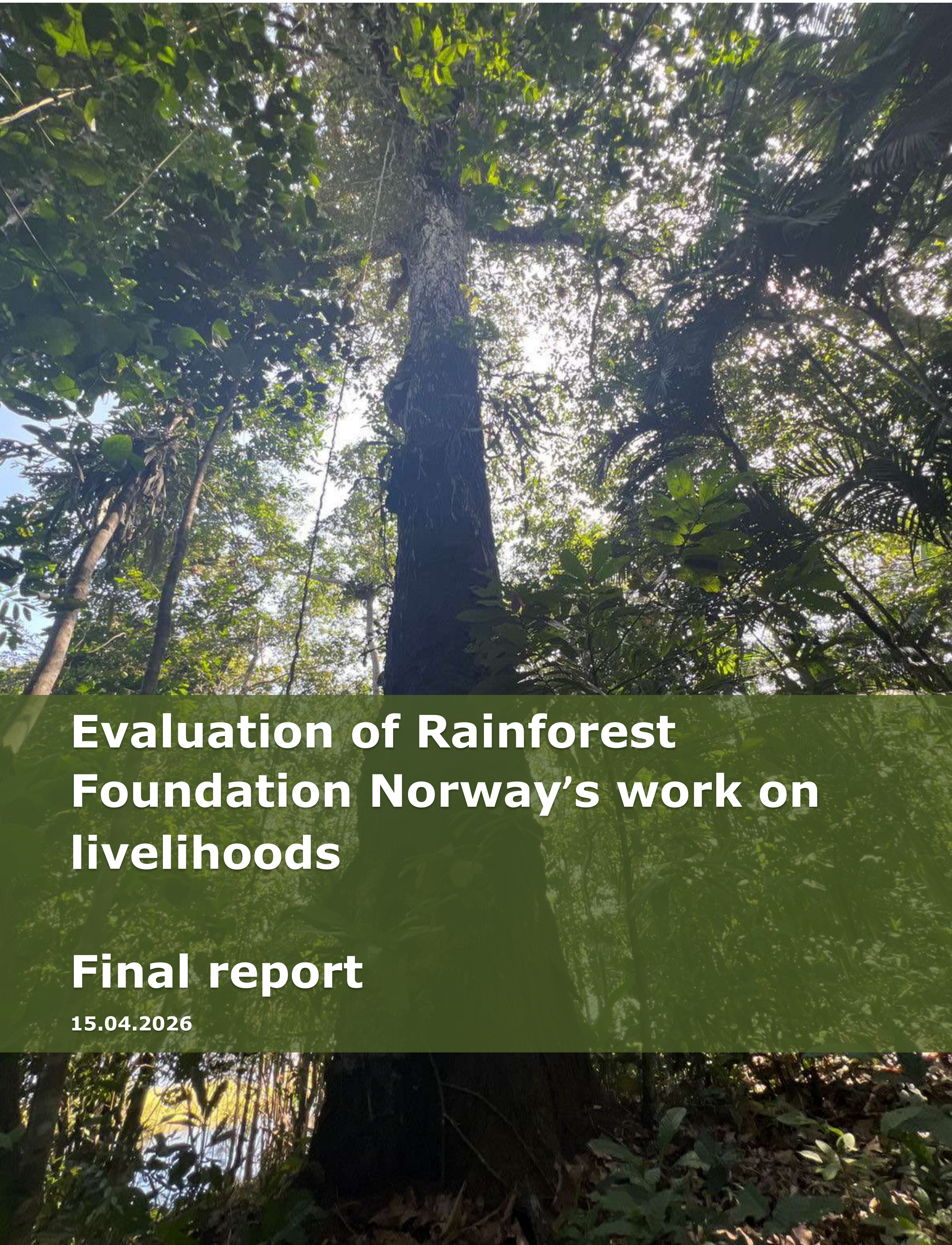
Rainforest Foundation Norway

Evaluation of RFN's livelihood work

2026

Cover photo: Work supported by ARSX (Associação Rede de Sementes do Xingu), a local seed network in Brazil focused on conservation of biodiversity and forest protection using native seeds. Bianca Moreno/ARSX/ISA

Future Horizons



Evaluation of Rainforest Foundation Norway's work on livelihoods

Final report

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This report was prepared by Future Horizons AS for Rainforest Foundation Norway.

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This report is the product of its authors, and responsibility for the accuracy of data included in this report rests with the authors. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of RFN.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAS	*Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad* (Environment and Society Association)
ARSX	*Associação Rede de Sementes do Xingu* (Xingu Seeds Network Association)
BRL	Brazilian Real
CFCL	Community Forest Concessions
CFF	Community Fund for Forests
CNE	*Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas* (National Council of Extractive Populations)
CONAB	*Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento* (Brazil's National Supply Company)
CORPI	*Coordinadora Regional de los Pueblos Indígenas* (Regional Coordinator of Indigenous Peoples)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EIFF	Eastern Indonesia Forest Facility
EQ	Evaluation Question
FCDS	*Fundación para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible* (Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development)
FENAP	*Federación de Nacionalidades Achuar del Perú* (Federation of Achuar Nationalities of Peru)
FOIRN	*Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro* (Federation of Indigenous Organisations of the Rio Negro)
ForEco	Forest Economy
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
FWI	Forest Watch Indonesia
GTANW	*Gobierno Territorial Autónomo de la Nación Wampís* (Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation)
IDR	Indonesian Rupiah
IEPE	*Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena* (Indigenous Research and Training Institute)
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
ISA	*Instituto Socioambiental* (Socio-Environmental Institute)
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MCM	*Memorial Chico Mendes* (Chico Mendes Memorial)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NICFI	Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative
NOK	Norwegian Krone
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
ONIC	*Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia* (National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia)
OPIAC	*Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana* (Organisation of the Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon)
ORAU	*Organización Regional AIDESEP Ucayali* (AIDESEP Regional Organisation of Ucayali)

ORPIO	*Organización Regional de los Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente* (Regional Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Eastern Amazon)
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PNAE	*Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar* (Brazil's National School Feeding Programme)
PSAT	Participatory land-use planning
PSG	Simple Management Plan
PAA	*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* (Brazil's Food Acquisition Programme)
RCA	*Rede de Cooperação Amazônica* (Amazon Cooperation Network)
RFN	Rainforest Foundation Norway
RFUK	Rainforest Foundation UK
RFUS	Rainforest Foundation US
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
SMIC	Standard minimum wage
SO	Strategic Objective
UK	United Kingdom
USD	United States Dollars
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World-Wide Fund for Nature

Executive Summary

Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) works to protect tropical rainforests through a rights-based approach centred on Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Livelihoods have become an increasingly important thematic priority, as part of the conditions that enable communities to remain in, govern, and sustainably use their territories.

This evaluation responds to the need for consolidating evidence, covering RFN's livelihoods-related work across Brazil, DRC, Peru, Colombia and Indonesia between 2019-2025. It assesses results and approaches, RFN's added value, and provide strategic recommendations. The ForEco programme in Brazil serves as the anchor case, given its scale and maturity. Other countries are mainly covered at portfolio level, while Indonesia also includes a case study/impact story. As such, findings are strongest where multiple data sources converge, particularly in Brazil, while evidence from other countries is more partial and qualitative. A review of academic literature is included to compare portfolio experiences with global evidence.

Key findings EQ1: results achieved to date

RFN's strongest livelihoods-related results are in enabling conditions rather than mature commercial outcomes. Across the portfolio, the most consistent achievements relate to tenure, community organisation, governance systems, and institutional capacity. Livelihoods are most effective when embedded in rights-based governance and territorial control, including integrated support packages, grounded, low-input models, inclusion linked to real roles and benefits, and peer learning across partners.

Brazil's ForEco programme provides the clearest evidence of scaled livelihoods results. By 2024, ForEco reported 76 commercial activities/value chains, annual income of BRL 11.4 million, cumulative income of BRL 33.1 million (2021-2024), and 9,541 producers engaged since 2021. ForEco also shows that public procurement and other market channels can be operationalised at scale when combined with integrated support.

In Peru, Colombia and DRC, results are strongest on governance, social organisation, and readiness rather than on income generation. Livelihood initiatives remain early-stage, with modest income effects but clearer contributions to governance infrastructure, territorial autonomy, cultural continuity, skills, and risk reduction.

In Indonesia, livelihoods results are mixed, but strongest where rights recognition and permitting create legal space for community economies. More advanced outcomes are visible where partners or intermediaries can manage aggregation, quality, and market relations. The social enterprise KOBUMI stands out as the clearest example of a more commercially advanced pathway.

Four recurring constraints limit results across the portfolio: (1) financial sustainability remains weak and dependent on continued support, (2) partner and market-facing capacities are often limited, (3) insecurity and illegal economies distort incentives, and (4) MEL and commercial evidence remain too weak to robustly assess profitability, comparability, and long-term sustainability.

Key findings EQ2: Evidence base and RFN's added value

RFN's livelihoods approach is broadly consistent with global evidence. Both the literature and portfolio evidence suggest that results are strongest where economic activities are linked to secure tenure, collective governance, and enabling systems. A key opportunity for RFN is to sharpen its role as a bridge between territorial realities and functioning livelihood systems. This includes stronger work on enabling finance, clearer positioning around territorial economies, and more operational approaches to feasibility, prioritisation, and access to market and policy mechanisms.

RFN's comparative advantage lies primarily in its partnership model. Long-term, trust-based relationships, predictable funding, institutional strengthening, and cultural sensitivity are important features of RFN's approach. ForEco is the strongest reference case, demonstrating scale, diversification and that results depend on broader support packages. Peru, Colombia, DRC and much of the current Indonesia portfolio remain earlier-stage and more governance-focused.

Effective livelihoods models are multidimensional, not a single model. Support needs to be differentiated according to partner maturity, territorial risk, and the type of livelihood pathway pursued. Higher costs do not necessarily imply weak performance, as efficiency is strongly shaped by contextual factors such as remote logistics, inflation, exchange-rate losses, and high transaction costs in complex settings.

Evidence gaps remain a major limitation for strategic decision-making. Across the portfolio, data on profitability, sustainability, and distributional outcomes is weak or uneven, making it difficult to assess which pathways are most viable, equitable, and scalable over time.

Key findings EQ3: Strategic implications and future direction

RFN's overall strategic direction remains appropriate, but implementation needs to be sharper. The main need is not strategic redirection, but clearer prioritisation, differentiation, and operational focus across contexts. Future livelihoods support should be more explicitly matched to partner capacity, territorial context, and pathway maturity, with more systematic tracking of inclusion.

RFN should distinguish more clearly between three types of livelihood pathways: (1) those with commercial potential, (2) those requiring blended or public finance, and (3) those likely to remain grant-dependent but justified by their broader contribution to rights, resilience, and governance. Declining aid makes prioritisation more urgent, in view of realistic continuation logic.

A more explicit differentiation of partner roles is needed. Most partners are strongest on rights, governance, and advocacy, while fewer can manage market-facing functions. A stage-based model with four "levels of maturity" would improve planning, role clarity, and resourcing.

Key recommendations

- **Refine the livelihoods pathway of change and adopt a stage-based approach.** Make sequencing clearer: enabling conditions, followed by market and institutional systems. Classify partners and interventions by maturity stage (4), and differentiate partner roles and support models more explicitly.
- **Sharpen strategic prioritisation under declining funding.** Use clearer criteria for selecting and scaling livelihood investments, including market logic, partner capacity, logistical feasibility, safeguards, and sustainability potential.
- **Strengthen integrated support for market-facing initiatives.** Ensure that production support is combined with aggregation, quality systems, working capital, logistics, compliance, and governance safeguards. Prioritise grounded, diversified and low-input models rooted in existing practices. Consider establishing an advisory function for technical assistance.
- **Make continuation logic explicit.** Clarify which interventions/pathways are expected to become commercially viable, which require blended or public finance, and which remain grant-dependent.
- **Strengthen RFN's role on enabling finance and systems.** Move towards more operational support for communities to access to public procurement, PES/climate finance, price premiums, and other relevant mechanisms.
- **Improve MEL and operationalise SO 1.5 through a mixed-method approach.** Combine clear baselines and denominators with short annual qualitative narratives, and strengthen basic data on prices, volumes, costs, participation, and benefit-sharing. Monitor who benefits, who influences decisions, and how risks such as elite capture or exclusion are managed.

Contents

Figures and tables:

1. Introduction

This report presents an independent evaluation of Rainforest Foundation Norway's (RFN) work on livelihoods across country programmes in Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Peru, Colombia and Indonesia. The evaluation consolidates learning from major livelihoods investments, with particular emphasis on Brazil's Forest Economy programme (ForEco). It explores what has worked, what has not worked, and why, and provides actionable recommendations to strengthen RFN's approach, including monitoring and reporting under the new livelihoods indicator (SO 1.5).

Background and rationale. Over recent years, RFN has invested consistently in livelihoods as part of its rights-based approach to rainforest protection, primarily through ForEco in Brazil, a programme designed to strengthen sociobiodiversity value chains and territorial economies. In DRC, Peru, Colombia and Indonesia, livelihood components are embedded within a broader rights, governance and conservation approach. In a rights-based perspective, livelihoods are not limited to income generation only, but include the capabilities, institutions, relationships and cultural practices that enable people to live well in their territories. Territorial rights, governance and community agency are factors that enable economic alternatives, while reinforcing forest protection. To address this, RFN has combined political advocacy, organisational strengthening and targeted economic support through long-term partnerships at country level.

Purpose. The evaluation responds to both a programmatic and a strategic need. At programme level, RFN and partners have built up substantial experience, but the evidence base remains fragmented. At strategic level, livelihoods have become more prominent in RFN's work, necessitating a clearer understanding of what works, RFN's added value, and how future support should be prioritised.

Objectives. The evaluation was designed to respond to three overarching evaluation questions:

- **EQ1:** Assessment of results achieved to date and the factors explaining what worked, what did not, and why, drawing particularly on the ForEco programme.
- **EQ2:** Assessment of RFN's added value and the wider evidence base for effective livelihoods and socio-bioeconomy approaches, informed by literature review and comparative reflection.
- **EQ3:** Assessment of how to strengthen RFN's strategic approach, drawing on cross country synthesis, providing recommendations on a refined livelihoods pathway and strategic considerations.

Scope. This evaluation covers livelihood and income-generating activities from 2019 to 2025 and combines deep-dive cases with cross-country synthesis. ForEco (Brazil) serves as the anchor case with one impact story, given its scale and stronger database. DRC, Peru, Colombia and Indonesia are covered mainly at portfolio level, while Indonesia also includes a case study/impact story. A brief review of academic literature is included to identify relevant pathways, strengths, weaknesses and lessons to inform RFN's future programming and strategy.

Limitations. The evaluation relied mainly on remote data collection, including online interviews, without direct community engagement or field observation. RFN's monitoring systems and indicator definitions have also evolved over time, reducing comparability across countries and years. In addition, many interventions relevant to livelihoods were not consistently framed or reported as such, requiring qualitative judgement in determining what to include. Finally, while the ForEco commercial dataset provides valuable insight into revenue streams and market channels, it is not sufficient to robustly assess profitability or financial sustainability. Given time and budget limitations, the evaluation therefore focuses on identifying robust patterns, practical lessons and strategic implications for RFN's future livelihoods work.

1.1.Definitions

In this context, based on RFN's approaches, partner interviews and relevant literature, "sustainable livelihoods" can be understood as *livelihoods that enable Indigenous Peoples and local forest-dependent communities to secure and improve their well-being over time, while maintaining control over their territories and conserving forest ecosystems.*

This builds on established livelihoods frameworks emphasising the ability to cope with shocks, sustain assets and avoid degrading the natural resource base (Chambers and Conway 1992; Scoones 1998; Carney et al. 1999), as well as Indigenous concepts like *Buen Vivir*, emphasising collective harmony with territory and nature for holistic well-being.

This is further understood under the various terms utilised by partners and in literature, such as:

Figure 1: Definitions of key livelihoods concepts

Sociobioeconomy. Refers to economic systems based on the sustainable use of biodiversity that are embedded in social, cultural and territorial contexts, particularly in the Amazon. It emphasises value chains rooted in standing forests, Indigenous knowledge and local governance, linking livelihoods, conservation and social inclusion (Garrett et al. 2024).

Bioeconomy. Refers to economic activities based on biological resources and ecosystem services. In Amazonian contexts, recent literature stresses the need for a "locally grounded bioeconomy" that goes beyond extractive models and integrates sustainability and territorial governance (Castro-Díaz and Brondizio 2024).

Social forestry. Refers to approaches that devolve forest management and use rights to local communities, enabling them to manage and benefit from forest resources. This is closely linked to broader evidence showing the critical role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in effective and equitable conservation (Dawson et al. 2021; Djenontin et al. 2024).

Agroforestry. Refers to land-use systems that integrate trees with crops and/or livestock, contributing to diversified production, resilience and ecosystem services. Such systems are widely recognised as key components of sustainable forest-based livelihoods and landscape approaches (Garrett et al. 2024).

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Refers to forest products other than timber, such as nuts, oils, fibres and resins, which contribute to rural livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. They are often important for income diversification and livelihood security, although outcomes depend on market access and governance (Boyapati and Muthukumarappan 2025; Derebe et al. 2023).

Territorial economies. Refers to economic systems embedded in specific territories and shaped by local governance, cultural practices and ecological conditions. In Amazonian contexts, these are often linked to place-based sustainability initiatives and socio-environmental governance systems (Brondizio et al. 2021; Inoue et al. 2025).

Blended finance and enabling finance. Refers to financial approaches that combine public, private and community-based resources to support sustainable livelihoods. In forest contexts, this includes PES-type mechanisms, climate finance and collective arrangements that address the high transaction costs of conservation-based economies (Climate Policy Initiative 2024).

Value chains. Refers to the full set of activities linking production to markets, including aggregation, processing and distribution. In socio-bioeconomy contexts, strengthening value chains is central to increasing local value capture and enabling sustainable forest-based production systems (WWF Brasil 2024).

2. Methodology

This evaluation applied a mixed-methods, theory-based and contribution-oriented approach to generate credible and actionable learning across RFN's livelihoods portfolio. It drew on programme documentation, partner reporting, previous evaluations, commercial datasets, academic and grey literature, and key informant interviews, aligned with the OECD-DAC criteria. The analysis was structured around the three overarching evaluation questions (EQ1, EQ2, EQ3).

Given the diversity of contexts and the many external factors shaping results, the evaluation used a contribution analysis lens to assess the plausibility of RFN's contribution to observed outcomes, including how intended pathways compared with actual results and how these were influenced by policy shifts, market dynamics, and climatic or social factors. Evidence was weighted according to its purpose: ForEco commercial data was used primarily to assess scale and market trends, key informant interviews and programme documents to identify results, explain causal pathways and contextual factors, academic literature to compare RFN's approach under EQ2, and country cases and impact stories to generate transferable lessons (rather than direct cross-country comparison).

A systems lens was applied in parallel to examine interactions between markets, governance, socio-bioeconomy, forest ecosystems, tenure rights and cultural values, including possible unintended effects and conditions for scaling. The analysis was also guided by a rights-based, gender- and inclusion-responsive perspective, with attention to participation, power relations, differentiated impacts, culturally grounded understandings of well-being, and the distribution of risks and benefits.

2.1.Design, data collection and triangulation

Triangulation was undertaken systematically to strengthen the credibility of findings, using the evaluation matrix as a roadmap, cross-checking reported results with multiple sources, and assessing consistency. The analysis draws on a combination of document review and semi-structured interviews across countries and stakeholder groups. In total, 58 interviews were conducted with partners, community representatives, and external stakeholders. Where relevant, the report distinguishes between findings consistently reported across interviews and countries, and those that are more context-specific or based on fewer sources. Unless otherwise stated, findings reflect converging evidence across multiple data sources. The evidence base was built through five main components:

1. **A structured literature review of academic and grey literature on socio bioeconomy and livelihoods approaches**, and lessons from comparable programmes. This provided an analytical baseline for assessing RFN's approaches against external evidence, identifying best practices and emerging trends, informing EQ2 and strategic recommendations under EQ3.
2. **Programme document review** covering strategy papers, MEL datasets, donor proposals, partner reports and country specific documentation, including ForEco commercial data. This supported reconstruction of intervention logic, understanding of expected results, and assessing progress and constraints across the portfolio.
3. **Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs)** provided qualitative evidence to validate reported results and clarify causal mechanisms. Online- and in-person interviews covered RFN staff, partners, IPLC representatives and external stakeholders.
4. **Country deep dives and case studies** combined document review, interviews and contribution analysis, and generated a more detailed understanding of how livelihoods interventions unfold in context, and extraction of transferable lessons.
5. **A structured validation process** was used to test interpretations with RFN programme teams and partners, strengthen contextual accuracy, refine the livelihoods pathway of change, and increase ownership and uptake of findings.

2.2. Case selection and sampling

ForEco served as the anchor case due to its maturity and strong data availability. Additional country evidence was synthesised from DRC, Peru, Colombia and Indonesia, with public procurement (Brazil) and EIFF/KOBUMI (Indonesia) treated as impact stories. Both these in-depth cases were selected based on learning value, the diversity of livelihood models, and availability of data across different sources.

Sampling for interviews was purposive rather than representative, prioritising stakeholders most able to provide insight into results, implementation dynamics, enabling and constraining factors, and RFN's comparative role.

2.3. Ethical considerations

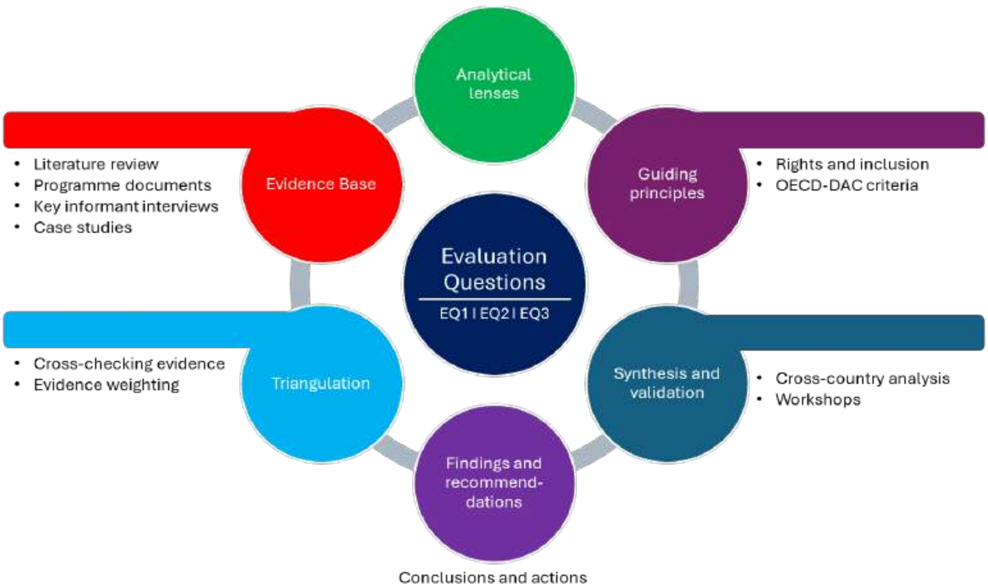
The evaluation adheres to RFN's ethical guidelines and GDPR requirements. All participants provide informed consent, and data has been anonymised and managed securely. Ethical considerations were integrated into interview planning and facilitation, including attention to power dynamics and safeguarding of respondents.

2.4. Quality assurance and validation

Quality assurance was overseen by the Team Leader, with a focus on methodological rigour, internal consistency and analytical coherence. Given the limited budget, formal external peer review was not undertaken. Yet the team has maintained quality through systematic internal checks at each stage, including verification of data completeness and accuracy, cross checking findings, ensuring consistency with the evaluation matrix, and internal peer review of draft sections.

Final validation was conducted through structured feedback from RFN (written and through a validation workshop), to confirm factual accuracy, test interpretations and strengthen practical relevance.

Figure 2: Simplified overview of methodology design



3. Global evidence

In forest contexts, livelihoods entail far more than cash income only. It includes subsistence use, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), agroforestry, fisheries, seasonal agriculture, and social and cultural relations tied to a territory (Chambers & Conway 1992; Scoones 1998; Derebe 2023; Boyapati and Muthukumarappan 2025). The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) remains the most widely used framework for livelihoods, defining it as the capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living, including sustainability and resilience to shocks, and maintaining such capabilities over time (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998; Carney et al., 1999).

Yet forest-based livelihoods among Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) cannot be understood through the SLF lens alone. *Buen Vivir* complements the SLF by also emphasising well-being, reciprocity, and relationality with nature, including the idea that nature itself holds rights (Gudynas, 2011). This is particularly relevant in tropical forest settings, where livelihoods are inseparable from land rights, collective governance, ecological stewardship, and cultural continuity (Fraser, 2018; Tigre & Le Tourneau, 2024). Territories governed by Indigenous Peoples often maintain higher forest integrity than surrounding areas, underlining their importance for conservation, climate mitigation, and biodiversity protection (Walker et al., 2020).

Within this context, socio-bioeconomy models have emerged as alternatives to conventional commodity-driven development. Rather than relying on monocultures or industrial production, these models are based on diversified agroforestry systems, NTFPs, community enterprises, and hybrid livelihood portfolios rooted in local ecology and culture (Brondizio et al., 2021; Garrett et al., 2024; Castro-Díaz & Brondizio, 2024). NTFPs contribute significantly to both household income and subsistence among forest-based households worldwide, whilst also supplying food, medicine, and culturally important materials (Derebe, 2023; Boyapati & Muthukumarappan, 2025). The value lies not only in income generation, but also in buffering shocks, reinforcing social cohesion, and supporting adaptive capacity (Djenontin et al., 2024). Evidence from Brazil further suggests that community-led sociobiodiversity value chains can perform well economically when they are equitable, organised, and supported through value addition and market access (WWF Brasil, 2024; Embrapa, 2014). Yet such systems remain vulnerable to logistical barriers, opaque pricing, dependence on intermediaries, insufficient working capital, sanitary and commercial requirements, and inadequate state support for community enterprises (Castro-Díaz & Brondizio, 2024).

Overall, the literature suggests that support to livelihoods in forest areas should be treated as a territorial and rights-based agenda, linking well-being, resilience, and conservation.

Relevant academic research points to a relatively clear set of good practices for sustainable forest livelihoods.

- **Diversified livelihood portfolios are generally more resilient than single-commodity strategies.** Forest households are better able to cope with market, climate, and seasonal shocks when they combine multiple sources of food, income, and subsistence rather than relying on one product or buyer (Scoones, 1998; Munanura et al., 2018; Derebe, 2023; Djenontin et al., 2024).
- **Territorial governance needs to be strengthened alongside economic activities.** Livelihood gains are more durable where they are linked to secure land rights, collective institutions, and community decision-making structures (Walker et al., 2020; Dawson et al., 2021; Castro-Díaz & Brondizio, 2024).
- **Communities need support to move up the value chain.** Processing, storage, quality control, branding, certification, and improved market access can help communities capture more value locally instead of depending only on raw-material sales to intermediaries (WWF Brasil, 2024; Garrett et al., 2024; IDB, 2024).

- **Collective organisations are often essential.** Co-operatives, associations, and community enterprises provide scale, bargaining power, aggregation capacity, and an institutional interface with public and private markets (Brondizio et al., 2021; WWF Brasil, 2024).
- **Social inclusion must be deliberate, especially for women and youth.** Benefits do not automatically reach all groups equally, and women's labour often remains under-recognised unless inclusion is addressed explicitly (Brondizio et al., 2021; Djenontin et al., 2024).
- **Place-based and culturally grounded approaches tend to work better than standardised models.** Interventions are generally more effective when they build on local ecological knowledge, customary institutions, and territorial priorities (Gudynas, 2011; Tigre & Le Tourneau, 2024; Inoue et al., 2025).
- **Market support works best when combined with public policy engagement.** Public procurement, enabling regulation, territorial planning, and recognition of community rights often matter as much as private market access (Government of Pará, 2022; Kaiser, Haase, & Krueger, 2023).
- **Appropriate finance remains critical.** Community enterprises often struggle with working capital, patient finance, and risk-sharing mechanisms adapted to their realities (Climate Policy Initiative, 2024; IDB, 2024).
- **Success should be measured in more than income.** In forest settings, livelihood outcomes should also be assessed in terms of resilience, food security, governance, cultural continuity, and conservation, not only revenue generation (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Djenontin et al., 2024; IPBES, n.d.).

Consequently, the literature broadly supports RFN's move towards integrated, territorial livelihoods approaches. It suggests that lasting results are most likely where interventions combine economic support with territorial governance, rights defence, organisational strengthening, and policy engagement (Walker et al., 2020; Dawson et al., 2021; Castro-Díaz & Brondizio, 2024). It also reinforces the importance of diversification, women's inclusion, and longer-term accompaniment for community organisations and enterprises (Derebe, 2023; Djenontin et al., 2024; WWF Brasil, 2024).

At the same time, the evidence cautions against treating commercialisation alone as a proxy for success. Viable livelihoods depend not only on markets, but also on whether communities retain control over territory, institutions, and the terms on which they engage with external actors (Gudynas, 2011; Tigre & Le Tourneau, 2024; Inoue et al., 2025). The evidence suggests that the most viable approach is less about promoting isolated value chains and more about supporting the institutional, territorial, and political conditions that allow diversified and rights-based forest livelihoods to endure.

4. EQ1 – Results achieved (2019–2025)

In response to EQ1, the evaluation finds that RFN's livelihoods-related results are strongest where economic initiatives are embedded within rights-based governance and territorial control, consistently evidenced through interviews, programme documents and consistent with literature reviewed. Across the portfolio, the most consistent achievements relate to enabling conditions, including tenure, community organisation, and institutional capacity, while income and commercial outcomes remain more uneven and context-dependent.

At country level, livelihoods are rarely understood as income alone, but rather in terms of territorial permanence, food security, cultural continuity, and reduced vulnerability to illegal economies and coercive market dynamics. ForEco shows that scaled socio-bioeconomy results are possible where integrated support packages and market channels are in place, whereas other countries are generally at earlier stages and demonstrate results mainly through governance, enabling conditions, and emerging pilots. Note that because livelihoods are often embedded within broader rights-, governance-, and conservation work, much of the evidence is qualitative, and should be read as a synthesis of patterns of changes made in income, diversification, market participation, territorial governance, forest stewardship, and socio-bioeconomy support.[1]

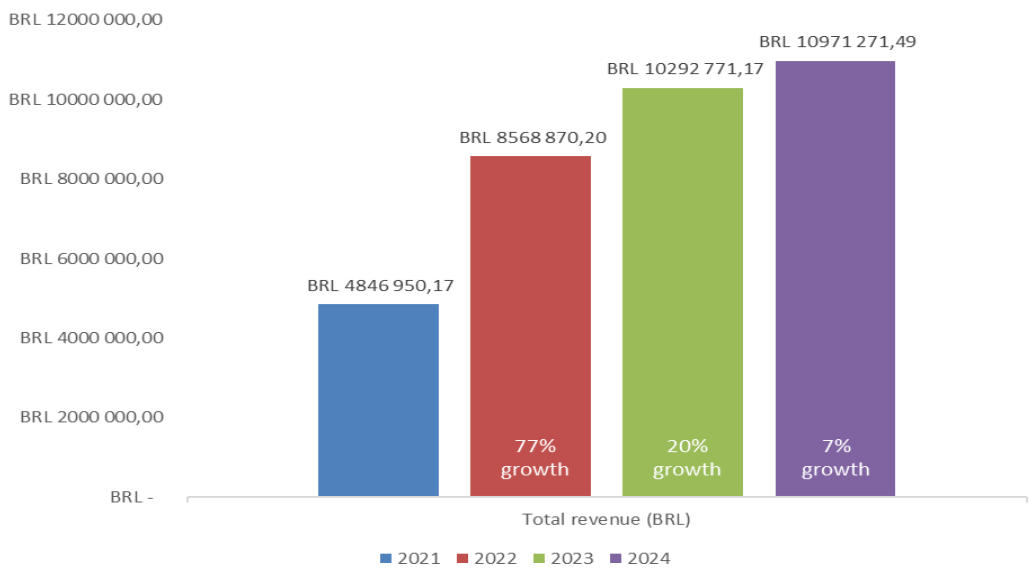
Below follows a summary of the more detailed country reports (see annexes 1–4).

4.1.Brazil/ForEco

Brazil has the clearest and most explicit livelihoods focus, including quantified data on sales and market participation. ForEco's 2021–2024 results framework indicates strong progress on livelihoods and value-chain development, alongside more mixed but generally positive movement on territorial protection. Despite early COVID-19 delays, the 2023 evaluation found the programme was performing very well by mid-term, with several projects exceeding targets. By 2024, ForEco reported 76 commercial activities/value chains, surpassing the mid-term target of 55.

These findings are strongly supported by both programme data and consistent interview evidence across partners and stakeholders in Brazil.

Figure 3: Total Revenue ForEco 2021-2024



[1] According to RFN, this is referred to as «territorial production systems" (*aranjos territoriais*) among partners. See also definitions in Chapter 1.1.

Income increased substantially, with a reported annual income reached BRL 11.4 million in 2024, above both the baseline (BRL 3.5 million) and the mid-term target (BRL 7 million), while cumulative income is reported at BRL 33.1 million by 2024.[2]

Figure 4: Impact story 1: ForEco and public procurement schemes

ForEco – making public procurement work for Indigenous and traditional producers

ForEco has helped turn public procurement from a formal policy into a functioning market channel for Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities, linking livelihoods, territorial governance and local food systems in practice.

Before the intervention, programmes such as PNAE (Brazil's National School Feeding Programme) and PAA (Brazil's Food Acquisition Programme) existed on paper, but were largely inaccessible to communities. Complex documentation requirements, tender procedures and logistical constraints meant that most producers were excluded. As a result, sales were often fragmented, opportunistic and unreliable, limiting both income and incentives to invest in production.

Through partners such as ISA, FOIRN, IEPÉ and CNS, ForEco focused on making these systems work in practice. This involved supporting communities to secure documentation, navigate public tenders, plan production and sales, comply with administrative and sanitary standards, and organise aggregation and delivery across remote territories. In Rio Negro, for example, FOIRN's work was explicitly designed to enable Indigenous producers to qualify for school feeding contracts, while addressing the bureaucratic barriers that would otherwise prevent participation.

These efforts have generated strong and measurable results:

- BRL 7.4 million in public procurement sales between 2021 and 2024, representing 21.4% of total programme revenues
- Growth from BRL 584,875 in 2021 to BRL 3.3 million in 2024, an increase of 464%
- 9,541 producers reached since 2021, including 4,445 women. Within this, ISA alone reached 2,379 producers, including 953 women

Beyond the numbers, the most important result is systemic. Public procurement has created predictable demand for products rooted in traditional food systems, including cassava, flour, fruits and other locally produced goods. In places such as Rio Negro and Terra do Meio, this has enabled communities to move from fragmented sales towards more organised production, collective planning and stronger engagement with public institutions.

At the same time, the approach has reinforced territorial production systems. By linking traditional crops to institutional markets, communities have been able to diversify production, strengthen food security and maintain cultural practices. Women's participation has also increased, particularly in production and processing activities, contributing to both income and local leadership.

Overall, ForEco shows that when institutional barriers are addressed, public procurement can function as more than a policy instrument. It becomes a practical mechanism for strengthening territorial economies. In doing so, it supports not only income generation, but also governance, food sovereignty and the long term resilience of forest based communities.

[2] Note that this deviates slightly from the consolidated commercial dataset assessed by the team, which reports BRL 34.7 million for 2021–2024.

Participation also expanded, with 380 new participants reported in 2024 (256 women, 124 men), and 9,541 producers engaged cumulatively since 2021 (4,445 women, 5,096 men), nearly doubling the baseline of 4,739. In 2024, 753 communities were engaged in production and 177 new producers were trained in production, business and finance, with a high share of women among Indigenous participants. Documentation also points to continued value-chain diversification, pilots/studies, and new NTFP contracts, supported by a community of practice that strengthened learning, market access, and socio-bioeconomy narratives.

Enterprise development has primarily taken the form of community-based commercial structures and associative models rather than formal private companies. Examples include Wariró (indigenous brand)/ *Casa dos Produtores Indígenas do Rio Negro*, which operates as a commercial outlet and aggregation point under Indigenous management, alongside various producer associations and cooperatives engaged in processing and sales of products such as açaí, oils and crafts. However, available documentation provides limited systematic information on legal registration, ownership structures, number of enterprises established, profitability, or how these function in practice.

Most ForEco products/services are sold domestically according to data reviewed, however, a few products are also exported. This may hold a higher potential in terms of revenue and price premiums, but also face constraints in terms of technical assistance and rigid requirements. See box below.

Figure 5: ForEco and exports of products

ForEco: Exports of products

Exports can, in principle, generate price premiums. While not reported consistently, some ForEco-linked products are exported indirectly through buyers and processors. Examples include processed Brazil nuts sold onward by companies such as Wickbold and Mutrã, rubber from Médio Juruá and Terra do Meio purchased by Veja for global shoe production, and seed oils, butters and biocosmetics purchased by Natura and marketed both domestically and internationally.

Overall, these exports appear small relative to domestic sales, and are constrained by requirements related to product specifications, quality and sanitary compliance, certification, packaging and scale. In Médio Juruá, Menezes (2022) describes how Veja buys the full rubber output and pays a premium that includes an “environmental services” component. However, high remuneration may cause sustainability risks unless producer organisations have appropriate capacity and governance mechanisms in place, including continuous technical assistance.

The same thesis describes structured buyer relationships for processed andiroba oil and murumuru/ucuúba butters purchased by Natura, including technical and administrative support. A key point is that commercial viability depends on more than having a buyer, it also entails logistics, coordination and sustained technical capabilities. In practice, several partners (including ISA) note that producer organisations are not sufficiently mature for export-oriented compliance in the short term, which would require further investment and time.

Livelihoods is also embedded in territorial protection and protection-of-defenders. From 2024 programme documentation, partners supported 63 local organisations to develop protection strategies, trained 505 people in territorial/human-rights protection, and reported 73 advocacy actions, including emergency relocation, legal support, and technical assistance. Protection results show a gradual shift toward more territories rated “high” by 2023–2024 compared to the 2021 baseline, though year-to-year movement should be interpreted cautiously. Still, the evidence suggests that ForEco has scaled up a diversified portfolio of forest economy value chains, generated substantial revenues, broadened participation, and contributed to stronger territorial protection capacity.

In sum, the ForEco programme appears to be a socio-bioeconomy approach - at scale, with many relevant outcomes. It thus provides the clearest evidence of scaled livelihoods results in the portfolio, though profitability and continuation/financial sustainability remain uncertain.

4.2. Peru and Colombia

In Peru and Colombia, livelihoods-related results are documented less through consolidated commercial figures and more through a governance-first pathway where "economic alternatives" are pursued as part of territorial autonomy, risk reduction, and *buen vivir*. In interviews from Peru, livelihoods is consistently framed as inseparable from territorial control and collective rules. Economic initiatives are expected to follow agreed territorial policies on sustainable use, and to function as a practical counterweight to external pressures and illegal economies rather than as "income-only" interventions.

In Peru, two initiatives stand out as the most concrete livelihood pilots supported to date, both still in an early-to-mid maturity phase. The Wampís aguaje oil initiative (Candungos) is described as one of the most promising livelihood initiatives supported by RFN, although it is not yet profitable. However, the pilot has demonstrated a potential sustainable harvesting/processing pathway, building local capability around a new technology and diversifying the use of the plant. Secondly, the Achuar Shakaim cooperative is positioned as a potential income generator through value addition (chocolate and ungurahui oil), although there are constraints including strong competition, buyer timelines, limited working capital, and the need for stronger management capacity. Governance risks may grow with increased cash flows, e.g. elite capture, internal divisions, and corruption concerns, requiring explicit safeguards and transparency.

Across both Peru cases, interview data adds clarity on why income effects remain modest so far. Illegal actors (notably mining/logging) absorb time and resources that could otherwise go to productive investments, and regulatory requirements are highly challenging for producer groups. Consequently, cooperative/business models must be designed around realistic incentives and accountability. Some partners prefer family-based participation over whole-community enterprises to avoid fragmentation of responsibilities. In terms of gender and youth inclusion, this largely builds on traditional roles. As an example, for oils, roles are described as family-distributed (men/youth harvest and carry, whereas women/youth lead washing/processing). The participation of youth is seen as essential for knowledge continuity and reducing migration pressures.

In Colombia, interview data points to livelihood results that are primarily social and organisational, e.g. women's circles, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and incremental market-readiness for crafts and tourism. There are no immediate large income gains, and the livelihood approaches are more focused on reinforcing cultural continuity, practical skills, and collective governance. This is seen as a precondition for ensuring a future market participation safer and more equitable, as money can quickly destabilise communities if benefit-sharing is not locally legitimate and transparent.

Overall, these cases show stronger results on governance, social organisation and readiness than on mature income effects. In both countries, livelihoods interventions appear as early-stage with modest income effects till date.

Evidence from Peru and Colombia is more limited and context-specific, with findings based primarily on partner interviews and selected case material.

4.3. DRC

In DRC, RFN's livelihoods-related results are best characterised as "post-tenure." In interviews, partners consistently describe livelihood gains as dependent on securing space, legal tenure, management structures, and local rules, before investments can be made. This is framed as a two-step pathway of "securing spaces first, then valorising resources," where community forestry instruments are used to define development priorities and rules for sustainable use (including zones for agriculture, livestock and fish farming to support basic survival needs). Governance and tenure foundations are therefore the core livelihood-related achievement to date.

Note that while several findings are consistent across interviews, evidence remains largely qualitative and reflects early-stage interventions.

Partners highlight RFN support to the Community Forest Concessions (CFCL), where communities' applications and accompanying processes (socio-economic studies, participatory planning, and Simple Management Plans/PSGs) establish the enabling conditions for livelihoods investments. In North Kivu, CREF reports that eight CFCL application dossiers have been completed and submitted, while accompaniment continues for communities already in the PSG/implementation phase. This is described as highly consequential, as communities without recognised tenure and functioning management instruments remain "stuck" and cannot credibly enforce rules, negotiate external pressures, or mobilise livelihoods investments otherwise.

Some communities have moved beyond tenure into implementation and smaller livelihood initiatives, but often through practical enabling investments rather than mature value chains. RFN has supported some communities and partners with production of cocoa and cassava, e.g. providing small credit schemes and investments in processing and transport. This is seen as essential by partners, because otherwise products cannot reach buyers or are sold too cheaply.

A distinct feature in DRC is that livelihood protection and benefit mechanisms are also pursued in collaboration with commercial operators, not only through community production. Based on dialogue with forestry and agro-industrial actors, support has been provided by the latter to schools and health centres, in addition to efforts to address recruitment of minors and improve labour conditions. This has also entailed inclusion-relevant measures, such as payroll systems that initially failed to recognise Pygmy (Batwa) names.

The main livelihoods result to date is governance infrastructure (tenure, plans, local institutions, and negotiated safeguards) rather than mature market outcomes. Quantified income effects remain limited, largely due to early-stage of communities in terms of production, market access and basic infrastructure.

4.4. Indonesia

In Indonesia, livelihoods outcomes are closely tied to rights recognition and territorial access, with most partners focused on securing the legal and administrative space for community economies before larger-scale market engagement becomes viable.

Compared to Brazil/ForEco, livelihood results in both reporting and from interviews, appear more uneven and typically smaller-scale, with many initiatives oriented toward subsistence and local stability rather than immediate cash income. Pusaka, for instance, describes livelihoods as a relatively recent and deliberately secondary component (approx. 10–12% of its budget), designed primarily to strengthen customary territories and ways of life. Market linkages are present, but framed as incremental and locally rooted (e.g., diversified sago processing, coconut oil, and value-added fish products), with some products already reaching markets. Intsia's work in Papua similarly highlights that regulatory recognition and governance arrangements are key enabling conditions, with some emerging livelihood outcomes through a mix of market facilitation (bringing buyers, promoting cacao/copra) and local problem-solving (e.g., rice planting supported by customary land allocation). There are also some practical constraints reported such as pests affecting cocoa output and limited financing to scale support.

WARSI stands out as an example where long-term rights and planning work has more clearly translated into concrete livelihoods outcomes. According to interviews, WARSI has contributed to securing more than 50 social forestry schemes and enabled communities to establish business units (e.g. ecotourism, micro-hydro and agroforestry) that would otherwise be treated as illegal encroachment. Additionally, WARSI has contributed to policy-related results such as local regulations and improved extension services for social forestry implementation. In North Kalimantan, interviews describe how a Village Information System has integrated data across 68 villages, thus supporting boundary clarification and enabling community enterprise development. A separate WARSI case (Bujang Raba) also points to ecosystem-service-linked revenues and other income, including carbon revenues (reported at about IDR 1 billion since 2019, across five villages) and village-level income linked to ecotourism/PES, alongside investments in scholarships and forest patrols. At community level in North Kalimantan, the focus has been on diversification of forest products and processing (e.g., agarwood resin; essential oils; rattan crafts), with market channels ranging from village-owned enterprises to social media marketing. This has also contributed to increased confidence and public voice among community members.

Most existing partners have more of an advocacy focus in relation to livelihoods, with the exception of Warsi and Bentara. The latter reports also to be selling products to KOBUMI, which constitutes a larger “enterprise” pathway among the Indonesian partners. See box below. Interview evidence indicates broadly consistent views on the model’s potential, although perspectives on financial sustainability remain mixed.

Overall, the evidence suggest that RFN’s livelihoods-related contribution in Indonesia appears to be strongest on enabling conditions (rights recognition processes, planning and permitting systems, and partner/community capability), with livelihood outcomes emerging among more advanced partners and where intermediaries or enterprises can manage aggregation, quality, and buyer relationships. Partner interviews highlight constraints consistent with other countries, including limited market readiness among advocacy-oriented organisations, uneven production volumes and quality control, and the practical costs of marketing and logistics. These are factors that shape both the scale and feasibility of moving beyond pilot initiatives.

An exception is the KOBUMI-model (described below), which shows promise in terms of commercialisation and scaling of operations. Even if the model may not be applicable in every context, it is the only example encountered of a RFN livelihoods initiative that appear to have reached sufficient commercial maturity to move towards full financial sustainability, and scalable.

Figure 6: Impact story 2: EIFF and EcoNusa

EIFF - Building a market pathway through KOBUMI

Under the Eastern Indonesia Forest Facility (EIFF), RFN supported EcoNusa to develop new livelihood pathways for Indigenous and local communities in Papua and Maluku. A central result was the creation of KOBUMI, a dedicated business vehicle designed to aggregate, process and sell forest and agroforestry products from remote communities.

KOBUMI was established to solve a practical problem. While communities were producing commodities such as nutmeg, copra and cacao, they faced major barriers to entering formal markets, including limited aggregation, inconsistent quality, lack of traceability, and weak links to buyers. As a result, most production remained small scale, informal and unable to capture higher value. EcoNusa helped set up KOBUMI as a commercially oriented company working closely with producer cooperatives. While the ownership structure has evolved over time, the core function has remained the same: to act as an intermediary that connects community production to formal markets, while supporting quality, traceability and organisations along the value chain.

KOBUMI has now moved beyond the pilot stage. By 2025, it was sourcing a range of products including nutmeg, mace, copra, patchouli oil, fermented cacao beans and cloves. It has invested in cooperative development, post-harvest systems and traceability. Financial performance and results show clear potential, but also highlights ongoing challenges:

- IDR 3.6 billion in revenue and IDR 1.4 billion profit before tax reported in 2023
- Positive net profit of IDR 318.7 million in 2025
- 124 farmers registered in its traceability system, and achieved ISO 9001 and HACCP certification - thus enabling access to higher-value markets
- Continued dependence on a limited number of profitable products, particularly copra

The company still carries debt, and some value chains, such as nutmeg, have not yet reached break-even. This means that while the model is commercially promising, it is not yet fully financially self-sustaining and still depends on access to working capital and continued development support.

The most important result is therefore not short-term profitability, but the establishment of a functioning model through which forest-based products from remote communities can enter formal markets. KOBUMI provides a more predictable market outlet, improves price transparency, and supports producer organisations to meet market requirements. This has contributed to increased income opportunities and local employment, including for women in sorting and operational roles.

The model creates a pathway for strengthening territorial economies by making forest-based production more viable, helping reduce pressure on unsustainable activities. However, these outcomes depend on stronger governance, safeguards and market conditions. Consequently, the key challenge is to move from early viability to long-term sustainability through diversification, improved management capacity and better access to finance.

Overall, KOBUMI demonstrates a credible pathway linking forest communities to formal markets, while highlighting the continued support needed to achieve durable, sustainable livelihoods.

4.5. Three interlinked types of results

Across the five countries, results cluster around three interlinked areas: (1) governance foundations, (2) economic alternatives, and (3) systems change. Results are strongest where these are combined. Governance creates the conditions for livelihoods, where practical livelihood gains reinforce territorial permanence; and systems change determines whether results can endure and scale. The relative emphasis on these result types varies across countries, with Brazil showing more advanced market outcomes, while other contexts are more focused on governance and early-stage livelihood development.

4.5.1. What worked well

Building on the findings above, five factors appear to explain stronger livelihood outcomes:

1. **Livelihoods work best when treated as integral, not secondary.** The strongest results occur where livelihoods are embedded in governance and territorial protection rather than added as a stand-alone component. This is clearest in ForEco and is also reflected in DRC and Indonesia, where tenure and planning are seen as prerequisites for viable livelihood investments.
2. **Integrated support packages deliver stronger results.** Results are stronger where production support is combined with aggregation, compliance, working capital, market intermediation and safeguards. ForEco is the clearest example, with similar patterns appear in Peru, DRC and in the EIFF/KOBUMI-experience in Indonesia.
3. **Locally grounded models are more robust.** Interviewees consistently favour grounded, low-input models built on existing practices over externally designed, maintenance-heavy models. Examples include agroforestry systems, fields and gardens, traditional crafts, locally managed NTFP harvesting, and selective value addition. In Indonesia, interviews emphasise that externally driven group models often generate scepticism because they resemble earlier government programmes. Approaches that build on existing practices and show tangible benefits are more likely to sustain motivation and collective action.
4. **Inclusion is strongest when linked to real roles and benefits.** This is visible in women's circles and skills transmission in Colombia, family-based participation in Peru, and women's strong roles in selected ForEco chains. A related lesson is that increased cash flows can generate elite capture or internal disputes if benefit-sharing is unclear.
5. **Peer learning and convening help scale workable approaches.** RFN-supported exchanges have helped strengthen implementation, collaboration and scaling. ForEco's community-of-practice model is the clearest example, where shared learning/ troubleshooting and joint initiatives have helped align partner approaches. Similar dynamics appear across countries, where peer learning is seen as crucial. Such exchanges may also strengthen MEL by helping partners interpret results, clarify definitions and improve data quality over time.

4.5.2. What did not work well

Overall, the evidence points less to wrong intentions than to structural constraints and design weaknesses. Four recurring constraints limited results across the portfolio.

1. **Financial sustainability remains the exception.** Rising sales do not automatically translate into self-financing livelihood systems. High transaction costs, uneven volumes, weak working capital, and continued technical support needs remain major constraints. Even in ForEco, where revenue growth has been strong, profitability cannot be assessed robustly, with interviews emphasising the continuing need for technical support and working capital. Peru faces similar early- to mid-stage constraints, including slow buyer cycles, strong competition, weak working capital and limited management capacity. In DRC, interviews warn that livelihood activities can create problems if transport and market access remain unresolved. Indonesia faces similar constraints. KOBUMI may be an exception, although full sustainability is yet to be demonstrated. But across the portfolio, most pathways remain dependent on continued financial support.

2. **Collective enterprise models underperform when imposed.** Collective models underperform when imposed mainly to satisfy external requirements. Peru interviews note that community-wide enterprises often falter because responsibility becomes fragmented. Indonesia interviews echo similar scepticism, with some communities associating "groups" with earlier government programmes created only to access aid. Collective models work best when benefits are immediate and tangible, such as aggregation, bargaining power, shared processing or joint transport.
3. **Insecurity and illegal economies distort incentives.** In several contexts, insecurity and illegal economies distort incentives, raise costs, and reduce the competitiveness of legal livelihood alternatives. In Peru, illegal mining and logging increase costs, complicate travel, and absorb organisational time/ capacity for enterprise development. Colombia faces similar constraints through conflict, threats and illegal economies. In DRC, conflict and weak governance slow implementation and pull labour towards more extractive activities. As forest-based livelihood initiatives cannot compete on short-term income with illegal economies, programmes rely on longer-term outcomes such as well-being, safety, territorial permanence and cultural continuity, alongside governance mechanisms to reduce the risk of internal conflict.
4. **Weaknesses in MEL and commercial evidence.** A persistent weakness is uneven evidence. ForEco has the strongest commercial data, but gaps remain on costs, prices and profitability. In other countries, many important outcomes are social, governance-related or qualitative, making comparability difficult. The new Livelihoods indicator 1.5 may help address some of these issues, depending on how it is implemented (see next chapter, and annex 8).

4.6. Implications for livelihood indicator (SO 1.5)

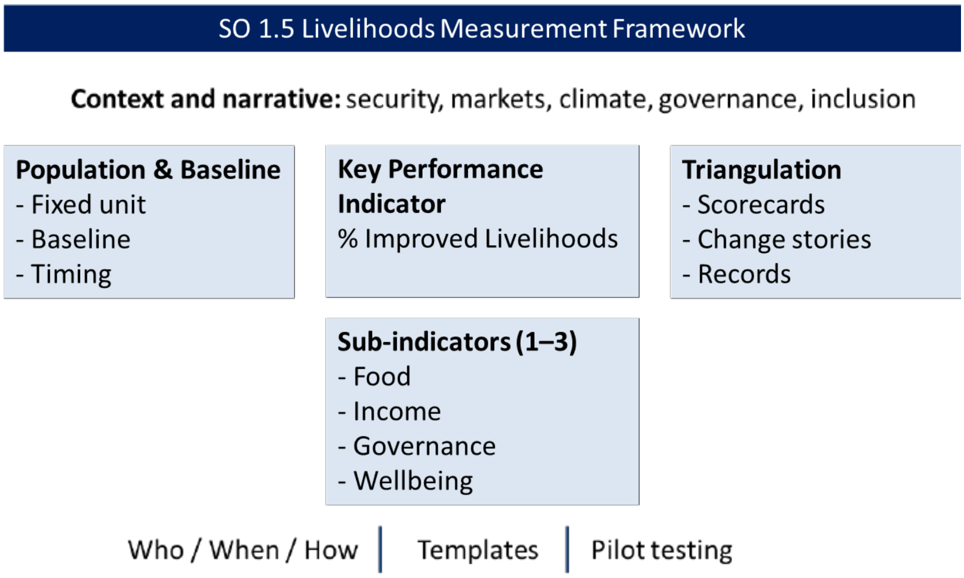
Evidence on livelihood outcomes is uneven across countries, reflecting both differences in programme maturity and limitations in available monitoring data. Livelihood outcomes are often multi-dimensional and strongly context-dependent, often combining income-related changes with food security, cultural continuity, community governance, and resilience against illegal economies and shocks. As such, the RFN's new SO indicator 1.5 is highly relevant, but requires clear baselines, consistent denominators, annual qualitative/mixed-method verification, and simple disaggregation by sex/age. Baseline data and feasible means of verification are essential for demonstrating change over time, and may require an inception-phase while monitoring systems are established.

Indicators alone do not explain the causal pathway, which suggests that quantitative reporting should be complemented with participatory assessment that captures "what changed, for whom, and why," including gender and youth patterns. It is also important to limit the number of indicators/reporting measures, to reduce reporting burden and improve data quality, while still enabling credible aggregation at organisational level.

Below is a simple framework illustrating a practical measurement system for SO 1.5, where the central KPI, % of targeted populations with improved livelihoods, is supported by a structured but flexible evidence framework. Rather than relying on a single metric, the approach combines a small set of context-relevant sub-indicators, triangulated through mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), and anchored in clearly defined population units and baselines.

This is embedded in a simple data collection system and complemented by a narrative layer that explains contextual drivers, constraints, and observed patterns. Together, these elements ensure that reported livelihood improvements are both comparable across contexts and meaningful in diverse, high-risk environments.

Figure 7: Component for operationalising SO 1.5



See Annex 8 for a more detailed description on the suggested framework.

5. EQ2 – Evidence base and RFN's added value

EQ2 examines whether RFN's approach is consistent with wider evidence on effective forest-based livelihoods and what this implies about RFN's added value. This section draws on a combination of literature, programme documentation and interview evidence. While some findings are well supported across multiple sources, others remain more indicative, reflecting the emerging nature of evidence in several country contexts.

In general, the evaluation finds that RFN's approach is broadly aligned with global evidence on effective forest-based livelihoods, particularly in its emphasis on rights, governance, and territorially grounded socio-bioeconomies. Both literature and portfolio evidence converge on a common finding: livelihood results are strongest where economic activities are combined with secure tenure, collective governance, and enabling systems. The added value lies primarily in RFN's long-term, trust-based partnership model and the ability to link governance processes with emerging livelihood pathways. Cross-country evidence suggests that low-input, locally grounded and diversified models are generally more robust than externally designed approaches, while climate and market volatility reinforce the need for diversification and contingency planning. At the same time, significant gaps remain in evidence on profitability, financial sustainability, and distributional outcomes.

The ForEco case provides the strongest evidence of commercial traction and serves as an important reference case. Two patterns are especially relevant for RFN's future work:

1. **Diversification across market pathways matters.** ForEco's growth is not attributable to one "winning product," but to multiple channels that reduce risk and create more stable demand. The expansion of services (notably sport fishing and tourism) illustrates how higher-margin activities can complement commodity-like NTFPs. This also applies to KOBUMI in Indonesia.
2. **ForEco demonstrates that systems results are central to livelihoods.** The most transferable lesson is not a specific commodity, but the integrated support package required to make market channels work. The public procurement outcome is such an example.

At the same time, the gaps in ForEco's commercial dataset limits RFN's ability to assess value for money, distinguish between gross revenue growth and net livelihood benefit. This hinders decision-making relating to prioritisation of investments and future sustainability/exit plans.

5.1. Territorial scope

Both interviews and programme documentation suggest that despite wide territorial reach of RFN's livelihoods work, there are substantial variation in maturity and scale across contexts. Brazil (ForEco) demonstrates the strongest programme-level consolidation of results, with reported engagement in 31 territories, 753 Indigenous and extractive communities, and 9,541 direct beneficiaries since 2021, according to programme documents. Indonesia's earlier East Indonesia Forest Facility (ended in 2023) reported engagement across 172 villages and 34,000 direct beneficiaries in 2022, including economic alternatives and enterprise development, although these figures are not directly comparable to ForEco. Current livelihoods investments in Indonesia appear smaller in scale than previously through EIFF. In Peru, Colombia and DRC, the data suggest that livelihoods work is more often embedded in governance-first programming and documented through pilots and enabling conditions, with uneven and generally earlier-stage outcomes. Note however, that differences in scale are not directly comparable across contexts. These findings are broadly consistent across the literature and interview data, although operationalisation varies by country and partner capacity.

Portfolio variation suggests that RFN should avoid a single livelihoods model and instead differentiate support by partner maturity, territorial risk and type of pathway pursued. Stages of maturity may vary according to geography and country context, but also in between partners. See chapter 6.3 for more detailed description of these stages.

5.2. Efficiency

Efficiency can be judged only partially and mainly in operational, not cost-effectiveness, terms. The ForEco dataset shows revenue trends but not comparative cost-effectiveness in the strict OECD-DAC sense of inputs versus results, across value chains or partners. In other words, it shows sales performance, but not whether one value chain, partner, or territory is more cost-efficient (or profitable) than another. Nor can it isolate how much of the observed revenue growth is attributable to specific inputs. This limitation is reinforced by fragmentation of data, lack of harmonised definitions, and reporting inconsistencies across partners.

Across countries, efficiency is heavily shaped by contextual cost drivers, e.g. staff accompaniment, difficult logistics in remote territories, inflation, exchange-rate losses, and the transaction costs of operating in complex settings. In ForEco, salary costs increased due to inflation and the need to maintain technical capacity close to communities, while travel costs increased by fuel, transport and river-based logistics. Yet, according to programme reports, partners also improved cost-efficiency by combining agendas, sharing costs, reducing consultancies, and relying more on in-house technical support and pro bono services. Similarly, in DRC, cost-efficiency was reported improved through better planning, online follow-up and joint implementation. Across programmes, implementation costs vary according to contextual factors (community-based/territorially dispersed, or more policy- and advocacy-oriented), suggesting that higher costs do not necessarily indicate weak performance.

5.3. RFN’s comparative advantage

RFN’s added value lies less in any single model than in its partnership modality: long-term, trust-based relationships, long-term and predictable funding, institutional strengthening, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to link rights and governance processes with practical livelihood pathways. This modality is seen as critical by partners, because it allows for learning, adaptation and organisational strengthening over time. Across countries, RFN has assisted partners build the organisational and political capacity needed to become credible local actors, engage provincial or territorial authorities, and create the conditions for income-generating activities to take root. RFN’s ability to support livelihoods and market channels at scale while remaining territorially grounded, most visible in ForEco, also constitutes a strong comparative advantage.

Internally, RFN has taken steps to clarify concepts, develop a shared Theory of Change, and introduce a global livelihoods indicator (SO 1.5), partly to reduce fragmentation and ensure that ForEco does not remain isolated from the wider portfolio. This has also helped bridge different local vocabularies, e.g. “family community economy.”

Many organisations work on livelihoods, but they differ in the balance between field-based implementation and policy/finance systems change. In line with the ToR, a qualitative comparison was undertaken of RFN vs. similar organisations such as RFUS, RFUK - and WRI. The comparison was based on interviews, document review and secondary sources. Note however that interview was not conducted with RFUK, and is based on online research and interview data from partners in DRC.

RAINFOREST FOUNDATION US	RFUS has not historically framed livelihoods as a standalone thematic focus, but it supports livelihoods through enabling conditions, land and territorial rights, strong Indigenous organisations, supportive policy frameworks, capacities and productive assets, and linkages to capital and markets, including incentive payments and results-based mechanisms. The organisation combines partner support with some direct programming, with a strong emphasis on institutional strengthening and Indigenous-led finance mechanisms, including territorial funds. RFUS is a comparatively small organisation, working mainly in the Amazon and Mesoamerica

through Indigenous and forest peoples’ organisations and territorial funds. Some country teams are hands-on, for example in Peru, but overall field presence is more limited than RFN and its partners. With an annual budget of roughly USD 9 million, RFUS typically operates through targeted initiatives rather than large portfolio style programmes. Common instruments include conservation incentives, payment for results, monitoring stipends, small scale local economic development, business skills support, and enabling Indigenous led funds.

This is broadly aligned with RFN’s approach and logic, but RFN is to a larger degree providing long-term grants and partnerships and, in Brazil through ForEco, has demonstrated an ability to operationalise livelihood initiatives at greater scale.

RAINFOREST FOUNDATION UK
SECURING LANDS, SUSTAINING LIVES

RFUK frames its work around protecting rainforests by securing Indigenous and forest peoples’ land rights, supporting community forest management, and strengthening advocacy and accountability. It runs ForestLink, a forest monitoring tool and programme, alongside a separate thematic area on Indigenous land and livelihoods. The latter includes support to community production and market engagement. In practice, RFUK appears to provide more technical and accountability-oriented support, e.g. monitoring tools, documentation, socio-economic studies, and engagement with concessions and operators. Additionally, the organisation focuses on market access and enterprise support by linking producers to buyers and strengthening producer organisations.

RFUK is substantially smaller than RFN, with annual income between £4 to £7 million, and less staff. Operations span across multiple rainforest countries, but typically with less field presence than RFN and its partners. RFUK has a similar rights-based framing, but provides more targeted technical contributions with a clear market approach.

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

WRI is a global research organisation focused on environment and development, including forests. It frames livelihoods and jobs mainly through systems change, policy and investment agendas such as restoration and landscape programmes, and through data and tools that shape governance, enforcement, and supply chain action. Where WRI supports livelihood related initiatives, this is typically delivered through partners rather than long term accompaniment in specific territories, as field presence is not its core comparative advantage. WRI’s strength lies in evidence generation, datasets, decision support platforms, convening, and policy influence at national and global levels, with livelihood effects often indirect via planning and investment shifts. A potential constraint is that high level solutions do not always translate into grounded livelihood outcomes without strong delivery partners.

WRI is substantially larger than RFN, RFUK, and RFUS, with its 2024 annual report referencing nearly 2,000 staff globally and multiple international offices. Compared to RFN, WRI is complementary and strong on evidence and influence at scale, but structurally different from RFN’s long term partner accompaniment model and field-based initiatives.

All of these organisations share a somewhat similar approach as RFN. RFUS and RFN have a broadly aligned logic: livelihood change is pursued through enabling conditions, Indigenous organisation-building and finance/market mechanisms. However, RFN’s portfolio indicates a stronger ability to operate at scale through long-term partner ecosystems, with ForEco as an illustrating example. RFUS’s approach places particular emphasis on Indigenous-led finance and territorial funds, which may provide a useful reference point for RFN’s own ambitions to strengthen enabling finance.

RFUK is also smaller in size and scope than RFN, but appears to have a more distinct market-access and enterprise development approach. From DRC, interviews suggest complementarity between RFN and RFUK, where RFN is associated with management planning, while RFN UK is more linked towards practical tools, monitoring and engagement with operators/companies.

WRI however, is a much bigger actor, but structurally more oriented toward evidence generation, convening and policy/finance architecture. Livelihood effects are often indirect through improved planning, enforcement or investment signals. In Brazil, WRI focuses on livelihoods through bioeconomy, although more at the policy level and through establishing financial mechanisms such as the Fundo Flora.[3] In both Brazil and Indonesia, WRI's work on bioeconomy and finance mechanisms illustrates the potential of policy-level instruments, but the material reviewed suggests that such instruments typically require strong delivery partners and governance legitimacy to translate into concrete livelihood gains in remote territories. The approach is thus complementary to RFN's field-based partner-based model.

Overall, the comparison reinforces that RFN is well positioned to articulate its added value as a bridge between territorial realities (rights, governance, protection) and the mechanisms that convert those realities into sustained livelihood outcomes (institutional markets, enabling finance, buyer ecosystems, and safeguards for inclusion and sustainability). This is consistent with portfolio evidence pointing to livelihoods outcomes as a multidimensional approach. Livelihoods may be singled out as a RFN thematic focus area, but it can equally be considered a cross-cutting topic.

5.4. Gaps and opportunities

Evidence and comparability remain weak, and requires clearer definitions, more consistent indicators, and mixed-methods reporting. Livelihoods results are often embedded in governance programming and therefore under-documented or inconsistently reported. While the portfolio contains clear evidence of change, including income, food security, skills, cultural continuity and reduced vulnerability, these results are rarely comparable across contexts. Many of the most important results are social and governance-related and cannot be captured through income figures alone.

Sustainability is still under-specified, and RFN should be more explicit in reporting and strategy about what it takes for different models to continue, scale, or eventually exit grant support. The portfolio shows that revenue growth does not automatically lead to financial sustainability, especially in remote forest territories with high transaction costs. What is often missing is clarity on which functions remain grant-dependent, such as aggregation, logistics, quality control, safeguards or working capital, and what a realistic continuation pathway looks like for each model.

Inclusion and distributional effects should be tracked systematically. The portfolio shows clear gains in women's participation and leadership, but youth outcomes are less well evidenced, and reporting often stops at participation counts. There is also limited systematic analysis of who benefits, how benefits are shared, and what risks arise when cash flows increase, including elite capture or internal division. A practical improvement would be to add simple distributional checks to livelihoods reporting, including sex and age disaggregation where feasible, short narratives on benefit-sharing, and basic risk assessment in higher-cash-flow initiatives.

Technical feasibility and prioritisation need to be operationalised clearer. The evidence suggests that technically demanding or externally designed models tend to underperform, while grounded

[3] Fundo Flora is a flagship project of WRI, launched during COP30, intended as a blended finance investment vehicle designed to bridge the gap between climate finance and local restoration projects. See here for further information: https://www.wribrasil.org.br/noticias/fundo-flora-traz-modelo-inovador-de-financiamento-para-dar-escala-restauracao-na-amazonia

and locally adapted approaches do better. Given limited budgets, RFN would benefit from a light but consistent set of criteria for selecting livelihood investments, for example market logic, organisational capacity, logistics, safeguards and environmental sustainability. This could be supported by access to a small pool of technical advisers and more structured peer learning across countries and partners. See also next chapter for more on this.

Enabling conditions and access to finance should be treated as part of livelihoods. The strongest results come where production support is combined with enabling conditions such as recognition, permits, procurement channels, policy engagement and diversified market access. Similar logic applies to finance: documents and interviews point repeatedly to the need for blended models, including public mechanisms, premiums, PES or climate-related finance, because market channels alone rarely cover the full costs of community-based forest economies. To the extent possible, RFN should move towards a more operational role in enabling access to finance for communities, including clearer country-level mapping of mechanisms, partner roles and capacity requirements.

Positioning could be more explicitly framed. RFN's distinctive proposition is strongest framed as support to territorial economies within a wider rights-and-governance approach, including what partners and communities often value most: food security, cultural continuity, territorial permanence, resilience and safety. At the same time, RFN should be more explicit about which livelihood pathways are likely to become commercially viable, which will require blended or subsidised finance, and what evidence supports those distinctions.

6. EQ3 – Strengthening strategy and future direction

In response to EQ3, the following strategic implications are based on a combination of consistent findings across countries and more context-specific insights, with strongest evidence from Brazil and more indicative findings from other contexts. Generally, the evaluation finds that RFN's strategic direction towards rights-based, territorial livelihoods remains appropriate, but needs clearer prioritisation, differentiation, and operational focus under changing funding conditions. Future impact will depend on aligning livelihood support more explicitly with partner capacity, territorial context, and the maturity of different livelihood pathways. It will also require stronger attention to the enabling conditions and systems that make markets and finance work in practice, and greater clarity on which pathways are likely to become commercially viable, which will remain blended, and which will continue to depend on grant support. Overall, a more structured and stage-based approach, supported by stronger evidence, safeguards, and financing strategies, will be important for scaling livelihood outcomes that are both durable and equitable.

The main strategic implication is not to change RFN's overall direction, but to sharpen how livelihoods support is prioritised, differentiated, and operationalised. In practice, this means being more selective about what to support, placing greater emphasis on grounded and diversified models, and matching ambition to partner capacity and context. RFN should also be more explicit about whether the pathways pursued are commercially viable, blended, or primarily grant-dependent.

A second implication is that RFN should strengthen its work on enabling finance and systems change. Across the portfolio, improved market access and revenue growth rarely translate into full financial sustainability on their own. More attention is therefore needed to blended models, including PES-type instruments, climate and carbon finance, price premiums, institutional markets, and other public or hybrid mechanisms that can help cover the transaction costs of remote forest economies.

Finally, a changing funding environment makes prioritisation more urgent. As grant finance declines, RFN will need to make priorities, including clearer differentiation between interventions that can become commercially viable, which may only be feasible through blended models, and which should be supported primarily due to a wider contribution to rights, resilience, and territorial governance.

6.1. Declining aid

There was an overall 9% drop in net ODA in 2024, with additional decline in 2025 (OECD, 2025). This is due to the US cutting back on aid, and a broader trend where also other significant donor countries are reducing ODA budgets. Norway is a notable exception. However, the broader implications of ODA reductions threaten programmes sustaining smallholder farmers, indigenous groups, and rural poor. Additionally, US private philanthropy, the world's largest source of private charity, faces mounting pressures to decrease foreign aid (Maecenata Stiftung, 2026).

For RFN, the practical implication is that this increases the need to distinguish more clearly between (1) livelihood pathways that may become commercially viable, (2) those that can only continue through blended finance or public mechanisms, and (3) those likely to remain grant-dependent. RFN may need to focus more selectively on models that can either generate sustainable commercial returns or credibly access complementary finance (i.e. PES-type mechanisms, climate finance, price premiums). In this context, KOBUMI remains a particularly relevant reference point as one of the few examples in the portfolio moving towards reduced grant dependence.

This makes role differentiation, programming and financing strategy even more important.

6.2. Livelihoods contribution to SO1 and SO2

RFN's Strategic Objectives 1 and 2 are both highly relevant to livelihoods. As shown in the previous, livelihood results are strongest when integrated into a rights-based approach rather than treated as a stand-alone enterprise component.

Under SO1, the main implication is to make livelihoods more explicit within territorial governance instruments such as life plans, community forest management plans, social forestry units, and Indigenous environmental management plans. In practice, this means ensuring that relevant plans include a limited number of locally legitimate livelihood priorities, clear rules for sustainable use and benefit-sharing, and basic implementation requirements such as logistics, working capital, and minimum organisational capacity. Across countries, the evidence also suggests that RFN should prioritise grounded, low-input models that build on existing practices, while treating enabling functions and governance safeguards as core components rather than optional project costs.

Under SO2, the key implication is to focus not only on policy change, but on making institutional channels usable in practice for local communities, such as procedures, eligibility rules, procurement systems, finance mechanisms, and permits. RFN could therefore strengthen SO2 by supporting more operational policy engagement, for example around documentation routines, accreditation, adapted procurement procedures, and access to subsidy or finance mechanisms. Partners highlight the importance of this, but community-level access remains limited, suggesting a need for more practical work on accessing them.

In contexts shaped by insecurity and illegal economies, especially Peru, Colombia and parts of DRC, SO2 remains critical for reducing risks and protecting defenders. Livelihood initiatives cannot compete directly with illegal markets on income alone and therefore need to be framed as part of a broader package of territorial resilience, safety and well-being.

A final implication is the need for more comparable livelihood evidence across country programmes. Without repeating the broader MEL discussion, RFN would benefit from tracking SO 1.5 through a mixed-method approach that combines clearer units and baselines with short annual narratives on what changed, for whom, and why. Where sales data exist, reporting should also include basic information on volumes, prices and cost drivers, as well as who participates, who benefits, and who controls funds. This would strengthen both comparability and the ability to assess sustainability and governance risks over time. This implies that country teams should specify which SO1/SO2 functions are essential to each livelihood pathway.

6.3. Partnerships, capacities and organisational roles

The portfolio suggests that RFN needs a more explicit differentiation of partner roles and support models, but partners differ significantly in organisational maturity, delivery capacity, and the types of livelihoods functions they can realistically perform. Brazil/ForEco represents the most consolidated model, while in other countries there are fewer mature market-facing results. Many partners are strong on rights, territorial governance, and advocacy, but fewer are equipped for functions such as aggregation, quality assurance, compliance, contract negotiation, cash-flow management, and buyer relations. Where livelihoods outcomes are strongest, these market-facing roles are either already present, built gradually over time, or provided through an intermediary entity or specialised technical support.

A key implication of this is not whether livelihoods should be pursued, but which role each partner can credibly play, what additional capacities are required, and what type of support model is appropriate in each context. Roles need to be made explicit, for example rights and governance lead, production and extension lead, market intermediary, or finance and PES facilitator, rather than assuming that one organisation can cover all dimensions.

To operationalise this, the team suggest a structured, stage-based approach to partnerships and capacity development. The four "maturity stages" suggested below are intended as both a conceptual model, as well as a practical partnership management tool.

Stage 1 – Enabling livelihoods (foundations)

Objective: establish minimum conditions for viable and equitable livelihood change

Typical components at this stage would include rights/tenure recognition pathways, community planning instruments (e.g., life plans, management plans), governance and benefit-sharing arrangements, and protection and security measures. Even if income effects will be modest at this stage, it would be good to define the "population unit" and a baseline for livelihood outcomes (not necessarily income). Partners can still deliver meaningful "livelihood progress" if the expected outcomes are defined appropriately (e.g., strengthened rules, safer access, improved food sovereignty, reduced vulnerability).

Partner role: Primarily governance and protection: rights recognition, planning instruments, basic governance and benefit-sharing rules, and security/protection measures.

RFN's role: Ensure that livelihood ambitions are not prematurely set as "income targets" when foundational conditions are missing. Ensure how livelihood logic fits territorial governance, assist in baseline/denominator design for SO 1.5 (community/household unit selection, mixed-method tools), and risk assessments (security, illegality, coercive markets).

Stage 2 – Production and organisational capability (readiness)

Objective: move from permission and plans to implementation capacity

This stage would include technical assistance linked to locally grounded production systems, basic infrastructure and tools, internal human resources, and governance safeguards (transparency, decision rules, grievance handling). This stage should also test whether collective models are viable or whether family-based/self-selected groups are more appropriate. At this stage, partner capacity becomes more imperative.

Partner role: To translate plans into operational capability: locally grounded technical assistance, basic infrastructure/tools, staffing and routines, and explicit governance safeguards (decision rules, transparency, grievance handling).

RFN's role: Early-stage funding, provide feasibility screening (avoid high-input/maintenance-heavy models), assess organisational/technical capabilities (can the partner deliver?), basic production system advice (low-input, locally grounded), advising on safeguards (benefit-sharing rules, grievance channel, conflict sensitivity check, over-extraction, etc.) and appropriate collective models.

Stage 3 – Market and institutional channels (predictable demand)

Objective: establish an enabling ecosystem that make markets work in practice

Core elements at this stage would include aggregation and cashflow routines, quality and compliance systems, buyer relationships, and institutional channels such as public procurement, minimum price mechanisms, recognition/permit systems, social clauses, or other procedures that reduce volatility and transaction costs. This level requires strong capabilities from partners.

Partner role: At this stage, it is required to either have internal dedicated enterprise capacity, or work with a specialised intermediary (e.g., a social enterprise/trader, consultancies), or collaboration with market-capable actors.

RFN's role: Provide advice on business development, market-related relations, funding etc. Institutional market readiness (procurement rules, registration/accreditation, documentation), aggregation and cashflow routines (payment timing, working capital needs, internal controls), and quality/compliance design (minimum standards, batch control, traceability).

Stage 4 – Scaling with safeguards (sustainability)

Objective: strengthen the durability of livelihood outcomes

This stage builds on the previous, but more geared towards scaling and long-term sustainability. Priorities include diversification (products/services/seasonality), low-input production, maintenance and replacement systems for equipment, working-capital solutions, and clear safeguards against over-extraction, perverse incentives or unequal or distorted benefit sharing. It should also include additional financing strategies (including blended finance/PES-type mechanisms) and exit-planning.

Partner role: Provide diversification across products/services/seasonality, maintenance and replacement systems, working capital solutions, and safeguards against over-extraction and elite capture (risks that increase as cash flows rise). This stage is also where financing strategy must become explicit, especially for value-chains that require some sort of continuous subsidy.

RFN's role: RFN would continue as technical advisor, assisting with diversification strategy (products/services/seasonality, avoid single-buyer dependency), ensure safeguards are in place (elite capture, benefit-sharing, over-extraction), assist with blended finance strategy (PES/territorial funds/price mechanisms, subsidies), and consider appropriate commercial vehicles like the KOBUMI-model. "Exit planning" should be framed as shifting the mix of financing and responsibilities, not necessarily ending support.

6.4. Value chain development and economic inclusiveness advisory

To operationalise this, RFN could consider a small internal or hybrid advisory function ("centre of practice") focused on feasibility, safeguards, market systems and MEL. Core services could be:

- **Defining stages/maturity:** Classify each partner and value-chain pathway into Stage 1–4, agree on realistic outcomes, risks, and "what success looks like" per stage.
- **Provide minimum viability assessments (before scaling):** Quick feasibility checks covering market logic, logistics, organisational capacity, governance safeguards, and ecological sustainability. Decide "go/no-go" for scaling. Define what capacities/intermediaries are needed.
- **Enabling package/guide (stage 2–3):** Provide guidance and templates for planning: stage, outcomes, assumptions, key risks, milestones, required datasets (volumes/units, unit price, buyer/channel, direct costs, working-capital gap), governance (benefit-sharing, transparency, grievance channel, role matrix), simple contracts, delivery/logistics, total cost structure, etc.
- **Institutional markets and blended models:** Support to make "systems" work (procurement readiness, accreditation processes, documentation routines, payment-delay mitigation). Map feasible PES/climate finance/territorial funds per country, and help partners operationalise systems channels and finance readiness/compliance.
- **Safeguards:** Provide simple tools for benefit-sharing, transparency, grievance handling, and "money risks" (elite capture/division). Quality-assure safeguards.
- **Learning and MEL alignment:** Define denominators/baselines, define stage-appropriate indicators, and fix data issues early. Quality-assure evidence.

The team could potentially be a mix of RFN and partners, complimented by a technical roster of country-based consultants. Note, the advisory team should not negotiate sales on behalf of communities, act as trader/exporter or directly run enterprises. This could distort roles, incentives and be a potential conflict of interest.

Figure 8: Technical advisory capabilities (tentatively)

Capabilities for value chain development and economic inclusiveness advisory

- Livelihoods systems and finance (governance, socio-bioeconomy, safeguards, blended finance, PES/carbon, institutional finance)
- Market systems (procurement, accreditation, compliance routines, buyer ecosystems)
- Business development (cashflow/working capital, aggregation models, cooperative governance, cost structures)
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
- Agroforestry/NTFP production, sustainable harvesting
- Food safety/sanitary compliance, traceability
- Processing and quality systems
- Legal (contracts, cooperative/company structuring)
- Logistics/cold chain/remote supply planning
- Carbon/PES technical experts (MRV, safeguards, registry processes)

6.5.Gender, youth and inclusion

Livelihoods support is consistently framed as part of a rights-based approach, and integration of gender, youth and inclusion varies by context, partner capacity, and the maturity of livelihood models. Roles are clearly gendered across value chains and stages, and this shapes who participates and who benefits. In Brazil, women dominate seed and handicrafts and rubber tapping is described as exclusively male, while youth engagement is growing through production and digital storytelling. In Peru, interviews describe “whole-family” production models where men and youth typically harvest and transport while women lead washing and processing. In Indonesia and DRC, entrenched patriarchal norms are described as limiting women’s meaningful participation, especially in formal decision spaces and in land ownership/inheritance.

Several interviews flag the need for indicators that go beyond participation counts, including decision-making, workload and benefit-sharing by sex and age across value chain stages. This mirrors the RFN Gender Policy warning that quantitative participation indicators alone do not capture the nature or effects of participation and should be complemented with qualitative measures. Peru/Colombia offer concrete examples of shifts in voice and control, including women taking formal leadership and financial management roles (for example treasurers and coordinators) and building savings mechanisms, but these examples still read as illustrative rather than systematically evidenced across sites.

Across countries, the practices that seem to enable women’s and youth participation are those aligned with the Gender Policy’s recommended entry points: separate spaces for women and youth, accessible meeting formats, and facilitation approaches that recognise who speaks in which settings. Peru/Colombia documents women’s circles and women-led knowledge schools as mechanisms that support leadership, intergenerational transmission, and practical livelihood skills. Indonesia explicitly proposes approaches like resident field staff to engage women through informal dialogue during daily activities, rather than relying on formal meetings where women may not speak.

Youth in all these countries represent future leadership, cultural continuity and livelihood sustainability, but structural constraints (migration, extractives, scepticism about collective models) are significant. There are many strong push factors pulling youth away from community economies. DRC notes rural outmigration and youth movement linked to study and mining. Peru/Colombia recommends intentional youth-focused activities to sustain knowledge transmission and engagement. Brazil shows a more opportunity-driven picture of youth engagement (learning exchanges, storytelling), but still lacks comparable evidence on youth influence in governance and benefit sharing. Indonesia adds another constraint: scepticism toward group-based models due to negative past experiences with bureaucratic "groups," which may particularly affect youth willingness to invest in collective enterprises.

Going forward with the livelihoods indicator, RFN will require consistent cross-country comparable sex and age disaggregated monitoring that tracks changes in participation, influence, workload, and benefit distribution. This is directly addressed in the RFN Gender Policy, which calls for a mix of quantitative and qualitative gender-sensitive indicators, appropriate data collection approaches (including mechanisms to hear women's views), and using findings from gender analysis to adapt programming.

6.6.Sustainability

Sustainability in RFN's livelihoods work is understood as a multi-dimensional concept spanning social, ecological, governance and economic outcomes. It includes not only income generation, but also food security, cultural continuity, inclusive participation, and strengthened territorial governance through Indigenous knowledge systems, alongside local capacity-building for practices that endure beyond project cycles. These dimensions are largely integrated and well reflected in the material assessed by the team.

In remote forest contexts, market revenues alone are rarely sufficient to sustain livelihood systems due to high transaction costs, logistical constraints and limited market access. As a result, certain functions, such as governance and rights protection, aggregation and coordination, compliance and safeguards, and elements of capacity development, are expected to remain publicly or grant financed. Sustainability should therefore be understood not as full cost recovery, but as the durability of livelihood outcomes over time, supported by a combination of market-based activities and enabling mechanisms such as public procurement, blended finance and institutional support.

Evidence across cases consistently indicates that financial sustainability remains a key challenge, particularly outside more mature contexts. The main challenge is that revenue growth does not by itself produce financial sustainability. What often remains unclear is (1) which functions will remain grant-dependent (aggregation, logistics coordination, compliance, governance safeguards, working capital) and (2) what continuation pathway is realistic for each model (market-only vs blended vs institutional channels vs PES-type mechanisms).

A practical next step for RFN is therefore to require each livelihood pathway (at Stage 2–4) to articulate a simple "continuation logic": which functions will be maintained by whom, financed how, and with which safeguards. The global decline in ODA and grant financing may indicate that RFN will have to carefully consider what interventions can realistically become self-sustaining, whether on a purely commercial ground or realistically access other financing. See also chapter 6.1 on this.

In addition, environmental services generated by these livelihood systems, including forest conservation, carbon storage and biodiversity protection, should be understood as core outcomes rather than secondary co-benefits, and are central to the overall value and sustainability of these approaches.

6.7.Refined theory of change for RFN's livelihood work

The refined ToC responds to three recurring findings: (1) governance is foundational, (2) livelihood pathways need bundled support, and (3) systems access determines durability.

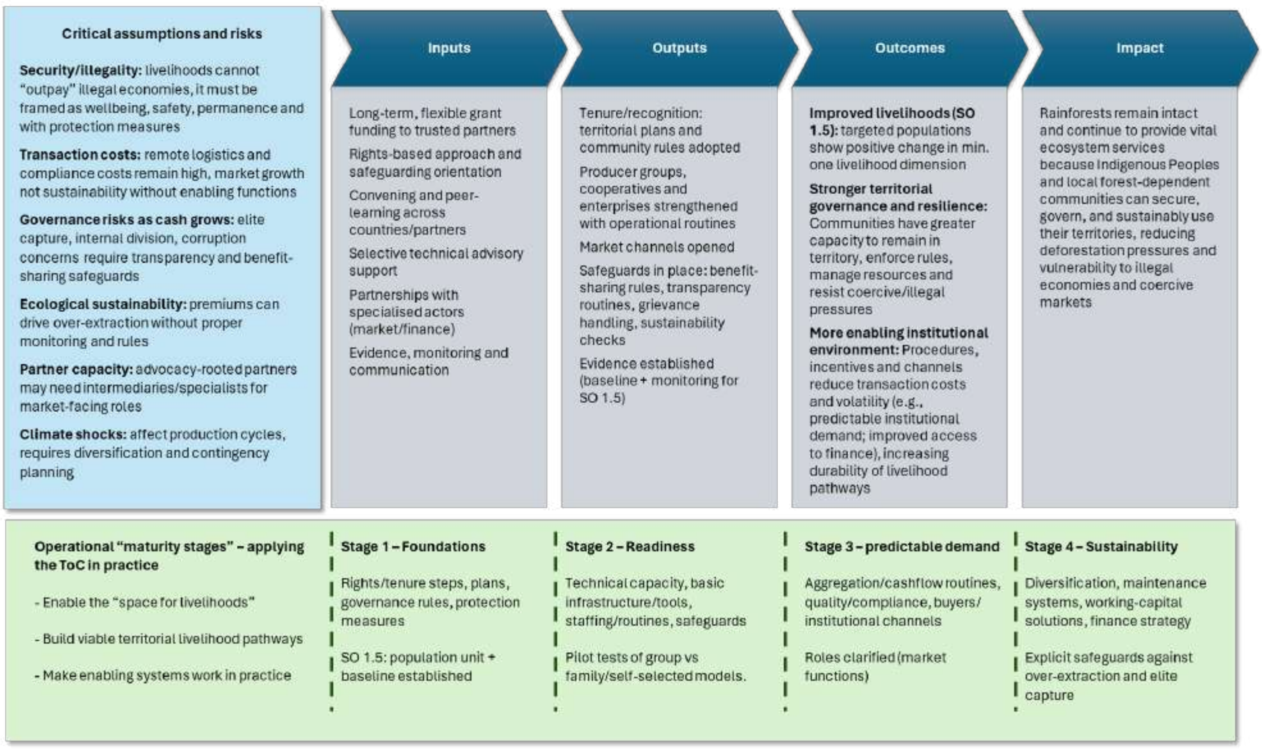
RFN's livelihoods work contributes to rainforest protection by strengthening the ability of Indigenous Peoples and local forest-dependent communities to remain in, govern, and sustainably use their territories, often under conditions of political volatility, coercive markets, illegality, and climate-related shocks. Rights and governance create the space for credible livelihood options, which again reinforce territorial permanence, governance legitimacy, and forest stewardship. Livelihood gains are multi-dimensional (income, food, security, resilience, inclusion, cultural and environmental wellbeing), shaped by many external factors. Outcomes are therefore contributional.

RFN’s primary inputs are long-term, trust-based partnerships, flexible grant funding, convening and learning functions and selective technical support. These inputs support three interlinked result streams. First, RFN and partners enable the “space for livelihoods” by securing and defending territorial rights, establishing locally legitimate planning and management instruments, and strengthening community decision-making and benefit-sharing, including protection against threats and illegal economies. Second, territorially grounded livelihood pathways build on existing practices and diversified local economies, prioritising low-input and culturally legitimate approaches. Third, where feasible, partners pursue systems-level change so that livelihood pathways can function and scale in practice, by making institutional channels/markets accessible (e.g., public procurement), strengthening market intermediation and aggregation, and improving access to enabling finance.

Across all three streams, the ToC assumes that livelihood gains will be more durable when accompanied by explicit safeguards to manage risks such as elite capture and internal division, over-extraction and perverse incentives, and conflict sensitivity. The ToC also assumes that effective inclusion (women, youth, marginalised groups) is achieved through practical participation and decision spaces, and that partners require differentiated roles and capacities.

Expected outcomes are: (1) targeted populations demonstrate improvement in at least one locally relevant livelihood dimension (captured through SO 1.5), (2) stronger territorial governance and rule enforcement reduces vulnerability to destructive pressures and enables forest stewardship, and (3) in selected contexts, enabling systems reduce transaction costs and increase predictability, improving the likelihood that livelihood pathways are durable. These pathways also contribute to maintaining critical environmental services, including carbon storage, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem stability. Impact is improved forest integrity and reduced deforestation pressure, through reinforcing territorial rights, viable territorial economies, and community-led stewardship.

Figure 9: Overview of the suggested refined Theory of Change



7. Conclusions and recommendations

Across the portfolio, RFN's livelihoods work demonstrates a coherent and credible approach grounded in rights, territorial governance, and long-term partnerships. The evaluation finds that livelihood outcomes are strongest where economic initiatives are embedded within these enabling conditions, rather than implemented as stand-alone enterprise support. In this sense, RFN's overall strategic direction is well aligned with both portfolio evidence and global experience.

The main challenge is not direction, but execution: ensuring that support is differentiated, evidence-based, and aligned with the realities of partners, markets, and funding. With clearer prioritisation, stronger operational tools, and improved evidence, RFN is well positioned to scale livelihood outcomes that are both durable and equitable.

Results to date (EQ1) show clear progress in establishing the foundations for livelihoods, particularly through strengthened tenure, governance systems, and community capacity. Brazil's ForEco programme stands out as the most advanced case, demonstrating that socio-bioeconomy approaches can generate measurable income and participation at scale. In other countries, results are more uneven and generally at earlier stages, with livelihoods emerging through governance processes, pilots, and incremental capability development rather than mature commercial outcomes.

The assessment of RFN's added value (EQ2) confirms that RFN's comparative advantage lies in its long-term, trust-based partnerships and its ability to connect rights and governance processes with practical livelihood pathways. This bridging role between territorial realities and functioning economic systems is a distinctive strength. This positioning reflects what partners and communities value most: territorial permanence, food security, cultural continuity, and resilience, while also engaging with emerging market and policy opportunities. At the same time, important evidence gaps remain, particularly regarding profitability, financial sustainability, and distributional outcomes, which limits the ability to assess scalability and long-term viability.

Looking forward (EQ3), the main strategic implication is not to change direction, but to sharpen how livelihoods support is prioritised, differentiated, and operationalised. The portfolio shows that livelihood pathways differ significantly in maturity, feasibility, and financing requirements. Most are not yet financially self-sustaining and will require continued support through enabling systems, blended finance, or public mechanisms. A more structured and stage-based approach, combined with clearer role differentiation, improved evidence, and stronger attention to enabling finance, will be critical for achieving durable and equitable outcomes.

Declining grant finance reinforces the need for greater selectivity and clarity, and to distinguish between livelihood pathways with (1) credible commercial potential, (2) those that require blended or public financing, and (3) those that are primarily justified by their contribution to rights, resilience, and governance. This also implies a more operational positioning on enabling systems and accessing finance mechanisms, and making them work in practice for partners and communities.

Recommendations are based on areas where evidence shows consistent gaps or constraints across multiple contexts.

7.1.Recommendations

7.1.1. Programme-level recommendations

- **Adopt a stage-based approach to livelihoods programming.** Categorise each partner and livelihood pathway within a small number of maturity stages (1: Foundation, 2: Readiness, 3: Predictable Demand, 4: Sustainability). Define realistic outcomes, risks, and support packages for each stage, and avoid premature expectations of income generation where foundational conditions are not in place.

- **Differentiate support models based on partner roles and capacities.** Clarify which partners lead on governance, production, market intermediation, or finance facilitation. Do not assume that all partners can deliver on everything. Where needed, support the use of intermediaries or specialised technical assistance for market-facing functions.
- **Prioritise grounded, diversified and low-input livelihood pathways.** Focus on models that build on existing practices (e.g. NTFPs, agroforestry, local processing, services) and that contribute to resilience and territorial permanence. Avoid high-input or externally designed models that are difficult to sustain in remote contexts.
- **Strengthen integrated support packages for market-facing initiatives.** Where livelihood pathways move toward market engagement, ensure that support includes not only production, but also aggregation, quality systems, working capital, logistics, compliance, and governance safeguards.
- **Make "continuation logic" explicit.** For more mature stages, require a simple articulation of how activities will continue: which functions remain, who is responsible, and how they will be financed (commercial, blended, or grant-supported).

7.1.2. Organisational recommendations

- **Strengthen RFN's role on enabling finance and systems.** Move from general advocacy on finance toward more operational support for accessing and using relevant mechanisms (e.g. PES, climate finance, public procurement, price premiums). This includes mapping opportunities at country-level, clarifying partner roles, and supporting practical readiness.
- **Establish a light "centre of practice" or advisory function.** Create a small internal or hybrid function to support feasibility screening, safeguards, market systems, and MEL. This function should guide programme teams and partners, but not engage directly in commercial operations.
- **Enhance strategic prioritisation under declining funding.** Introduce clearer criteria for selecting and scaling livelihood investments, including market logic, organisational capacity, logistical feasibility, safeguards, and environmental sustainability.
- **Clarify RFN's external positioning on livelihoods.** Frame RFN's approach explicitly as support to territorial economies within a rights-based framework, with differentiated pathways (commercial, blended, grant-dependent). This can strengthen communication with donors, partners, and policy actors.

7.1.3. MEL and indicator recommendations

- **Operationalise SO 1.5 through a mixed-method approach.** Combine quantitative indicators with short annual qualitative narratives capturing "what changed, for whom, and why." Ensure that indicators reflect the multidimensional nature of livelihoods.
- **Establish clear denominators, baselines and units of analysis.** Define whether reporting is at household, individual, or community level, and ensure that baselines are established before measuring change.
- **Strengthen basic economic data for market-facing initiatives.** Where sales data exist, complement with information on volumes, prices, and key cost drivers to enable at least indicative assessments of profitability and sustainability.
- **Integrate distributional and inclusion tracking.** Systematically track participation, influence, workload, and benefit-sharing by sex and age, and include simple qualitative assessments of risks such as elite capture or exclusion.

- **Reduce reporting burden while improving comparability.** Limit the number of indicators and focus on a small set of meaningful, comparable measures across countries, supported by clear guidance and partner training.

7.1.4. Proposed refinements to the livelihoods pathway of change

- **Clarify the sequencing of change.** Make explicit that livelihood outcomes depend on a sequence: (1) enabling conditions (rights, governance, security), (2) production and organisational capacity, and (3) functioning market and institutional systems. Sequencing does not necessarily mean that different interventions/stages cannot happen in parallel.
- **Differentiate livelihood pathways by type and financing model.** Distinguish between pathways that are (1) expected to become commercially viable, (2) those requiring blended finance, and (3) those primarily supported for their governance and resilience contributions.
- **Strengthen the role of systems change in the pathway.** Emphasise that durable livelihood outcomes depend on access to functioning institutional channels (e.g. procurement, permits, finance), not only on enterprise development.
- **Integrate safeguards and inclusion more explicitly.** Embed safeguards against over-extraction, elite capture, and conflict, and ensure that gender, youth, and marginalised groups are included through practical participation and decision-making mechanisms.
- **Frame outcomes as contributional and multi-dimensional.** Recognise that livelihood outcomes include income, but also food security, resilience, governance, and cultural continuity, and that RFN contributes to these outcomes alongside many external factors.

8. Annexes

8.1.Annex 1: Country report Brazil (ForEco)

The Forest Economy Programme (ForEco) was established in 2019 as a multi-year initiative funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and coordinated by RFN, with a total budget of NOK 200 million.[4] It was designed to promote a forest-based economy in the Brazilian Amazon that simultaneously would strengthen biodiversity protection and improve the livelihoods of IPLCs. The programme was developed in coordination with the Norwegian Embassy in Brasília, and Brazilian partners, to address the constraints of the Bolsonaro period (2019–2023), when cooperation with government and use of the Amazon Fund was severely limited.

The programme's strategic foundation is articulated in its Theory of Change (ToC), which emphasises protecting the Amazon rainforest while supporting sustainable, rights-based economic opportunities. It seeks to ensure improved livelihoods for forest-dependent communities through strengthened value chains, territorial governance, knowledge exchange, and protection of environmental human-rights defenders.

The program ran from 2021 to 2024 in its first phase and operated across priority territories, mainly Indigenous Lands and Extractive Reserves, selected for their ecological value and socio-bioeconomic potential. A no-cost extension was approved by the Embassy in 2025, allowing activities and financial planning to continue until April 2026.

ForEco works through a consortium of long-standing Brazilian civil-society partners. These include *Instituto Socioambiental* (ISA), *Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena* (Iepé), and the following grassroots organisations: *Rede de Cooperação Amazônica* (RCA), *Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas / Memorial Chico Mendes* (CNS/MCM), *Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro* (FOIRN), and *Associação Rede de Sementes do Xingu* (ARSX), each contributing unique expertise across territorial management, policy advocacy, Indigenous governance, community enterprise development, and socio-bioeconomy innovation.

An external evaluation was conducted in 2023, covering the first phase of implementation (2021-2023). The evaluation highlights that RFN's model of long-term partnerships has facilitated trust, continuity, and resilience within this network, especially through periods of shifting political and environmental pressures. Nevertheless, severe deforestation between 2019 and 2022 and weakened federal environmental governance shaped early program years, while improvements in Brazil's political climate from 2023 onwards enabled partners to influence the new National Bioeconomy Strategy and national Indigenous policy spaces. ForEco partners actively engaged in these transitions, contributing to policy debates and helping shape definitions and incentives around socio-bioeconomy, minimum price guarantees, and access to rural credit.

8.1.1. Main results achieved

ForEco's results framework for 2021–2024 indicates strong progress on livelihood and value-chain outcomes, alongside more mixed but generally positive movement on territorial protection. Despite early implementation delays linked to COVID-19, the 2023 evaluation concluded that the programme was performing very well by mid-term, with several projects exceeding expected targets.

By 2024, the programme reported 76 commercial activities/value chains supported, exceeding the mid-term target of 55. Note however that the indicator was redefined in 2024 to count value chains (rather than all commercial initiatives), which may have affected comparability and target logic.

[4] BRA-20/0012 "Advancing Sustainable Management in the Brazilian Amazon", signed between RFN and the MFA represented through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Brasilia.

Income generation through supported activities increased substantially over the period. Annual income reached BRL 11.4 million in 2024, compared to a baseline of BRL 3.5 million, and above the mid-term target of BRL 7 million. Cumulative income is reported as BRL 33.1 million (accumulated) by 2024. Note also that these figures deviate slightly from commercial data assessed, in which cumulative figures amount to a total revenue of BRL 34,679,863.03 (further explained below).

The programme also reports significant reach and participation. In 2024, 380 new individuals began directly benefiting (256 women and 124 men). A total of 9,541 producers were engaged (4,445 women and 5,096 men) since 2021, nearly doubling the baseline total of 4,739. At output level, 753 communities were actively engaged in production in 2024. A number of capacity development activities have also been conducted, with 177 new producers trained in production, business, and finance in 2024, with a high share of women among Indigenous participants.

ForEco reports gradual improvement in the level of protection across selected Indigenous territories and protected areas. From a 2021 baseline dominated by low and medium protection levels, the 2023 midline shows a shift toward higher protection. By 2024, results indicate further improvement, though year-to-year changes should be interpreted cautiously.

Overall, the results suggest that ForEco has scaled up a diversified set of forest economy value chains, generated substantial income, and expanded participation among Indigenous and forest-dependent communities, while contributing to strengthening territorial protection.

Expansion and strengthening of value chains

Commercial data of the program depicts a robust growth across the board. In 2024, ForEco reported continued consolidation of forest-based value chains alongside gradual expansion into new chains and market channels. By 2024, ForEco supported 76 active value chains, spanning Indigenous and forest-dependent communities across 26 Indigenous territories, 11 conservation units and 5 rural settlements. IEPÉ alone launched six new chains in 2024, including community-based tourism initiatives, indicating diversification and future growth potential.

According to progress reports, income from supported value chains increased from BRL 4.5 million in 2021 to BRL 7.38 million in 2022 and reached over BRL 11.37 million in 2024, indicating growing maturity of territorial productive arrangements and market channels:

- ISA is the largest revenue contributor, generating BRL 15,191,818.59 and the most diversified (34 value-chains).
- CNS generated BRL 6,067,601.20, largely driven by Médio Juruá rubber, açaí and cosmetics-related oilseeds.
- IEPÉ generated BRL 5,895,006.12 with broad diversification (22 value-chains), strongly driven by cassava flour (Wayamu) and açaí (Oiapoque).
- FOIRN (Rio Negro) generated BRL 3,534,466.12 and is highly concentrated in public procurement sales and handicrafts.
- ARSX generated BRL 3,990,971.00 from a single specialised chain, Xingu native seeds.

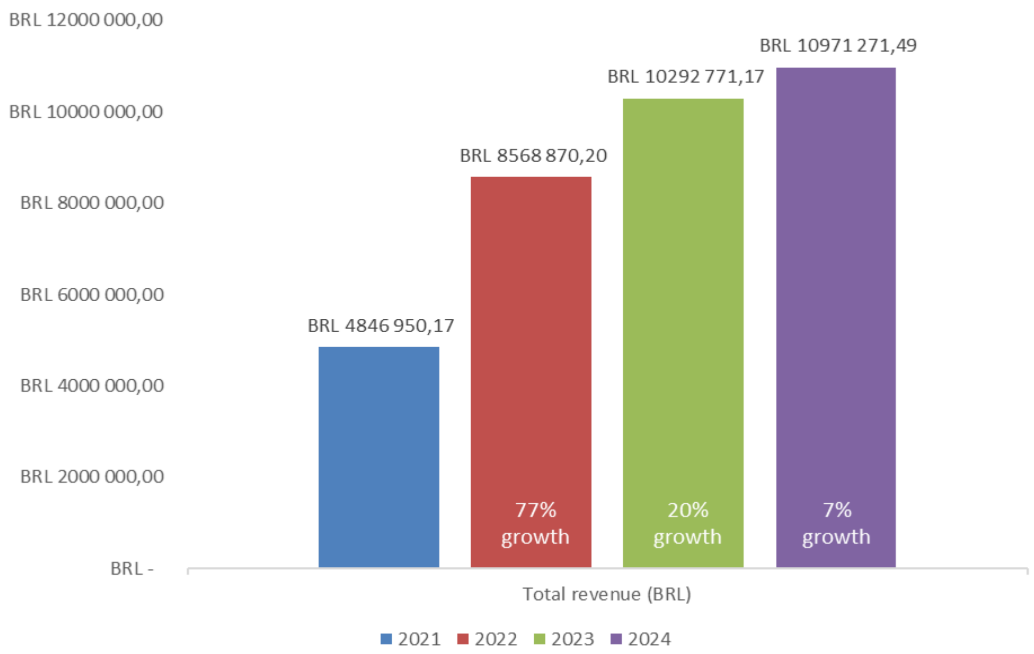
This growth has been attributed to improved market access, strengthened commercialisation strategies and expanded access to institutional and “ethical” markets, while noting that commercialisation still depend on project support to scale and sustain operations. Participation in public procurement schemes such as PNAE (Brazil’s National School Feeding Programme), and PAA (Brazil’s Food Acquisition Programme), as well as ethical markets through platforms like Origens Brasil® and Amazonbai, also contributed to this growth.

Some examples illustrate the dynamics: the Wajãpi (Amapá) strengthened handicraft sales and began supplying açaí to private buyers; FOIRN expanded cassava flour commerce through the

WARIRÓ market; and extractive communities revitalised oilseed and rubber value chains, supported by feasibility studies, infrastructure investments, and access to public subsidies and other mechanisms. In addition, 16 new NTFP contracts were signed, with most attributed to ARSX in upper and middle Xingu and ISA in Terra do Meio. UASEI in Oiapoque expanded into industrialised açaí pulp and reported 2024 sales of 122,692 kg and USD 62,415, plus increased visibility by becoming one of the winners of the UNDP Equator Prize in 2025. And in In Médio Juruá, CNS-linked organisations scaled processing of seed oils and butters and reached a policy milestone when federal authorities applied a minimum price guarantee, intended to reduce price volatility and protect producer income.

Note that the figures vary slightly between reports and the consolidated commercial data received by the team, likely due to timing of partner reporting, and double-counting prevention across partners and channels (also flagged in the 2024 progress report). The difference is small, however. Based on the data received by the team, total revenues for 2021-2024 amounts to BRL 34,679,863.03, with an annual distribution and growth according to the chart below:

Figure 10: Total revenue of ForEco 2021-2024



Datasets for 2025 was not received by the team, but interviews suggest that there has been a continued growth for 2025 and into 2026, especially for better established value chains and public procurement. However, this cannot be substantiated due to lack of documentation.

Top-ten products/services in terms of revenue represent a total of BRL 22,156,196 (61.6%):

Table 1: Top ten products in terms of revenue 2021-2024

Product	Partner	Region	Total 2021–2024 (BRL)		Share of 2024 total (%)
Seeds Nativas de Xingu	ARSX	Xingu	BRL	3 990 971,00	11,2
Castanhas de Pará- Terra do Meio	ISA	Terra do Meio	BRL	3 259 507,08	4,9
Rubber Médio Juruá	CNS	Jurua	BRL	3 121 052,00	6,9
Sport Fishing- Mariá	ISA	Maria	BRL	2 349 541,34	7,9
Farinha de Mandioca (Wayamu)	Iepé	Wayamu	BRL	2 035 382,00	2,9
Castanhas de Pará dos Territórios Wai-Wau	ISA	Wai-Wu	BRL	1 924 518,90	4,8
PAA/PAB (mercados instituicionais de alimentos)	Foirn	nan	BRL	1 692 263,08	6,2
Produtos da Roça- terra do Meio	ISA	Terra do Meio	BRL	1 474 313,66	10,5
Açaí no Oiapoque	Iepé	Oiapoque	BRL	1 252 372,00	3,2
Açai Territórios Amapá	CNS	Amapa	BRL	1 056 275,00	3,2
			BRL	**22 156 196,06**	**61,6**

In 2024, total revenues of all products amounted to BRL 10,971,271, with native seeds from Xingu being the largest single product (11%). Note however that "all other products" covers both family farming and Brazil nuts, both of which surpass seeds in total revenue for the whole period.

Figure 11: 2024 % revenue share by product

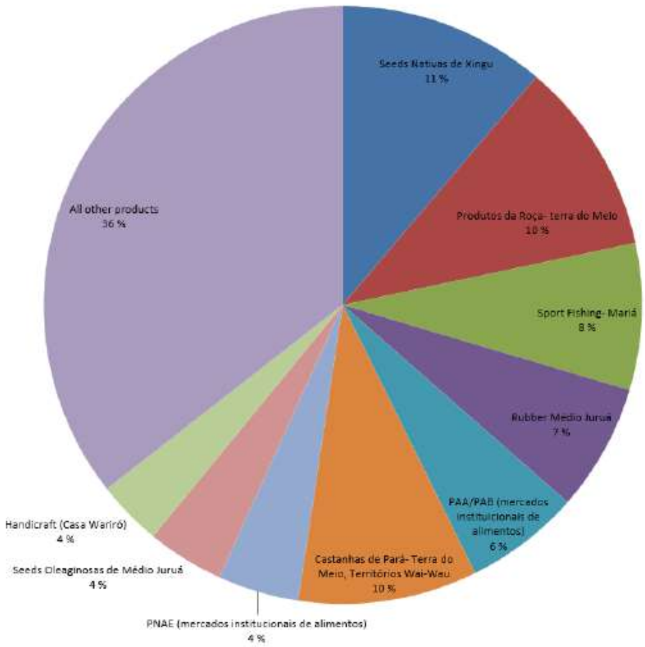
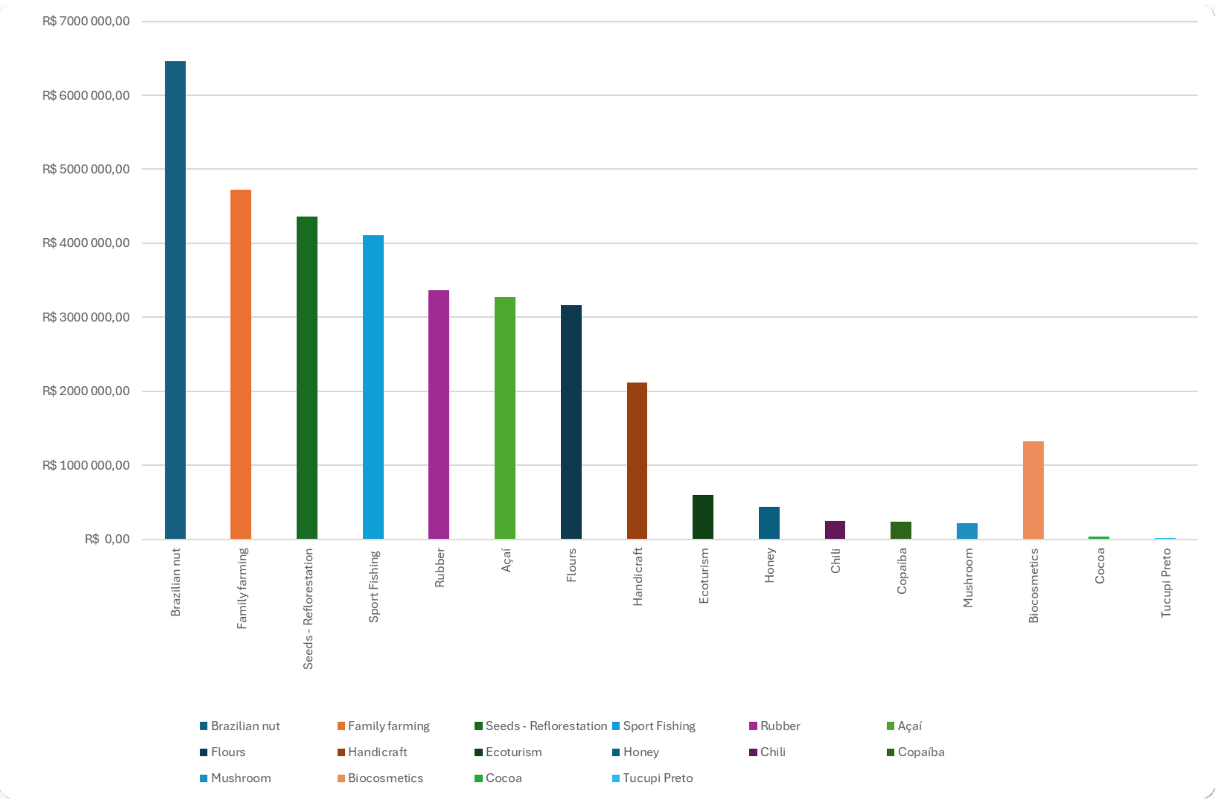


Figure 12: Total revenue 2021-2024 per product



Under the ForEco programme, enterprise development has primarily taken the form of community-based commercial structures and associative models rather than formal private companies. Examples include Wariró / Casa dos Produtores Indígenas do Rio Negro, which operates as a commercial outlet and aggregation point under Indigenous organisational management, alongside various producer associations and cooperatives engaged in processing and sales of products such as açaí, oils and crafts. However, available documentation provides limited systematic information on legal registration, ownership structures, number of enterprises established, or how these function in practice, and there is similarly little evidence on profitability of these.

As such, ForEco has demonstrated a considerable commercial potential in many of the value-chains supported, with strong revenue growth and diversification across products and services. Note however that the data provided does not enable a profitability analysis, further commented later. Commercialisation has focused on domestic markets, including public procurement and ethical domestic buyers. The expansion of "ethical market linkages" reported in 2024 includes more than 21 new contracts, many of which were through platforms and networks such as Origens Brasil® and Amazonbai.

Exports of products

Exports can, in principle, deliver price premiums, but the programme documentation reviewed does not report exports in a systematic way. The closest examples are indirect or partial. Uasei, in Oiapoque, reported 2024 sales of industrialised açaí pulp of USD 62,415, which may also include exports. In Xingu and Panará, cumaru has previously been linked to export through sales to Kayapó organisations supplying Lush, with the raw material exported to the UK for processing and linked to buyers in the French perfume sector.

According to conversations with RFN, rubber from Médio Juruá and Terra do Meio is bought by Veja, and seed oils, butters and biocosmetics by Natura before marketed domestically and abroad. Some volumes of Brazil nuts are also exported after processing, by purchasing companies like Wickbold and Mutrã. However, these export dimensions are not reported consistently by partners, appear small relative to domestic sales (note that figures are not available), and face clear constraints, e.g. product specifications, quality and sanitary requirements, certifications, packaging, and scale.

A MA thesis (Menezes, 2022) shared with the team analyses company community partnerships in Médio Juruá, an area covered under ForEco through CNS and local organisations such as ASPROC, AMARU, and CODAEMJ. It describes structured buyer relationships for processed andiroba oil and murumuru and ucuúba butters, where cooperative output is purchased by Natura, alongside technical and administrative capacity support. It also describes rubber sold to Veja, a Paris based company, using wild Amazon rubber in shoe soles sold globally, with a premium relative to market price. The collaboration also includes quality and social and environmental services elements, and additional certification related bonuses.

The thesis underlines that commercial viability depends on more than having a buyer, emphasising the importance of ongoing technical capacity, coordination, and costly logistics shape the viability of deliveries. Price incentives may also entail sustainability risks, e.g. poor tapping practices by newcomers. Overall, it supports the conclusion that some ForEco relevant value chains can be commercially viable in the sense of stable buyers, volumes, and price premiums, but that full financial sustainability still relies on continued support to governance, capabilities, and logistics.

In practice, the bureaucratic and legal requirements often exceed partner capacity, suggesting that any expansion of exports would require further investment and time. Some partners, including ISA, have noted that export markets are unlikely to be viable in the short term due to the limited maturity of producer organisations.

Public procurement

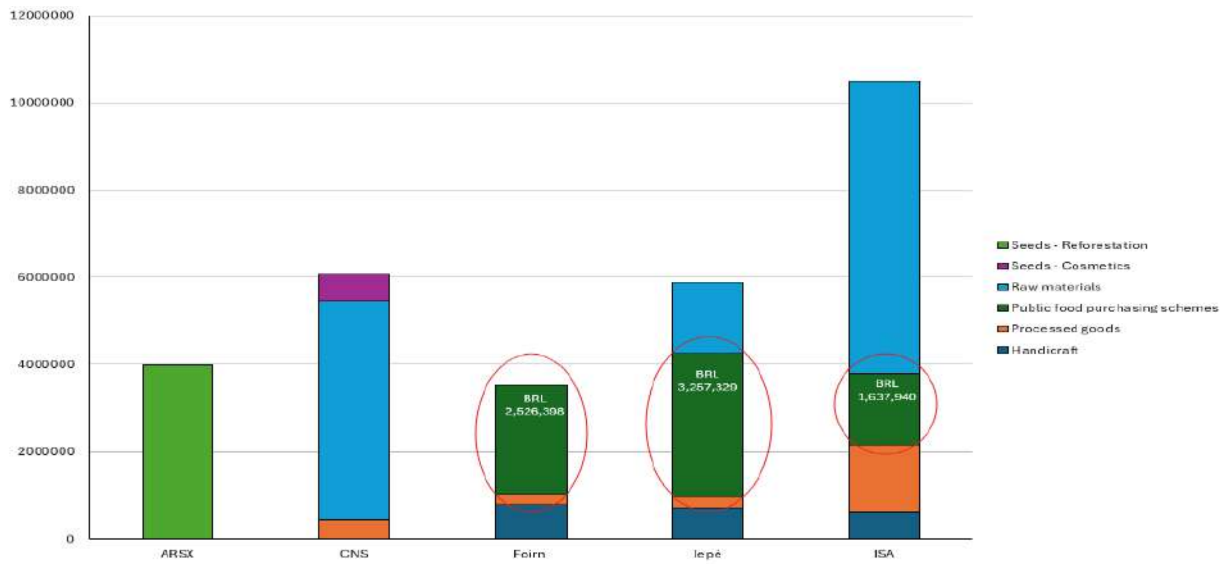
Public procurement has continued to mature as a distinct market channel. ISA, CNS, IEPÉ, and FOIRN has worked consistently with state and federal authorities to accredit more Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent community producers for PNAE and PAA. Main challenge has not been the regulations per se, but rather the fact that bureaucratic requirements are often not adapted to Indigenous organisational realities. Payment delays create cashflow risks and may require bridging finance, and logistics can be challenging, particularly in remote regions such as Rio Negro where transport costs and delivery times are high. Additionally, aggregating supply across many small producers is administratively complex.

To counter this, ForEco has provided training, registry efforts and technical assistance, which successfully led to increased contracts and procurement volumes from local communities. This success is due to building an enabling ecosystem around procurement, including training, accreditation support to producer organisations, and close follow-up with institutions such as CONAB (Brazil's National Supply Company, *Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento*) and relevant ministries. Starting out with a few pilots, this has gradually been scaled up and resulting in that public procurement shifted from a model purely designed for formal family farming suppliers - to one that also recognises Indigenous and traditional producers, including the adaptation of documentation requirements and operational routines.

In effect, ForEco has contributed to practical reforms to administrative procedures so that procurement can function in real settings. This comes across as ForEco's clearest "systems change" result, in which the combination of advocacy, technical assistance and pilots, has led to a concrete revenue generating market channel. According to the commercial datasets provided to the team, the total revenue from public procurement (PNAE and PAA combined) for 2021–2024 at BRL 7,421,667 (21.4% of total revenues), covering Rio Negro, Xingu, and Indigenous Territories in Amapá and Pará.

Despite the success however, it should be noted that a vulnerability may be the continued dependence on technical assistance, logistics and cashflow constraints, and the need for stable enabling rules/public sector commitment.

Figure 13: Partner's total revenue per category, including public purchasing 2021-2024



Policy influence and visibility

Programme documentation and interview data indicate that ForEco has strengthened RFN's visibility and policy relevance in Brazil by linking rights based territorial work to practical livelihood and market channels, while also advancing learning and coordination among partners. RFN's Brazil Framework (revised 2025) reflects this shift by positioning livelihoods and income generating activities as a pathway within rights based sustainable management, explicitly drawing on learning from ForEco. Interviews also underline that the interlinkages between livelihoods activities, advocacy and territorial management are central. Stronger value chains and access to public programmes are enabling conditions for territorial defence, making patrolling and protection more feasible, strengthening collective governance, maintaining people in communities and reducing vulnerability to external pressures.

In the 2024 progress report, policy influence, agenda setting and external visibility is emphasised. It highlights partner engagement in Brazil's National Bioeconomy Strategy launched in June 2024, including contributions through ISA, CNS and the ÓSocioBio network, with advocacy results linked to minimum price guarantees and improved access to rural credit.[5] Interviews suggest that this policy engagement is reinforced by partners' grounded work, where field-based activities strengthen legitimacy, practical knowledge and influence in policy processes. This also underscores an international positioning, including participation at New York Climate Week and the premiere of Seeds of Change, framed as elevating grassroots leadership narratives and the socio bioeconomy agenda. This builds on an active community of practice, including nine proposals linked to new funding mechanisms, 75 knowledge exchange activities and 42 major partner publications in 2024. These are not only seen as a visibility strategy, but also an enabling function for scaling practice, strengthening coalitions and improving future financing prospects.

Interview data consistently identifies the abovementioned public procurement reform as one of ForEco's clearest systems change results. School feeding and public food purchasing are particularly tangible because it has translated into contracts and revenue. A repeated lesson is that success depended not only on advocacy framing but on sustained operational support, including training, registration and accreditation work, and continued follow up with public institutions to make procurement workable in practice.

Policy influence and territorial protection are closely intertwined in the ForEco programme. In 2024, continued work under territorial protection and rights included support to 63 local organisations to develop protection strategies, and training of 505 individuals in territorial and human rights protection.

Community engagement, gender, youth and inclusion

By 2024, ForEco reported having engaged 9,541 producers since inception, with strong participation of women and growing involvement of youth in production, digital storytelling and learning exchanges. In 2024 alone, 380 new producers reportedly began participating and 753 communities were directly involved in production activities across Indigenous and extractive territories. Interview data supports the emphasis on inclusion but also highlights unevenness across territories and value chains, particularly where logistics, administrative requirements or cultural norms shape participation.

Gender and youth integration varies across value chains and value chain stages. Women are often central in seeds, handicrafts and several processing activities, while rubber tapping is described as largely male dominated. The 2023 evaluation highlighted the need for more systematic inclusion

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[5] PRONAF (Brazil's National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture) includes multiple credit modalities tailored to different production systems. These can be linked to minimum price guarantees under PGPM-Bio (*Política de Garantia de Preços Mínimos para Produtos da Sociobiodiversidade*). For further information, see: https://www.gov.br/mda/pt-br/acesso-a-informacao/acoes-e-programas/programas-projetos-acoes-obras-e-atividades/programa-nacional-de-fortalecimento-da-agricultura-familiar-pronaf

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strategies and improved indicators that disaggregate participation, decision making, workload and benefit sharing by sex and age across each stage of the value chain, to reduce the risk that support unintentionally privileges certain groups or increases vulnerabilities.

Territorial protection

Across interviews, land rights, territorial governance and reduced external pressure are described as preconditions for sustainable livelihood outcomes. Without security and control, investments in value chains and community enterprises remain fragile. A consistent concern, especially regarding youth, is that weak livelihood options increase migration to towns and vulnerability to recruitment into illegal economies. Interviewees repeatedly linked forest-based products and services to standing forest and functioning ecosystems, stressing that livelihoods are multi-dimensional, spanning food systems, health, culture, education and notions of good living. Reducing livelihoods to purely a "market approach" is insufficient, and territorial rights and governance is required to make livelihood strategies feasible.

The 2023 thematic evaluation documentation states that ForEco's six-partner collaboration covers 26 Indigenous Territories, 11 conservation units and 5 rural settlements, totalling 467,013 km². The outcome indicator is tracked at baseline (2021), midline (2023) and endline (2025), however the final outcome data on "area to be protected" attributable to the programme, is yet to be provided.

Nevertheless, the data reviewed consistently confirm the mutual relationship between territorial protection and livelihoods, and the positive results achieved through ForEco. Improved livelihoods has provided practical incentives and resources to remain in and defend territories, e.g. through patrols, monitoring, meetings and mobilisation. It has also strengthened intergenerational learnings, and youth taking part of traditional production. Visible productive and socially beneficial activities supported by ForEco has strengthened public support and recognition, as demonstrated through the public procurement reform.

ForEco has consistently focused on activities that build on what people already do, maintain diversity and avoid high input models. Several interviewees cautioned against alien interventions (models, technology) and overly commercial approaches, which may undermine diversity, increase dependency or exacerbate internal inequalities. The time horizon is a constraint however, as short project cycles risk temporary gains without durable protection or livelihood outcomes. Another constraint is the financial sustainability of these efforts, especially if funding to ForEco is not renewed.

8.1.2. Lessons Learned

Across documentation provided to the team and interviews conducted, several consistent insights emerge.

What worked well

The ForEco programme has consistently reflected a wider contribution to livelihoods, as part of a broader rights-based approach, where local economies, food systems, and community organisation are seen as practical enabling conditions for territorial permanence and governance, rather than "income only," although the growth and diversity of the various value-chains are considerable. What worked well can be summarised to the following:

Programme design. The main driver of performance has been the programme design, rather than any single product, with an integrated approach of technical assistance, business planning, aggregation and cashflow systems, market intermediation, advocacy and organisational strengthening. This is also demonstrated by the programme's ability to work through multiple channels/markets at once. The structural constraints of forest economies, require a blend of instruments, market channels, public procurement, public incentives, and long-term grant support.

The strongest results are associated with support that combined technical assistance, business planning, aggregation and cashflow routines, market intermediation, and organisational strengthening.

The success of the procurement reform is a concrete example of such an integrated approach. Having a five-year horizon and predictable funding has been decisive in the time required to build trust, organise producers, invest in basic infrastructure, test business models, and adapt to shocks. This continuity also made it possible to combine “slow” institutional work, with “visible” market outcomes, such as contracts, new buyers, and increased sales.

Scale and diversification of value chains and markets. Total income from supported value chains reached BRL 11,371,494.16 in 2024, described as a 15% increase from 2023. By the end of 2024, ForEco reported 76 active value chains across Indigenous Territories and extractive communities. Diversification across products and market channels has helped mitigate seasonal fluctuations, enabling participation in multiple markets including institutional markets, restoration and PES linked channels. Some products have also achieved export markets.

Public procurement as a concrete systems change pathway. The operationalisation of public procurement as a market channel is a milestone. This “systems change” was achieved through changing procedures and documentation routines to make procurement work for Indigenous and traditional producers. ForEco-funded training, advocacy, registry efforts and technical support resulted in increased contracts and procurement volumes with total revenues for 2021–2024 at BRL 7,421,667 (21.4% of total revenues), covering Rio Negro, Xingu, and Indigenous Territories in Amapá and Pará.

Gender and youth are increasingly participating. There has been a strong participation of women in training, governance, and value chain production, with youth engagement through documentation, digital storytelling, and agroecological exchanges. The 2023 evaluation highlights that the programme initially lacked adequate youth indicators and that “youth” is understood differently across contexts, yet interviews and documentation suggest that there has also been a strong participation of youth. This has also contributed to intergenerational learning of traditional practices. Women’s participation has created new spaces for women in production, commercialisation, and decision making.

Policy influence, agenda setting, and visibility. ForEco has contributed to both national policy engagement and international visibility, for instance related to Brazil’s National Bioeconomy Strategy, minimum price guarantee (PGPAF) and improved access to rural credit (PRONAF). Participation at New York Climate Week provided more visibility, and the legitimacy of participating at such events is rooted in ForEco’s practical interventions at field level.

Partner-based model and community of practice. The partner model with a community of practice has been instrumental as a practical mechanism for exchanges, e.g. spreading workable solutions and aligning approaches. In concrete outputs, this has led to 9 proposals for funding, 75 knowledge exchanges, and 42 major publications in 2024. RFN’s role as convenor has enabled joint planning, cross regional inspiration, and shared problem solving, for instance related to procurement procedures, market access barriers, and maintaining a balance between production and territorial stewardship. RFN is perceived as different from other donors in terms of flexibility, long-term relations and not overly burdensome management routines. This is seen as crucial by partners.

Territorial protection. ForEco’s territorial protection work both reinforced, and was reinforced by, livelihood activities. Stronger local economies and producer organisations has supported collective governance and reduced vulnerability to illegal economies. In 2024, the programme supported 63 local organisations to develop protection strategies and trained 505 individuals in territorial and human rights protection, alongside multiple advocacy actions. Concrete results included CNS security protocol training, an emergency support fund to relocate female leaders under threat, legal support,

support for real-time reporting and advocacy, and advances in demarcation processes. Partners consistently described livelihoods as a practical complement to rights based territorial protection, supporting permanence in territories and reducing pressures linked to migration and intergenerational tensions.

Learning and adapting. ForEco has gradually strengthened its learning and results focus. Partners have attempted at adopting a One Result Framework based on Outcome Mapping to track changes in practice, rather than activity counts. This shift has improved concepts, approaches across partners, stronger attention to youth and gender and sustainability criteria, although still needs further strengthening. The definition of “value chain” was revised in 2023 as a connected sequence from sourcing to marketing and sales, which improved comparability and helped distinguish complete chains from isolated initiatives.

What did not work well, and why

Two cross cutting constraints made performance and sustainability harder to assess. First, MEL and commercial reporting were uneven across partners, and early monitoring underestimated the economic potential of several value chains, as well as gaps in the commercial datasets. This limited comparability, learning, and any credible assessment of profitability. Second, results varied widely between territories and communities, with uneven engagement and production that was not always well explained. Interviews link this to differences in local organisation, market access, logistics and motivation, suggesting a need for stronger readiness diagnostics and more tailored support, or a clearer inception phase in year one.

MEL and comparability gaps. A consistent limitation across programme documentation is uneven reporting and weak comparability across partners, particularly in early years. The 2023 progress report and the thematic evaluation highlight the underestimation of economic potential at inception, and uncertainty relating to how indicator data should be counted and recorded. Some revisions has been made, and annual production and commercial data jointly collected and disseminated. Nevertheless, there are gaps in the reporting for instance relating to markets (e.g. exports, buyers), but more importantly it is not possible to conduct a more thorough analysis of financial sustainability and “what pays.” A recurring theme from interviews is also the challenge to count participants and measuring impact from the economic activities and aggregating this data.

Gaps on financial sustainability data. The commercial data gathered is focusing on gross revenue rather than profit, in which costs and margins are largely missing. This means that it is not possible to estimate net surplus at value chain, partner, or territory level. Similarly, input costs are not reported consistently (e.g. packaging, fuel, transport, maintenance, labour, certifications, storage, processing, administrative time, etc.). Interviews suggest for instance, that the cost of fuel in Rio Negro for transportation far exceeds revenues from sales. Similarly, volumes and unit prices are not systematically reported alongside revenue, and working capital and cashflow needs are not quantified. The total partner overhead allocation is unclear, including staff time and management costs to provide technical assistance, governance, etc.

Sustainability remains an unresolved challenge. This means that it is not possible to assess which value-chains hold the highest commercial potential and/or are likely to be fully financially sustainable. The most mature arrangements appear to be those that combine a stable market channel such as public procurement or long-term buyers, including aggregation and cashflow mechanisms, and institutional support to meet compliance and quality requirements. However, transaction costs remain high, and most value-chains will likely require a continuous subsidy element or a blended model, whether in the form of premiums, technical assistance, grant-funding or other financial assistance. Even the more mature chains depend on ongoing support. Médio Juruá rubber (Veja) and seed oils and butters (Natura) have stable buyers and premiums, but still require continued technical assistance and heavy logistics. Public procurement is a strong systems change pathway, but remains exposed to bureaucracy (especially at local level), administrative burden, and delayed payments. Full financial sustainability within a five-year horizon is unlikely in many remote territories, particularly because territorial governance and protection costs are not priced by markets.

Consequently, when considering future investments, it is vital to fully understand the commercial potential, as well as the viability of a blended model/accessing subsidies and policy instruments (price mechanisms, procurement access, and PES-type finance) for a specific product. In particular now, as the grant from NICFI will not be renewed.

8.1. Annex 2: Country report Peru and Colombia

Across Peru and Colombia, RFN's livelihoods-related work sits in a high-risk context where forest loss, conflict, and illegal economies directly shape what is feasible. In Colombia, the programme analysis links post-2016 dynamics to rapid deforestation driven by road building, land grabbing, cattle ranching, and agricultural expansion, alongside serious human rights violations and insecurity. In Peru, partners operate in a context of accelerating extractive pressures, including illegal logging, gold mining, coca cultivation, and infrastructure expansion, with heightened violence against Indigenous defenders and governance risks from overlapping concessions (including carbon concessions).

RFN's scope in both countries follows a governance-first logic, with economic alternatives (from the Spanish *alternativas económicas* as a preferred term to livelihoods) positioned as a supporting pathway to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to destructive pressures. As explained by a key informant: *support to handicrafts follows the same logic that if people leave the territory they abandon the home, the crops, and traditional knowledge, but if they do only handicrafts they may also abandon fishing and other core subsistence practices (KII)*. In this sense, "alternatives" are understood as complementary and partial options that diversify and strengthen household and community economies without replacing or encompassing all livelihood activities. Partners also noted what they described as an 'excessive conceptualisation' of approaches like bioeconomy and ecological economy, with too much attention placed on the label itself, and emphasised "community economies" as a more practical way to articulate and connect the knowledge, practices, and priorities already rooted in the territory.

This framing is explicit in Colombia's Theory of Change, where development of territorial instruments is expected to enable piloting of sustainable income models and stronger non-timber forest value chains, with a focus on gender equality and inclusion. A similar approach is reflected in Peru's country programming, where autonomous governance, life plans, and Indigenous platforms for isolated peoples' corridors form the backbone, while selected livelihood initiatives are introduced as complementary 'economic autonomy' steps.

In Colombia, implementation is delivered through a mix of Indigenous organisations and specialist NGOs (including ONIC, OPIAC, Fundación Etnollano, FCDS, and AAS across NICFI and Norad-supported components), with RFN's added value emphasised as combining policy experience with long-standing relationships. In Peru, RFN's framework identifies Indigenous representative organisations and specialised allies (including CORPI, ORPIO, ORAU, FENAP, GTANW and others) working across territorial rights, corridor governance, and targeted economic alternatives.

Across the combined portfolio, livelihood interventions are mostly small-to-moderate components embedded in wider governance work: non-timber forest products and value addition (for example Achuar cooperative processing, Wampís aguaje oil), modest community enterprise initiatives (handicrafts, community tourism, beekeeping), and market-side engagement to reduce deforestation impacts in commodity chains (notably work engaging business associations on "deforestation-free" exports).

8.1.1. Livelihood approaches and implementation

In both countries, interventions were designed to align with Indigenous governance processes, rather than being stand-alone "projects." Peru's programming places strong emphasis on life plans and autonomous governance structures, with livelihoods framed as part of "buen vivir" and linked to food sovereignty and territorial control. Colombia's Theory of Change similarly frames livelihoods as something that becomes viable through territorial instruments (life plans, Indigenous municipalities under Decree 632 where applicable, and Indigenous Environmental Management Plans in other areas).

8.1.2. Results and partner perspectives

Income, diversification and early value-chain performance: Evidence of income potential is promising but still maturing, particularly where partners have invested in NTFP value chains and processing. In Peru, the Achuar Shakaim cooperative is positioned as a potential income generator through value addition (chocolate and ungurahui oil), but KIIs highlight constraints including fierce competition, buyer timelines, limited working capital, and the need for stronger management capacity. KIIs also describe the Wampís aguaje oil processing facility as one of the most promising initiatives, with expectations of higher-value markets (for example cosmetics), but note it is capital-intensive and slow to mature, with uncertain near-term profitability. In Colombia, livelihood components remain modest relative to the governance agenda, but partners report meaningful non-monetary outcomes linked to agroecological chacra diversification approaches (agricultural diversity, recovery of traditional knowledge, and gradual economic strengthening rather than abrupt shifts).

Community enterprises and inclusion-oriented outcomes: KIIs describe small-scale community enterprise components (handicrafts, community tourism, beekeeping), alongside 'schools of knowledge and women's trades' that function as intergenerational mechanisms for economic and cultural revitalisation. In Colombia, these are also associated with strengthening women's leadership and creating practical market linkages for crafts and tourism, even where cash income remains limited at this stage.

Governance and organisational strengthening as enabling results: Across both countries, evidence points to stronger and more measurable results in territorial governance and rights than in livelihoods. In Colombia, ONIC contributed to the formalisation of a record number of Indigenous territories in 2023 (72 territories, about 2,000 km²) and supported national advocacy for policy implementation. In Peru, partners advanced Indigenous corridor platforms for isolated peoples and made progress toward formal creation steps for a PIACI reserve, including approval of a categorisation study for an area of roughly 5,000 km², alongside consolidation of autonomous governance methodologies across territories.

Territorial protection, monitoring and market-facing leverage: Colombia's approach combines strengthened territorial instruments with monitoring systems, including a partnership agreement to measure illegal mining impacts in Guainía. In parallel, partners report market and policy engagement with private-sector actors, including dialogue with ANDI and sector federations to explore pathways toward deforestation-free supply chains and improved access to EU markets. In Peru, protection outcomes are closely tied to corridor governance and advocacy against legislative rollbacks, but programme reporting notes that insecurity and threats from illegal actors increase costs and divert time from planned activities.

8.1.3. Value chain development

Value chain work is best described as selective pilots rather than broad portfolio expansion. Peru's Achuar Shakaim cooperative aims to add value to primary products through chocolate and ungurahui oil, which can strengthen local capture of value if market access stabilises. The Wampís aguaje oil plant is an investment in upstream processing as a route to higher-value markets, but it requires sustained technical and business support. Colombia's most concrete value chain evidence relates to crafts and tourism, including catalogue design, product standardisation, pricing, and a Bogotá sales outlet, and a tourism initiative where market understanding was achieved through partnership with a tour company.

KIIs repeatedly stress that livelihoods should not be reduced to cash income: for many partners it is good living in harmony, with an economy connected to health, education, nutrition, and cultural continuity. Another key dynamic is that money divides: carbon concessions and illegal operators can trigger internal conflict, so productive investments need strong governance safeguards and transparent benefit-sharing.

8.1.4. Community engagement, gender, youth and inclusion

Both programmes use participatory planning instruments as entry points. Peru's life plans are explicitly linked to community development visions (often framed as buen vivir) and can include resource-specific management components. In Peru, decades of experience show that community-wide companies and microenterprises often fail because responsibility is diffuse: everyone is responsible, and therefore no one is responsible. As a result, the current policy preference is to work with groups of interested families around a specific economic initiative, with any economic investment anchored at the household level rather than treated as a whole-community enterprise. This approach recognises that not all families share the same priorities or motivation to participate, so participation is based on informed choice and volunteers. A further positive is the shift from a project-by-project logic to a longer-term programme plan: rather than ending when a single project closes, support is designed as an ongoing pathway that can adapt and continue over time.

KIIs also underscore that gender and youth inclusion is strongest when productive initiatives are designed around whole-family participation: for oils, men and youth typically harvest and carry fruit, while women lead key washing and processing steps alongside young people, working as a team. Informants cautioned against the risk of the male head of household leaving for work elsewhere unless they are also involved. Youth participation is seen as essential for continuity of traditional knowledge and livelihoods; KIIs cite cases where traditional medicine spaces initially excluded youth, but the death of knowledge holders highlighted the risk of loss and prompted stronger calls to intentionally include young people and women. Suggested next steps include dedicated youth-focused activities, such as intercultural youth and student gatherings that combine learning on productive initiatives, cultural exchange, and sports across Achuar territories in Peru and Ecuador, coordinated with school directors and trusted local institutions (for example foundations or churches), to reinforce young people's role in sustaining both community economies and cultural transmission.

In Colombia, Etnollano supported participatory studies in Guainía and used women's circles so women could analyse proposals and develop leadership initiatives autonomously. The School of Traditional Skills (Escuela de Oficios) builds on a long-term process led by the Indigenous Council of Alto Guainía, involving 10 communities, to strengthen community spaces linked to handicrafts, food systems, and traditional medicine. Guided by elder women knowledge holders (sabedoras), the initiative supports intergenerational transmission so that traditional knowledge, which was at risk of being lost, can be revitalized and passed on within and across communities. This sustained accompaniment by Etnollano/RFN has helped reinforce cultural continuity while also strengthening practical skills that underpin community wellbeing and livelihoods

RFN's gender approach is described as making gender dynamics explicit rather than prescribing role changes, so communities can discuss and address them autonomously. Activities tend to build on women-linked practices and trades that align with care responsibilities and women's spaces for dialogue, including sensitive issues like economic control within households, which KIIs frame as a form of gender-based violence that has increasingly been brought into community discussion so it can be discussion (and therefore function as a mitigation measure). Reported outcomes include women taking on formal leadership and financial management roles in Indigenous organisations (for example as treasurers responsible for executing funds and reporting), and women serving as coordinators of artisan groups. Increased economic autonomy is evidenced by women's own savings and collective decisions to allocate income to women's health funds. Women-focused Indigenous gatherings across the Amazon, supported by RFN and German cooperation, are seen as safe spaces for knowledge exchange, leadership strengthening, and visibility. A recurring lesson is that women-led revitalization of traditional skills can generate both cultural recovery and income, but it requires long-term accompaniment, patience, and acceptance of setbacks over multi-year processes.

8.1.5. What worked well

Evidence supports the idea that territorial instruments and Indigenous governance structures are credible platforms for later livelihood scaling. KIIs highlight Etnollano's long diagnostic phase and its focus on chacra diversity, women's leadership, and 'non-disruptive' economic strengthening. Shakaim and the aguaje oil plant are both described as community-driven initiatives that create pathways to greater economic autonomy, even if still early-stage. KIIs affirm that communities have understood the value of being part of a cooperative not only for securing a more predictable buyer and income stream, but also for accessing added benefits such as technical assistance through cooperative promoters, input support for production, and a stronger sense of collective ownership compared to independent traders who primarily offer cash purchases without longer-term support.

Colombia's programme has demonstrated influence through policy engagement and rights-based advocacy, including support for implementing Decree 632 and scaling Indigenous environmental planning methodologies.

8.1.6. What did not work well, and why

KIIs and document review describe recurring push for chicken-rearing and technical demanding fish farms, often failing due to input dependence, maintenance burdens, and rapid consumption or collapse. For Shakaim, KIIs highlight that short-term income impacts are constrained by intense competition from far better-capitalised buyers and by a structural mismatch between slow buyer purchasing cycles and the cooperative's immediate cash-flow and logistics needs. They recommend scaling up support through larger productive projects that match Shakaim's reach (66 communities across five river basins), strengthening last-mile logistics to serve families consistently, and accelerating capacity building, certification and documentation for the processing plant, and participation in regional and international fairs. KIIs also stress that high-demand products like *sangre de grado* will not remain viable without dedicated reforestation and sustainability financing: supply is already moving farther from communities (from minutes away to one to two hours), competitors incentivize overextraction with small payments per litre and per seedling, and without sustained investment to motivate households and replant closer to existing farms, the resource base and the cooperative's gains will be exhausted.

At the same time, KIIs warn that investing heavily in processing plants or craft markets without strong governance and community-wide legitimacy can benefit only a few and generate tension.

The Wampis in Peru report illegal actors as their biggest threat, particularly illegal miners raise operating costs and security risks, force longer and less predictable travel routes, and divert substantial time and resources toward internal conflict management and sustained engagement with state institutions (ministries, the prosecutor's office, and the judiciary), reducing the bandwidth and funding available for livelihoods support and weakening cultural practices and community cohesion. KIIs confirm that members of the communities have joined the mining activities, and they say that currently they can take out 5-10 kg of gold and therefore they cannot compete in income nor in time as the livelihoods initiatives are short to medium term, but they have a narrative that is more focused on wellbeing (drinking water, health, forests etc) rather than income.

8.1.7. Key lessons learned

Treat livelihoods as 'buen vivir' outcomes, not only income metrics. The most coherent pathway across both countries is where economic alternatives reinforce territorial governance, food sovereignty, and cultural continuity, rather than substituting them. A key lesson is the importance of integrality: understanding these initiatives as part of an interconnected system, environmental, social, cultural, and commercial, and addressing all relevant factors so the process remains sustainable over time.

A key lesson is that success requires an integral, end-to-end view of the value chain from the outset, grounded in each community's context and priorities. Strengthening traditional ways of life linked to specific skills or trades works best when programme design also considers organisational capacity, sustainable sourcing of raw materials and territory stewardship, learning and transmission processes, and only then market pathways. Not every process needs to culminate in the same type of commercialization, so "success" should not be defined only by entry into shops or fairs, but by progress across governance, wellbeing, and environmental outcomes alongside economic improvements.

Avoid high-input models and prioritise interventions that build on existing practices and diversification. KIIs suggest that low-input, locally managed systems (for example diversified chacras, existing fisheries management, crafts grounded in tradition) are more robust than industrial-style models requiring purchased inputs and constant technical support.

Build explicit safeguards against 'money divides,' especially around carbon and concessions. Both Peru reporting and Colombia risk reflections highlight that concessions (including carbon) can weaken governance and create internal conflict; livelihood support should include transparent governance processes, consent safeguards, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Strengthen livelihood MEL as a learning system, not only indicator reporting. IIs emphasize that qualitative indicators are often more important than production volumes or simple participation and sales metrics, particularly when initiatives aim to strengthen integrality outcomes such as the recovery of traditional knowledge, social cohesion, and wellbeing. Informants highlighted the value of communities co-creating their own indicators and tracking what matters locally, for example health-related measures like distance or access to safe drinking water. They also cautioned against externally imposed, income-only targets that can misrepresent progress: while absolute amounts may seem small to donors, moving from zero to even modest earnings can be meaningful, and income increases do not automatically translate into wellbeing if spending patterns undermine household stability. In this framing, savings and collective financial strategies are treated as more reliable proxies for wellbeing and resilience than gross income alone. KIIs also emphasised that supporting *alternativas económicas* will always involve an inherent element of trial and error, and that the value lies in testing the full value chain in practice and capturing the learning on what actually generates wellbeing.

Gender, youth and inclusion need context-specific framing and delivery mechanisms. Effective practice in this portfolio includes women's circles, women-led knowledge schools, and inclusive advocacy spaces; the main lesson is to anchor gender and youth strategies in Indigenous concepts of balance and interdependence -as per the RFN Gender Policy- while still strengthening participation and decision-making power.

8.1.8. Implications for RFN's future livelihoods work (Colombia)

Partners' experience suggests RFN could strengthen livelihoods impact by making forest economies a more explicit and better resourced programme component, still anchored in territorial governance instruments (life plans, Indigenous municipalities and Indigenous Environmental Management Plans) that create the conditions to pilot and later upscale sustainable income models and NTFP value chains. KIIs also point to the value of avoiding one-size-fits-all recipes and instead building a structured learning system and networks of exchange among community economy leaders (for example tourism, crafts, beekeeping and NTFPs), while keeping a strong link to policy and private sector leverage, including the ongoing dialogue with ANDI and sector federations on deforestation-free supply chains for EU market access. A related priority is to map and partner with specialised organisations that can complement RFN on enterprise development and poverty reduction delivery.

8.1.9. Implications for RFN’s future livelihoods work (Peru)

In Peru, partners indicate that livelihoods support needs to be strengthened as a tangible economic autonomy pillar alongside autonomous governance and corridor protection, because communities face growing cash needs (education, health, basic goods) while illegal economies and concessions intensify pressure and division. Practical implications include focusing on fewer, more viable, low-input models rooted in existing practices (diversified agroforestry and family-based initiatives, sustainable NTFP management and reforestation where resources are being depleted), while investing in the prerequisites for success: capable management, working capital, logistics to reach dispersed communities, and market linkages for initiatives like Shakaim and the Wampís aguaje oil facility. Given security risks and high transaction costs, partners also stress the need for sustained accompaniment, clear safeguards and benefit-sharing to prevent community divisions, and deliberate alliance-building with specialist technical and poverty-reduction actors already present in Peru’s broader ecosystem of partners and donors.

8.2.Annex 3: Country report DRC

DRC hosts 62% of the Congo Basin rainforest and the world's largest tropical peatlands, but livelihoods remain highly precarious in many forest areas, shaped by poverty, weak governance, and conflict dynamics (especially in the East). RFN's country framework explicitly links territorial security, inclusive governance and livelihood improvement as necessary conditions for protecting intact forests and peatlands and reducing land-use conflicts.

Within the 2018–2022 Norad framework period, RFN and partners supported 21 communities to engage in the *local community forest concession* process (CFCL) across Equateur, Sud-Ubangi, Mai-Ndombe and North Kivu. In 2023, partners reported continued expansion of engagement, with 148 newly targeted communities providing their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) to be accompanied in the community forestry process across North Kivu, Tshopo and Equateur, despite ongoing armed conflict in Eastern DRC.

The programme works through long-standing Congolese civil-society partners (notably CREF Network in North Kivu and GASHE in Equateur), alongside other allies supporting governance, rights and financing innovations (for example the Community Fund for Forests, CFF, incubated by RFN until expected formalisation in 2026). Target groups include forest-dependent local communities and Indigenous Peoples (including Pygmy groups such as Batwa, and other communities pursuing ICCAs and tenure claims), as well as communities affected by industrial forestry and agro-industrial concessions through social clauses and rights monitoring.

Main livelihood and socio-bioeconomy intervention types are best described as a transition from securing rights to valorising resources through community-defined plans and small-scale financing: CFCL titling, Simple Management Plans (PSGs), zoning and local development planning, community grants (rapid-impact projects), early-stage value-chain support (notably cocoa and cassava), and pilots in fish farming and agroecology linked to post-tenure management.

8.2.1. Livelihood approaches and implementation

The core implementation logic is sequenced: first, securing customary territories legally (CFCL and related land-use instruments); second, developing management and development tools (PSG, zoning, socio-economic studies, local development plans); and third, support community-chosen livelihood priorities and governance for benefit-sharing and compliance. KIIs describe CFCL as the prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods, with PSGs used to define rules, zones, and priorities for local development and resource use. Community funds / direct grants for community priorities are a more recent implementation, i.e. rapid-impact grants in Equateur reported at USD 5,000–6,000 per community for activities like fish farming, duck and pig rearing, and river transport. Social clauses and dialogue with concessionaires seeks to protect livelihoods in and around industrial concessions

Partner roles are distinct and complementary: CREF describes a province-wide platform role and technical accompaniment of CFCL dossiers and PSG development in North Kivu, while GASHE emphasises community rights defence and engagement with commercial deforestation drivers in Equateur, using monitoring tools and dialogue. Partners also talk about complementarity referring to the work of RF UK and RFN in DRC: RF UK's livelihood work prioritises socio-economic studies and economic operators, while RFN focuses on securing spaces and on the PSG process at grassroots level.

8.2.2. Results and partner perspectives

- Income and diversification outcomes. Quantified income results are limited in the available reporting, but qualitative evidence suggests early livelihood benefits where communities received direct support and where PSG implementation has moved into the "implementation" phase. KIIs with RFN staff report that communities have used funds to generate community-managed benefits (including sales of goods and support for medical evacuations), and that women and youth engagement tends to increase once livelihood activities start (after tenure is secured).

- Value-chain development and market access. Partners describe progress mainly in enabling conditions (organisation, credit groups, processing and transport) rather than mature value chains at scale. KIIs mention mutual support groups around cocoa and cassava, credit schemes, and investments in processing and evacuation/transport (for example, pirogues and tricycles) as practical improvements to market access and wellbeing. At the same time, partners stress that without market access and basic infrastructure, livelihood support can ´bring little and create problems´, especially where production cannot be transported and prices are low.
- Governance and organisational strengthening. Reported achievements are strong on governance foundations: by end-2022 the programme reported 15 PSGs developed (beyond target) and the establishment of elected CFCL governance bodies, framed as essential for sustainability. In 2023, partners reported that two communities in North Kivu were supported not only to implement PSGs but also to set up benefit-sharing mechanisms for revenues generated in their CFCLs.
- Territorial protection and environmental contributions. The community forestry approach is consistently positioned as a protection pathway for intact forests and peatlands. In Equateur, a Rainforest Trust co-financed initiative identified roughly 6,652 km² of peatlands for community protection and management through CFCL. In Mai-Ndombe, support for co-management of contiguous CFCLs (Mbali Rivière) is linked to bonobo habitat protection and ecotourism.

8.2.3. Value chain development

Public procurement and certification initiatives are not prominent in the DRC documents reviewed, and value-chain strategies appear earlier-stage than the Brazil ForEco model, with stronger emphasis on tenure and governance foundations before scaling market systems. At the same time, partners express that without this component, tenure gains risk remaining socially and politically “invisible” because communities and authorities want to see tangible poverty-reduction benefits, and livelihood activities bring little (and can even create problems) if market access and basic enabling infrastructure are not addressed.

8.2.4. Community engagement, gender, youth and inclusion

Community participation in planning and management is a clear strength of the model: CFCL requests, FPIC processes, participatory land-use planning (PSAT), socio-economic surveys, zoning, and PSG development are consistently described as community-led or co-produced with facilitation support.

The programme’s inclusion agenda is shaped by customary norms that often exclude women from public decision-making and land inheritance and recognition, as well as by the specific vulnerability of Pygmy Indigenous Peoples. Partners argue against externally imposed solutions like quotas and describe targeted sessions to build shared understanding among women, men and youth, and also document labour-rights issues for Indigenous communities in concession contexts (for example payroll systems not recognising Pygmy names), where dialogue and advocacy reportedly produced practical fixes. The programme has invested in gender-focused tools and advocacy: in 2022 it produced a community benefit-sharing tool and a women’s guide for forest management, supported by a gender study clarifying women’s roles in decision-making bodies. KIIs frame youth as future leadership for forest stewardship, but youth constraints are partly structural: in some areas (for example Kambushi) rural outmigration is significant, while elsewhere youth move for study or mining work (notably in Walikale).

8.2.5. What worked well

Partners interviewed value the sequenced model of "secure space first, then valorise" as credible and necessary for sustainability, because rights recognition and legal tenure are seen as the foundation for any durable livelihood gains. They also highlight the strength of the governance results achieved through CFCL titling support and PSG development, which exceeded targets in 2022 and helped create the basic conditions for transparent benefit-sharing and rule-based resource management. KIIs further indicate that direct community support mechanisms, including rapid-impact grants, were highly appreciated because funds reached communities directly rather than only through NGOs, and were used for practical livelihood and wellbeing priorities such as fish farming, small livestock, transport, and in some cases medical evacuations. Finally, partners point to the added value of dialogue-based engagement with commercial actors, reporting measurable changes linked to social clauses and structured dialogue, including commitments to social infrastructure such as schools and health centres, adherence to the standard minimum wage (SMIC), and greater attention to workers' rights and contracts.

8.2.6. What did not work well, and why

Livelihood results are uneven and often still at an early stage. It is too early to evaluate livelihood performance because communities are at very different points along the pathway, from title acquisition to PSG development and implementation, and only later to income generation. Market and infrastructure barriers remain binding, with transport constraints, weak market access, and limited local purchasing power constraining profitability and reducing the perceived value of livelihood support when products cannot reach markets or only sell at very low prices. Gender inclusion is still constrained by local norms and earlier-stage exclusion, as women's limited involvement in initial CFCL stages reduces their knowledge and influence, and KIIs caution that overly prescriptive gender targets can create resistance or conflict if they are not locally owned and accompanied over time.

Finally, KIIs point to MEL limitations, requesting livelihood indicators that better capture progress and quality, including governance influence and enabling conditions, because current MEL risks under-documenting the how and why of change in fragile contexts.

8.2.7. Key lessons learned

Tenure security is directly linked to livelihood security: RFN's support to strengthen community capacities to understand and defend their land and forest rights proved to be a critical enabler of forest protection and sustainable livelihoods. By helping communities negotiate and apply social clauses with commercial actors operating in forestry and agroindustry, RFN increased communities' ability to assert their rights, set clearer conditions for access and benefit-sharing, and reduce the risks of exploitation. Because local communities depend on forests as their primary source of subsistence and income, tenure security is directly linked to livelihood security. When community rights are recognised and respected, communities are better positioned to manage and protect forests, creating a reinforcing cycle where improved rights support improved livelihoods, and stronger livelihoods support stronger forest stewardship.

Yet, tenure security is necessary but not sufficient: CFCL titles and PSGs create the governance and legality for sustainable use, but livelihood gains depend on market access, infrastructure, and the capacity of community institutions to manage benefits and enforce rules. KIIs stress that supporting an activity (for example agriculture) without solving transport and market failures can create frustration and limited impact; targeted "enabling investments" (evacuation, processing, maintenance materials, bridges) can unlock returns more reliably than isolated inputs but it requires large budgets.

Direct finance can shift ownership if paired with governance support: early evidence from rapid-impact grants suggests direct community funding is motivating and visible, but sustainability requires strong benefit-sharing systems, transparent management and ongoing capacity strengthening.

Gender and youth inclusion must be designed as a change process: women's participation improves when livelihoods are tangible and when norms are addressed through participatory facilitation, not quotas; youth dynamics (migration, mining pull factors) need to be accounted for in livelihood design and leadership pathways.

Implications for RFN's future livelihoods work (DRC): partners explicitly suggest that a more structured forest economy package for DRC, analogous in intent (not necessarily scale) to ForEco, could help RFN demonstrate poverty-reduction and livelihood impact while protecting forests, provided it stays anchored in the tenure-to-valorisation pathway and invests in prerequisites (infrastructure, markets, governance).Partners also recommend mapping actors and organisations specialised in poverty reduction in order to strengthen alliances and potentially these organisations could take over the implementation of management plans.

8.3.Annex 4: Country report Indonesia

RFN’s projects in Indonesia are rooted in rights-based advocacy. This strategy aligns with the current national landscape, where the government often overlooks the rights of indigenous communities in favour of granting natural resource management to large-scale private investors and state projects. Indigenous community generally lack recognition and therefore they have limited access to natural resources despite their high natural resource high dependency for daily livelihood.

Furthermore, the government consistently fails to provide essential social services, such as healthcare and education, to indigenous populations. Logistically, reaching these communities is difficult as many reside in remote areas. This challenge is compounded by limited local government budgets and political leaders who often prioritise settling "election debts" over public service once in power.

There are spaces for formal recognition of indigenous community in mapping and access to forest areas. Mapping activity includes the mapping to indigenous community living in the area where the indigenous community participate actively, with the facilitation from RFN partners. Involvement in the mapping also provides opportunity to the indigenous community to develop network or participate in the joint-action for advocating government policies. As the female members of the community involve, they know what aspects of village governance that they can participate. Some of them fill the gap of female representation as the community already know that some of their female members have the capacity to participate in the related issues.

Regarding access to forest, although forest areas belong to the national government, community can get social forestry permit (with maximum area of 5000 hectares under the village as Hutan Desa or Village Forest under the village authority, or as Community Forest managed by social forestry business unit established by the community). Another option is to access forest area as Customary Forest that can cover to 50,000 hectares. The process for getting Customary Forest permit is rather complicated as the community needs to do the customary mapping and registration as customary group that gets formal approval in a decree from the Bupati. Both processes take time, but to get the status as Customary Forest takes longer time.

Related to livelihood projects, there are five partner organisations were analysed, namely KKI WARSI, Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI), Bentara Papua, Intsia Papua Foundation and Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat. KKI WARSI works in Jambi (Sumatra) and North Kalimantan, FWI works in Aru Islands (Maluku), Pusaka Bentala Rakyat (Pusaka) in Southwest Papua and South Papua, Bentara Papua in Southwest Papua and West Papua, and Intsia Papua Foundation works in Papua Province. All of these partner organisation provide assistance to indigenous community but through different modes. KKI WARSI works directly with the indigenous community, facilitates them for getting access to forest resources and develop the management capacity of social forestry business unit. FWI works with partner organisations, one that is specialised in mapping and the other is a locally based organisation. Pusaka works directly with the community in advocacy program but have collaborations with local partner organisations for livelihood program. Bentara Papua works directly with the communities in three locations representing diverse landscapes (highland, coastal and lowland). Intsia Papua Foundation works with Customary Community Groups (Lembaga Masyarakat Adat) and in collaboration with organisation with expertise in mapping.

In Papua, RFN’s status as an international entity provides a strategic advantage. Because it is not based in Indonesia, RFN enjoys greater flexibility in supporting local organisations compared to domestic NGOs, which face significant bureaucratic restrictions. This direct relationship allows Indonesian partners to implement approaches that are more tailored and relevant to local realities.

8.3.1. Livelihood approaches and implementation

RFN's interventions are thoughtfully designed and adapted to the local context, rooted in deep consultations with local partners. While each project utilises a formal log frame (logical framework) that identifies livelihood approaches as a core strategy, implementation remains highly flexible. If a specific livelihood strategy outlined in the log frame proves unfeasible due to local conditions, RFN and its partners engage in further dialogue to determine the most effective alternative course of action.

The primary livelihood development model is agroforestry, which is uniquely suited to indigenous communities living in forest regions. These initiatives typically seek recognition for managing natural resources through either social forestry permits or the formal designation of customary forests (Hutan Adat). FWI notes that for some indigenous communities, customary forest designations are often more appropriate as they allow communities to manage larger ancestral territories that more accurately reflect their traditional land-use scales.

In Jambi KKI WARSI has facilitated carbon credit access for the Orang Rimba in Jambi through the voluntary carbon market. In the Kerinci region, they have linked organic cinnamon producers directly to buyers. WARSI focuses on technical assistance, ensuring that the business operations are managed directly by community-based entities, such as community forestry management units. In North Kalimantan, WARSI facilitated community to develop forest products. The forest products developed are varied, according to the local potential like agarwood resins, essential oils (from agarwood, lemongrass, etc.) and handicraft. The community targets markets from government exhibitions and companies operating in their surroundings. However, the community members are also active in social media like Facebook Pro that they receive likes and their video becomes viral, which then creates market from them. Marketing of commodities is mainly done through the government exhibitions.

Intsia has provided support to smallholders cultivating cocoa within agroforestry systems and assists coastal communities with dried fish production. Currently, this assistance is delivered on an individual basis as the community is not familiar with the group approach. The livelihood intervention from Intsia shows that the community in Papua that still close to hunter and gathering practices are easier to manage the crops that do not need daily attention. Perennial crops like cacao do not need intensive care compared to vegetable, and therefore are more suitable.

FWI acknowledges livelihood as program's output from the beginning, but the priority is given to litigation in strengthening access of community to natural resources and mapping of indigenous rights as well as identifying baseline data for livelihood development. However, livelihood does not focus on commodity development. FWI has initiated discussions with Kobumi to explore sustainable sourcing for copra.

Bentara develops products from their intensive assistance in the community where the staff from Bentara stay in the village (live-in). Three products developed by Bentara are coffee (highland community), coconut oil and VCO as well as banana flour (coastal community), and sago flour (lowland community). Being in the village, Bentara's staff are able to have intensive discussion with the community about potential commodities to be developed while the staff that stay in the city market the products. By doing so, there are some products marketed in some shops in the city. Bentara is aware the need to develop capacity of the community to market their products. Coffee has been sold through Koperasi Bekal to artisanal coffee shops as the supply is rather limited. Kobumi has approached Bentara for copra but the supply order has not been decided as the supply of copra is limited. In the limited copra supply, Bentara perceives it is better to process the coconut oil locally and sold to local markets. In South Sorong, community produce sago flour and chips that have already markets locally up to the cities of Sorong and Aimas.

Pusaka works with local organisation to implement the project. In Merauke, women organisation eL_AdPPer market the products through local network of MSMEs that they have developed in past in addition to the efforts for placing community products in some exhibitions organised by the government. The collaboration with eL_AdPPer was from the short-term engagement between Pusaka and eL_AdPPer for supporting program related to program to develop local food in 2020-2021 that produced sago flour, fish floss meat and fish chip. Afterwards, eL_AdPPer continues to assist the community for the livelihood program without support from Pusaka. In the limitation of funding support, eL_AdPPer often ask local traders or other NGOs to take products from the villages and sell it to Merauke City. Through the local network, products from the assisted community can also be found in some souvenir shops in Merauke and Jayapura. eL_AdPPer sees that the community's MSMEs have already develop market network that can become marketing channels of the community products. In Southwest Papua, Pusaka works with local organisation named Sinagi Papua. Although Sinagi Papua has not been legalised, the leader of the organisation has actively involved in the development of food products with materials taken locally. According to Sinagi Papua, collaboration with Pusaka is very good as Pusaka is close to the community especially to customary people.

Despite these progresses, because RFN's partners are historically advocacy-oriented, livelihood programming remains a new frontier. These organisations often feel under-equipped to navigate complex market dynamics. Furthermore, as noted by Pusaka and Intsia, many communities remain sceptical of "group-based" models due to past government programs where groups were formed merely as a bureaucratic requirement to access aid. FWI suggests that this lack of "collective motive" can be overcome by initiating practical collective actions—such as the aggregation of community products. By demonstrating the tangible economic benefits of scaling up, partners can foster an organic awareness of the value of cooperatives and collective action.

8.3.2. Results and partner perspectives

Livelihood interventions have generated supplementary income and encouraged the diversification of local economies. For the indigenous communities assisted by WARSI, these programs have built the capacity to capitalise on emerging trends in forest-based products, specifically within the carbon and sustainability markets. In the realm of carbon trading, WARSI acts as a vital bridge; by amplifying the narratives of indigenous communities, they ensure that traditional forest stewardship is recognised as a high-value ecosystem service. This positioning has successfully attracted gold standard carbon investors who prioritise projects with high social and environmental integrity.

In contrast, Intsia and Pusaka prioritise support for subsistence-level small producers. Their strategy focuses on immediate food security and local stability rather than complex market mechanisms. Currently, products from these communities are primarily sold to local village traders. Notably, some communities producing crabs and copra supported by Pusaka and Intsia have established trade links with Kobumi. However, a significant challenge remains like production volumes are still limited and the quality management has not been a concern. Because the primary expertise of RFN's partners lies in rights advocacy, livelihood development is still in its nascent stages. This focus on advocacy, while essential for land security, currently limits the partners' ability to meet the rigorous supply requirements of large-scale, demanding off-takers.

8.3.3. Value chain development

A Among the RFN partner organisations interviewed, value chain development remains in its early stages. Currently, commodities are primarily a result from the successful recognition of indigenous rights to natural resources. While previous interventions focused almost exclusively on securing these legal rights, the shift toward facilitating livelihood development is only just beginning.

Nevertheless, partner organisations agree that developing value chains is essential. To be effective, this must be executed through locally-based organisations that are integrated with existing traders and initiatives that give favourable business deals. For instance, Kobumi—a trading entity established during a previous RFN intervention—could play a pivotal role in this transition. Ultimately, the choice remains with the communities. They retain the autonomy to sell their products to whichever buyers are most advantageous based on economic returns, geographic proximity, and favourable business negotiations.

8.3.4. Community engagement and inclusion

RFN's partner organisations recognise that mobilising community participation in planning and management is fundamental to their success. Consequently, their work plans are the result of intensive, grassroots discussions with local residents. However, meaningful participation by women remains a significant challenge, largely due to entrenched patriarchal social structures. While partners consistently strive to include women in formal meetings, deeper engagement is still required. One proposed strategy to bridge this gap is the use of live-infield staff; by residing within the community, staff can engage in informal, intensive dialogues with women during their daily activities, rather than relying solely on formal sessions where women may be less likely to speak.

In previous interventions, the allocation of specialised staff and resources for gender-focused work was limited. This was primarily because organisational efforts were concentrated on territorial mapping, a physically demanding task that requires navigating deep into the forest. Partners that already moved into more advanced stages of assistance, they have managed to integrate gender considerations relatively well compared to other partners that still focused heavily on rights advocacy. Rights advocacy works still consumed by legal and territorial works mainly in mapping that should reach inner forest areas that usually are not easy to be reached.

8.3.5. What worked well

The most successful aspect of RFN's livelihood interventions is the creation of enabling conditions for indigenous communities to reclaim access to their traditional natural resources. Historically, these communities were relegated to being mere observers while the government granted forest concessions to corporations, often ignoring the devastating impacts on both local livelihoods and the supporting ecosystems.

8.3.6. What did not work well, and why

While the recognition of indigenous rights is theoretically enshrined in national legal frameworks, actual implementation is often hindered by complex procedural requirements—such as rigorous documentation, technical measurement, and verification—as well as the political influence of powerful lobbyists. By focusing on rights advocacy, RFN's partners have successfully bridged this gap, empowering communities to secure formal recognition through Ministerial Decrees based on national regulations.

Despite these legal victories, partners remain cautious regarding market-based interventions. This hesitation stems from a self-aware recognition of their limitations as advocacy-rooted organisations. To address this, the following strategies can help by developing local collaboration for partnering with existing local initiatives and business-oriented entities can provide the necessary market expertise, knowledge exchange where partner organisations highlighted RFN's critical role in facilitating peer-to-peer learning, allowing different organisations to complement each other's strengths and fill capacity gaps.

8.3.7. Key lessons learned

RFN is well-positioned to function as a central hub for information and knowledge exchange. By operating across multiple levels, RFN can ensure that local successes are amplified as best practices to influence and improve national-level regulations.

8.4.Annex 5: Academic and grey literature reviewed

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8.5. Annex 6: SO 1.5: practical suggestion for an organisational KPI

SO 1.5 is an organisational KPI (% of targeted populations with improved livelihoods). However, livelihood outcomes across RFN's portfolio are multi-dimensional, strongly context-dependent and shaped by many external factors. Consequently, KPI reporting needs to be accompanied by a short narrative that documents key contextual constraints and plausible pathways to the observed changes.

This mixed evidence approach is particularly important in high-risk settings (Peru, Colombia and DRC), where improved livelihoods may first be visible through resilience and governance outcomes rather than immediate revenue. A narrative could for instance document main enabling and constraining factors (security/illegal economies, market access, climate shocks, state presence), any major implementation adaptations, and key inclusion patterns (gender/youth) and why they occur.

8.5.1. Fix population units, denominators, and timing at inception

To enable credible aggregation across countries, each project should establish three elements at inception and keep them constant:

1. **Population unit (denominator):** household / producer group / cooperative members / community sub-group[6].
2. **Baseline reference and method:** rapid survey, participatory scorecard, or administrative records (e.g., cooperative/Village Savings and Loan Associations, procurement accreditation).
3. **Annual measurement point:** ideally the same season each year where seasonality affects income or food security.

This addresses recurrent comparability issues, and supports more realistic early-year targets while measurement systems are being established during inception.

8.5.2. Reduce reporting burden

A recurring theme across countries is that burdensome reporting leads to fatigue, lower data quality and data gaps. To improve data quality, projects should select 1–3 sub-indicators that are feasible, while still reporting the overall SO 1.5 "improved" status for aggregation. For instance:

- **Brazil (ForEco):** procurement participation and reliable payments may be a strong proxy for improved livelihoods.
- **Indonesia:** agroforestry/cocoa smallholder groups may track food security and diversified income.
- **DRC:** rapid-impact grants and early post-tenure activities may track resilience mechanisms and benefit-sharing functionality.

8.5.3. Standardise triangulation and disaggregation

Given the portfolio's emphasis on governance-first approaches (e.g., Peru/Colombia/DRC) and rights-based protection (all contexts), several SO 1.5 dimensions will often be documented best through participatory tools. A practical minimum package for triangulation could be:

- **Annual participatory scorecard (0–3)** for selected sub-indicators (e.g., reduced reliance on harmful practices, perceived wellbeing, cultural stewardship), etc.
- **2–3 short "change stories" per project** (outcome harvesting style) with a named source (meeting note, registry, cooperative record, etc.).

[6] Note that interviews from Brazil underline that that counting participants can be challenging, some suggesting using community as population unit. However, it cannot automatically be assumed that a whole community will benefit (unless documented).

Sex- and age-disaggregation should be required where feasible, particularly for inclusion and benefit-sharing dimensions, with a brief explanation of patterns (norms, roles, security constraints, logistics). This is relevant across contexts.

8.5.4. Avoid treating revenue as the default proxy

Across the portfolio, livelihood improvements are frequently non-monetary (food security, cultural continuity, reduced vulnerability, stronger governance). Revenue should therefore be treated as one optional input under Dimension 1, but used only where meaningful and comparable, and always complemented by non-monetary evidence.

Additionally, despite ForEco demonstrating strong revenue growth, there are data gaps (e.g. unit price, volume and cost data) that limit profitability analysis - and long-term (financial) sustainability.

8.5.5. Year 1 as an inception

First-year targets are often low/zero, or targets/indicators not properly adapted to the local context. Yet even if Y1 is an inception, while the full monitoring system is being designed, it can still be measured based on milestones and qualitative evidence. Whether essential foundations are in place for SO 1.5, including tested methods for data collecting, are measurable outputs in their own right.

This avoids the common problem of inconsistent early-year reporting because definitions and counting rules are still being developed. Y1 can also include a small number of qualitative "progress made" indicators that capture early trajectory and learnings (without overstating impact).

To ensure SO Indicator 1.5 become measurable and comparable across countries, the inception year should encompass the following:

1. **Confirm scope and "population unit" (denominator)**

Partners need to agree and document, per project, the population unit that will be used consistently for SO 1.5 reporting (e.g., households, communities, clans, cooperatives/producer groups), including:

- Defining the target population list (who is "in scope" for the project)
- Confirming the denominator (total number of population units targeted and assessed)
- Documenting inclusion/exclusion rules (e.g., how mobile households, seasonal participation, or overlapping groups are treated)

Deliverable: A fixed "Population Register" (simple list) stating the unit, total N, and counting rules.

2. **Select a minimal set of sub-indicators to measure well**

Each project will select 1–3 realistic sub-indicators from the SO 1.5 framework, matching the project's livelihood focus, such as food security, NTFPs, community enterprises, savings, governance/benefit sharing, wellbeing, etc.

Deliverable: A one-page "SO 1.5 Indicator Selection Sheet" listing chosen sub-indicators, definitions in local terms, and rationale.

3. **Establish baseline values and reference points**

Partners need to conduct a baseline for the selected sub-indicators, with clear deadlines for data collection and, where relevant/feasible, aligned to seasonality (e.g., annual harvest cycles, etc.).

Possible methods may include short surveys, administrative records (e.g., cooperative/VSLA registers), participatory tools (e.g., community scorecards on a 0–3 scale), or structured focus group reflections.

Deliverable: Baseline dataset or scorecard summary + brief note on method, timing, and coverage.

4. **Define "improvement" and set realistic Year 2 targets**

Partners need to operationalise “improvement” targets for the selected sub-indicator, for instance:

- “New or additional income activity” = household/group confirms active engagement for X months and can name product/channel
- “Improved food access” = self-reported reduction in months of shortage, or increased diversity of foods produced/consumed
- “Inclusive governance” = evidence of representation/participation plus documented benefit-sharing rules or community fund practice
- “Reduced reliance on unsustainable practices” = scorecard result

Deliverable: Operational definitions and targets/thresholds on “Improvement,” with preliminary Year 2 targets.

5. Data collection and reporting routines in place

Partners need to integrate SO 1.5 monitoring into existing M&E routines by defining: responsibilities (who collects which data), dates (when data is collected), templates (how data is stored and submitted) and confidentiality/consent (how to manage sensitive information).

Deliverable: A one-page “SO 1.5 Monitoring Plan” (who/when/how) plus completed reporting template. This may also be integrated into overall partner M&E plan.

6. Testing the triangulation and data quality checks (small pilot)

Before full rollout, it would be good to have partners pilot the chosen tools in a small subset of population units (e.g., 5–10 communities or a sample of households/groups) to confirm whether questions and tools are fully understood, whether data can be collected consistently, and whether the method captures change that stakeholders consider meaningful.

Additionally, there is a need to build in quality check to ensure consistency (e.g. that there is same denominator across indicators), spot checks/verification (records vs. self-report), and avoid duplication risk where multiple partners work in the same geography.

Deliverable: Monitoring pilot (what worked, what to adjust) + updated tools/templates. It may be that RFN needs to conduct such a global pilot to ensure data quality and consistency across, as well as aggregation of the data.

8.6.Annex 7: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Evaluation of RFN's Work on Livelihoods

Organisation: Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN)

1) Background

Over the past years, Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) has invested consistently in livelihoods efforts as part of its rights-based approach to rainforest protection. This has taken two main forms: (i) a large, dedicated intervention in Brazil through the ForEco Forest Economy (Advancing Sustainable Management in the Brazilian Amazon) programme portfolio, and (ii) livelihood components embedded within broader programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Peru & Colombia (PeCo), and Indonesia.

Across these contexts, RFN and partners have explored how livelihoods can strengthen territorial governance, resilience, and forest stewardship of Indigenous Peoples and Local (forest dependent) Communities (and vice versa) while navigating the tension between green market mechanisms (forest products, restoration, certification, PES/carbon) and so-called *buen vivir* - culturally grounded, community-defined ways of living that sustain people and forests.

To inform programmatic choices and align with organisational learning ambitions, RFN now seeks to evaluate and consolidate findings across programmes and to set direction for future livelihoods efforts. In 2025, livelihood was elevated to a thematic priority through the revision of RFN's frameworks, underscoring the need for an organisation-wide evidence base to guide scale-up, refinement of future investments, and quality improvements.

2) Purpose

The evaluation will provide actionable learning to guide RFN's programme development and strategic choices. It will determine what has worked in RFN's livelihoods projects, what did not, and most importantly, *why*, identifying key factors, do's and dont's, and the types of projects RFN should prioritize or avoid. The evaluation should come up with a consolidated and refined methodology/theory of change/pathway of change for RFN's livelihood work.

The evaluation should clarify RFN's distinct added value compared to other actors and provide insights not only on project-level results but also on patterns and lessons across countries and interventions.

Findings should feed into programme improvements, and support RFN's aim to strengthen its MEL system. RFN aim to publish the evaluation report on our website.

3) Intended Use and Users

- Primary users: RFN Programme country teams (Brazil, DRC, Peru and Colombia, Indonesia and Papa New Guinea), team leaders, Knowledge & Learning (SALT), and other relevant RFN teams.
- Secondary users: Partners and (relevant) donors, as well as other allied organisations, and the general public.

4) Objectives

1. Review and synthesize literature on livelihoods and socio-bio economy approaches in tropical rainforests (research and grey literature, plus best practices from implementing organisations, government actors and other stakeholders) to identify pathways, strengths, weaknesses, and examples that can inform RFN's future programming and strategy.
2. Synthesize RFN's livelihoods results to date, moving beyond project-level reporting to develop a cross-country perspective, with Brazil and the ForEco Forest Economy programme as the largest intervention and selected cases from DRC, Peru Colombia, Indonesia and Papa New Guinea.
3. Input to RFN's new livelihood indicator (SO Indicator 1.5) for consistent reporting across all projects.
4. Distil lessons from the ForEco programme in Brazil and its data material that can strengthen other RFN country programmes.
5. Evaluate RFN's approach comparatively to other implementing organisations and programmes/project (incl. RFUK/US)
6. Identify how RFN can better define and strengthen its livelihoods approach organisation-wide, highlighting RFN's unique contribution and strategic angle within its thematic priorities, and provide recommendations for improving MEL systems.

5) Evaluation Questions

EQ1 Results so far: What are the main results achieved through RFN's livelihoods work to date, focusing on Brazil and selected interventions in DRC, Peru- Colombia, Indonesia and Papa New-Guinea, and what insights emerge when looking across countries and projects? What has worked and what has not worked, so far, and Why? How can these findings inform reporting against RFNs new livelihood Indicator (SO indicator 1.5)?

EQ2 Added value and evidence base: What do existing studies and implementation experiences from implemented projects (including public programmes and initiatives) reveal about effective livelihood and socio-bio economy approaches, including key strengths, gaps, territorial scope, and best practices to guide RFN's future work? What is RFN's added value compared to other actors, and how can this angle be sharpened?

EQ3 Strengthening and strategy: How should RFN and partners strengthen livelihoods efforts related to RFN's strategic objective 1 (rights-based management) and 2 (policies at local, national and regional levels). With livelihood work we include; approaches, capacities, partnerships, risk management, gender youth and inclusion. How should these insights inform RFN's thematic priorities and future strategy? What strategic shifts are needed to position RFN distinctly in the livelihoods space?

6) Scope

- Geographies: Brazilian Amazon (primary case), plus targeted cases in DRC, Peru, Colombia, Indonesia and Papa New Guinea. (Selection to be finalised at inception-stage based on learning value and feasibility).
- Who: This evaluation will focus on livelihood and income generating activities developed by Indigenous peoples, other forest dependent communities and their representative local organizations, supported by RFN partner organisation in the six project countries.
- Period: 2019–2025.
- Depth: Mixed portfolio-level synthesis and deep-dive cases (Brazil + up to 2–3 additional cases).

7) Methodology

- Desk review: Key programme documents will be provided by RFN
- Literature-review: Review and synthesize literature on livelihoods and socio-bio economy approaches (scope to be agreed)
- Key informant interviews / focus groups: RFN staff, partners, and IP and LC representatives, ensuring gender representation and inclusion (women, youth, diverse socio-economic groups).
- Participatory validation: Draft findings´ presentation/validation with RFN and (as relevant) partners to improve quality and uptake.
- Analysis: Contribution-oriented analysis of outcomes; thematic synthesis for cross-country lesson-drawing; efficiency reflections where data allows.
- Ethics: Informed consent, confidentiality, do-no-harm, cultural sensitivity; alignment with RFN's guidelines.

8) Deliverables

7. Inception Report: methodology, sampling/case selection, data sources, final EQs, plan for gender & inclusion.
8. Evaluation of ForEco programme results, reflection on input versus results achieved with a special focus on commercial data for the programme period (2021-25).
9. Semi-structural interviews with project partners/ stakeholders (virtual mode).
10. Presentation / Validation Seminar: preliminary findings with RFN (and partners as appropriate).
11. Final Evaluation Report (max. 30 pages excl. annexes) + Annexes (tools, sources, ToR, etc.).
    Produce impact stories from ForEco (+ another country TBD) for internal learning and external communication.
12. 2-page Executive Summary for internal sharing and RFN's evaluation database.

9) Indicative Timeline

Milestones	**N**	**D**	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**Target Date**
Call for proposals							12.11.2025
Reception of proposals							12.11.25 - 30.11.2025
Notification of award							03.12.2025
Contract & kick-off meeting							05.12.2025
Submission of inception report							19.12.2025
Inception Report – evaluation & comments							22. 12.2025
Data collection window							22.12.2025 – 16.03.2026
Delivery draft evaluation report							20.03.2026
RFN - Review and feedback							27.03.2026
Validation seminar/workshop							TBD
Final report & 2-page summary							13.04.2026

10) Required Qualifications (evaluation team)

- Proven evaluation experience from livelihoods/socio-bioeconomy initiatives in forest contexts with Indigenous Peoples and Forest Dependent Communities.
- Knowledge of territorial sociobioeconomy systems, market-oriented non-timber forest products (NTFP) and services derived from biodiversity resources.

- Proven track record in designing and performing quantitative and qualitative data collection, comfortable with contribution analysis; experience with creating impact stories, and in making recommendations.
- Comprehensive understanding of relevant national and international policy arenas and instruments for rainforest protection, including the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD) and socio-biodiversity related public policies in Brazil and the other partner countries.
- Demonstrated expertise in gender, youth & inclusion and participatory validation approaches.
- Excellent track record in preparing well-written reports on time.
- Regional/language competence is an asset.

11) How to apply

Interested and eligible candidates (team or individual consultant) must submit technical and financial proposals by Wednesday Nov. 30t^{h}. The proposal must include the following information:

- CV of all members in the team, and a summary of their qualifications (maximum two pages combined)
- Proposed methodology and timetable (max 2 pages)
- A financial offer, including daily fees based on 8 working hours per day. If team members have different fees, the expected division of labour between them must be indicated. The financial proposal must contain all the information related to the prices for the performance of the deliverables described in these terms of reference. The economic proposal to be offered must contain all direct and indirect costs, including audit fees and taxes. The financial offer should not surpass 385 000 NOK.
- At least two references for similar work.

12) Evaluation of proposals

Tenderers will be ranked according to a score based on the following criteria:

- Understanding of the assignment and methodology: 50%
- Past experience and livelihood competency: 30%
- Budget proposal: 20%

Responsibilities

The division of responsibilities for the evaluation is defined according to the following table.
Interested party Responsibilities

Team of Evaluators	Full implementation of the evaluation, including practical arrangements such as: Organization of consultations and interviews; lead the development and implementation of evaluation and writing methods; conduct interviews and synthesize results; organize validation workshops; ensure the timely submission of the Inception Report, the Draft Evaluation Report and the Final Evaluation Report; timely incorporation of customer comments; and presentation of report conclusions and recommendations to RFN and ForEco partners. Communication modalities, feedback mechanisms and contact with stakeholders will be agreed upon during the initial phase.
RFN	Election of Evaluators/evaluation team. Contract management. Assist in providing contact details to key informants and relevant stakeholders to be consulted/interviewed during data collection; provide inputs and documentation to the consulting team; review of the draft report.

13) Eligible Tenderers

i) Tenderers must provide information on their legal form and ownership structure.

ii) Tenderers shall be excluded from participation in a procurement procedure if:

(1) they are bankrupt, are having their affairs administered by the courts, or have suspended business activities.

(2) they or persons having powers of representation, decision-making, or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a final judgment.

(3) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct.

(4) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established, or those of the country where the contract is to be performed.

(5) they or persons having powers of representation, decision-making, or control over them have been convicted for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or money laundering by a final judgment.

(6) they make use of child labour or forced labour and/or practice discrimination, and/or do not respect the right to freedom of association and the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining pursuant to the core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

iii) Tenderers shall confirm in writing that they are not in any of the situations listed above. RFN reserves the right to investigate any of the situations listed above if it has reasonable grounds to doubt the contents of such confirmation.

iv) Contracts shall not be awarded to tenderers which, during the procurement procedure:

(1) are subject to a conflict of interests.

(2) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required as a condition of participation in the tender procedure or fail to supply this information.

RFN reserves the right to reject any of the proposals that it does not consider relevant.

14) Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations will be upheld throughout the development of the consultancy, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for the rights and privacy of participants. The assignment should be conducted in accordance with the highest professional standards. As such, the work will ensure sensitive, safe, non-discriminatory participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents. Specific consideration must be given to ethical issues of design, data collection, reporting and storage. According to the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the consultancy must maintain appropriate measures to protect personal data. Info on GDPR can be found here: https://gdpr.eu.

Rainforest Foundation Norway

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