of SRI at the regional level?				

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Socio-Economic Risks				
Are the main stakeholders sufficiently engaged to ensure the socio-economic sustainability of regional achievements?				
Institutional Framework and Governance Risks				
Are the existing institutional and governance frameworks likely to affect/promote the sustainability of the project's regional achievements?				
Environmental Risks				
Are there transboundary environmental risks that have arisen during the project implementation and are likely to jeopardize its sustainability?				
If yes, what are these risks and what mitigation measures should be taken?				

ANNEX 1.3 - DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE DEDICATED TO THE REGIONAL-LEVEL EXECUTION PARTNER (CORNELL UNIVERSITY)

Institution Name	Cornell University
Role	Regional-level Project Execution Partner
Contact	

Background

This questionnaire is part of a mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the RICOWAS project. Its objective is to collect the necessary information and data in order to conduct this MTE with all the required data in accordance with international standards.

This questionnaire is structured around four main sections:

- Project strategy;
- Progress towards the achievement of the results;
- Project implementation;
- Sustainability.

All views expressed in this questionnaire will be treated impartially and with full confidentiality.

We invite you to share your assessments and to support your answers as thoroughly as possible. Furthermore, if you feel that a relevant question has not been raised, you are free to include it in the survey.

Project Strategy

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Does the project design allow for effective implementation at the regional level?				
Can the effectiveness of your collaboration with CRS-Riz/IER be improved? If yes, how?				
Do you have all the authority needed to ensure effective collaboration at the regional level?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve implementation at the regional level?				

Progress towards the achievement of the results

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Are there any obstacles likely to hinder the project implementation at the regional level during the remaining duration?				
Are there positive effects from regional activities that have already been successful, whose benefits could be extended?				
Are there activities that are no longer relevant and that it would be appropriate to replace with others that would have more impact in achieving the objectives?				

Project implementation

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Management Methods				
Is the collaboration with the OSS effective and productive?				
Is the collaboration between the Executing Entities at the national level effective and productive?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve collaboration at the project level?				
Work Planning				
Are there delays in the implementation of planned regional activities? If yes, what are the causes?				
Do you have any recommendations to improve implementation at the regional level?				
Finance				
Do you have any recommendations regarding revisions to budget allocations to boost implementation at the regional level?				

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Project-Level Monitoring & Evaluation Systems				
Are the current M&E tools effective and efficient in terms of implementation at the regional level?				
Is financial resource availability timely and is their allocation effective and efficient?				
Do you have any recommendations to make the system more effective and efficient in terms of implementation at the regional level?				
Stakeholder Engagement				
Has regional implementation succeeded in developing and leveraging all necessary and appropriate partnerships?				
Do national actors play an active role in regional implementation?				
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen stakeholder engagement?				
Reporting				
Do you apply reporting requirements and meet deadlines?				
Are lessons learned at the regional level documented, shared with key partners and internalized by them?				
Lessons Learned				
Are the main lessons learned from regional-level initiatives documented?				
Communication				
Is internal communication with the OSS regular and effective in regional implementation?				
Is communication with the Executing Entities at the national level regular and effective in regional implementation?				
Do you have any recommendations to strengthen internal communication?				
Knowledge Management				
Is the dissemination and sharing of data and knowledge essential to regional implementation effective and efficient?				
Innovation				
Are there regional innovations that could be leveraged?				
Gender				
Are gender issues properly addressed in project implementation at the regional level?				

Sustainability

Question	Yes	More or less	No	Assessment elements
Financial Risks				
Are there potential financial resources at the regional level likely to sustain the project's achievements at the regional level?				
Socio-Economic Risks				
Are the main stakeholders sufficiently engaged to ensure the socio-economic sustainability of regional achievements?				
Institutional Framework and Governance Risks				
Are the existing institutional and governance frameworks likely to affect/promote the sustainability of the project's regional achievements?				
Environmental Risks				
Are there transboundary environmental risks that have arisen during the project implementation and are likely to jeopardize its sustainability?				
If yes, what are these risks and what mitigation measures should be taken?				

ANNEX 1.4 - DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE DEDICATED TO THE NATIONAL-LEVEL EXECUTING ENTITIES OF THE RICOWAS PROJECT (COORDINATORS OF THE 13 COUNTRIES)

Questionnaire link in both English and French versions (KoboCollect format):

<https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/achsCxLx>

ANNEX 1.5 - DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE DEDICATED TO RICE FARMER BENEFICIARIES OF THE RICOWAS PROJECT FROM THE 13 COUNTRIES

Questionnaire link in both English and French versions (KoboCollect format):

<https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/XdTPfmQw>

ANNEX 2 - PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK INDICATORS OF THE RICOWAS PROJECT

Source: Table 37 "RICOWAS Results Framework" from the RICOWAS project document (the last two columns have been added thereto)

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Global Objective								
Improve climate resilience and increase rice system productivity of smallholder rice farmers across West Africa using a climate-resilient rice production approach	Number of direct CRRP beneficiaries	0	At least 70,000 CRRP direct beneficiaries (at least 30% women and youth)	At least 140,000 CRRP direct beneficiaries (at least 30% women and youth)	70000	153131	50745	72%
Improve climate resilience and increase rice system productivity of smallholder rice farmers across West Africa using a climate-resilient rice production approach	% rice yield increase with CRRP	0	25% yield increase	50% yield increase	25%	50%	11%	43%
Improve climate resilience and increase rice system productivity of smallholder rice farmers across West Africa using a climate-resilient rice production approach	Number of climate-resilient practices / technologies adopted	0	At least 06 CRRP practices/ technologies adopted	At least 12 CRRP practices/ technologies adopted	6	12	2	36%
COMPONENT 1: Strengthen human and institutional capacity in climate-resilient rice production (CRRP)								
Outcome 1.1. Climate change dimension in the regional Rice Offensive Strategy and the National Rice Development Strategies integrated	Number of National Rice Development Strategies (NRDS) part of the Rice Offensive having integrated climate change	0	At least 5 of the 13 countries NRDS have integrated climate change	All 13 countries have integrated climate change in their NRDS	5	13	0	0%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Output 1.1.1. Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated in the regional and national rice strategy documents	Number of studies	0	08 studies completed	15 studies completed (Recommendations integrated in the 13 NRDS)	8	15	0	0%
Output 1.1.1. Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated in the regional and national rice strategy documents	Number of national validation meetings	0	06 National validation meetings completed	13 National validation meetings completed	6	13	0	0%
Output 1.1.1. Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated in the regional and national rice strategy documents	Number of regional validation workshops	0	01 regional validation workshop completed	02 regional validation workshops completed	1	2	0	0%
Output 1.1.1. Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated in the regional and national rice strategy documents	% of women participation	0	More than 25% of participants are women	More than 35% of participants are women	25%	35%	4%	16%
Output 1.1.1. Climate change dimension and proposed actions integrated in the regional and national rice strategy documents	Number of women interviewed	0	More than 25% of interviewed stakeholders are women/girls	More than 25% of interviewed stakeholders are women	25%	25%	0%	0%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Outcome 1.2. Key stakeholders operating in different climate zones and rice systems gained tools, knowledge and skills to successfully address climate-threats and implement CRRP in a sustainable way	Number of rice value-chain stakeholders increase capacity to scale-up CRRP	0	26 researchers, 39 trainers and 13 NEE and 02 REE Staff with strengthened capacity in CRRP	At least 52 researchers, 39 trainers and 26 NEE and 04 REE Staff with strengthened capacity in CRRP	80	121	16	20%
Outcome 1.2. Key stakeholders operating in different climate zones and rice systems gained tools, knowledge and skills to successfully address climate-threats and implement CRRP in a sustainable way	Number of institutions have their Staff with increased capacity (gender disaggregated)	0	At least 2 institutions/countries have improved capacity to scale-up CRRP (= total of 26 institutions)	At least 5 institutions/countries have improved capacity to scale-up CRRP (total of 65 institutions)	26	65	14	54%
Outcome 1.2. Key stakeholders operating in different climate zones and rice systems gained tools, knowledge and skills to successfully address climate-threats and implement CRRP in a sustainable way	CRRP regional research group operational	0	26 members of the CRRP research group	The regional research group is operational	1	1	1	100%
Output 1.2.1. Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened	Number of research projects implemented	0	02 research projects completed/country (= total of 26)	04 research projects completed/country (= total of 52)	26	52	2	8%
Output 1.2.1. Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened	Number of training sessions conducted (gender disaggregated participation)	0	14 training sessions conducted. More than 30% of participants are women	28 training sessions conducted. More than 45% of participants are women	14	28	5	36%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Output 1.2.1. Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened	Number of new training modules	0	6 training modules developed and published	12 training modules developed and published	6	12	4	67%
Output 1.2.1. Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened	Number of scientific articles published	0	2 scientific articles published	8 scientific articles published	2	8	3	150%
Output 1.2.1. Capacity of national and regional research centers strengthened	Number of exchange workshops (gender disaggregated participation)	0	At least 10 exchange workshops. More than 30% of participants are women	26 exchange workshops. More than 45% of participants are women	10	26	4	40%
Output 1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	Number of capacity needs assessment studies (gender disaggregated interviews)	0	14 country and one regional capacity needs assessment	14 country and one regional capacity needs assessment	14	14	12	86%
Output 1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	Number of regional technical workshops (gender disaggregated participation)	0	02 regional technical workshops	04 regional technical workshops	2	4	2	100%
Output 1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	Number of field exchange visits (gender disaggregated participation)	0	At least 01 field exchange visits/country (= total of 13). More than 30% of participants are women	At least 06 field exchange visits/country (= total of 78). More than 40% of participants are women	13	78	11	85%
Output 1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	Number of data collection kits	0	13 data collection kits	13 data collection kits	13	13	7	54%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Output 1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	Regional communication hub functional	0	01 operational regional communication hub	01 operational regional communication hub	1	1	0	0%
Output 1.2.2. Institutional capacity of the regional and national executing entities for project implementation strengthened	CRS-Riz advanced its status to CRE-Riz	0		CRE-Riz established		1	0	
Output 1.2.3. Extension institutions involved in the development and dissemination of SRI and CRRP strengthened	Number of regional TOT workshops (gender disaggregated participation)	0	2 regional ToT workshops. More than 30% of participants are women	4 regional ToT workshops. More than 40% of participants are women	2	4	2	100%
Output 1.2.3. Extension institutions involved in the development and dissemination of SRI and CRRP strengthened	Number of national trainings (gender disaggregated participation)	0	20 national trainings. More than 30% of participants are women	52 national trainings. More than 45% of participants are women	20	52	26	130%
Output 1.2.3. Extension institutions involved in the development and dissemination of SRI and CRRP strengthened	Number of trainers trained (gender disaggregated participation)	0	At least 39 trainers trained (at regional level) (3/country). More than 30% of participants are women	At least 39 trainers trained (at regional level) (3/country). More than 45% of participants are women	39	39	26	67%
Output 1.2.3. Extension institutions involved in the development and dissemination of SRI and CRRP strengthened	Number of training modules produced	0	At least 5 training modules produced	At least 7 training modules produced	5	7	5	100%
Output 1.2.3. Extension institutions involved in the development and dissemination of SRI and CRRP strengthened	Number of training kits (equipment, material)	0	7 training kits (equipment, material)	13 training kits (equipment, material)	7	13	0	0%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
COMPONENT 2. Assist farmers to scale-up CRRP								
Outcome 2.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones successfully adopted SRI and CRRP practices, achieved higher rice productivity, and improved their incomes and livelihoods.	Number of farmers adopting CRRP	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 40,000 smallholder farmer beneficiaries adopt CRRP	At least 140,000 smallholder farmer beneficiaries adopt CRRP	40000	153131	41060	103%
Outcome 2.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones successfully adopted SRI and CRRP practices, achieved higher rice productivity, and improved their incomes and livelihoods.	Number of ha under CRRP	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 25,000 ha under CRRP	At least 60,000 ha under CRRP	25000	71240	16745,6	67%
Outcome 2.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones successfully adopted SRI and CRRP practices, achieved higher rice productivity, and improved their incomes and livelihoods.	% Income increase with CRRP	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 40% income increase with CRRP	At least 80% income increase with CRRP	40%	80%	8%	21%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Number of trainings for smallholder farmers (disaggregated by gender and youth)	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	24 farmer trainings held/country	48 farmer trainings held/country	312	624	368	118%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Percentage of trained farmers (disaggregated by gender and youth)	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 50% farmer trainers trained	At least 80% farmers trainers trained	50%	80%	15%	30%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Number of extension materials distributed	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 5 extension material packages distributed	At least 7 extension material packages distributed	5	7	6	120%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Percentage of farmers technically assisted in their fields (disaggregated by gender and youth)	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 50% of farmers technically assisted in their fields	At least 80% of farmers technically assisted in their fields	50%	80%	13%	25%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Percentage of farmers producing rice seed and organic fertilizer	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 20% of CRRP farmers produce rice seed and organic fertilizer	At least 60% of CRRP farmers produce rice seed and organic fertilizer	20%	60%	16%	81%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Percentage of farmers adopting SLWM practices in their fields	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 30% of CRRP farmers adopt more than two SLWM practices in their fields	At least 80% of CRRP farmers adopt more than two SLWM practices in their fields	30%	80%	80%	268%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Number of local nurseries established	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 200 of nurseries are created at the local level	At least 520 of nurseries are created at the local level	200	520	80	40%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Number of local composting units	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	At least 100 of composting units are created at the local level	At least 260 of composting units are created at the local level	100	260	25	25%
Output 2.1.1. Smallholder rice farmers in the project zones strengthened their livelihoods by reducing production costs and improving rice yields through the adoption of SRI and CRRP	Number of equipment packages distributed to farmers /country (disaggregated by gender and youth beneficiaries)	To be determined at project start (Baseline study)	7 equipment packages distributed to farmers /country. More than 40% of participants are women/girls	13 equipment packages distributed to farmers /country. More than 50% of participants are women/girls	7	13	1	14%
Output 2.1.2. Adopted SRI and CRRP practices by smallholder farmers are	M&E methodology established in first year	M&E system to be developed	M&E method functional	13 M&E experts are collecting data	1	13	0	0%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
monitored, analyzed and the results widely shared		at project start						
Output 2.1.2. Adopted SRI and CRRP practices by smallholder farmers are monitored, analyzed and the results widely shared	Data tracking mechanism established	M&E system to be developed at project start	Equipment for data tracking mechanism installed	Equipment for data tracking mechanism installed and operational	1	1	0	0%
Output 2.1.2. Adopted SRI and CRRP practices by smallholder farmers are monitored, analyzed and the results widely shared	Baseline study established	M&E system to be developed at project start	14 Baseline studies established	14 Baseline studies established	14	14	12	86%
Output 2.1.2. Adopted SRI and CRRP practices by smallholder farmers are monitored, analyzed and the results widely shared	Number of training sessions on M&E system and data collection	M&E system to be developed at project start	30 training sessions on M&E system and data collection	67 training sessions on M&E system and data collection	30	67	40	133%
Output 2.1.2. Adopted SRI and CRRP practices by smallholder farmers are monitored, analyzed and the results widely shared	Number of yearly M&E reports	M&E system to be developed at project start	2 yearly M&E reports by 13 NEEs and the REE	4 yearly M&E reports by 13 NEEs and the REE	26	52	5	19%
Outcome 2.2. Rice value chain strengthened through public-private partnerships (PPPs) and agricultural associations and cooperatives, and thus improved the resilience of smallholder rice farmers to the harmful effects of climate change	Number of successful PPP partnerships with Farmer Organizations	0	At least 26 new PPP agreements established and functional (2 PPPs/ country)	65 new PPP agreements established and functional (5 PPPs/ country)	26	65	9	35%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Outcome 2.2. Rice value chain strengthened through public-private partnerships (PPP) and agricultural associations and cooperatives, and thus improved the resilience of smallholder rice farmers to the harmful effects of climate change	Additional benefits (US\$) created based on project intervention	0	Total additional benefits (US\$) from PPPs (established at baseline)	Total additional benefits (US\$) from PPPs (established at baseline)		1000	0	#DIV/0!
Output 2.2.1. Rice production and post-harvest components in the rice value-chain strengthened	Number of private sector partners engaged with/country - (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at baseline	3 private sector partners engaged with/country	6 private sector partners engaged with/country	39	78	13	33%
Output 2.2.1. Rice production and post-harvest components in the rice value-chain strengthened	Number of stakeholder meetings held (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at baseline	4 Number of stakeholder meetings held/country	10 Number of stakeholder meetings held/country	52	130	6	12%
Output 2.2.1. Rice production and post-harvest components in the rice value-chain strengthened	Number of capacities strengthening workshops held (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at baseline	3 capacity strengthening workshops held/country. More than 35% of participants are women	6 capacity strengthening workshops held/country. More than 35% of participants are women	39	78	8	21%
Output 2.2.1. Rice production and post-harvest components in the rice value-chain strengthened	Number of direct beneficiaries from PPP partnerships. (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at baseline	At least 30 direct beneficiaries from PPP partnerships/ country. More than 35% of beneficiaries are women	At least 80 direct beneficiaries from PPP partnerships/ country. More than 35% of beneficiaries are women	390	1040	0	0%
Output 2.2.1. Rice production and post-harvest components in the rice value-chain strengthened	Number of PPPs supported with equipment. (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at baseline	At least 26 PPPs supported with equipment; More than 35% of beneficiaries are women	65 PPPs supported with equipment; More than 45% of beneficiaries are women	26	65	0	0%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Output 2.2.2. Agricultural associations and cooperatives in the rice value chain strengthened in their operations	Number of newly formalized Farmer Organizations (FOs) (disaggregated by gender)	0	At least 3 new FOs formalized/country	At least 6 new FOs formalized/country	39	78	120	308%
Output 2.2.2. Agricultural associations and cooperatives in the rice value chain strengthened in their operations	Number of business plans developed (disaggregated by gender)	0	2 business plans developed/ country	5 business plans developed/ country	26	65	0	0%
Output 2.2.2. Agricultural associations and cooperatives in the rice value chain strengthened in their operations	Number of trainings to Farmer Organizations (FOs) (disaggregated by gender)	0	At least 4 trainings to FOs/country (=total of 52 trainings) More than 40% of beneficiaries are women	10 trainings to FOs/country (=total of 130 trainings) More than 50% of beneficiaries are women	52	130	87	167%
Output 2.2.2. Agricultural associations and cooperatives in the rice value chain strengthened in their operations	Number of assisted FOs to access credit facilities and subsidies (disaggregated by gender)	0	At least 02 credits accessed by FOs/country	At least 06 credits accessed by FOs/country	26	78	0	0%
COMPONENT 3. Strengthen communication, advocacy and partnerships to scale-up CRRP								
Outcome 3.1. Awareness and knowledge of CRRP in West Africa greatly increased	Number of knowledge-products disseminated	0	At least 60 knowledge-products disseminated (4*13 countries plus 8 regional)	At least 120 knowledge-products disseminated (8*13 countries plus 16 regional)	60	120	24	40%
Outcome 3.1. Awareness and knowledge of CRRP in West Africa greatly increased	Number of knowledge-sharing events held	0	28 knowledge sharing events held and participated in	At least 70 knowledge sharing events held and participated in	28	70	6	21%
Output 3.1.1. Knowledge and awareness materials developed and widely disseminated, in response to the demand and needs	Communication strategy (national and regional level) (gender disaggregated reach)	0	1 regional and 13 national communication strategies. More than 50% of beneficiaries are women/Youth	1 regional and 13 national communication strategies. More than 50% of beneficiaries are women/Youth	14	14	7	50%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
of different stakeholder groups								
Output 3.1.1. Knowledge and awareness materials developed and widely disseminated, in response to the demand and needs of different stakeholder groups	Number of knowledge-products produced (gender disaggregated reach)	0	At least 4 knowledge products produced per country (=total of 52). At least 8 knowledge products produced at regional level. More than 50% of beneficiaries are women/Youth	At least 8 knowledge products produced per country (=total of 104). At least 16 knowledge products produced at regional level. More than 50% of beneficiaries are women/Youth.	60	120	24	40%
Output 3.1.1. Knowledge and awareness materials developed and widely disseminated, in response to the demand and needs of different stakeholder groups	Project portal functional with regular postings and updates	0	01 Project portal developed	01 Project portal operational	1	1	0	0%
Output 3.1.1. Knowledge and awareness materials developed and widely disseminated, in response to the demand and needs of different stakeholder groups	Number of field visits organized (disaggregated by gender)	0	02 field visits organized/country More than 35% of participants are women/youth	At least 05 field visits organized/country. More than 45% of participants are women/youth	26	65	7	27%
Output 3.1.1. Knowledge and awareness materials developed and widely disseminated, in response to the demand and needs of different stakeholder groups	Number of policy briefs written and disseminated (gender disaggregated each)	0	1 regional policy brief. More than 50% of beneficiaries are women/Youth	13 national policy briefs. 3 regional policy briefs. More than 50% of beneficiaries are women/Youth	1	16	0	0%
Outcome 3.2. Partnerships and coordination strengthened to enable the mainstreaming of CRRP in West Africa.	Number of newly formulated partnerships to scale-up CRRP	0	2 new regional partnerships established	5 new regional partnerships established	2	5	0	0%

Result	Indicators	Baseline	Milestones (after 2 years)	End of project targets	Mid-term Target	Project target	Mid-term review Progress	% of progress
Outcome 3.2. Partnerships and coordination strengthened to enable the mainstreaming of CRRP in West Africa.	Number of partner activities to scale-up CRRP	0	2 collaborative activities /country (=26 total)	5 collaborative activities /country (=65 total)	26	65	0	0%
Output 3.2.1. Synergies among partners established to mainstream CRRP in West Africa	Number of coalition building meetings (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at project start (baseline)	4 coalition building meetings. More than 35% of participants are women/youth	Total of 8 coalition building meetings. More than 45% of participants are women/youth	4	8	0	0%
Output 3.2.1. Synergies among partners established to mainstream CRRP in West Africa	Number of people participating to international events (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at project start (baseline)	3 people participate in 2 international events	9 people participate in 4 international events	3	9	0	0%
Output 3.2.1. Synergies among partners established to mainstream CRRP in West Africa	National CRRP network functional (disaggregated by gender)	To be determined at project start (baseline)	13 national CRRP networks	13 national CRRP networks	13	13	2	15%

ANNEXE 3 - ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE RICOWAS PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The following photographs illustrate the main activities conducted up to the mid-term stage of the RICOWAS Project across the beneficiary countries. They highlight efforts undertaken to build capacities, promote the dissemination of Climate-Resilient Rice Production Practices (CRRP/SRI), foster producers' engagement, and enhance regional cooperation established under the project.

GOVERNANCE AND PROJECT START-UP



CAPACITY BUILDING



DEMONSTRATION AND ADOPTION OF CRRP/SRI PRACTICES



TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR PRODUCERS AND INNOVATION



VALORIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL RESIDUES AND SUSTAINABLE SOIL MANAGEMENT



MECHANIZATION AND ADAPTED TECHNOLOGIES



SUPERVISION AND AUDIT MISSIONS

