itad

Midterm Review of the Fish for Development Programme in Colombia

Midterm Review Final Report

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SEI Stockholm Environment Institute

CMI CHR. MICHELSEN INSTITUTE

Norad

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not necessarily represent those of Norad or any individuals and organisations referred to in the report.

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Acronyms

AUNAP	National Aquaculture and Fisheries Authority (Autoridad Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca)
CAR	Regional autonomous corporations (Corporación Autónoma Regional)
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CENIACUA	Colombian Aquaculture Research Centre (Centro de Investigación de la Acuicultura de Colombia)
FfD	Fish for Development
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ICA	Colombian Agricultural Institute (Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario)
IMR	Institute of Marine Research
KII	Key informant interview
MADR	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarollo Rural)
MADS	Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development (Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarollo Sostenible)
MOM	Monitoring, Ongrowing fish farms, Modelling system
NOK	Norwegian Krone
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NVI	Norwegian Veterinary Institute
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PIA	Participatory impact assessment
QA	Quality assurance
RFMO	Regional fisheries Management Organisation
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
VfM	Value for money
VHS	Viral haemorrhagic septicaemia

Executive summary

About the programme

Funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Fish for Development (FfD) programme in Colombia was initiated in 2021 with the goal of improving the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture activities in Colombia to support socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. The programme promotes technical dialogue between Norwegian institutions and Colombian counterparts to better understand the challenges relating to the development of aquaculture in Colombia. The fisheries workstream focuses on the development of knowledge, data and evidence leading to evidence-based decision-making in the fisheries sector and also seeks to improve regional and international cooperation with relevant bodies.

Purpose and approach of the review

The purpose of this midterm review of the programme is primarily learning so Norad can understand whether any adjustments to the programme should be made to support performance in the next phase of delivery. A theory-based evaluation approach was applied to discern the programme's contribution to results. The 4Es (Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity) framework was used to assess value for money (VfM). There was active engagement with Norad in the conduct of the evaluation. In all, 39 people from relevant Norwegian and Colombian partner institutions were consulted as part of primary data collection activities by the five person evaluation team.

Conclusions

Overall, the FfD programme in Colombia appears to be performing well at midline, recognising that the programme is only part way through its delivery cycle. Already at midline, the programme has succeeded in contributing to the majority of its aquaculture and fisheries outcomes. Results delivery has been particularly strong for the aquaculture workstream - the major component of the programme in terms of funding. This workstream has benefited from fortuitous timing, with Colombian stakeholders interested in progressing marine aquaculture in the country, in the drafting of a new aquaculture law and with the occurrence of aquatic animal disease outbreaks, all of which increased Colombian appetite for the support on offer. Notable highlights of the results include the development of capacity in aquatic animal disease diagnostics and response and environmental monitoring, in addition to inputs on the drafting of the aquaculture law.

Progress with the fisheries workstream to date was somewhat mixed. While data on dolphinfish was collected and regional cooperation progressed, there were some challenges owing to inter-dependencies between fisheries workstream outputs. As a result, progress fell short of expectations. Overall the results framework for the programme has not kept pace with the adaptations needed to align with Colombian partner needs and the changing context.

The programme represents good VfM, with demonstrable use of cost containment measures to ensure economy and proportionate spend on programme management by the implementing partners. Efficiency in delivery – although well managed by the Norwegian delivery partners, and overseen by Norad – has faced some challenges. The coordination requirements of the

programme proved to be greater than expected due to the number of Colombian institutions involved and the bandwidth of Colombian interlocuters to engage due to heavy workloads. However, these issues were addressed effectively and mitigation measures are in place to manage future challenges in this area. As the programme moves forward, it will need to efficiently engage with new Colombian stakeholders once they take office after the June 2026 presidential elections. Conclusions concerning the cost-effectiveness of the investment by Norad are tentative at this stage given the programme is only part way through delivery, although the evidence on contributions to outcomes points to a potential cost-effective investment in this programme by Norad. This dimension of VfM should be considered in more detail as part of the endline evaluation of the programme.

The expected impact of the programme on poverty reduction is seen as ambitious, at least within the 5-year time frame of the programme and the lack of consideration of this dimension in the design of the assistance and delivery of the support. However, there is a line of sight on how the improvements to the management of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors could improve the livelihoods of small producers and farmers due to improved productivity driven by better environmental management and better aquatic animal health. It would be useful for the programme to explore these further during the closing phase.

Sustainability of the results generated by the Norwegian assistance cannot be guaranteed, not least since 2026 is an election year in Colombia, with the potential for a change of priorities for the development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. While the institutional commitment of partners, the progression of legislative changes – for example, the development of a new aquaculture law, and the enhanced capacity in place as a result of the assistance – are factors supporting likely sustainability, ongoing funding and staff turnover constitute real challenges.

Lessons

The evaluation team distilled a number of lessons for development cooperation for Norad's consideration, including consideration of a more detailed articulation of causal change pathways to guide programme delivery, ensuring a realistic and sufficient project management budget, building in sustainability and exit planning and revisiting programme results frameworks on a regular basis.

Future steps

To strengthen results and impact in the closing phase of the delivery of the FfD programme in Colombia, a number of recommendations are proposed. These are, in our view, the priority actions that need to be taken based on the mid-term review findings.

Component	Recommendation	Time frame	Responsibility
Effectiveness	1. Reconsider the ambition and focus of the fisheries workstream in view of results and underspend to date.	Immediate priority	JIG
	2. Revise the results framework for the programme making a clear distinction between technical outputs and institutional or policy outcomes. Consider utilisation of an intermediate outcome level to better demonstrate programme progress.	Immediate priority	Norad and implementing partners
	3. Ensure early engagement with the new administration after the June 2026 presidential elections and the new administration taking office, including convening a meeting with the Ministry of Environment to explore their active participation in the delivery of the FfD programme in Colombia.	Immediate priority	Norad, Institute of Marine Research (IMR) and Norwegian Veterinary Institute (NVI)
Efficiency	4. Revise the programme budget for the closing phase of the programme, include a more realistic allocation for programme management and make efforts to reduce forecast: spend variances, for example, by more regular updating of forecasts.	Following completion of recommendations 1 & 2	Norad
Impact	5. To demonstrate the livelihood impacts of the support, it is suggested that Norad consider funding the preparation of a case study to explore the benefits of the assistance provided, for example, relating to aquaculture producers and Indigenous communities.	Towards the end of the programme	Norad
Sustainability	6. Develop a sustainability and exit plan.	In the last year of the programme	JIG

1 Introduction

1.1 Fish for Development programme, Colombia

The Fish for Development (FfD) programme in Colombia was initiated in 2021, with the goal of improving the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture activities in Colombia to support socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. The 5-year programme was designed to address specific challenges within the management of fisheries and aquaculture in Colombia, which were selected based on Colombian requests combined with a consideration of alignment with Norwegian expertise and experience. A total budget of Norwegian Krone (NOK) 50 million was allocated for the 5-year programme.[1]

Norwegian engagement in Colombian fisheries is based on Norad's Fish for Development programme which seeks to expand and strengthen Norway's support to fisheries and aquaculture in developing countries through the use of Norwegian competence and expertise. The programme was developed based on instruction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[2]

The Norwegian institutions involved in delivery of the programme are:

- the Institute of Marine Research (IMR)
- the Directorate of Fisheries[3]
- the Norwegian Veterinary Institute (NVI).

The Colombian institutions involved are:

- the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR)
- the National Authority for Aquaculture and Fisheries (AUNAP)
- the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA)
- the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS).

The principal target groups/institutions are AUNAP, as the main management institution for the fisheries sector, and ICA, as the main institution with responsibility for aquatic animal health in the fish farming sector. The programme is designed to focus on activities that will enhance AUNAP's and ICA's capacity for sustainable management of fisheries resources and aquaculture production.

The project promotes technical dialogue among public entities and academia to support the technical modernisation of Colombia's fisheries and

Figure 1: Location of Nariño



[1] Midterm Evaluation of Colombia Fish for Development programme – Terms of Reference.

[2] Norad (2019) Fish for Development. Policy Document, shaped by the Norwegian foreign assistance policy 2017–2018.

[3] Focused on commenting on Colombia's draft Aquaculture Law.

aquaculture sector. The aquaculture part of the project includes provision of support to national institutions to better understand the opportunities and challenges related to the development of marine aquaculture in Colombia. Other activities in the aquaculture space include the adaptation of Norway's MOM (Monitoring, Ongrowing fish farms, Modelling) system for environmental monitoring of Colombia's freshwater bodies and include field activities in La Cocha, Lake Tota and Betania dam. Additionally, support is provided by the project to strengthen aquatic animal health capacities for prevention, control and surveillance of diseases.

The fisheries part of the programme has also specifically selected the dolphinfish fishery as a focal point for this workstream. Dolphinfish is regarded as an underexploited resource, and there is limited data and management planning for the fishery. The learning and capacity development achieved by the programme in this one fishery is intended to be transferred in the future to others. In addition to strengthening Colombia's capacity in fisheries data collection and analysis, the project is facilitating Colombian participation in international spaces such as the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

1.2 FfD Colombia theory of change

The midterm review team conducted a participatory session with Norad and delivery partners IMR and NVI to validate the theory of change (ToC) during the inception phase. A similar session was conducted with the Colombian project coordinator and other stakeholders. These validation sessions helped to strengthen the review team's understanding of how the programme is expected to engineer change in the sustainable management of Colombia's fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ensuring this understanding aligns with Norad's and delivery partners' thinking on how change is expected to come about. The core hypotheses are set out below. For further detail on the ToC, see Annex 3.

The core hypothesis concerning the fisheries workstream ToC is:

- **If** Fish for Development supports the development of knowledge, data and evidence leading to evidence-based management decision-making in the fisheries sector, **and** supports more engagement with neighbouring countries on fisheries and increased scientific research cooperation, **then** the capacity to implement science-based decisions in the sector will be enhanced and there will be improved cooperation with neighbouring countries and regional and international fisheries bodies.

The core hypothesis underpinning the aquaculture workstream is:

- **If** Fish for Development supports Colombia in the adoption of an ecosystem approach to aquaculture4, **and** research and knowledge on aquaculture in Colombia is strengthened, **then** the enhanced capacity to manage the aquaculture sector will help prevent detrimental impacts on the environment, which, alongside the strengthening and implementation of regulatory frameworks for marine aquaculture, and greater ability to prevent and control disease in aquatic animals will contribute to the sustainable socioeconomic development of the aquaculture sector in Colombia.

[4] An ecosystem approach seeks the integration of aquaculture within the wider ecosystem such that it promotes sustainable development, equity, and resilience of interlinked social-ecological systems (FAO, 2010).

The ultimate goal of the FfD programme in Norad is that the fisheries and aquaculture sectors contribute to socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in partner countries. According to the project document for the institutional cooperation under the FfD programme in Colombia, the ToC for the programme is that fisheries and aquaculture sectors can contribute to poverty reduction and food security through a number of channels:

- sustainable management of capture fisheries can ensure that fisheries could be a sustainable source of food and income in the long run
- knowledge about, and management plans for, new and previously non-exploited resources can increase the resource base harvested from, and thereby provide a new source of food and income
- increasing the capacity for aquaculture production while ensuring that all production is conducted in a sustainable manner will contribute to food security, employment and income
- increase diagnostic capacity, knowledge about disease surveillance and the ability to combine the existing resources in order to execute more effective disease prevention and outbreak management, involving the one health approach.

During the inception phase, delivery partners IMR and NVI indicated that the ToC needs revisiting, because there were concerns about the level of ambition of the programme. The planned review of the ToC by delivery partners will therefore be useful to partners in framing expectations on the results and impact of the programme and contributing to a review of the programme's results framework.

2 Methodology

2.1 Purpose, objectives and scope

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to document the results achieved, lessons learned and challenges faced in the delivery of the FfD programme. As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the review focused on how the programme contributed towards sustainable resource management, institutional and capacity development and wider socioeconomic goals in Colombia. The temporal scope of the review is the period 2021–2025, focusing on institutional cooperation and programme activities.

This review of the institutional cooperation programme includes both fisheries and aquaculture workstreams. While the review analysed findings by workstream, it also drew together learning and recommendations at the programme level which may be applicable for both workstreams.

In terms of coverage, as this is a midterm evaluation, the key OECD/DAC criteria proposed in the evaluation ToR (see Annex 1) are Relevance, Coherence and Efficiency although any evidence emerging pertaining to Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability were also to be analysed and presented in the evaluation report. The evaluation framework is detailed in Annex 2.

2.2 Use of and audience for the review

The primary audience for the review is Norad and Colombian programme partners, who will use the findings to inform the next phase of programme delivery.

The secondary audience is the wider FfD programme team, who may use the findings of the review to feed into ongoing programme design. Lessons learned and recommendations from the review will help improve current workflows and will provide crucial insights into potential ocean, fisheries and aquaculture-related initiatives. All cases, data and methodological tools from the review will be accessible across the programme partners as a shared learning resource.

2.3 Approach

The evaluation team applied **formative evaluation approaches** to the midterm evaluation. This provided an opportunity to assess how the programme can be improved as it is implemented. Because this is a midterm review, this approach was particularly useful in showing what worked well and why or why not.

A theory-based, mixed methods approach was used in the evaluation of the programme. Theory-based evaluation captures evidence of programme results against a ToC, systematically testing the causal pathways, underlying assumptions and operating context to establish credible evidence of the programme's contribution to observed outcomes. During the inception phase, the review team examined programme documents and conducted scoping interviews and participatory sessions with delivery partners and Norad to develop an overarching ToC to guide the review (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**). In the evaluation, the ToC and causal pathways were used as a framework to structure data collection and analysis to understand what has been implemented and its quality, appropriateness and relevance and capture perspectives on the contribution of FfD to the changes and results observed, using contribution analysis. Contribution analysis[5] uses the ToC to assess the contribution an intervention/portfolio has made to outcomes.

We structured the **value for money** (**VfM) analysis** according to the 4Es – Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity. This framework is explained in Box 1. Because this is a midterm review of the programme, the main emphasis in the VfM assessment is on the Economy and Efficiency dimensions of the framework, with some coverage of Effectiveness (bearing in mind that outcome-level results may not yet have materialised at this stage in the life cycle of the programme). Specific consultations on VfM were conducted during the review process with Norad and delivery partners, although all interview topic guides included some coverage of VfM lines of inquiry. As noted during the inception phase, the concept of programme value lies not just in its results but also more widely in how the programme has strengthened relations between Norway and Colombia.

Box 1. The 4Es VfM framework

The 4Es framework assesses an organisation using the following criteria:

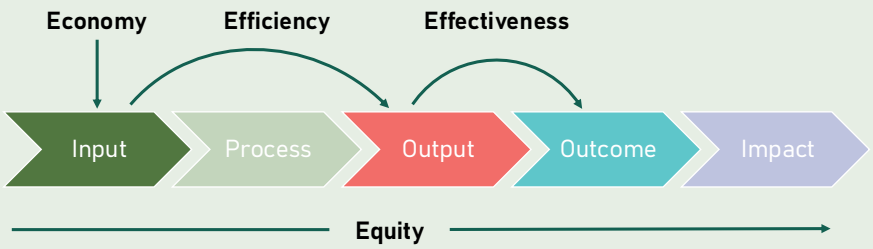
Economy: Are projects buying inputs of the appropriate quality at the right price?

Efficiency: How well are projects converting inputs into outputs? ('Spending well')

Effectiveness: How well are the outputs from an intervention achieving the intended effect? ('Spending wisely')

[5] Mayne, J. (2008) Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect. Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative, ILAC Briefs 16.

Equity: How fairly are the benefits distributed? To what extent do projects reach marginalised groups? ('Spending fairly')



Sustainability analysis: The sustainability analysis considered the following dimensions:

- local participation
- capacity building
- integration into systems and processes
- financial sustainability
- exit/transition planning.

Because this is a midterm rather than endline review of the programme, the assessment examined potential sustainability of the results of the programme and any factors that might enable/hinder future sustainability.

2.4 Data collection

Document review

To inform our understanding of the programme and assess progress against outputs and outcomes, we reviewed the following types of documentation:

- programme documentation
- programme progress and financial reports
- results frameworks and workplans
- meeting (annual and JIG) reports
- workshop and visit reports
- relevant Colombian government sector plans

Key informant interviews

In all, 39 people (22 women and 17 men) were interviewed as part of the data collection phase of the evaluation. A broad range of stakeholders were consulted as shown in Table 1. In addition to these consultations, two validation sessions were held in order to discuss the preliminary findings from the review; the first session was held with Norad and took place on 31 March 2026 and the second session was held with delivery partners and took place on 7 April 2026.

Table 1: Summary of key informants

Stakeholder group	Organisation	Number of key informants (male)	Number of key informants (female)
Funder	Norad	1	
Norwegian delivery partners	Institute for Marine Research	4	6
	Norwegian Veterinary Institute		
	Directorate of Fisheries		
Colombian institutions	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	10	11
	National Authority for Aquaculture and Fisheries		
	Colombian Agriculture Institute		
	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Affairs*		
	Regional Environmental Authorities		
	Colombian Aquaculture Federation of Producers		
	CENIACUA		
	Universities of Nariño and Córdoba		
Other Colombian stakeholders	Local producers, including a representative of the Indigenous community in La Cocha	2	1
Other Norwegian stakeholders	Norwegian Embassy Bogota		1
Scholarship recipients	Nord University, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Arctic University of Norway		3
Total		17	22

* We engaged with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Affairs during the inception phase but they weren't interviewed during the implementation phase.

2.5 Analysis, triangulation and assessing the strength of evidence

Robust procedures for data analysis and triangulation were used. The coding of qualitative data sources ensured a systematic and thorough approach to organising and sorting the data in preparation for analysis. Coded data was analysed and triangulated and then summarised into findings and scrutinised by the review team during a findings workshop, bringing in technical and contextual knowledge and ensuring agreement on the interpretation of the data.

To ensure transparency on the evidence base for each finding, a strength of evidence rubric (see

Table 2) will be used to explicitly assess the evidence underpinning each finding. This assessment will include reflections on the quantity and quality of evidence and the extent to which triangulation across multiple sources was possible.

Table 2: Strength of evidence assessment rubric

Strong evidence	Strong evidence from multiple, diverse data sources, with consistent results. Good degree of triangulation between different types of stakeholders or evidence source. The sources are reliable, with a high degree of convergence.
Moderate evidence	Evidence consists of multiple sources, but confidence is reduced by limited triangulation (variation of sources), quality of evidence (potential concerns over bias or credibility) or lack of consistency.
Limited evidence	Weak evidence from limited sources (limited triangulation) or inconsistent findings.
Poor evidence	Very limited (single source) or no evidence; incomplete or unreliable evidence (major concerns over bias and credibility).

2.6 Challenges and limitations

As with all evaluations, some challenges were experienced which are set out below. Overall the evaluation team are confident that these limitations did not unduly affect the quality or completeness of the assessment.

Consultations and interviews

While the review team are satisfied that all relevant stakeholders were consulted, it was not possible to interview the Ministry of Environment during the implementation phase of the review. However, the review team did succeed in consulting with the Ministry during the inception phase of the evaluation. Validation workshops have been held with Norad and delivery partners and we are taking forward plans to discuss evaluation findings with Colombian partners.

3 Findings

In this section we present our findings divided into subsections as outlined in the original ToR (see Annex 1: Terms of). The key findings and evidence base against each evaluation question is outlined in Annex 8 (Findings dashboard).

3.1 Relevance

Summary: In this section we examine programme alignment with Colombia's sector needs, strategies and priorities in fisheries and aquaculture sectors; the relevance and adequacy of Norwegian partner expertise; the ability and level of ambition of the programme; and relevance of partner engagement.

Key findings:

- The programme has high relevance to Colombia's needs in both the fisheries and the aquaculture sectors, aligning with national priorities.
- The project is responsive to the institutional priorities of AUNAP and ICA and has helped to build technical capabilities to develop the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in a way that is cognisant of environmental and animal health.
- Norwegian expertise aligns well to sector needs and focused on building capacity in areas identified as a priority by Colombian partners.
- The programme has demonstrated adaptability to Colombian circumstances, adjusting approaches as needed.
- Respondents felt that the level of ambition exceeded the resources available due to the large number of proposed activities.
- Participants across both the fisheries and aquaculture sectors agreed that the right institutions are involved; however, there is scope to improve inter-institutional engagement in the environment sector and with key decision-makers.

Strength of evidence: Strong. Multiple sources of evidence, from a diverse range of stakeholder groups, with consistency in reported findings on relevance. Findings were triangulated with secondary data on Colombian government priorities and the regional context in La Cocha in addition to priorities identified in project documentation.

3.1.1 Alignment with Colombia's needs, strategies and priorities

Finding 1: The programme has high relevance to Colombia's needs in both the fisheries and the aquaculture sectors, aligning with national priorities.

The programme aligns with Colombia's strategic objectives on sustainable fisheries management, food security and international environmental commitments. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) has developed a National Development Plan to strengthen the agriculture and fisheries industries and build a sustainable and productive rural economy, with three broad transformations anticipated. The 2022-2026 Agricultural, Fisheries and Rural Development Sectoral Plan outlines the goals for an inclusive rural society with social and economic justice, a productive and sustainable rural economy, and the harmonious development of rural regions with protection of natural resources.[6] These goals are consistent with the overarching goal of the FfD programme to achieve sustainable socioeconomic development for Colombia's fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction. Key informant interviews (KII) universally agree that the programme is addressing knowledge and capacity gaps in the sector which allow improved responsiveness to sustainability, environmental and health concerns in fish farming in Colombia, and contribute to strengthening marine aquaculture in an early stage of its development.

[6] Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural (2023). Plan Sectorial Agropecuario, Pesquero y de Desarrollo Rural 2022-2026.

Key informants reported that the programme responds to governance needs including contributing to scientific data generation (Outcome 1) and enhancing inter-institutional coordination and strengthening the ability of the sector to engage in regional and international forums (e.g. IATTC) (Outcome 2) directly supporting evidence-based policymaking and ensuring that fisheries issues are connected to national foreign policy.

Marine aquaculture has historically been difficult to advance in Colombia, but key informants reported that this cooperation has provided a clearer framework for its development (Outcome 3). This progress is reflected in the drafting of a new aquaculture law, which now includes marine aquaculture considerations, species prioritisation, and a stronger focus on sanitary issues.

At Colombian governmental level, respondents reported that the programme has addressed key gaps in technical support and advisory services, and is aligned with national policy frameworks, such as the Fisheries Policy and PlanDas (National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Aquaculture). This is evidenced through contributions to policy updates, legislative proposals, and progress in formalising the aquaculture sector, including strengthened inter-institutional coordination between the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) and the National Authority for Aquaculture and Fisheries (AUNAP).

Finding 2: The project is responsive to the institutional priorities of AUNAP and ICA and has helped to build technical capabilities to develop the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in a way that is cognisant of environmental and animal health.

Specific fishery and aquaculture programmes and projects are carried out by AUNAP with the implementation of relevant policies that are the responsibility of ICA. Respondents from both institutions confirmed the relevance of the programme and its goals.

All key informants stated that the programme is highly relevant to national aquaculture and fisheries development. The cooperation aligns strongly with AUNAP's and ICA's institutional priorities and responds to real sector needs, providing high-quality technical support, integrating experiences from freshwater and marine aquaculture, and helping the agency navigate internal transitions. Its relevance is evidenced by strengthened producers' capacities, for example in working with aquatic diseases, the development of resources such as dolphinfish, and identifying export opportunities and alternatives for the shrimp fleet during closed seasons.

Student scholarships awarded provided students with skills and knowledge necessary to support the development of the sector. Four scholarships to Master's students for studies in Norway were awarded, with one now complete. Of the three students who responded to a questionnaire, all recipients said their scholarship is directly related to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in Colombia, showing clear alignment with the sector needs. This includes, for example, the impacts of floating-cage aquaculture, and understanding the genetic diversity of a pathogen affecting tilapia. In addition to thematic relevance, the scholarships have enabled recipients to build engagement with relevant partners including ICA, and experts in animal health in Norway and internationally.

> *"The scholarship has undoubtedly been one of the greatest opportunities I have had and taken advantage of. It has enabled valuable academic network-building within the academic, scientific, and industrial sectors internationally."*
>
> [Scholarship recipient]

3.1.2 Adequacy and relevance of Norwegian expertise

Finding 3: Norwegian expertise aligns well to sector needs and focused on building capacity in areas identified as a priority by Colombian partners.

Norwegian cooperation is seen as a trusted source of guidance and is highly valued across all stakeholder groups. The experts engaged in the programme from IMR and NVI are acknowledged as leaders in their field who are generous with their knowledge. Respondents from AUNAP and ICA reported that technical input corresponded to identified needs in the sector and has added significant value to their operations, noting that the engagement has been consistently supportive, adaptive and highly beneficial. For example, Norway's expertise in marine aquaculture has successfully been adapted to the freshwater aquaculture context in Colombia. This was substantiated by interviews with other stakeholders. For example, a local producer stated that the collaboration combined Norway's extensive expertise in salmon research and production with Colombian professionals who understand the national context, enabling effective engagement with public, private and academic sectors. An academic respondent indicated that the programme demonstrated high technical quality, particularly in the environmental component, and access to specialised Norwegian expertise in aquatic animal health significantly strengthened national capacities.

The relevance of the support provided was evidenced in real time with a newly reported outbreak of viral haemorrhagic septicaemia (VHS) in La Cocha Lake during programme implementation. As a result of the technical input from the programme targeted at improving the technical understanding of aquatic diseases and strengthening diagnostic capacities and disease management, the team at ICA were able to draft a contingency plan in collaboration with NVI. The plan is based on internal procedures for outbreak management developed by ICA, supplemented by experience gained from the Streptococcus IA outbreak in 2023. The draft plan was used during the VHS outbreak in 2026 and is being revised based on lessons learned from the most recent outbreak.

3.1.3 Adaptability and level of ambition

Finding 4: The programme has demonstrated adaptability to Colombian circumstances, adjusting approaches as needed.

The programme has demonstrated agility in adapting to changing circumstances over the course of the programme. Colombian participants reported that the Norwegian team actively listened to needs and priorities and were willing to adjust approaches and methodologies to respond to needs, providing examples of where Norwegian support has demonstrated adaptability.

For example, the programme ran a course on monitoring sediments for producers at La Cocha Lake, which was well received and was subsequently adapted on request for producers at La Tota and Betania. As another example, in response to the current VHS outbreak, programme staff were able to arrange an additional meeting for ICA staff only to create a safe forum to discuss any questions on managing the outbreak. In the fisheries workstream, the programme adapted to the lack of dolphinfish data by covering the cost of data collection by paying observers through AUNAP.

The Norwegian team's willingness to find meaningful ways to support Colombian partners has strengthened trust, while the priority given to incorporating lessons from all actors (such as

producers, environmental authorities and universities) was credited with improving institutional collaboration.

The principles of flexibility and adaptability are exemplified by programme participants in both Norway and Colombia:

> *"The process has shown strong adaptability: despite changing dynamics, adjustments have been effectively implemented. The Aquaculture Law exemplifies this capacity to adapt and reflects the concrete support provided to the Government of Colombia."*
>
> [Government representative, Colombia]

> *"I think flexibility is necessary, and Norad says they are flexible. So far they have stuck to that. We now have a disease situation that wasn't in the original project plan. We wrote this project several years ago, and the world changes. We must adjust the project to Colombia's needs. We have offered support and told them that if they need us, we are there and can adjust and support as much as they think necessary."*
>
> [Norwegian partner]

Finding 5: Respondents felt that the level of ambition exceeded the resources available due to the large number of proposed activities.

The level of programme ambition was seen to exceed the resources available – at both output and outcome levels, and specifically in relation to the fisheries workstream. Too many proposed activities negatively affected the ability to achieve the planned outcomes.

The project coordinator in Colombia emphasised that although the overarching objectives are ambitious, the programme has successfully laid the groundwork for an evidence-based approach to managing fisheries and aquaculture, and there has been clear demonstration of strengthened institutional capacities, particularly in the aquaculture sector.

There is a need for a clear timeline linked to expectations and a more realistic results framework – see section 3.3.3 below for an appraisal of the programme's results framework.

3.1.4 Stakeholder engagement

Finding 6: Colombian and Norwegian participants across both the fisheries and aquaculture sectors agreed that the right institutions are involved; however, there is scope to improve inter-institutional engagement in the environment sector and with key decision-makers.

Participants from all stakeholder groups and across fisheries and aquaculture agreed that the right institutions are involved and engagement with the Norwegian partners has been universally positive.

One important factor influencing engagement has been the involvement of key personnel in Norway with in-depth knowledge of the Colombian institutions – the significance of this role was referred to by multiple respondents and has been an important factor in developing a shared understanding and building trust across institutions. This is a factor to be considered in future collaborations, at the same time as ensuring that adequate handover/succession planning is built in to mitigate against gaps if there are personnel changes.

Potential for the benefits of formalising a broader range of collaborations was identified, specifically in the environment sector. First, gaps were identified in the participation of the environmental sector and regional actors. Positive outcomes from the programme are heavily dependent on regional cooperation and decision-making at ministerial level, suggesting that it is important to formalise cooperation with all appropriate entities. The Ministry of Environment plays a central role in sustaining the ecosystems where aquaculture operates, yet the Ministry sees its role as limited to attending activities to which they are invited, such as workshops, committees and meetings, rather than proactive involvement. This dynamic suggests the need for the evaluation to identify mechanisms that can strengthen structured coordination within the project, including clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all participating entities, with particular emphasis on the Ministry of Environment's mandate and contributions.

Regional autonomous corporations (CARs) hold responsibilities for the environment and natural resources in the regions. Although they are not part of the collaboration, programme partners have made efforts to include them in activities in Nariño. Outcomes need to be utilised by the regional organisations for the maximum efficacy; therefore sustained engagement with regional organisations is needed. One respondent highlighted that while AUNAP's mandate in La Cocha is to formulate the aquaculture management plan, the CAR's principal focus is the environment and conservation, based on the area's designation as a Ramsar Wetland, as well as its significant cultural importance for Indigenous peoples. For this reason, cooperation between the two entities is essential to ensure that any plan for the area is holistic and takes into account cultural and environmental as well as economic needs. Participants emphasise that the role of regional actors is critical since key processes happen on the ground. Strengthening coordination with other authorities is essential to ensure coherent messaging and joint action in an ecosystem like La Cocha, which is internationally recognised as a Ramsar Wetland where conservation priorities must remain central. One respondent underscored the importance of ensuring that this extends to access to resources and financing mechanisms to facilitate the integration of environmental management and conservation goals. Extending regional collaboration beyond the CARs and the University of Nariño to include additional regional universities and research institutes has scope to embed scientific knowledge across the territories and further consolidate outcomes at a regional level.

Second, key informants drew attention to some instances of delays in decision-making, attributed to issues with staff turnover or relevant decision-makers not being involved in key meetings, limiting the effectiveness of engagement. One respondent felt that a clearer chain of command or involvement of experienced decision-makers in meetings would avoid delays, while another suggested that senior involvement would also help ensure implementation of the actions created as a result of the programme. Loss of knowledge due to staff turnover could be mitigated by ensuring that key roles are offered permanent or renewable contracts.

Other potential collaborations raised by respondents include formalising the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with respect to future international collaboration in the fisheries workstream, and closer involvement with the oceanarium due to the relevance of the organisation's ongoing research on the reproduction of marine fish, and the INVIMA (Colombia's Food and Drug regulator) with its mandate for protecting public health in relation to food safety. We also note that the Norwegian Food Safety Authority was part of the original proposal but has not ultimately been involved in the programme.

3.2 Coherence

Summary: In this section we examine synergies between the FfD programme in Colombia with similar initiatives being delivered in Colombia, as well as explore the synergies between workstreams and consideration of cross-cutting issues in the design and delivery of the programme.

Key findings:

- The Norwegian assistance was lauded for the high quality of the expertise and practical approach, although no similar initiatives were identified in Colombia. Stronger linkages with other Norwegian-funded FfD programmes would be useful to drive effectiveness and efficiency.
- The programme is structured into two separate workstreams with few inter-linkages or synergies identified. While there is no evidence of duplication across the workstreams, the design of the programme is somewhat fragmented with a long list of activities under each workstream.
- While environmental considerations are embedded in programme design and delivery, there is limited consideration of gender, although the programme does engage with and consider the needs of Indigenous communities, notably in the aquaculture work relating to La Cocha Lake.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate*. Multiple sources of evidence, from a diverse range of stakeholder groups, were used to triangulate and generate findings. The quality of the evidence was compromised by absence of coverage of similar programmes to FfD in Colombia, thereby limiting the evidence base on external coherence.

3.2.1 Synergies with similar initiatives

Finding 7: The Norwegian assistance was lauded for the high quality of the expertise and practical approach, although no similar initiatives were identified in Colombia. Stronger linkages with other Norwegian-funded FfD programmes would be useful to drive effectiveness and efficiency.

There was consensus among stakeholders consulted in Colombia that the Norwegian institutions delivering the programme and providing the technical advice and capacity building were providing high-quality expertise and were leading experts in their respective fields.

The Colombian institutions were particularly appreciative of the access to the Norwegian expertise to enhance their epidemiological response capabilities during a disease outbreak. The practical nature of the support provided by the Norwegian experts was highly valued and the Colombian recipients of support appreciated Norway's practical collaboration approach. It did take some time at the beginning of the programme for the Norwegian experts to develop a full understanding of the context, although this understanding was fostered during delivery in the early phases of implementation.

> *"The Norwegian institutes involved in the project are highly competent and globally recognised, particularly for their integrated governance model and strong technical expertise in aquaculture, disease management and sectoral coordination."*
>
> [Colombia partner]

The programme demonstrated strong internal and policy coherence, as it aligned well with Colombia's legal and strategic frameworks, including the Fisheries Law, the Colombia

Bioceánica, CONPES,[7] and the national regulations governing participation in the IATTC, while also supporting broader government priorities such as agrarian reform, food security, and the productive inclusion of coastal communities. Among the activities supported by the programme is the drafting of the new aquaculture law which is supported via technical input from Norway's Directorate of Fisheries. This work will ensure alignment of the programme's support to the aquaculture sector.

Stakeholders were largely unaware of other programmes funded by other development partners providing similar support to the Colombian institutions to that provided by the FfD programme. Stakeholders also noted that the marine aquaculture sector was a relatively new sector in Colombia and therefore the FfD programme was adding a lot of value on this, given Norwegian experience and expertise in this field.

> *"The programme shows strong complementarity and avoids duplication, particularly in marine aquaculture, where it fills a critical national gap rather than overlapping with existing initiatives. Norwegian cooperation has provided a clear strategic direction and technical depth that Colombia lacked, while the work on dorado aligns with national policies on potential resources and supports Colombia's commitments within an RFMO."*
>
> [KII Colombian government/agencies]

There were no specific linkages or synergies identified with other Norwegian supported programmes in Colombia. The Norwegian Embassy in Bogota is aware of the FfD Colombia programme and the programme team has engaged well with the Embassy on progress of the programme. When the programme experienced some coordination challenges, the Embassy stepped in to assist (see section 3.3.3). However, as a centrally managed programme, the Embassy engages less with the programme than its portfolio of bilateral assistance programmes which it manages from the Embassy. The Embassy does recognise that the programme should be made more visible, for example by including the locations of the work delivered under the FfD programme in the digital map of the Norwegian Embassy in Bogota, Embassy of Colombia in Norway and the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this way the Embassy could be used more actively as a tool of 'soft power' as it supports relationship-building between Norwegian ministries and institutions and their Colombian counterparts. One suggestion to enhance the visibility of the programme would be to ensure that the locations of its activities in Colombia are included in the Embassy's digital map, which shows the geographic footprint of Norway's support to Colombia.

The FfD programme in Colombia is part of a wider portfolio of programmes supporting the aquaculture and fisheries sectors in other countries including Ghana, Indonesia, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Sudan. There was some sharing of expertise across the programmes as the experts from the Norwegian institutions worked on several of the other country programmes. However, key informants admitted that more sharing of lessons and resources across the portfolio would be valuable in order to promote programme improvement and efficiencies. Options such as creating a knowledge repository for sharing resources across the portfolio of

[7] Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social.

FfD programmes could ensure greater knowledge sharing and minimising spending on similar products that could be adapted for use in other partner countries.

3.2.2 Synergies between workstreams

Finding 8: The programme is structured into two separate workstreams with few inter-linkages or synergies identified. While there is no evidence of duplication across the workstreams, the design of the programme is somewhat fragmented with a long list of activities under each workstream.

Section 3.3.3 under Efficiency covers a question on coordination mechanisms: Are the coordination inputs from the Colombian and Norwegian partners sufficient to ensure efficient delivery of assistance? The coverage on coordination mechanisms here will focus exclusively on the extent the design of the programme supported linkages between the workstreams.

The project document sets out the design of the two workstreams – fisheries and aquaculture – which are specified separately in the document. The outcomes for each are presented separately, and each delivery institution manages its own budget for its respective programme of work, although IMR acts as the lead institution overall, coordinating the partners' inputs, convening meetings and preparation of progress reports for Norad. Each outcome area has a Norwegian lead and a Colombian lead. The conveying of meetings of the Joint Coordinating Group, the Norwegian and Colombian outcome leads, as well as those involved in coordination and management activities, as well as work planning, ensures duplication is avoided across the workstreams. There seemed to be good coherence within the respective workstreams with key informants noting a concerted attempt during 2025 for Outcomes 1 and 2 under the fisheries workstream to become more integrated.

The coherence is evident within the workstreams, but less so across the workstreams. The structure seems to promote siloed working, with few instances identified of the two workstreams working together to ensure a joined-up approach. Ultimately the two workstreams were designed to deliver a common goal - namely support more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture activities in Colombia to contribute to poverty reduction and socioeconomic development in Colombia.

> *"The project demonstrates strong internal coherence, with a clear and logical sequence of actions – particularly in the development of the marine aquaculture framework, and a structured coordination model organised by groups, objectives, and designated leaders. Monthly follow-up meetings and advance preparation sessions ensure that all actors remain aligned on progress and priorities."*
>
> [KII Colombia government/agencies]

Feedback from KIIs during the data collection phase highlighted that delivery of the programme was very much geared towards the activity level, which has resulted in some fragmentation of the support, across a menu of activities rather than a set of goals. The delivery partners and the counterpart Colombian institutions are considering a refresh of the results framework which can help address this issue, taking into consideration also the refreshed ToC which can be used to clarify thinking on how the two workstreams link together to deliver the higher-level objectives of the programme.

The centrally managed delivery model of the programme is based on a 'fly in-fly out' approach with the Norwegian experts conducting short missions to deliver the technical support or training in Colombia. Although this approach was mostly seen as appropriate, some Colombian stakeholders noted that it did affect continuity of the support with a stop-start approach to activities rather than consistent institutional cooperation which could better drive progress.

While recognising that there were some weaknesses to linkages across the workstreams, within the components stakeholders noted that the programme played a useful conveying role by bringing the different Colombia stakeholders together.

> *"Marine aquaculture efforts enabled key actors to interact, share experiences, and work in a coordinated way, creating a two-way exchange that established a baseline and clarified how to identify opportunities in the sector."*
>
> [KII academic/civil society]

3.2.3 Consideration of cross-cutting issues

Finding 9: While environmental considerations are embedded in programme design and delivery, there is limited consideration of gender, although the programme does engage with and consider the needs of Indigenous communities, notably in the aquaculture work relating to La Cocha Lake.

The ultimate goal of the programme is to contribute to socioeconomic development/poverty reduction in partner countries. However, the project document does not cover which specific groups would benefit from more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture activities in Colombia and there is no specific consideration of whether women and girls would benefit. The gender profile of Colombian fisheries and aquaculture is characterised by high, yet historically undervalued, participation of women in artisanal, post-harvest and community-based roles, while commercial fishing and decision-making roles are largely male dominated. Therefore, although not explicitly mentioned, it is possible that benefits from the development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors would cascade down to women.

> *"Norwegian cooperation has contributed notably to environmental monitoring especially sediment monitoring, helping assess the ecological condition of La Cocha Lake and align programme activities with the Lagoon's environmental priorities."*
>
> [KII government agency Colombia]

In terms of focus on Indigenous communities La Cocha Lake (Laguna de La Cocha), located in Nariño, Colombia, was selected as a pilot area for the aquaculture part of the project. The lake is high in the Andes where Indigenous communities – particularly the Pastos and Quillacinga peoples – play a vital role in environmental stewardship. The consideration of these communities was prominent in the work delivered by the programme at La Cocha Lake and efforts were made to manage sensitivities and strengthen coordination between stakeholders including Indigenous communities to ensure a more inclusive and context appropriate approach. KII participants noted that sociocultural complexity, rural and farming issues, as well as Indigenous contexts are important considerations to address in supporting the aquaculture sector in Colombia. This was noted in the project document which highlighted the importance of consulting with small farmers and Indigenous groups – mainly the Quillacinga tribe) as both groups are involved in aquaculture. KIIs during the data collection phase noted topics relating to

Indigenous communities; gender and corruption were covered during delivery of the programme's workshops.

There was ample consideration of the environment in the design and implementation of the programme with a strong emphasis on sustainability in the management of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The programme provided assistance on environmental monitoring to the Colombian institutions addressing gaps in capability and know-how in relation to new approaches in this area. While the programme succeeded in engaging with the regional environmental authorities, it did not succeed in engaging with the Ministry of Environment – see section 3.1.4 Relevance for more details.

3.3 Efficiency

Summary: In this section we examine the extent to which Norad's investment in the programme represents value for money, assess the coordination mechanisms in place to manage the programme and ensure efficient delivery of the assistance, as well as consider project planning, delivery and risk management.

Key findings:

- Staff costs are the key cost driver of programme costs which is appropriate as a technical assistance programme. Project management spend has been higher than forecast/budgeted, although is comparable with other Fish for Development programmes.
- To reduce costs of programme delivery to Norad, the delivery partners have a number of cost containment measures in place.
- There has been a significant underspend against outcomes 1 and 2, meaning that the programme is off track in delivery of planned activities under the Fisheries Workstream. The spend on aquaculture activities was more predictable and better aligned with budgeted allocations.
- The value generated by the aquaculture workstream thus far appears to justify the spend. The spend on the fisheries workstream has been significantly lower and the contribution to outcomes weaker. Overall there is a reasonable balance between results and efforts.
- The coordination process of the inputs from the Colombian and Norwegian partners has evolved over time. After some challenges with coordination impacting on delivery in 2025, these issues have now been effectively addressed.
- The results framework has evolved from an initially broad and ambitious plan into a monitoring structure that increasingly reflects a narrower set of activities.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate*. Multiple sources of evidence (primary and secondary sources) were triangulated to generate the reported findings. One shortcoming was the availability of 2024 and 2025 Financial Reports for NVI, although these reports were available for IMR. Specific VfM-related consultations were conducted with Norad and the Norwegian delivery partners to deepen the evidence base on VfM, complementing the data generated by the other stakeholder interviews.

3.3.1 Value for money

Implementing partners - IMR and NVI – submit separate financial reports to Norad on their spend against the set budget. No programme funds are transferred to Colombian partners. Findings reported in this section are based on evidence reported in IMR Financial Reports from 2022/23, 2024 and 2025, and NVI financial reports for the inception year 01.11.2021 to 31.08.2022 and the implementation phase 1.10.2022 to 31.12.2023 and financial reports for 2024 and 2025. In addition to the analysis of the financial and monitoring data, the evaluation team conducted focused interviews on VfM with Norad and the Norwegian delivery partners.

The main framework used for the analysis of evidence pertaining to VfM was the 4Es framework which is a structured approach to assess the economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity of a programme. The analysis of economy covered consideration of the key cost drivers of the programme, programme management spend as a proportion of total spend and examples of cost containment measures in place to reduce, where possible, spend. The analysis of efficiency explored whether the programme was 'spending well' in terms of output performance and explored timeliness and spend against budget across the outcome areas. Equity considered the extent to which the programme embedded gender and inclusion considerations in design and delivery and findings were based on the evidence presented in Coherence and section 3.2.3. Finally, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness were considered together and were based on the outcome performance. Since this is a midterm evaluation of the FfD Colombia programme and the programme is only part way through implementation, the findings on effectiveness and cost-effectiveness are tentative at this stage.

An analysis of trends over time was used to assess the trajectory of spend by the implementing partners, and comparators were used where possible to form a judgement on whether the programme represented good value in relation to spend on programme management for example.

Finding 10: Economy: staff costs are the key cost driver of programme costs which is appropriate as a technical assistance programme. Project management spend has been higher than forecast/budgeted, although is comparable with other FfD programmes.

Key cost drivers for the programme according to its overall budget comprise staff costs (66%), travel (14%), consultancy (3%), project management (5.6%), with the residual assigned to other budget items. Both partners charge institutional overheads on top of staff costs, although no profit margin is added. While IMR travel costs remained relatively consistent over time, staff costs have varied considerably constituting 64% spend in 2022/23, 50% in 2024 and 55% in 2025. NVI staff costs were somewhat higher amounting to 92% of the inception year (1.11.2021 to 31.8.22) spend, but this figure decreased to 80% in the first year of delivery (1.10.2022 to 31.12.2023), 79% in 2024 and 86% in 2025. Travel costs increased from 7% in the inception year to 18% in the first year of delivery and 21% in 2024 although declined to 25% of costs in 2025. As a technical assistance programme, the proportion of staff costs of total spend is defensible and reasonable.

The initial programme budget, covering both IMR and NVI activity, included an allocation of NOK 2,800,000 for project management amounting to an overall budgeted overall allocation of 5.6% of programme costs.[8] Key informants reported that the budgeted allocation for project management was insufficient and unrealistic and would require a higher share (than budgeted) of programme costs.

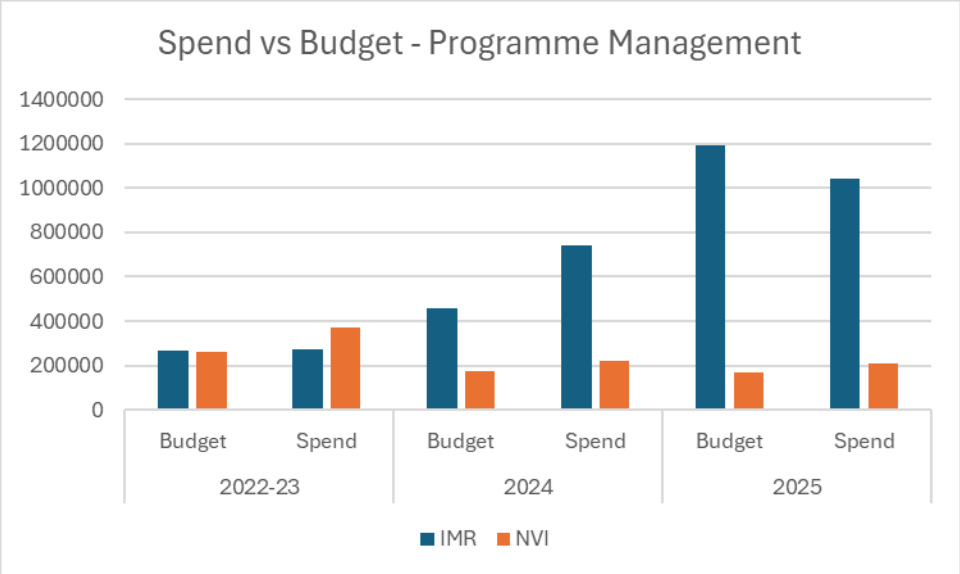
This was borne out by the data on spend – see Figure 2 below. IMR perform a key role in the overall management of the programme, although the NVI also incur project management costs – circa 8% of NVI spend in 2024 and 2025. While IMR's projected spend for the period 2022/23 to 2025 IMR on **project management** was 9% of total costs, the actual spend was higher – 14% – due

[8] This percentage is calculated by taking the project management time costs, project management travels and audits, monitoring and evaluation costs (total NOK 2,800,000) as a proportion of the total budgeted allocation of NOK 50,000,000 (per initial overall budget for the programme).

mainly to a large project management overspend in 2024. The latter according to KIIs for this review was in part on account of coordination challenges, which resulted in additional meetings between Norwegian partners and their Colombian counterparts. This led to a change of the Colombian coordinator from a role provided by AUNAP to a Ministry of Agriculture appointed position. KII participants were unanimous that the change has resulted in much less time and resource on project management needed by the Norwegian institutions. The 2024 spend on project management (which includes coordination also) was also explained in the 2024 Financial Report of IMR to Norad as being on account of cost of flight tickets for Colombian participants to Norway to attend the annual meeting held in Bergen in March 2024.

Another explanation for the higher than expected project management costs was due to the challenge of agreeing activities with the Colombian partners and then aligning timing with the availability of the Norwegian experts who are often booked in advance for other activities.

Figure 2: IMR and NVI Spend vs budget on project management (2022-2025)



Source: IMR Financial Reports on Fish for Development Colombia

NVI project management costs were 30% for the inception phase of the programme and 8% for the first year of delivery.[9] The costs incurred on project management by NVI exceeded the budgeted allocation for both the inception phase (17%) and first year of implementation (5.5%) but were aligned with budget allocations in 2024 and 2025. Going forward for 2026, NVI have allocated 6% of the allocation for Outcome 5 for project management staff costs which seems proportionate given the spend on project management in the initial year of delivery. It is worth noting that project management costs of IMR and NVI are not amenable to comparison, as travel costs for Colombian participants to project activities involving both IMR and NVI (e.g. annual meetings) are covered by IMR, as are interpretation costs.[10] This helps explain why NVI staff

[9] Financial reports – inception year 01.11.2021 to 31.08.2022 and 01.10.2022 to 31.12.2023.

[10] Regarding the annual meetings, IMR is responsible for covering travel costs for the Colombian delegation. IMR also covers interpretation costs. As for the travel expenses planned under NVI (Outcome 5), these are covered by NVI.

costs are a higher proportion of incurred costs than at IMR and why IMR project management costs are higher.

In addition to the project management time incurred by the Norwegian and Colombian partners, the Norad programme manager also allocates 50% of his time to management and oversight of the Colombia programme. (This cost is not included in the budgeted cost for the FfD programme Colombia.) The 2024 Annual Report for the programme noted that there is a need for sufficient time and resources for project administration and planning of activities on the Colombian side and to ensure the work can be done within the regular work hours. The report noted that attempts were made to recruit a project assistant in Colombia although rules and regulations rendered this suggestion unfeasible.

While overall project management costs have exceeded budget expectations, it is worth noting that the project management costs incurred by the Ghana FfD programme was across all years, representing 17% of programme spend.[11] Overall programme management spend by both implementing partners across the years 2022-2025 for FfD programme in Colombia is circa 12%, which is below the spend on programme management by the Ghana FfD programme.

Finding 11: To reduce costs of programme delivery to Norad, the delivery partners have a number of cost containment measures in place.

Examples of cost containment measures in place by the delivery partners are set out in Box 2 below.

Box 2: Examples of cost containment measures

- Holding meetings/annual meetings online rather than in person
- Use of google translate rather than translators for email exchanges
- There is a framework contract in place to reduce the cost of interpretation at meetings
- Two academics from the University of Nariño support project delivery although at no cost to the project
- The use of the same Norwegian experts across different FfD programmes can facilitate knowledge sharing between programmes although a knowledge repository for sharing resources and products across the portfolio of FfD programmes would be useful

The Colombian partners also provide in-kind contributions to programme delivery such as the time of their staff for coordination and inputs, as well as meeting rooms, transportation and logistics, etc. While some events have had to be cancelled due to staff availability or illness, the overall cost of cancellations is relatively small – estimated at circa 1% by a delivery partner.[12]

While the number of Master's scholarships supported by the programme is low – only four students – the cost-efficiency is not in doubt as cost-efficiencies are unlikely to have materialised if they had the planned six rather than the four scholarships. Similarly, although the number of participants attending training events are quite low for some of the events, the right

[11] Itad, SEI and CM1, End Review of the Fish for Development Programme in Ghana, October 2025.

[12] KIIs delivery partners.

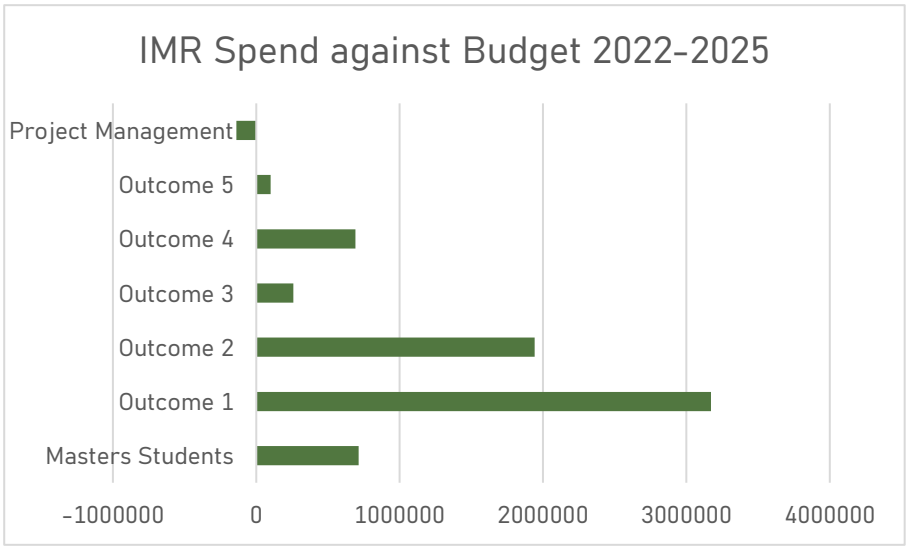
people are involved and some training is practically oriented (on boats etc.) limiting the number of training participants.

Finding 12: Efficiency. There has been a significant underspend against Outcomes 1 and 2, meaning that the programme is off track in delivery of planned activities under the fisheries workstream. The spend on aquaculture activities was more predictable and better aligned with budgeted allocations.

To date IMR has spent some NOK 14,625,000 in comparison with a budgeted allocated of NOK 21,363,000 which means that there was a significant underspend each year from 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25. The highest underspend was reported by IMR at the beginning of the programme in 2002/23 (51%), with the variance against spend declining to 21% underspend in 2024, although increased slightly to 25% underspend in 2025. In the past, it has not been an issue to roll over unused funding from the previous year to future years. However, this flexibility may not be accommodated by Norad in the future, requiring greater attention by partners to ensuring forecast accuracy going forward into the closing phase of the programme, despite the challenge this presents due to the on-demand nature of the programme.

Most of the IMR underspend in the period 2022-2025 is accounted for by the underspend against Outcomes 1 and 2 activities (fisheries workstream) as shown in Figure 3 below. However, the large underspend in 2022/23 is due to no new Master's students being accepted into Norwegian universities in that year, beyond the one student who had already enrolled. The work relating to dolphinfish was heavily delayed that year due to the misunderstanding concerning data availability, resulting in the need for further work on stock assessment for the fishery which necessitated a time delay until the next fishing season. The 2024 underspend was largely due to the cancellation of two workshops – one on assessment as part of Outcome 1 delivery and second one on international cooperation in fisheries was not conducted as part of Outcome 2 work. There was underbudgeting of the costs of the planned environmental monitoring in La Cocha Lake and the tuition fees for the three Master's students who started their studies in August 2024 were higher than expected. The 2025 underspend was due mainly to some Outcome 1 and 2 activities not proceeding, including the workshop on international cooperation in fisheries not proceeding due to the halt in assistance from the Directorate of Fisheries, Norway.

Figure 3: IMR spend against budget 2022-2025



Source: IMR Financial Reports on Fish for Development Colombia

In the case of NVI spend against budget, there was an underspend during both the inception year and the first year of implementation. The underspend in terms of the inception year was 38% and for the first phase of implementation (Oct 2022 – Dec 2023) was much lower – namely 10%. While NVI's budget and spend were aligned in 2025, there was a significant underspend in 2024 due to the postponement of two cost intensive activities relating to Outcome 5.

Outcome 5 is within the purview of the NVI.[13] It has an overall budget of NOK 20 million with circa NOK 8.6-9 million spent, so are generally on track to spend budgeted allocations by the end of the programme. Delivery partners, however, indicated that there is a limit in the ability of ICA to absorb more support without more staff.

KII participants were unclear about the extent VfM considerations were reflected in decision-making processes, although there was universal agreement that IMR managed the programme in an efficient way with due consideration for cost and VfM. The IMR programme manager was praised highly and there was also positive feedback on NVI's project management. It was also noted by key informants that the programme has stopped activities that were not delivering results, thereby ensuring VfM. While the programme delivery partners have an annual agreement of funding for delivery with Norad, they did not regard this as onerous nor express a preference for a multi-annual budgeting cycle.

Equity: As noted earlier under Coherence and section 3.2.3 consideration of cross-cutting issues, while environmental considerations are embedded in programme design and delivery, there is limited consideration of gender, although the programme does engage with and consider the needs of Indigenous communities, notably in the aquaculture work relating to La Cocha Lake.

3.3.2 Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness

Finding 13: The value generated by the aquaculture workstream appears to justify the spend. The spend on the fisheries workstream has been significantly lower and the contribution to outcomes appears weaker at this stage.

As noted below in the findings reported against the DAC criterion on Effectiveness (section 3.4), the FfD programme in Colombia is likely to make some contribution to four out of five of its planned outcomes, which is a positive result for a programme still halfway through its delivery cycle. The judgement on cost-effectiveness of the spend on the aquaculture workstream is that the results appear to justify the investment at this stage. The contributions to the outcome on improved capacity to implement science-based management advice for selected fisheries has inevitably been affected by the slow performance at output level for this component of the fisheries work.

3.3.3 Coordination mechanisms

Finding 14: The coordination process of the inputs from the Colombian and Norwegian partners has evolved over time. After some challenges with coordination impacting on delivery in 2025, these issues have now been effectively addressed.

While the project document mentions the creation of a Joint Coordinating Committee for the project to provide leadership and support for its implementation, this was not established at the

[13] Some funding under outcome 3 is also allocated to NVI – some NOK 30,000 in 2025 for example.

start of the project. The Joint Implementation Group was established and its members appointed in the Spring of 2024 with the first meetings held in autumn of 2024. Coordination was also compromised by the delays in identification of outcome leaders from both the Norwegian and Colombian sides until autumn of 2024. Although the Ministry of Environment was also appointed as a member, Ministry personnel have not participated in meetings.[14]

> *"Coordination mechanisms are coherent but uneven, functioning well on the Norwegian side while facing structural constraints in Colombia, such as limited budgets, bureaucratic delays, insufficient high-level prioritisation, and heavy workloads. Although meetings provide a functional coordination base, the lack of resources for missions and broader institutional engagement limits full coherence in implementation, despite the project's alignment with national strategies like PlanDaS and marine aquaculture priorities."*
>
> [KII Colombian government/agencies]

As noted above under section 3.3.1 Value for money, some coordination challenges in 2025 impacted on efficiency of delivery, although these issues were proactively resolved after intervention by Norad, the Norwegian Embassy in Bogota, the Colombian and Norwegian partners. The number of Colombian institutions involved in the programme was noted in the 2024 Annual Progress Report as an issue, complicating project planning and delaying implementation. The importance of allocating sufficient time resources for the Colombian project coordinator was similarly raised.

> *"Regular meetings, both within the Joint Implementation Group framework and those convened by MADR, have been crucial for maintaining informed institutions and building coherent national positions; this closer coordination marks a significant improvement compared to earlier stages of the cooperation."*
>
> [KII, Colombia government stakeholder]

The recruitment of two Colombia experts into roles in the Norwegian delivery organisations was a position from a coordination perspective, meaning that the experts were better able to navigate cultural differences as well as the complexity of the mandates and roles and responsibilities of the Colombian partners, smoothing delivery management and thereby reducing project management resourcing and spend. Although efforts were made early on in the programme to recruit a local project assistant, there were procurement challenges which meant this was not possible. However, the current arrangements seem appropriate and working to the satisfaction of both the Norwegian and Colombian stakeholders.

3.3.4 Project planning and delivery and risk management

Finding 15: The results framework has evolved from an initially broad and ambitious plan into a monitoring structure that increasingly reflects a narrower set of activities. A revised framework for the remaining implementation period should distinguish technical outputs more clearly from policy or institutional outcomes.

[14] Fish for Development Project, Norway-Colombia, 2021-2027, Progress Report 2024, QZA 20/0015.

The initial plan contained a relatively complete results chain in which institutional cooperation, pilot work, research and capacity building would strengthen fisheries and aquaculture governance, improve resource management, and contribute to wider socioeconomic goals. Among them, the dolphinfish fishery and La Cocha aquaculture were intended as entry points for broader institutional learning, and the framework extended beyond technical outputs to include management plans, regulatory and licensing reform, environmental guidelines and higher-level sustainability goals.

Implementation, however, quickly showed that several original assumptions were too optimistic. By 2023, the programme had already encountered major constraints in the fisheries workstream. Data that was supposed to be there for dolphinfish assessment work was not in place, which would require new data collection before any related outputs could proceed. It also encountered broader delivery challenges, especially from weak coordination, limited engagement from environmental authorities, and administrative issues.

From 2024 onwards, the programme became more focused on activities that were technically manageable and institutionally viable. Implementation has been centred on dolphinfish data collection, participation in regional fisheries bodies, marine aquaculture workshops and technical exchanges, aquaculture environmental monitoring system adaptation, and strengthening technical capacity in diagnostics, surveillance, sampling and outbreak preparedness. In contrast, more ambitious framework components such as management plans, licensing reform and aquaculture environmental guideline either had little progress or discontinued. By 2025, the programme itself formally acknowledged that the plans and results framework required revision and that parts of the framework had been designed with unrealistic ambitions.

From a midterm perspective, the results framework still has several strengths. It has a coherent thematic structure that broadly matches the programme's main cooperation areas: fisheries, regional fisheries cooperation, marine aquaculture, environmental management of aquaculture, aquatic animal health, and capacity building. It also aims for capacity and institutional change, for example through indicators on postgraduate training, diagnostic capacity and regional engagement.

Its limitations, however, are substantial. First, several outputs are framed as if they were directly deliverable by the programme even though they depend heavily on factors outside programme control, including political decisions, inter-agency coordination, external data availability and regional processes. This applies especially to outputs related to fisheries assessment reports, management plans and licensing reform. Second, there is a mismatch between activities and indicators in parts of the framework. Workplans are dominated by training, webinars, pilot activities and data collection, while the framework often expects these activities to effectively produce formal reports, management tools or institutional reforms. Third, the framework's impact goals are too ambitious for the scale and maturity of the programme, relying on external, macro-level sector indicators.

The framework remains useful as a broad organising tool, but a mechanical reading risks overstating failure against outputs that were not realistically within the programme's direct control. A revised framework for the remaining implementation period could distinguish technical outputs more clearly from policy or institutional outcomes. Results such as training, data collection, diagnostics and monitoring protocols tested could be framed as direct, technical outputs, while management plans, licensing reform and wider institutional coordination could be

treated as higher-level outcomes. Furthermore, the framework could be simplified, with fewer and more coherent indicators under each output. The framework could be adjusted to reflect where the programme is actually generating value.

Finding 16: There has been good progress in the delivery of aquaculture and fish health outputs. Overall, the fisheries workstream is somewhat off track although the regional cooperation work has progressed. Risks to delivery are considered and are managed appropriately.

To assess output performance, two rubrics were used and are set out in Box 3 below.

Box 3: Rubrics to assess output performance

Two scales are used to summarise the extent to which the OECD/DAC criteria have been met (see Annex 4):

1. Grading of the extent to which a criterion is met. This is used when it is possible to determine with some certainty whether the criterion is met.
2. Grading for the probability that the criterion will be met. The scale for probability is used when it is too early to assess whether the criteria is met.

For ease of interpretation, RAG ratings – red, amber and green are assigned to each of the rubrics.

These rubrics are presented in Annex 4, while Annex 5 presents the progress of the workstreams in relation to planned outputs.

Since this is a midterm review, it is not expected that the programme would have delivered all envisaged outputs since there are still two more years of delivery. Therefore, the assessment focuses on a combination of assessment of progress to date and the likelihood that the outputs will be achieved.

Progress with the delivery of the **fisheries workstream** was affected by the inter-dependencies between the outputs. While initially the plan was to use data on dolphinfish which was understood to exist in order to progress the other planned activities, it transpired that such data was not available and would need to be collected. Moreover, the collection of this data was complicated by the transboundary nature of dolphinfish which is challenging as it requires involvement of regional partners through the IATTC. Therefore, although new data on dolphinfish was collected, there was little progress on the other planned activities feeding into Outcome 1 - Improved capacity to implement science-based management advice for selected fisheries. KII feedback indicates that the results framework for the programme is not a useful tool for assessing progress with the fisheries workstream Outcome 1 activities as the adaptations to the work that were needed are not reflected in the outputs and associated indicators. The regional cooperation work associated with Outcome 2 - Improved cooperation with neighbouring countries and regional and international fisheries bodies – progressed well, with all planned activities assessed as likely to be achieved.

The aquaculture workstream of the programme is quite large consuming some 59% of the budget for the programme in comparison with 23% for the fisheries workstream. Of the 12 outputs listed in the results framework for the aquaculture workstream, six outputs have either been essentially fulfilled/largely met and eight outputs are deemed probable or very likely to be completed, which is a strong performance. Activities feeding into Outcome 5 – Capacity for surveillance, control and prevention of disease in aquatic animals improved – performed

particularly well with all planned activities likely to be delivered. This is supported by KII feedback which rated this support as highly valuable to Colombia. Some activities for Outcome 4 – Improved capacity of Colombian government institutions to control environmental footprint of aquaculture – faced challenges in terms of performance; for example the recommendations on improvements to the aquaculture licensing process has had limited progress to date.

Norwegian and Colombian partners consider risks as part of the discussions at the Joint Implementation Group meetings. Risks and challenges to implementation are also reported in the Annual Progress Reports to Norad including appropriate actions or mitigation measures to address any risks. The annual reports also distil lessons learned from delivery and are informed by the risks and challenges faced by the programme.

Colombia will elect its next president in June 2026, with the new administration formally taking office on 7 August 2026. This transition period is particularly relevant for the programme, as it typically involves the appointment of a new cabinet and, subsequently, potential changes in the leadership of key sectoral institutions. In the case of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, it is common for an incoming minister to appoint new directors for entities such as ICA and AUNAP, which may in turn lead to additional staff changes within these institutions.

Under this scenario, the role of career civil officers and technical staff becomes especially important. These officials already have knowledge of the programme and can provide continuity within their respective institutions during administrative turnover. Their institutional memory and ongoing engagement are likely to be essential for maintaining programme momentum throughout the transition. Once the new cabinet is appointed, it would be advisable for the Norwegian government to take a proactive role in presenting the programme's current status, evaluation findings, and key recommendations to the newly appointed directors. Early engagement can help ensure that incoming authorities understand the programme's relevance, the results achieved to date, and the importance of sustaining implementation to meet the agreed objectives.

3.4 Effectiveness

Summary: In this section we examine the results that have been achieved by the programme and what have been the factors that enabled or hindered results generation. The effectiveness of knowledge transfer and capacity building is also examined. This section closes with some examples of key results and suggestions on how results could be strengthened in the closing phase.

Key findings:

- The FfD programme in Colombia is likely to make some contribution to four out of five of its planned outcomes which is a positive result for a programme still halfway through its delivery cycle. The contributions to the outcome on improved capacity to implement science-based management advice for selected fisheries has inevitably been affected by the slow performance at output level.
- A key enabler of results was the high calibre of the Norwegian expertise which was trusted and appreciated by the Colombian partners. An important hindering factor in terms of effectiveness has been the turnover of staff in Colombian partner institutions, as well as the limited capacity to engage in the programme at times due to heavy workload.
- Knowledge transfer and capacity-building activities are rated as effective.
- Overall, the approach of the programme has been effective, with a number of notable achievements already at mid-term stage. Going forward the programme needs to consolidate and focus delivery on contributions to outcomes.

Strength of evidence: *Strong*. Evidence from a range of sources (interviews, progress reporting and validation workshops) was used to analyse, triangulate and report on the findings concerning effectiveness. The validation workshops with Norad and delivery partners confirm consistency and broad agreement with the findings.

3.4.1 Results achieved

Finding 17: Based on the evidence gathered at midline, the FfD programme in Colombia is likely to make a contribution to four out of five of its planned outcomes, which is a positive result for a programme still halfway through its delivery cycle. The contributions to the outcome on improved capacity to implement science-based management advice for selected fisheries has inevitably been affected by the slow performance at output level.

The programme's contributions to outcomes are correlated with the associated output-level performance. Since there was not much activity in relation to the planned dolphinfish work with the exception of the collection of data, there is some uncertainty regarding the contribution of the work to Outcome 1: Improved capacity to implement science-based management advice for selected fisheries. On the other hand, there is much more certainty concerning expectations of the contribution of the aquaculture work to the anticipated outcomes with a strong performance expected from the aquatic animal health work under Outcome 5 and the environmental monitoring work feeding into Outcome 4. Annex 6 provides an overview of progress and likelihood of contributions to outcomes.

Now that the programme has been in delivery since October 2022 (after an inception phase lasting 10 months), going forward it is useful to reflect on any design adjustments based on delivery progress to date. In view of progress with Outcome 1 activities, consideration should be

given to consolidating the fisheries-related work to focus on regional cooperation while also recognising that a regional focus will carry with it new challenges most notably the need for other stakeholders to engage effectively in the work. Delivery partners noted that during 2025 there was a clearer reorientation and integration between Outcomes 1 and 2 and combining the two outcomes could be a useful consolidation in the closing phase. The key emphasis on the aquaculture work should be on building on the achievements to date and deepening the contributions to outcomes (see Annex 6: progress against planned outcomes).

In terms of unexpected results, the key one mentioned in KIIs was that the programme played a useful convening role bringing the different Colombian partner institutions together, for example, through the Joint Implementation Group meetings.

3.4.2 Enablers of results

Finding 18: A key enabler of results was the high calibre of the Norwegian expertise which was trusted and appreciated by the Colombian partners. A major hindering factor in terms of effectiveness has been the turnover of staff in Colombian partner institutions, as well as the limited capacity to engage in the programme at times due to heavy workload.

Feedback from consultants with stakeholders and delivery partners highlighted a number of factors which contributed to the generation of results. These are set out below.

- Norway's technical support was rated as being of outstanding quality providing strong technical leadership in fisheries and aquaculture. This meant the advice and support provided was trusted and appreciated by the Colombian counterparts.
- The occurrence of disease outbreaks during the programme increased Colombia's awareness of the importance of aquatic animal health and provided an opportunity for the delivery partners to provide hands-on support at a critical time.
- Aquaculture producers indicated that they were sometimes blamed for environmental issues at La Cocha Lake. This incentivised them to engage in environmental monitoring activities and, if necessary, reduce the possible impact on the environment to demonstrate that they were not the culprits for environmental issues at the lake.
- The programme chose to conduct environmental monitoring activities in a number of settings – not just La Cocha Lake - as was initially planned. This afforded opportunities to test the monitoring system in other lakes/reservoirs, creating potential for scale-up in the future.
- The applied practical approach to training and delivery of advice and support was appreciated by the Colombian partners, providing a strong platform for application of the acquired know-how.
- Strong teamwork with key partners such as ICA, the University of Nariño and FEDEAQUA.
- Institutional commitment on the part of the Colombian authorities e.g. ICA.

There were also challenges to delivery and factors which somewhat impacted achievements and their sustainability. These hindering factors included the following:

- Some informants noted that the Norwegian delivery partners tended to be somewhat focused on activities rather than making contributions to outcomes or higher-level goals.

Going forward into the final phase of the programme, a more outcome-oriented approach would address this.

- It has taken time for the dynamics of cooperation between the Colombian and Norwegian partners to settle in terms of efficient and effective ways of working and communications.
- Effectiveness has been partially constrained by internal institutional issues in Colombian partner institutions such as limited staff, high workloads across multiple roles (for example, the same staff managing both terrestrial and aquatic outbreaks), bureaucratic processes and at times insufficient high-level prioritisation (according to KIIs Colombia).
- The legal system underpinning the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in each country are very different, meaning that it takes time to formulate regulations and approaches that would work in a Colombian context.
- The knowledge, attitudes and practices study conducted at La Cocha Lake shows that producers have the knowledge and awareness about animal health risk but they are not implementing biosecurity practices – reflecting a knowledge-action gap.
- As noted earlier, the results framework is not fit for purpose as it is not flexible enough to allow the programme to adapt as needed in accordance with the delivery circumstances.

3.4.3 Effectiveness of knowledge transfer and capacity building

Finding 19: Knowledge transfer and capacity building activities are rated as effective.

Annex 5 presents the performance of the programme in terms of progress towards outputs. Overall, the outputs on capacity building are likely to be achieved, with the exception of the indicator on Colombian Master's students supported in thesis work in fisheries or aquaculture, which fell short with just one rather than eight theses prepared; however, the milestone of eight theses was rated as unrealistic. While initially it was envisaged that six/eight Colombian students would be enrolled on the Master's programme, in reality four were enrolled. The students who responded to a questionnaire (n=3) indicated that the courses and research they conducted was directly related to the management of fisheries and aquaculture in Colombia with two out of three also reporting they would have been unlikely to study for a Master's without the scholarship.

Student feedback indicated that the scholarships have enabled capacity building and effective knowledge transfer with the potential for sustainable impacts. All scholarship recipients are intending to use their knowledge to move into a specific sub-sector of aquacultures or fisheries related to their topic of study, suggesting that the acquired knowledge and skills will be used to support the sustainable management of the sector. The graduate-level education provided by the Norwegian institutions developed not only academic knowledge and capability, but the capacity to transfer this knowledge into professional environments with students commenting that they had been able to build valuable academic, scientific and professional networks and felt equipped to begin to address the challenges facing the sector.

In terms of the other knowledge transfer and capacity strengthening activities, there are a number of notable successes such as capacity strengthening in the areas of marine aquaculture which is relatively new to Colombia, diagnostic capacity in relation to aquatic animal health, environmental monitoring of lakes/reservoirs and better sanitary practices for aquaculture producers. The programme's work with ICA has increased their capability to work with aquatic

diseases. This covers strengthening aquatic animal health and improving technical and diagnostic capabilities, including increased number of pathogens detected by PCR[15] capabilities and laying the groundwork for developing specialised fish pathologists; ICA had already implemented and validated PCR analysis, According to respondents from ICA, they have been able to introduce methods that were previously unavailable, which has enabled the identification of priority aquatic diseases and has expanded expertise beyond the institution's traditional focus on terrestrial species, thereby strengthening ICA's capacity and contributing to the development of the national aquaculture sector.

3.4.4 Strengthening results in the closing phase

Finding 20: Overall, the approach of the programme has been effective, with a number of notable achievements already at midterm stage. Going forward the programme needs to consolidate and focus delivery on contributions to outcomes.

The FfD programme has already made valuable contributions to a number of noteworthy achievements, which are set out in Table 4 below.

Table 3: Key results of the FfD programme in Colombia.

Outcome area	Examples of key results
Outcome 0: Masters Students and University Courses	▪ Masters students in Norway – long-term capacity building
Outcome 1:	"The programme has effectively strengthened Colombia's ability to participate in regional fisheries management, enabling more active and substantive engagement in IATTC discussions through updated catch and effort data, improved technical arguments and the successful submission of a dorado management plan." [KII Government agencies Colombia]
Outcome 2: Improved cooperation with neighbouring countries	▪ More active participation by Colombia in regional fisheries management, e.g. IATTC discussions on regional fisheries governance
Outcome 3: Improved knowledge base for marine aquaculture	▪ Generation of updated sanitary and environmental information supporting evidence-based decision-making ▪ Marine aquaculture activities now included in the agenda of Colombia's Aquaculture Chain Council with the Norwegian cooperation helping to position the topic in the national agenda ▪ Progress on the aquaculture law "Norway's contribution to the aquaculture law has been substantial, providing an international market perspective and targeted inputs on health, parameters and commercialisation. These contributions were possible because the cooperation exists; without it support for the law would not have materialised." [KII Colombia government stakeholder]

[15] Polymerase chain reaction.

Outcome area	Examples of key results
Outcome 4: Improved capacity of Colombian Governmental institutions to control the environmental footprint of aquaculture	▪ Strengthened capacity and methodologies on environmental monitoring, for example at La Cocha Lake
Outcome 5: Capacity for surveillance, control and prevention of disease in aquatic animals improved	▪ ICA's diagnostic capacity strengthened leading to more effective responses to aquatic animal disease outbreaks ▪ Expanded recognition of diseases and engagement with producers on biosecurity ▪ Contingency Plan for disease outbreaks drafted and in use
Unexpected or unanticipated results	▪ Some improvements in inter-institutional coordination between ICA, AUNAP and other Colombian stakeholders

The key focus on the closing phase of the programme should be on securing contributions to outcomes. This could involve the following:

- Considering the refreshed ToC and the pathways to change from outputs through to intermediate outcomes and outcomes. It would also be useful to consider the assumptions which need to hold for change to happen.
- Reconsider the fisheries workstream and its ambitions during this closing phase. What is viable to deliver within the timeframe and how can this work contribute to outcomes of the programme?
- Consider engagement with the Ministry of Environment as a means to strengthen contribution to outcomes.
- Liaise with Colombian partner institutions on issues of staff turnover in order to mitigate against risks.

3.5 Sustainability

Summary: In this section we examine the likelihood that strengthened capacity building and structures will be sustained in the aftermath of the closure of the project, including whether exit and handover plans have been developed.

Key findings:

- Colombia now has a stronger foundation to diagnose diseases, identify causal agents and respond more rapidly to environmental health risks, which together help reduce vulnerability to climate change consequences and provide a strong indicator of sustainability for the aquaculture workstream.
- Programme continuity is expected to remain strong due to strengthened relationships, support linked to identified national needs, and learning embedded within institutions. Ongoing institutional commitment, including ongoing funding, is needed to ensure sustainability.
- Indications of sustainability of capacity are positive where learning is embedded into institutional practices, but concern remains over the impact of staff turnover.
- There is evidence of successful knowledge exchange through collaboration mechanisms with universities and knowledge transfer from returning trainees and students.
- There is currently no clear exit strategy, which is a gap to be addressed in the next period.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate*. Multiple sources of evidence, from a diverse range of stakeholder groups, were used to triangulate and generate findings. The quality of the evidence was compromised by coverage of similar programmes to FfD in Colombia, thereby limiting the evidence base on external coherence.

3.5.1 Likely sustainability of results and capacity

Finding 21: Colombia now has a stronger foundation to diagnose diseases, identify causal agents and respond more rapidly to environmental health risks, which together help reduce vulnerability to climate change consequences and provide a strong indicator of sustainability for the aquaculture workstream.

Respondents from different stakeholder groups in both Colombia and Norway made reference to the links between the environment, health risks, disease control and fish farming. As climate change increases disease pressures and creates new environmental health challenges, local producers are seeking out technical guidance, and clear information on appropriate responses.

The increased availability of updated environmental health information and the availability of environmental assessment methodologies provides a strong foundation for sustained meaningful and integrated decision-making in La Cocha. According to the programme coordinator, environmental monitoring in La Cocha 'represents a milestone for aquaculture management' and the Ministry of Trade and Fisheries in Norway highlighted the improved capacity to control the environmental footprint of aquaculture in Colombia. Further, inclusion of policy change in the programme creates a pathway to improving regulation and disease prevention in the longer term by embedding changes in future practice.

Finding 22: Programme continuity is expected to remain strong due to strengthened relationships, support linked to identified national needs, and learning embedded within

institutions. Ongoing institutional commitment, including ongoing funding, is needed to ensure sustainability.

Strengthened relationships and capacities are expected to persist thanks to the commitment of the participating institutions and the relevance of the support provided. Sustainability is likely to be constrained by the following factors:

- Rotating representatives in public entities limits consistent decision-making and long-term institutional ownership. Participants reported that institutions sometimes send different representatives without the capacity to make binding decisions, limiting progress. Limited staff availability, and heavy workloads, further restrict the ability of officials to dedicate sufficient time and maintain consistent engagement despite the recognised importance of the work.
- The upcoming change of government may affect the continuity and consolidation of progress.
- Funding for ongoing data collection is needed to develop longitudinal data rather than a snapshot in time. For example, for data on dolphinfish to remain useful, it must be consistently gathered and Colombia will need to find some way of resourcing observers or identify an alternative means of collecting data.

Finding 23: Indications of sustainability of capacity are positive where learning is embedded into institutional practices, but concern remains over the impact of staff turnover.

Indications of sustainability of capacity are positive as learning is embedded into institutional practices and there is agreement among delivery partners that strong institutional partners are engaged, with the potential to strengthen the environmental and regional contributions of the programme through more coordinated involvement of the Ministry of the Environment and regional actors. There is evidence that ICA is already applying the knowledge gained and embedding new diagnostic procedures into permanent institutional practices.

In the aquaculture pathway, programme partners reported that the programme has fostered genuine ownership, continuity, and a strong commitment to sustaining the outcomes for the benefit of the aquaculture sector. In general, there has been a high level of continuity with the involvement of permanent ICA staff and university faculty members since the beginning of the programme. Concern remains where there is staff turnover due to temporary and short-term contracts. Reliance on short-term contractors leads to loss of accumulated knowledge and undermines continuity in the process. The significance of key individuals, including both Norwegian programme staff, and Colombian staff who leave or retire, highlights the need for mechanisms like a train-the-trainers model to prevent the loss of institutional memory. There are existing examples of this approach already being undertaken, for example sampling and autopsy manuals for trout and tilapia have been developed based on the producer workshops, which will enable ICA to conduct subsequent trainings. The online course such as the Fish Health course at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences was highly valued by ICA but will require updating to remain current.[16]

[16] Fish for Development Colombia 2021-27, NVI.

Finding 24: There is evidence of successful knowledge exchange through collaboration mechanisms with universities and knowledge transfer from returning trainees and students.

Knowledge transfer mechanisms ensure that knowledge is transmitted successfully, new staff are trained, and capacities are maintained despite any staff turnover challenges. A Joint Implementation Group member reported that the training held in Norway enabled participants to return and transfer knowledge to producers, strengthen skills, support institutional development, and contribute to lasting sectoral impacts. A key lesson from ICA was that staff felt that hands-on workshops conducted by Norwegian delivery partners were effective and that longer in-country stays in Colombia by Norwegian experts working directly in the laboratory with staff would enable a much deeper and more effective transfer of knowledge.

Collaboration mechanisms have been strengthened through the research capacity of the University of Córdoba, which has supported ongoing studies and hosted Colombian students returning from Norway. This exchange of knowledge and talent contributes to long-term capacity building and reinforces the sustainability of the cooperation. Expanding opportunities for returning scholarship students, by linking them to fisheries or aquaculture enterprises is essential, to support knowledge transfer.

Norwegian programme staff have reported that there is evidence that ICA is becoming more independent and staff have developed their own relationships with scientists in Norway and are building strong networks which will be positive for future knowledge exchange and the sustainability of networks.

3.5.2 Exit or handover plans

Finding 25: There is currently no clear exit strategy, which is a gap to be addressed in the remaining phase of the programme.

A clear and well-defined exit strategy is essential to ensure continuity, as interviewees highlight uncertainty about post-project arrangements and emphasise that sustained impact will require committed personnel, increased institutional capacity, and explicit financial and operational commitments from Colombia to carry forward the processes initiated by the cooperation. This is a consideration to be taken into account during the remaining programme period.

Considerations for an exit strategy include handover to other delivery partners, involving management of equipment, access to training materials, guidance and other resources, and preparing for exit for example by developing transition plans and consolidating programme lessons, risk management, and roles and responsibilities.

3.6 Impact

Summary: In this section we examine any changes observed at the institutional and sector levels and the contribution to higher-level goals of sustainable management and poverty reduction, as well as whether any unexpected positive or negative effects have been observed.

Key findings:

- Marine aquaculture is now positioned as a food production alternative for Colombia and the capacity to manage and monitor aquatic animal disease and the environmental impact of aquaculture is significantly improved.
- The fisheries sector is positioned to catalyse data-driven fisheries governance in the future, and has enhanced Colombia's regional presence.
- The impact on poverty is challenging to measure in the short term, but there are indications that economic benefits may impact positively on low-income producers.
- There is an improved awareness of diseases and management processes with evidence of both knowledge transfer and uptake with the improvements in aquatic health contributory factors to economic benefits for the sector.
- Strong grassroots engagement is needed to understand livelihood implications for small, rural and Indigenous producers and ensure programming has the potential for long-lasting impact.
- Programme support has increased visibility of Indigenous communities and small producers to the participating authorities, with greater collaboration and trust in evidence.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate* evidence at institutional/sector level with multiple sources of evidence, from a diverse range of stakeholder groups, with consistency in reported findings on impact and correlation with findings from validation workshops. Moderate evidence on socio-economic impact and poverty reduction. Evidence is limited to indications of potential impact at this stage of the Programme.

3.6.1 Institutional or sector level changes

Finding 26: Marine aquaculture is now positioned as a food production alternative for Colombia and the capacity to manage and monitor aquatic animal disease and the environmental impact of aquaculture is significantly improved.

The programme coordinator confirmed that the programme has helped advance an area that had previously stalled, positioning marine aquaculture as a potential food production alternative for Colombia and enabling discussions grounded in data rather than assumptions. In the aquaculture sector, the programme has generated substantial learning-enhanced collaboration, cooperation and learning, which has resulted in improvements to diagnostic capacity, impacting on environmental health. The programme has also contributed to a formalisation of cooperation between ICA and AUNAP. This has supported regulatory policymaking, for example through the drafting of a new aquaculture law, which is seen by both Colombian and Norwegian programme staff as a major achievement.

ICA staff reported that the process has generated substantial learning for ICA and the aquaculture programme, strengthening technical understanding and expanding knowledge in an area that was previously unfamiliar, while offering clear insights into how ICA can continue improving its role in aquatic animal health. Respondents felt that the cooperation has strengthened diagnostic capabilities, which has contributed to clear health improvements in the productive sector, enhancing producers' economic outcomes through better environmental

health practices, and underscoring the value of sustaining long-term collaboration to continue building institutional capabilities. This positive impact was reiterated by a MADR official.

In addition, ICA's capacity for emergency preparedness has been elevated, with evidence of the impact of this during the management of a recent disease event (viral haemorrhagic septicaemia (VHS) outbreak in La Cocha Lake in 2026). The team were able to put into practice and further revise a contingency plan with the support of programme staff. Local producers also reported that the consistent accompaniment from ICA was critical in supporting community efforts in managing the outbreak.

Staff reported that continued training directed to ICA staff, and ideally to a larger number of officials, remains essential to continue to progress achievements.

Finding 27: The fisheries sector is positioned to catalyse data-driven fisheries governance in the future, and has enhanced Colombia's regional presence.

The programme has enhanced Colombia's ability to engage strategically in regional fisheries governance, specifically through IATTC, which has facilitated the active participation of AUNAP and has led to the expansion of opportunities related to dolphinfish. Respondents from AUNAP felt this represented a 'significant advance' and has allowed Colombia to contribute to international discussions and increase its regional presence. A government representative reported that the submission of a dolphinfish management proposal to IATTC was made possible through cooperation with Norway. The data that has now been collected is expected to support future evidence-based policymaking and to have the potential for long-term benefits for natural resource management.

3.6.2 Community engagement, socioeconomic development and poverty reduction

Finding 28: The impact on poverty is challenging to measure in the short term, but there are indications that economic benefits may impact positively on low-income producers.

The ultimate goal of the Fisheries for Development programme is poverty reduction (as outlined in the results framework) but there is limited evidence of how programme objectives will lead to poverty reduction in the ToC pathways. Programme staff in Norway are in agreement that it would be difficult to expect to see an impact on poverty after 5 years. Programme partners in Norway and Colombia refer to the long-term anticipated impact of the programme on improved health of aquatic animals and sustainable food production, with assumptions about the downstream impact of these impacts on income and therefore poverty reduction. At this stage we can conclude that evidence indicates the potential for the programme to impact on livelihood improvements and poverty reduction in the longer term. To be able to substantiate evidence for a positive impact on poverty reduction, additional evidence is needed on the socioeconomic benefits experienced by low-income producers as a result of the programme.

Finding 29: There is an improved awareness of diseases and management processes with evidence of both knowledge transfer and uptake with the improvements in aquatic health contributory factors to economic benefits for the sector.

Improved awareness of diseases and diagnostic responses can generate economic benefits for producers since improved procedures prevent losses for producers and support farmers' incomes. There is clear evidence of uptake among local producers, based on prompt reporting of

the new outbreak providing evidence of the potential to impact incomes. However, producers also identified the need for ongoing support to meet requirements in the longer term.

Small, rural and Indigenous producers lack the financial capacity to improve production to the level needed to make long-lasting impact to living conditions. Producers emphasised the need for continued support to allow them to sustain their activity and remain resilient, for example to meet demanding biosecurity certification requirements. Small producers are also particularly vulnerable to disease events as they depend on short production cycles and weekly sales and do not have the financial capacity to sustain incomes over a period of quarantine.

Scholarship recipients are positioned to use their knowledge to improve sustainable management of the sector. As topics have a focus on sustainability (for example the impact of fishing on ecosystems and in relation to climate change, sustainable fishing concepts to support communities, sustainable use and production of aquaculture resources) this suggests that the knowledge sharing pathway is likely to benefit sustainable development of the sector. For the benefit of the scholarships to be realised, it is important to ensure that there is follow-up in place with recipients to support their successful integration into key sectors, companies or institutions of the industry on graduation.

Finding 30: Strong grassroots engagement is needed to understand livelihood implications for small, rural, and Indigenous producers and ensure programming has the potential for long-lasting impact.

Several respondents drew attention to the significance of small-scale and subsistence farmers to any fisheries and aquaculture programme in Colombia. A MADR officer reported that 95% of producers are small-scale or subsistence farmers, who require targeted support, and saw a critical role for Norwegian cooperation in strengthening their capacities, which would ultimately allow their access to broader markets and longer-term economic development.

Academic respondents from regional universities stressed that this type of cooperation requires strong grassroots engagement with communities involved from the outset as 'active partners in shaping solutions rather than passive beneficiaries'. Respondents identified that to increase the likelihood of adoption of training, an in-depth understanding of producers' local realities including the cultural and social context in which they are operating and how Indigenous values and practices shape their engagement with the fisheries and aquaculture sectors is needed. This will also tailor engagement strategies to align institutional approaches with local producer needs. Annex 7 includes details on a methodological approach – Participatory Impact Assessment – that could be used to capture the livelihood benefits of the FfD programme at the community level.

> *"Given the strong local dependence on rainbow trout production, stakeholders emphasise the need for continuous institutional support, calm dialogue, and the adoption of good practices to ensure that aquaculture remains both environmentally compatible and capable of generating new employment and opportunities for the region."*
>
> [Local producer]

From a local producer perspective, respondents emphasised the need for greater engagement between institutions and producers which take into account aquaculture best practices as well as employment and income drivers and environmental and conservation needs in the regions.

3.6.3 Unexpected effects

Finding 31: Programme support has increased visibility of Indigenous communities and small producers to the participating authorities, with greater collaboration and trust in evidence.

The review identified one important unexpected effect. Through the pilot study in La Cocha, programme support has greatly increased visibility of Indigenous communities and small producers to the relevant authorities (AUNAP and ICA and regional environmental authorities) and an understanding of their role in production and conservation along with insight into their priorities and needs. Respondents reported that there was initially distrust of authorities among local producers and Indigenous communities, but by actively listening to local priorities trust was built and collaboration strengthened.

Programme staff reported that positive results have been seen from the environmental monitoring training for the local producers, and implementation discussions with the authorities are now needed to support ongoing use. Producers reported that they need support to apply what they have learned, including assistance to meet demanding biosecurity certification requirements and to develop projects that strengthen traditional trout farming in ways that are aligned with their Indigenous practices. Ongoing institutional ownership and additional government funding is needed to ensure this outcome is sustainable.

> *"[The Programme] has served as a bridge of communication to relay the needs of the lake and connect the community with the various entities that are increasingly serving them. Producers now have greater contact, especially with ICA … Before, they were very distant from each other, but now they work more closely and in a coordinated manner as institutions."*
>
> [Local producer]

Long-term sustainability is anticipated if these relationships are maintained. Indeed, local producers stated that they hope that institutions will remain present over time, to continue to address their needs and ensure continued progress.

4 Conclusions, lessons and future steps

This section presents key conclusions from the evaluation of the FfD programme in Colombia. A number of lessons are also set out, focused on implications for future cooperation partnerships between Norway and Colombia and other countries. As Norad is very interested in learning in order to understand whether any adjustments to the programme are needed to support improvements of performance in the next phase of the programme, a number of programme-specific recommendations are also suggested.

4.1 Conclusions and lessons

Overall, the FfD programme in Colombia appears to be performing well at midline, recognising that the programme is only part way through its delivery cycle. Already at midline, the programme has succeeded in making a contribution to the majority of its aquaculture and fisheries outcomes. Results delivery to date has been particularly strong for the aquaculture workstream – the major component of the programme in terms of funding. This workstream has benefited from fortuitous timing, with Colombian stakeholders interested in progressing marine aquaculture in the country, in the drafting of a new aquaculture law, and with the occurrence of aquatic animal disease outbreaks, all of which increased Colombian appetite for the support on offer. Notable highlights of the results include the development of capacity in aquatic animal disease diagnostics and response and environmental monitoring, in addition to inputs on the drafting of the aquaculture law.

Progress with the fisheries workstream to date was somewhat more mixed. While data on dolphinfish was collected and regional cooperation progressed, there were some challenges owing to inter-dependencies between fisheries workstream outputs. As a result, progress fell short of expectations. Overall, the results framework for the programme has not kept pace with the adaptations needed to align with Colombian partner needs and the changing context.

The programme appears to represents good VfM, with demonstrable use of cost containment measures to ensure economy and proportionate spend on programme management by the implementing partners. Efficiency in delivery, although well managed by the Norwegian delivery partners, and overseen by Norad, has faced some challenges. The coordination requirements of the programme proved to be greater than expected due to the number of Colombian institutions involved and the bandwidth of Colombian interlocuters to engage due to heavy workloads. However, these issues were addressed effectively and mitigation measures are in place to manage challenges in this area in the future. As the programme moves forward, it will need to efficiently engage with new Colombian stakeholders once they take office after the June 2026 presidential elections. Conclusions concerning the cost-effectiveness of the investment by Norad are tentative at this stage given the programme is only part way through delivery, although the evidence on contributions to outcomes points to a potential cost-effective investment in this programme by Norad. This dimension of VfM should be considered in more detail as part of the endline evaluation of the programme.

The expected impact of the programme on poverty reduction is seen as ambitious, at least within the 5-year time frame of the programme and the lack of consideration of this dimension in the design of the assistance and delivery of the support. However, there is a line of sight on how the improvements to the management of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors could improve the livelihoods of small producers and farmers due to improved productivity driven by better

environmental management and better aquatic animal health. It would be useful for the programme to explore these further during the closing phase.

Sustainability of the results generated by the Norwegian assistance cannot be guaranteed, not least since 2026 is an election year in Colombia, with the potential for a change of priorities for the development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. While the institutional commitment of partners, the progression of legislative changes, for example the development of a new aquaculture law, and the enhanced capacity in place as a result of the assistance are factors supporting likely sustainability, ongoing funding and staff turnover constitute real challenges.

The evaluation team distilled a number of lessons for development cooperation for Norad's consideration, as set out below.

1. Consider more detailed articulation of causal change pathways in programme theories of change in order to serve as a roadmap and guide the delivery of outcomes.
2. When budgeting future development cooperation partnerships, ensure realistic and sufficient budget allocations for project management, recognising that strong project management inputs are needed in a complex and capacity-constrained multi-stakeholder environment to keep delivery on track.
3. Sustainability and exit planning need to be considered from the beginning to embed changes to policies and practices and support institutional and system changes.
4. Programme teams should regularly revisit, and update if necessary, the programme results frameworks to ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned to programme delivery.

4.2 Future steps

To strengthen results and impact in the closing phase of the delivery of the FfD programme in Colombia, a number of recommendations are proposed. These are, in our view, the priority actions that need to be taken based on the mid-term review findings.

Table 4: Recommendations

Component	Recommendation	Time frame	Responsibility
Effectiveness:	1. Reconsider the ambition and focus of the fisheries workstream in view of results and underspend to date.	Immediate priority	JIG
	2. Revise the results framework for the programme making a clear distinction between technical outputs and institutional or policy outcomes. Consider utilisation of an intermediate outcome level to better demonstrate programme progress.	Immediate priority	Norad and implementing partners
	3. Ensure early engagement with the new administration after the June 2026 presidential elections and the new administration taking office, including convening a meeting with the Ministry of Environment to explore their active participation in the delivery of the FfD programme in Colombia.	Immediate priority	Norad, IMR and NVI
Efficiency	4. Revise the programme budget for the closing phase of the programme, include a more realistic allocation for programme management and make efforts to reduce forecast : spend variances for example by more regular updating of forecasts.	Following completion of recommendations 1 & 2	Norad
Impact	5. To demonstrate the livelihood impacts of the support, it is suggested that Norad consider funding the preparation of a case study to explore the benefits of the assistance provided, for example, relating to aquaculture producers and Indigenous communities.	Towards the end of the programme	Norad
Sustainability	6. Develop a sustainability and exit plan.	In the last year of the programme	JIG

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of reference

Terms of reference (ToR)

Midterm review – Fish for Development (FfD) Programme Colombia

1. **Background**

Norway and Colombia have collaborated since 2021 under the Fish for Development (FfD) programme Colombia, aiming to strengthen the sustainability and socioeconomic impact of Colombia's fisheries and aquaculture sectors, combat poverty, and contribute to food security. The programme's total budget is NOK 50 million (2021–2027), involving institutional cooperation between relevant authorities and institutions in Colombia and Norway.

2. **Purpose and scope**

The main purpose of this review is to document and assess results, learning and challenges achieved in the Fish for Development programme in Colombia until December 2025. The review should focus on how the programme has contributed towards sustainable resource management, institutional and capacity development, and wider socioeconomic goals in Colombia.

The scope of the review is the period 2021–2025, focusing on institutional cooperation and core programme activities.

3. **Evaluation criteria and questions**

The review shall be guided by the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria:

1. Relevance (2–3 pages)

- To what extent does the programme align with Colombia's sector needs, strategies, and priorities in fisheries and aquaculture?
- Do Norwegian partners contribute relevant and adequate expertise?
- Responsiveness: has the programme adapted to changes in needs or conditions?

2. Coherence (2 pages)

- How does Norwegian assistance add value and synergy to other activities in Colombia (governmental, private sector, civil society)?
- Is fragmentation or duplication avoided?
- How are cross-cutting issues (gender, climate/environment, and anti-corruption) integrated?

3. Effectiveness (6–7 pages)

- What results have been achieved (expected and unexpected)?
- Which factors influenced achievement – working methods, ownership, partnerships, data and indicator selection?

- How effective are knowledge transfer and capacity building?
- Are approaches and methods fit for purpose? Could achievement be strengthened during the remaining period?

4. Efficiency (4–5 pages)

- Assessment of inputs/resources (staff, budget, time).
- Is there a good balance between efforts and results (value for money)?
- Programme management, relations, and institutional ownership in Colombia and Norway.
- Planned versus delivered activities; analysis of deviations.
- Bottlenecks and risk management.

5. Sustainability (3 pages)

- Likelihood that benefits and results will continue after programme end.
- Have adequate capacity and structures been developed in Colombia?
- Exit and handover plans for national responsibility.

6. Impact (4–6 pages)

- What changes are observed at the institutional and sector levels?
- Contribution to higher-level goals of sustainable management and poverty reduction.
- Unexpected positive or negative effects.

7. Lessons learned and further steps (4 pages)

- Summarise transferable lessons for future cooperation.
- Provide recommendations for future institutional partnership and potential new strategic focus areas between Norway and Colombia.

4. **Methodology**

- Desk review of documentation, combined with interviews with relevant actors in Colombia and Norway (authorities, professionals, academia, civil society).
- It is desirable to include local experts for contextual understanding and support.
- The consultant shall submit a brief inception note with the proposed approach.
- The methodology should include use of data triangulation to ensure robust findings.

5. **Deliverables and timeline**

- Inception note: within two weeks of assignment start.
- Draft report: by 10 December 2025.
- Final report: within one week of receiving comments from Norad and partners.
- Maximum length: 30–35 pages excluding annexes.
- Online presentation to key partners: by 15 January 2026.

6. **Team requirements**

   - Documented experience in evaluation of capacity building and development programmes in fisheries/aquaculture or related sectors.
   - Knowledge of Norwegian and Colombian institutions and context.
   - Fluency in English (Spanish language skills preferred).
   - The team must include members with experience from or residency in Colombia.

7. **Key documents (data sources)**

   - Programme documents, cooperation agreements, progress and financial reports, previous assessments, sector policy documents, relevant analyses for fisheries and aquaculture.
   - Contact list of key actors in Colombia and Norway will be provided.

Annex 2: Evaluation framework

DAC criteria	Primary review question	Sub-questions	Data sources	Analytical approach
Relevance	To what extent does the programme align with Colombia's sector needs, strategies and priorities in fisheries and aquaculture?	What are the implications of the development of Colombia's new aquaculture law and update of Colombia's fisheries policy on the scope and objectives of the FfD programme in Colombia?	KIIs Programme documents National strategies and policies	Theory-based evaluation
	Do Norwegian partners contribute relevant and adequate expertise?	Is there alignment between the needs of the Colombian partners and the expertise made available by the Norwegian partners?	KIIs	
	Responsiveness: has the programme adapted to changes in needs or conditions?	What have been the key changes in the programme design?	Programme documents KIIs	
	Is the programme overambitious?	What should be the main focus of the programme during the closing phase?	KIIs	
	Is the programme engaging with all the right Colombian partners?	Has the engagement with the environmental sector institutions in Colombia been adequate? Why/why not?	KIIs	
Coherence	How does Norwegian assistance add value and synergy to other activities in Colombia (governmental, private sector, civil society)?	What are other initiatives similar to the work being done by the FfD programme?	KIIs Programme documents Scoping/context analysis reports Secondary evidence on other relevant programmes	
	Could an alternative design of the project better ensured fragmentation or duplication are avoided?	What coordination mechanisms exist to ensure fragmentation or duplication is avoided?		

DAC criteria	Primary review question	Sub-questions	Data sources	Analytical approach
	How are cross-cutting issues (gender, climate/ environment, and anti-corruption) integrated?	How are cross-cutting issues considered in the design and delivery of the FfD programme in Colombia?		
Effectiveness	What results have been achieved (expected and unexpected)?	What have been the significant results to date? Follow-up on contingency plan for disease outbreaks and the drafting of the new aquaculture law.	KIIs Annual reports/monitoring data Results reporting and progress reports	Contribution analysis Theory-based evaluation
	Which factors influenced achievement – working methods, ownership, partnerships, data and indicator selection?	Are the various activities delivered under the different outcomes being sequenced and layered appropriately to deliver results?		
	How effective are knowledge transfer and capacity building?	Has the collaboration between the Norwegian institutions and Colombian counterparts built the knowledge and capability of the latter?		
	Are approaches and methods fit for purpose? Could achievements be strengthened during the remaining period?	What are the key outcome areas with strong potential that the programme should focus on in the closing phase?		
Efficiency	Are the inputs/resources (staff, budget, time) sufficient to deliver the planned outputs?	Is the delivery model fit for purpose? Is programme spend on track?	KIIs Programme management documents Meeting minutes and reports Workplans and annual reports Programme management document Risk matrices and meeting minutes Financial reporting	Process evaluation VfM analysis – 4Es framework

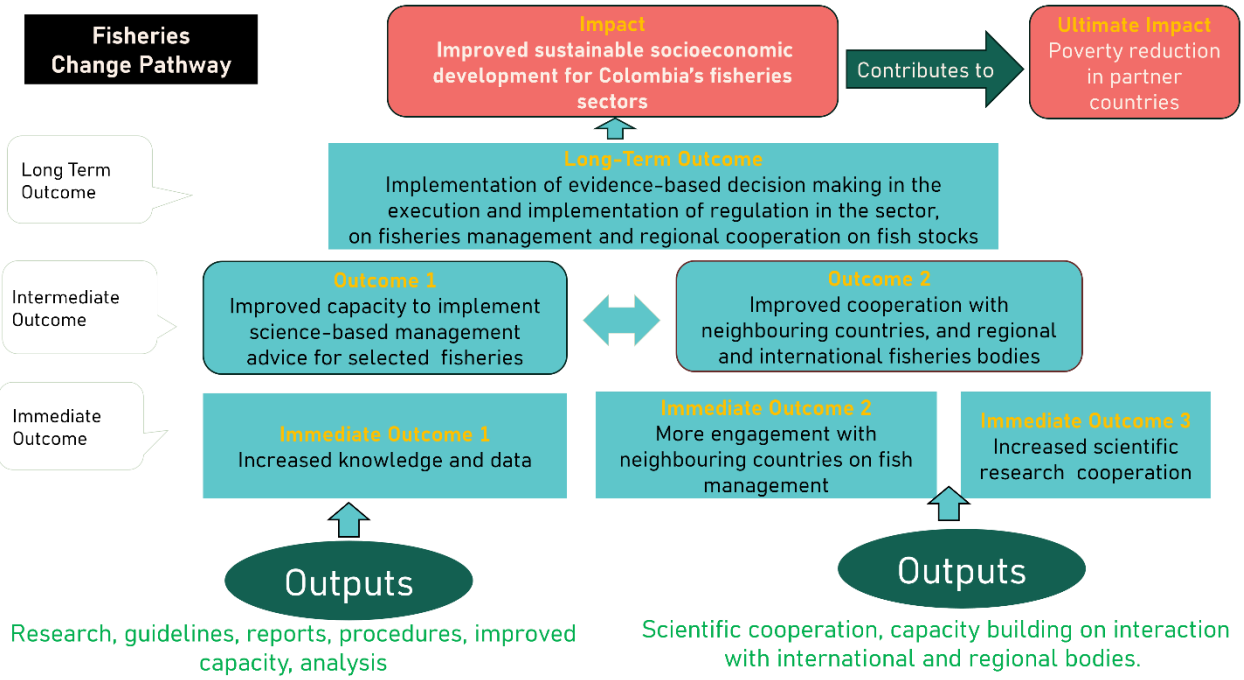
DAC criteria	Primary review question	Sub-questions	Data sources	Analytical approach
			Programme management documentation Monitoring data	
	Is there a good balance between efforts and results (value for money)?	What has been the value add of the programme in terms of strengthening relations between Norway and Colombia? Any evidence of cost containment measures by delivery partners?	Financial reporting Programme management documentation Monitoring data KIIs	Normative framework analysis
	Are coordination inputs from the Colombian and Norwegian partners sufficient to ensure efficient delivery of the assistance?	How have changes in Colombian coordination structures impacted on delivery? How have changes in the Colombian programme coordinator impacted on delivery? How prepared is the programme to ensure continuity of delivery during the political transition (presidential elections in Colombia in 2026)?		
	Are there any deviations between planned versus delivered activities?	Were activities delivered according to plans? Why/why not?		
	Were there any bottlenecks to delivery and are risks management and mitigation appropriate?	Were risks appropriately managed and identified?		
Sustainability	What is the likelihood that benefits and results will continue after programme end?	What measures have been taken to ensure sustainability of results?	Project documents and strategy KIIs Transition plans?	Sustainability analysis
	Is it likely that strengthened capacity and structures supported via the project will be	What are the key gaps remaining in capacity in Colombian institutions in the management of aquacultures and fisheries sectors?		

DAC criteria	Primary review question	Sub-questions	Data sources	Analytical approach
	sustained in the aftermath of the closure of the project?			
	Have exit and handover plans for national responsibility been developed?	Have handover plans been prepared?		
Impact	What changes are observed at the institutional and sector levels?	What factors have enabled or hindered change at the institutional and sector levels?	Annual reports/monitoring data KIIs	Theory-based approach Contribution analysis
	What is the contribution to higher-level goals of sustainable management and poverty reduction?	What is the potential of the programme making an impact on improved socioeconomic development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Colombia?		
	Have there been any unexpected positive or negative effects?	Any unintended consequences of the support?		

Annex 3: Theory of change

High-level summaries of the programme's ToC for its fisheries and aquaculture workstreams are presented below in Figure 4 and Figure 5. These ToCs were developed by the review team during the inception phase, based on the ToC articulated in the programme document and the programme's results framework. As such, the ToCs presented below should be considered as initial draft ToCs.

Figure 4: Draft summary ToC for fisheries workstream

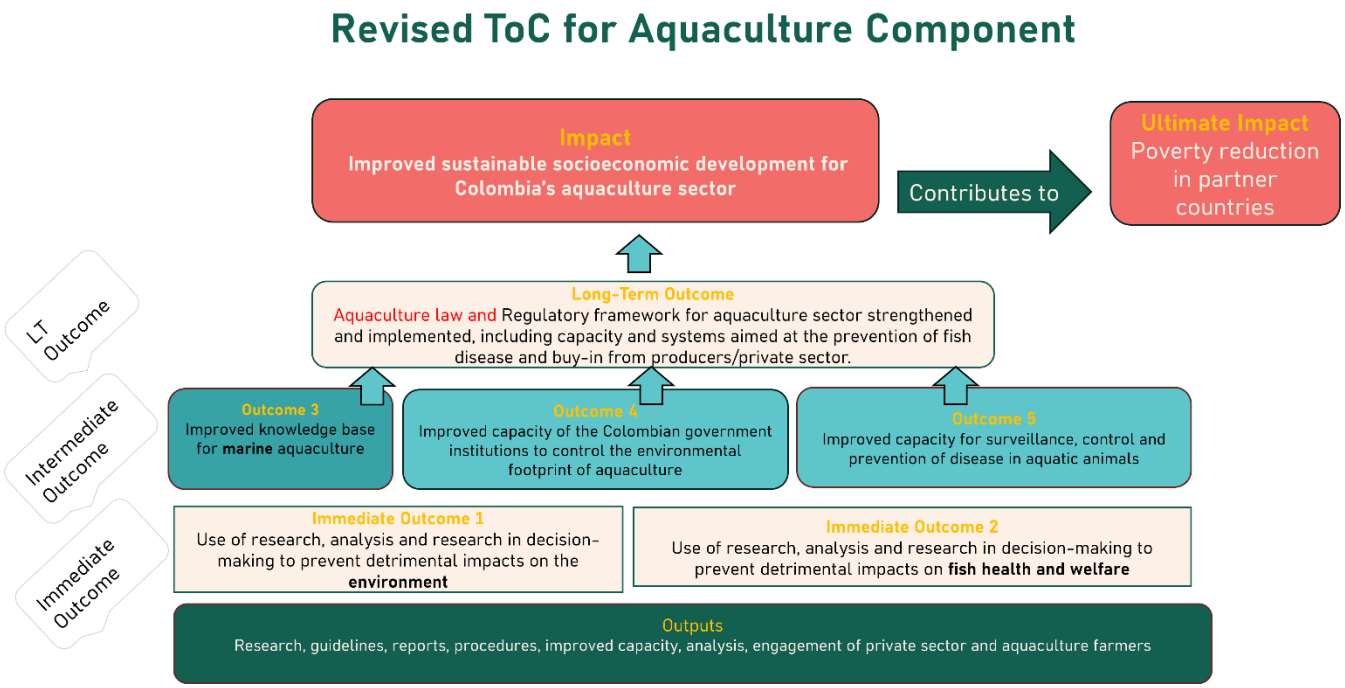


Source: Colombia Fish for Development project document and results framework for Colombia FfD programme and discussions at validation sessions with Norwegian and Colombian stakeholders.

Assumptions underpinning the fisheries change pathway in the ToC are set out below.

1. Competent public institutions have the capacity to manage fisheries according to a sound legal framework and territorial realities.
2. Academic institutions are willing to engage in applied research on Colombian fisheries issues.
3. Increased linkages between academia and public management lead to increased requests for research by the management institutions.
4. Work on management plan for dolphinfish is transferrable to other fisheries.
5. Better management of the fisheries sector will yield benefits to marginalised and vulnerable communities.
6. Neighbouring countries are willing to cooperate with Colombia on fisheries management and share data with neighbouring countries.
7. Institutions in Colombia and in neighbouring countries have the time and resources to engage in coordination efforts re management of fish stocks.

Figure 5: Draft summary ToC for aquaculture workstream



Source: Colombia Fish for Development project document and results framework for Colombia FfD programme and discussions at validation sessions with Norwegian and Colombian stakeholders.

Assumptions underpinning the aquaculture change pathway are set out below.

1. Stakeholders' understanding of the regulatory framework increases compliance.
2. Institutions in Colombia have the time and resources to engage on the control of the environmental footprint of aquaculture.
3. Private sectors are incentivised to monitor the environmental footprint from their aquaculture activities.
4. Better management of the aquaculture sector will yield benefits to marginalised and vulnerable communities.
5. If the Contingency Plan to address fish disease outbreaks is implemented, it will benefit the aquaculture sector.

Annex 4: Rubrics to assess progress

Table 5: Scale for assessing whether a criterion is met

Grading	Description	RAG rating
4. Largely met/above expectations	This grading is used when evidence indicates that the criterion is largely met, or cases that exceed expectations	
3. Essentially fulfilled	This is used when this general assessment is positive, and the weaknesses are minor compared to positive findings	
2. Partially fulfilled	This is used when the criterion is somewhat met, but there are significant weaknesses	
1. Little or not fulfilled at all	This is used when there are significant weaknesses and the criterion is met to a small extent or not at all	
0. Not possible to assess	It is not possible to assess goal attainment for the measure	

Table 6: Scale for assessing the probability that a criterion will be met

Level	Description	RAG rating
4. Very likely	There is strong evidence that the criterion will be met, based on developments so far and/or the theory of change	
3. Probable	The criterion is expected to be fulfilled and there is only minor uncertainty about it	
2. Less likely	The criterion may be met, but there is considerable uncertainty	
1. Unlikely	There is little to indicate that the criterion will be met	

Annex 5: Progress against outputs

Table 7: Progress against outputs – capacity building

Output	Results/evidence	Assessment (0-3)	Likelihood (1-4)
0.1 Six Colombians financed for MSc degrees in fisheries/aquaculture at Norwegian universities	One MSc graduated in 2024; three students on track for 2026 completion with an intention to work in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Colombia	2 – Partially fulfilled	4 – Very likely
0.2 Colombian master students supported for thesis work in fisheries/ aquaculture	Limited progress; only one relevant thesis identified. The original target of eight theses deemed unrealistic since only four students were enrolled on the programme	2 – Partially fulfilled	2 – Less likely
0.3 Short/intensive training courses for ICA and AUNAP staff	Fish health course completed by 23 participants in 2024 and 38 in 2025	3 – Essentially fulfilled	4 – Very likely

Table 8: Progress against outputs – fisheries workstream

Output	Results/evidence	Assessment (0-3)	Likelihood (1-4)
1.1 New data collection on dolphinfish established	System already established and continuing annually	3 – Essentially fulfilled	4 – Very likely
1.2 Research on dolphinfish conducted	No research outputs yet/deemed not realistic due to transnational nature of dolphin fish stock	1 – Little fulfilled	2 – Less likely
1.3 Assessment report on dolphinfish produced	No assessment yet/deemed not realistic as regional cooperation needed for assessment although a workshop was conducted on fish stock assessment methods	1 – Little fulfilled	3 - Probable
1.4 Management plan/advice for dolphinfish produced	No management plan; dependent on a regional assessment approach	1 – Little fulfilled	1 – Unlikely
1.5 Stakeholder engagement in the fisheries management cycle conducted	No engagement yet due to absence of data and assessment	1 – Little fulfilled	1 – Unlikely
1.6 Assessment report for another previously unassessed species delivered	No activity by 2025	1 – Little fulfilled	1 – Unlikely

Table 9: Progress against outputs – regional cooperation

Output	Results/evidence	Assessment (0-3)	Likelihood (1-4)
2.1 Application for regional survey with R/V Dr Fridtjof Nansen submitted	Already submitted earlier in the programme	**4 – Largely met**	**Completed**
2.2 Regional scientific cooperation on dolphinfish research initiated	Initial cooperation started via IATTC processes	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**
2.3 Increased capacity to interact with regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs)	Participation in international meetings increasing	**3 – Essentially fulfilled**	**4 – Very likely**

Table 10: Progress against outputs – aquaculture and fish health

Output	Results/evidence	Assessment (0-3)	Likelihood (1-4)
3.1 Report with recommendations for development of marine aquaculture	Workshops held but report not yet produced	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**2 – Less likely**
3.2 Spatial assessment for marine aquaculture development	Work progressed in 2024 and 2025	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**
3.3 Report on species selection for marine aquaculture	Workshop completed. No evidence for an incoming report	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**
4.1 Recommendations for improved aquaculture licensing process	Very limited progress to date	**1 – Little fulfilled**	**2 – Less likely**
4.2 Improved environmental guidelines for aquaculture	Work transitioned to work on MOM-B investigations which are closely linked to environmental monitoring of the effects of aquaculture.	**2 – Partially furfilled**	**3. Probable**
4.3 Training of staff on methods for assessing carrying capacity of water bodies	However, while the project has delivered technical assistance, the carrying capacity for La Cocha Lake is in the hands of Corponariño, who is not a partner in the project, although the project has engaged with them. While project activities have been completed it is not likely that the carrying capacity	**4 – Largely met**	**1 –Unlikely**

Output	Results/evidence	Assessment (0-3)	Likelihood (1-4)
	will be done by the end of the project		
4.4 Pilot environmental monitoring for La Cocha Lake	Pilot activities ongoing. Final report produced with learning points from the pilot study. Draft protocol in progress after pilot and training	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**3-Less likely**
5.1 Evaluation of aquatic animal health surveillance system	Studies under way	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**
5.2 Proposals for revised surveillance and monitoring programmes	Extensive training and guideline work already delivered	**3 – Essentially fulfilled**	**4 – Very likely**
5.3 Improved capacity for aquatic animal disease diagnosis	New diagnostic methods and training delivered in ICA	**3 – Essentially fulfilled**	**4 – Very likely**
5.4 Improved disease outbreak investigation procedures	Draft procedures tested in simulation exercises	**3 – Essentially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**
5.5 Biosecurity evaluation tool developed and tested	Baseline survey and training completed but tool still developing	**3 – Essentially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**

Annex 6: Progress against planned outcomes

Table 11: Progress against planned impact and outcomes

Outcome	Results/evidence	Progress (0-3)	Likelihood (1-4)
Outcome 1: Improved capacity to implement science-based management advice for selected fisheries	Some progress through establishment of dolphinfish biological data collection and training activities. However, key indicators remain unmet. Several indicators explicitly marked 'not realistic'	**1 – Little fulfilled**	**2 – Less likely**
Outcome 2: Improved cooperation with neighbouring countries and regional and international fisheries bodies	Colombia is now participating in RFMO meetings (CCAMLR and IATTC) and regional cooperation has started.	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**4 – Very likely**
Outcome 3: Improved knowledge base for marine aquaculture	Workshops and policy discussions have been held and aquaculture law review is ongoing. However research indicators remain unrealised	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**3 – Probable**
Outcome 4: Improved capacity of Colombian government institutions to control environmental footprint of aquaculture	Environmental monitoring pilots and MOM system implementation have progressed and technical capacity has been built	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**4 – Very likely**
Outcome 5: Capacity for surveillance, control and prevention of disease in aquatic animals improved	Progress in diagnostic, surveillance and biosecurity capacities. However, some monitoring indicators remain incomplete and several planned outputs are still under development	**2 – Partially fulfilled**	**4 – Very likely**

Annex 7: Overview of participatory impact assessment approach

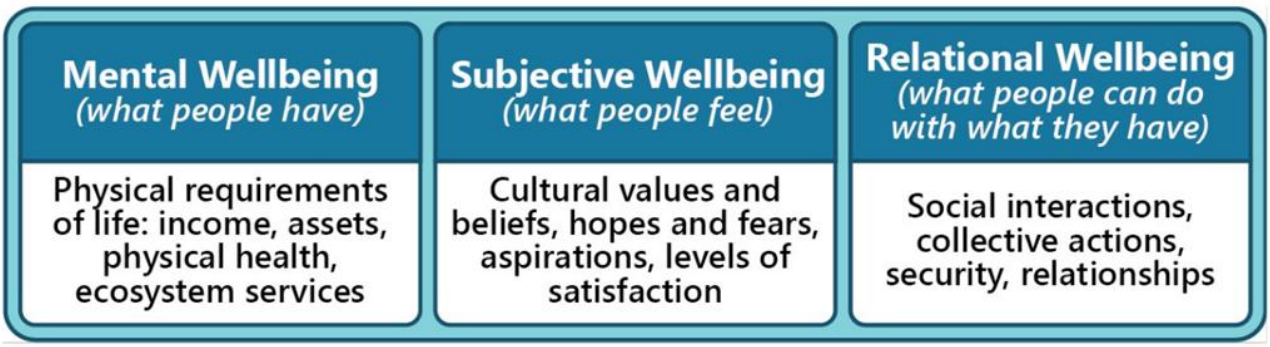
Participatory impact assessment[17] (PIA) is an appropriate methodological approach to use in assessing the poverty reduction impacts of a technical assistance programme like Fish for Development Colombia as it is a tried and tested, flexible approach. PIA can be adapted to different contexts and can be used to answer three questions which are of direct relevance to the objectives of the benefits that cascade down to the community level from programmes like FfD.

Table 12: PIA key questions

Participatory Impact Assessment – three key questions
What changes have there been in the community since the start of the project?
Which of these changes did the project contribute to?
What difference have these changes made to people's lives?

Fauna and Flora International have usefully developed a guide to the PIA approach for use in the conservation and development sectors and to evaluate the impact of the interventions on quality of life.[18] https://www.fauna-flora.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FFI_2022_Guidance-on-conducting-a-participatory-impact-assessment.pdfThe approach uses a three dimensional framework for human wellbeing (recognising that income alone does not determine people's wellbeing) as set out below.

Figure 6: Dimensions of wellbeing



The process of conducting a PIA is based on a series of group discussions with community members in order to discuss changes in wellbeing, factors that contributed to the changes and the difference the changes have made to people's lives.

1. **Who to speak to:** The first step is to define the community/ies that you think have been affected by the intervention and then look at the specific groups within the community group, for example stratified by gender or age to make sure the voices of different groups are heard. It is important to define people the intervention has worked with directly (beneficiaries) or broadly 'project affected people'.

[17] Jeremy Holland, 'Who Counts? The power of participatory Statistics,' Practical Action Publishing, 2013.

[18] https://www.fauna-flora.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FFI_2022_Guidance-on-conducting-a-participatory-impact-assessment.pdf

2. **How many people should be consulted**? The sample size can be set according to aim of the PIA, numbers of communities/households and also practical considerations. Since PIA is a small 'n' or sample size approach, about five focus group discussions per intervention might be appropriate.
3. For each focus group discussion, it is good to engage an experienced national consultant as facilitator.
4. In addition to the consultations at community level, some KIIs with delivery partner team members, local partners and other stakeholders identified as part of a snowballing process could be held. These consultations are designed to add explanatory power by teasing out further evidence on how much the FfD programme may have contributed to the observed changes in wellbeing, how and why.

Annex 8: Findings dashboard

DAC criteria	Primary review question	Key finding	Evidence base	Report section
Relevance	To what extent does the programme align with Colombia's sector needs, strategies and priorities in fisheries and aquaculture?	Findings 1-2	KIIs Programme documents National strategies and policies	3.1.1
	Do Norwegian partners contribute relevant and adequate expertise?	Finding 3	KIIs	3.1.2
	Responsiveness: has the programme adapted to changes in needs or conditions?	Finding 4	Programme documents KIIs	3.1.3
	Is the programme overambitious?	Finding 5	KIIs	3.1.3
	Is the programme engaging with all the right Colombian partners?	Finding 6	KIIs	3.1.4
Coherence	How does Norwegian assistance add value and synergy to other activities in Colombia (governmental, private sector, civil society)?	Finding 7	KIIs Programme documents Scoping/context analysis reports Secondary evidence on other relevant programmes	3.2.1
	Could an alternative design of the project better ensured fragmentation or duplication are avoided?	Finding 8		3.2.2
	How are cross-cutting issues (gender, climate/ environment, and anti-corruption) integrated?	Finding 9		3.2.3
Efficiency	Are the inputs/resources (staff, budget, time) sufficient to deliver the planned outputs?	Findings 10-12	KIIs Programme management documents Meeting minutes and reports Workplans and annual reports Programme management document Risk matrices and meeting minutes Financial reporting Programme management documentation Monitoring data	3.3.1
	Is there a good balance between efforts and results (value for money)?	Findings 12-13	Financial reporting	3.3.1 and 3.3.2

DAC criteria	Primary review question	Key finding	Evidence base	Report section
	Are coordination inputs from the Colombian and Norwegian partners sufficient to ensure efficient delivery of the assistance?	Finding 14	Programme management documentation Monitoring data KIIs	3.3.3
	Are there any deviations between planned versus delivered activities?	Finding 15-16		3.3.4
	Were there any bottlenecks to delivery and are risks management and mitigation appropriate?	Finding 16		3.3.4
Effectiveness	What results have been achieved (expected and unexpected)?	Finding 17	KIIs Annual reports/monitoring data Results reporting and progress reports	3.4.1
	Which factors influenced achievement – working methods, ownership, partnerships, data and indicator selection?	Finding 18		3.4.2
	How effective are knowledge transfer and capacity building?	Finding 19		3.4.3
	Are approaches and methods fit for purpose? Could achievements be strengthened during the remaining period?	Finding 20		3.4.4
Sustainability	What is the likelihood that benefits and results will continue after programme end?	Finding 21	Project documents and strategy KIIs	3.5.1
	Is it likely that strengthened capacity and structures supported via the project will be sustained in the aftermath of the closure of the project?	Findings 22-24		3.5.1
	Have exit and handover plans for national responsibility been developed?	Finding 25:		3.5.2
Impact	What changes are observed at the institutional and sector levels?	Findings 26-27:	Annual reports/monitoring data KIIs	3.6.1
	What is the contribution to higher-level goals of sustainable management and poverty reduction?	Findings 28-30		3.6.2
	Have there been any unexpected positive or negative effects?	Finding 31		3.6.3

We provide expert monitoring, evaluation, learning and strategy services to help build a more equitable and sustainable world for all.

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