

## Evaluation of the research programme to promote the development of a pro-nature economy (ECOPRONAT)

Countries: multi-country – South Africa, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Peru, Rwanda	Sector: Innovation, strategy and research
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Evaluation team: Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, Marc Tevini, Jacques Delahousse, Juliette Abadie - Quadrant Conseil

Steering of the evaluation: Julien Calas, Maxime Petrosino, Claire Cogoluèhnes puis Victor Fourcin – Agence Française de Développement

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Project management: AFD /Global development network

**Amount:** €3.5 million in grants

Disbursement rate: 90%

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**Completion date: 31 December 2025**

Countries concerned by the research programmes supported by Ecopronat: Farsymabi (Mozambique); Sanbi (South Africa and Kenya); Enslac (Ecuador, Colombia, Peru); Sure-wet (Uganda); WRI (Rwanda, Ethiopia); IHS (India); ESGAP (Colombia, South Africa)

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### Project objectives

Between 2019 and 2025, Agence Française de Développement (AFD) led the ECOPRONAT (PRO-NATure Economy) research programme. The main aim of this research and capacity-building programme was to promote the development of a pro-nature economy based on the findings of the research. It has therefore contributed to:

- developing knowledge and methodologies to ensure that biodiversity is taken into account to a greater extent in projects led by public sector bodies and AFD's

operational departments across various sectors of intervention (agriculture, land use planning and sustainable cities),

- building the capacity of researchers in the Global South, as well as students and researchers in training.

The project factsheet is available on the AFD website at the following link: <https://www.afd.fr/en/ecopronat-research-promote-development-pro-nature-economy>

## Conclusions of the evaluation

The implementation of the ECOPRONAT programme has sought to address the **many objectives pursued** by AFD: to produce high-quality research in AFD's beneficiary countries, in collaboration with local research teams, focusing on the theme of a pro-nature economy, in order to strengthen local research capacity and encourage the incorporation of this work into the public policies of both the countries and AFD.

Among these objectives, this evaluation focused on the objective of scientific quality in research, on the one hand, and the objective of contributing to public policy, on the other. For this reason, the results of the ECOPRONAT programme are analysed at the research production stage (Q1), the stage covering the production and dissemination of the work (Q2), and finally the impact of this work (Q3) on stakeholders and local public policy.

Evaluation question no. 1 - **research production** - To what extent, and by what means, have the actions undertaken by the programme's components produced the intended research or activity outputs, whilst taking into account, within this production process, the target stakeholders and the issues relating to the future use of these outputs?

The research projects supported by the ECOPRONAT programme have generated **new knowledge** to help better integrate biodiversity into various economic sectors. The main knowledge contributions relate to:

- **the analysis of initiatives** aimed at integrating biodiversity and the study of their impacts in the Global South,
- **the adaptation of existing frameworks to the specific challenges of these contexts,**
- and the development of **technical tools or the formalisation of processes to support policy-makers** in integrating scientific evidence on biodiversity as well as social, political and economic considerations.

The support provided by AFD and E-Sud has helped to strengthen the scientific quality of the work carried out by certain research teams, particularly those with less experience in this area.

The research production process has led to a range of capacity-building initiatives for researchers in the Global South and North through the pooling of existing work and research funded under the project. These learnings are identified in particular in the areas of the use and creation of **new data on biodiversity**, the ability to collaborate in a **transdisciplinary** manner, to define good practice relevant to their own work, or to formalise a method for **stakeholder engagement**. This capacity-building extended beyond the research team in certain projects, which worked alongside **local research organisations, students and recent graduates**. It also extends beyond the scope of the project, as several research outcomes have been incorporated into training modules for university courses.

**Research projects directly aimed at supporting the development of solutions** that incorporate biodiversity or the selection of the most appropriate solutions in local contexts **have successfully co-produced their research with future users**. In particular, co-production has made it possible to take into account the knowledge requirements of the relevant political and administrative stakeholders, and to encourage the reuse of the research findings in the long

term. These partnerships have been facilitated by the research teams' strong local roots, as well as pre-existing relationships between certain teams and local political and administrative stakeholders. In some projects, support from the AFD (head office or branch) has helped to refocus their activities in order to facilitate interaction between research teams and target audience of the research.

Evaluation question no. 2 - **dissemination and reception of research findings** - To what extent do strategies for disseminating research findings promote awareness of, legitimacy for, and ownership of the findings among the target stakeholders?

The majority of the supported projects have successfully **disseminated their work to stakeholders outside the project**: political, administrative and community stakeholders, the private sector, other research stakeholders, NGOs, etc. All projects engaged in **science outreach** efforts to make the research accessible and relevant, which in several cases elicited positive reactions and increased interest from the targeted stakeholders.

The most successful strategies to date are those that diversify the media used and the times at which stakeholders are engaged. **Research teams working directly on the development of new public policy solutions have had greater opportunity to define specific targets at an early stage and to share their findings with them throughout the research process**, thereby facilitating uptake.

**Projects whose research does not focus directly on developing policy solutions** plan their dissemination strategy at the end of the project, once the research findings have been finalised, and this takes the form of **one-off end-of-project presentation sessions**. This strategy can be explained in part by the absence of clearly defined external stakeholders prior to the project or by the research being primarily aimed at the research community.

Question 3 - **Impact of the research** – To what extent, and under what conditions, are the activities carried out under this programme likely to generate short-, medium- or long-term effects that contribute to the development of a pro-nature economy and support AFD's operations?

Research projects directly focused on developing solutions that integrate biodiversity in collaboration with stakeholders on the ground have **successfully influenced public policy in their region** based on the research findings, and have established a sustainable dialogue between researchers and public stakeholders that extends beyond the scope of the project. The evaluation highlights **three key conditions for the success of these projects**:

- the involvement of, and consideration given to, the needs of political and administrative stakeholders within the research process itself,
- a comprehensive strategy for disseminating the results,
- pre-existing relationships between the target users of the research and the research teams.

The other projects sparked interest among the target audience and sometimes led to a desire to continue the dialogue. However, these projects were not intended to facilitate the direct application of research findings to public policy, and their involvement in the process of disseminating the research and making it accessible to a broader audience came later. In fact, the concrete manifestation of these interests and intended uses cannot be observed within the timeframe of the evaluation.

## Rationale, objectives and methodology of the evaluation

This evaluation focuses on the ECOPRONAT research programme, which ran from 2019 to 2025 and supported seven research projects<sup>1</sup> aimed at generating new scientific knowledge to inform science-based public policy discussions, facilitating the mobilisation of financial resources to bring about these changes, and to strengthen the capacities of researchers in the Global South, as well as to provide support for change to AFD's partners<sup>2</sup>.

The distinctive feature of this programme therefore lies in the combination of scientific objectives on the one hand and a contribution to public policy on the other. For this reason, the programme's evaluation framework and theory of change were developed specifically to address these two objectives. They are structured around the following three stages:

- the stage at which the research is carried out and, in some cases, the arrangements for co-production with other stakeholders,
- the stage involving the dissemination and reception of the work by the individuals targeted by the project teams,
- and the uptake by the targeted stakeholders, including the first instances of use observed or potential applications currently being considered.

Data collection was based on a literature review, interviews and focus groups involving around sixty people, including:

- Six scoping meetings with members of the Steering Committee, enabling the development of a shared evaluation framework in line with the programme's theory of change.
- Four case studies of four projects selected from the initial sample of seven (FARSYMABI, WRI, ENSLAC, ESGAP), based on:
  - o One initial meeting with the project coordinator,
  - o One focus group with the research team, comprising three to six people
  - o Two to five follow-up interviews with the target audience of the research (AFD staff at head office and in regional offices, as well as local, political, academic and private sector stakeholders).
  - o An analysis of research output by external experts.
- A summary evaluation of the three other projects (SANBI, SURE-WET, IHS), conducted through a focus group with each research team comprising three to six people.
- Two interviews with the teams responsible for implementing components 3 and 4 of the programme (Global Development Network and AFD Campus) and a survey of the 100 beneficiaries of component 4 (AFD Campus's Biodiversity Partners Programme)

Limitations of the evaluation:

- **A final evaluation carried out before the full impact of the research projects could be observed:** the evaluation coincides with the completion of several projects. Nevertheless, the processes of dissemination and ownership of research also take place over the medium to long term. Consequently, certain effects could not yet be observed at the time of the evaluation, particularly in the case of projects where the production or dissemination of the work had not been completed (see Table 1 below). In this context, the evaluation aims to highlight the initial effects observed, as well as the conditions conducive to achieving further results in the future.
- **Source of data:** much of the data was gathered from statements made by the people interviewed. In this context, the evaluation sought to compare the perspectives of different stakeholders on the observed effects: in the case studies (FARSYMABI, ENSLAC, WRI, ESGAP), the

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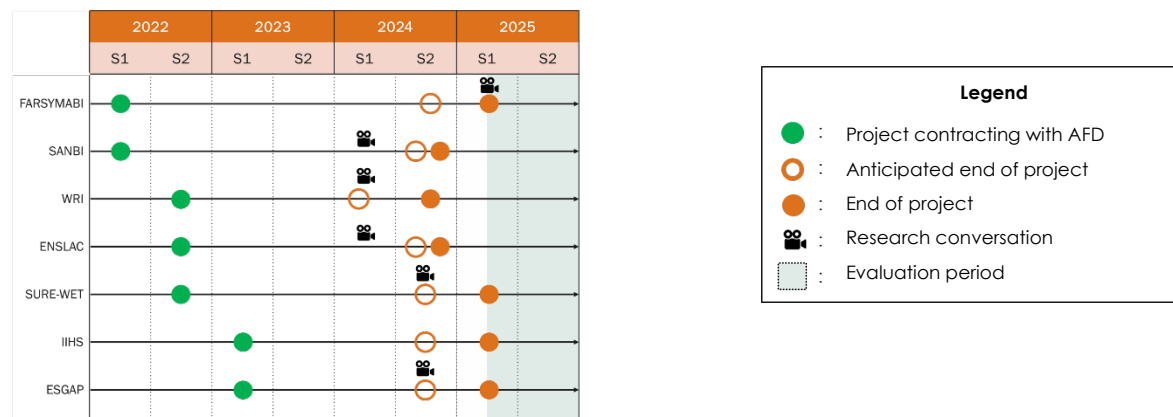
<sup>1</sup> Two further components of the programme, relating to the awarding of research grants (in conjunction with the Global Development Network) and support modules for project leaders (in conjunction with AFD Campus), were also taken into account in the evaluation. As these components are not intended to contribute to public policy, they are analysed in terms of their capacity-building objectives and presented in the boxes at the end of the report. The comparative study of metrics is not included in this scope, as it was not specifically intended to contribute to the public policy dialogue.

<sup>2</sup> Source: terms of reference for the evaluation.

conduct of additional interviews strengthens the robustness of the findings compared to other projects (IIHS, SURE-WET, SANBI), which are based solely on literature review, interviews with AFD and members of the project team.

Table 1: Comparative timeline of the start and end dates of the projects evaluated (source: Ecopronat steering documents, Ecopronat website; produced by Quadrant Conseil)

## Initial approach and actual implementation of the project



The programme's main focus is on supporting research projects through project management support provided by E-Sud. Several calls for expressions of interest were published to support research teams in the North and South, with a view to enriching research through local expertise. The three calls for expressions of interest issued were:

- “Integrating biodiversity into economic sectors”, launched in May 2021, with two projects selected between January and March 2022:
  - [FARSYMABI - Identifying agricultural systems that contribute to food security, poverty reduction and biodiversity in Mozambique.](#) The FARSYMABI project is led by the Mozambique Observatório do Meio Rural in partnership with the School of Agriculture, the University of Lisbon, Lúrio University, and Eduardo Mondlane University.
  - [SANBI - Studying wildlife economy to mainstream biodiversity into agricultural policies in South Africa and Kenya.](#) The SANBI project is led by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), in partnership with Stellenbosch University.
- “Scaling up nature-based solutions and large-scale ecological restoration”, launched in November 2021, with four projects selected between September 2022 and April 2023:
  - [ENSLAC - Enabling nature-based solutions scale-up in Latin American cities.](#) The ENSLAC project is led by Yes Innovation, a Franco-Ecuadorian urban planning and architecture firm, in partnership with the Humboldt Institute (Colombia) and Ciudad Viva (Peru).
  - [WRI - Developing a strategic framework for nature-based solutions in urban areas.](#) The project is led by the World Resources Institute (WRI), in partnership with two local research institutions: EiABC - the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development, and RYWP - the Rwanda Young Water Professionals.
  - [SURE-WET - Addressing constraints to upscaling wetland restoration in Uganda.](#) The SURE-WET project is led by the IHE Delft Institute and Makerere University (Uganda).
  - [IIHS - Greening urban food systems through nature-based solutions in Bengaluru.](#) The project is led by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE).
- “Further development of the ESGAP method”: launched in 2022, with two projects selected between March and June 2023 (one of which falls within the scope of the evaluation):

- [ESGAP - Measuring environmental sustainability in Colombia and South Africa](#). The project is led by a research team comprising the Basque Centre for Climate Change, Stellenbosch University, the National University of Colombia (UNAL), and University College London (UCL).

**Table 1: Project budget**

Category	Total project cost		AFD contribution	
	Scheduled	Executed	Scheduled	Executed
Components 1 & 2			€2,500,000	€2,167,674
Component 3			€500,000	€500,000
Component 4			€500,000	€499,997
TOTAL			€3,500,000	€3,167,671

## Evaluation results

**Question 1 - Research production - To what extent, and by what means, have the actions undertaken by the programme's components produced the intended research or activity outputs, whilst taking into account, within this production process, the target stakeholders and the issues relating to the future use of these outputs?**

### 1.1 Production and scientific quality of deliverables

**All the research projects** supported by the ECOPRONAT programme have helped to **generate new knowledge in order to better integrate biodiversity** across several economic sectors. The main contributions to knowledge relate to **building on initiatives** to integrate biodiversity considerations in the Global South (ENSLAC, IIHS, SURE-WET), **adapting and scientifically strengthening existing frameworks to address the specific challenges of these areas** (ESGAP), as well as the implementation **of technical tools or the formalisation of processes supporting the integration by policy-makers** of scientific evidence on biodiversity and its social, political and economic implications (FARSYMABI, WRI, SANBI).

**FARSYMABI:** In Mozambique, the project led by the OMR has enabled the **creation of a mapping tool** that categorises the country into 16 homogeneous socio-ecological regions, with a view to jointly developing public policies tailored to each region, taking into account agricultural development, poverty and biodiversity conservation.

**Excerpts from the opinion of the thematic expert** involved in the evaluation, who reviewed the project deliverables:

*"The main contribution of the FARSYMABI project is the proposal of **a framework for linking biodiversity conservation and agricultural development** in a developing country such as Mozambique. "The national typology of Socio Ecologically Homogeneous Regions (SEHR) is, in theory, an innovation."*

*"However, this ambition comes with **a high methodological cost**, which limits the innovative scope of the project."*

**WRI:** In Addis Ababa and Kigali, the project led by the WRI has enabled public sector stakeholders to access scientific data and a **practical approach to developing a strategy** for nature-based solutions tailored to the specific needs of the region.

**Excerpts from the opinion of the thematic expert** involved in the evaluation, who reviewed the project deliverables:

*"Collectively, these innovations position the WRI framework as a contribution to urban climate adaptation methodology, with **demonstrated potential for scaling up** for wider application across contexts of rapid urbanisation in the Global South." In this sense, the successful trials carried out in two different African cities provide concrete evidence of the **framework's potential for replication and adaptation**.*

*"The framework acknowledges **limitations in the granularity of the data**, suggesting opportunities for integration with higher-resolution local databases and emerging climate projection models."*

**ENSLAC:** in 15 cities across Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, the project led by Yes Innovation offers a detailed analysis of 15 case studies of urban development projects involving **nature-based solutions** in Latin American cities to facilitate the replication of good practice, make nature-based solutions a local rather than an imported concept, consolidate local knowledge and disseminate qualitative information on the impact of these solutions. In particular, the project highlights the **wide-ranging impacts of nature-based solutions**, going beyond the expected outcomes (e.g. an urban agriculture programme in Quito, strengthening the empowerment of communities).

**Excerpts from the opinion of the thematic expert** involved in the evaluation, who reviewed the project deliverables:

*"ENSLAC provides the **first comprehensive regional analysis specifically focused on Latin American contexts**, offering unprecedented insights into scaling mechanisms and context-specific governance innovations in the Global South. [...] **The longitudinal scale of the data provides a wealth of empirical evidence**, with cases spanning from 1979 [...] to 2019."*

*"The analysis focuses on the descriptive documentation of cases rather than the systematic identification of regional patterns [...]. This limitation suggests the **need for improved comparative analytical frameworks** that better synthesise findings across various contexts **to generate more robust theoretical insights into the scaling of nature-based solutions** in Latin American urban environments."*

**ESGAP:** In South Africa and Colombia, Colombian and South African research teams were able to provide data for the ESGAP indicator, and adapt and supplement some of the indicators to suit their local contexts: humidity and high altitude for Colombia, and vast grasslands for South Africa.

**Excerpts from the opinion of the thematic expert** involved in the evaluation, who reviewed the project deliverables:

*"The main contribution of the project is to provide a clear policy framework, combining metrics on current status (SESI), trends (SESPI) and policy recommendations. "ESGAP stands out for its engagement in debates on "strong sustainability", while making these standards applicable to the evaluation of concrete public policies."*

*"However, the construction of the SESPI raises more questions than it answers. The trends calculated remain heavily dependent on fragmented data, without taking into account socio-economic adaptability or the social legitimacy of the reference standards. Environmental progress cannot be viewed solely as a move towards ecological targets: it must also reflect a socially sustainable path."*

**SANBI:** in South Africa, the project has contributed to the body of literature on the economic challenges associated with biodiversity conservation and has helped to disseminate knowledge among the stakeholders involved.

**SURE-WET:** in Uganda, the project has helped to develop a framework for analysing the institutional challenges and drivers of wetland restoration projects.

**IIHS:** In Bangalore, the project led by the IIHS has helped to build and expand the body of literature on nature-based solutions in the Global South. According to the research team, the focus on nature-based solutions as solutions to urban problems represents an innovative aspect of the project, particularly in a national context where biodiversity is absent from urban strategies.

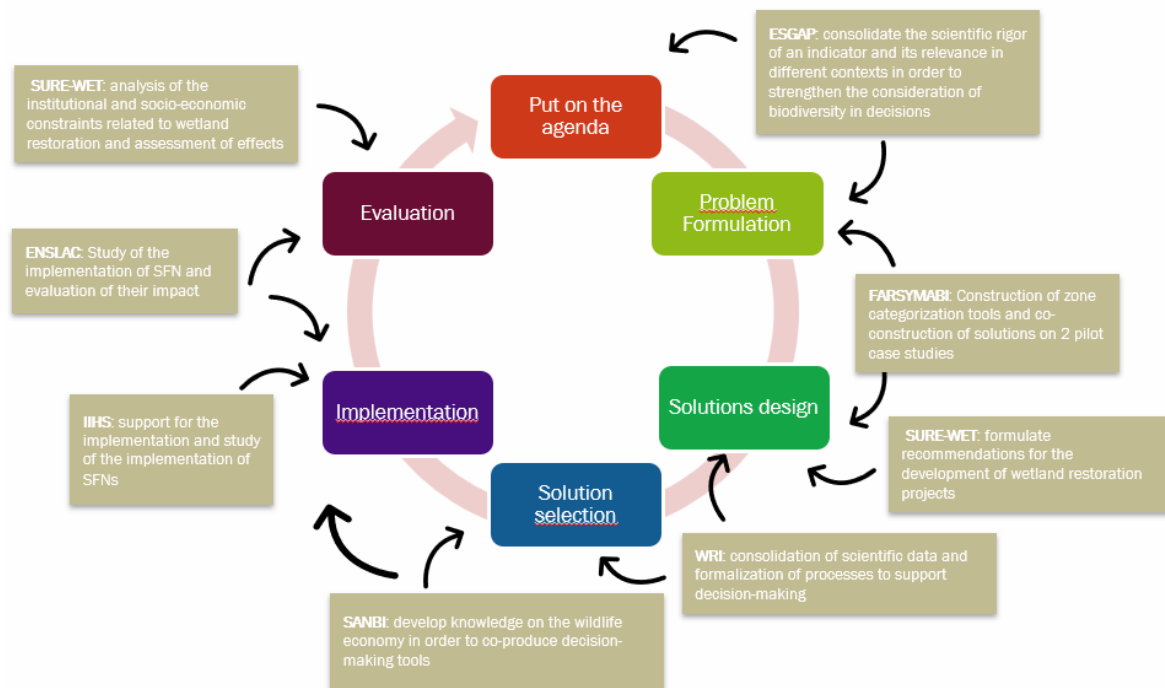
In light of these scientific findings, it is important to recognise the diverse range of objectives pursued by project teams in generating evidence to ensure that biodiversity is better integrated. Research can inform public policy or decision-making at various stages of the public policy cycle; depending on the research teams' objectives, interaction with public sector stakeholders and the application of the research findings may take place in the short or long term.

A recent literature review on the interactions between science and public policy, published by the AFD<sup>3</sup>, outlined the various roles that research can play in supporting public policy. By situating the supported projects within the public policy cycle, we can observe different objectives regarding knowledge generation, as well as variations in the timeframe for using the results:

- **Three projects (SURE-WET, IIHS, ENSLAC) carry out research either to support the implementation of initiatives or to develop tools for evaluating them.** This means that teams must first set aside time to research these activities, and that they can only put forward potential recommendations to inform decision-making and the selection of solutions once the research has been completed. Only one of the projects (SURE-WET) has actively promoted the dissemination of recommendations for practical implementation by involving future users in the planning process at a very early stage.
- **One project (ESGAP) conducts research at the early stages of the public policy cycle** (focusing on the agenda-setting of an issue or the definition of a problem), with the aim of strengthening the scientific rigour of an indicator that better integrates biodiversity, without making recommendations on the actions to be taken.
- **Three projects (FARSYMABI, WRI, SANBI) carry out research that focuses directly on the design of solutions and the selection of policy options through public policy dialogue.** These are at different stages of maturity and are often rooted in existing relationships with the targeted stakeholders. Their impact is more directly observable, as the research projects directly apply their findings and recommendations to at least some of the targeted public sector stakeholders.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.afd.fr/fr/ressources/quattendre-de-la-recherche-pour-eclairer-laction-publique-revue-de-litterature-et-applications-pratiques>

Figure 1: Positioning of the projects across the different stages of the public policy cycle addressed by their research



These projects **have enabled all research organisations to strengthen their expertise** in these areas, for example through the pooling, analysis and generation of **new data on biodiversity** (notably FARSYMABI, ESGAP, SANBI), the ability to collaborate in a **transdisciplinary** manner, to define good practice relevant to their own activities (notably ENSLAC) or to formalise a method for **stakeholder engagement** (notably WRI and FARSYMABI). Furthermore, the inclusion of **local research organisations**, their **students** (WRI, SURE-WET, FARSYMABI) and **recent graduates** (SANBI) in research initiatives is accompanied by capacity building for the stakeholders involved.

## 1.2 Consultation with and involvement of relevant stakeholders to ensure the results are used in the research process

**Around half of the projects have established arrangements for co-producing research** by identifying and involving the future users of the research in their work. This stage enabled the research content to be adapted **to take account of the expectations and needs of the relevant political and administrative stakeholders**, and to facilitate the reuse of the results in the long term. Among the most successful examples of this process of co-producing research with decision-makers are the FARSYMABI, WRI, SANBI and SURE-WET projects:

- In Mozambique, the FARSYMABI project has succeeded in involving the key stakeholders likely to make use of the research findings when producing the final outputs. Two workshops brought together representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture and the Environment at national level, and farming communities, universities and local associations at local level.
- In Addis Ababa and Kigali, the WRI-led project, in collaboration with its local research partners, successfully engaged technical experts and decision-makers from both cities to produce expert reports and jointly analyse areas of opportunity for nature-based solutions. The added value of the project lies in defining the entire process and proposing an action plan that applies the data to urban projects, enabling stakeholders to prioritise areas for action and the types of nature-based solution to be implemented.
- In South Africa, the project led by SANBI carried out its research in partnership with national public bodies, enabling it to have a direct impact on national conservation policy.

- In Uganda, the SURE-WET project was able to involve students, an NGO working with local communities, and the Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment. This department has been involved throughout the process and is the primary target of the research findings, in particular the analytical framework for identifying the challenges and institutional levers involved in wetland restoration projects.

This phase of involving the future users of the research is particularly crucial when the research aims to provide evidence to support the identification of public policy solutions or actions, or the choice between several such solutions or actions.

Conversely, **other projects did not involve future users in the production of research outputs (ESGAP), or co-produce research with local project stakeholders, but without involving public decision-makers who could act on the findings (IIHS, ENSLAC)**. This does not indicate that these projects have failed, but can be explained either by research primarily aimed at developing a generic tool not targeted at a specific user (ESGAP), or by projects primarily focused on consolidating research findings on the implementation of solutions before targeting specific users:

- The ESGAP project teams in Colombia and South Africa are involved at a very early stage in the public policy process, and a research phase was needed to refine the indicator that would subsequently be presented. They gradually managed to identify individuals within the relevant ministries who might be interested in the indicator, but the research project did not aim to involve various stakeholders during the research process.
- In Bangalore, the project led by the IIHS was able to collaborate with and involve local stakeholders (schools) throughout its research, but the project does not directly involve the decision-makers who might make use of the findings. This research serves as preparatory work to support the implementation of solutions, which may subsequently lead to evidence-based proposals.
- The ENSLAC project teams in Ecuador, Peru and Colombia worked primarily with stakeholders in the 15 cities that were the subject of case studies, but potential research targets were not consulted during the research. Here again, the work mainly consisted of a preliminary phase of evaluating and capitalizing on existing solutions before promoting their dissemination to public actors or donors.

### **1.3 The contribution of AFD's project management and the dedicated programme resources to the successful implementation of projects**

**AFD's support facilitated the successful implementation of the projects** while ensuring a high standard of scientific quality. For all teams, AFD's support is recognised for its substantial contribution to research initiatives and for the interest it shows in the content of the research through:

- **Providing expertise** on the issues at hand, which, according to several project leaders, is rarely the case with other donors. AFD was thus able to provide useful critical input to the research initiative (SURE-WET), at times by challenging the results (ENSLAC), advising on the strategy for producing deliverables (IIHS), or identifying key stakeholders to disseminate the work and with whom to initiate a public policy dialogue (ESGAP).
- **Proposing adjustments** to the original project for research teams that may have encountered difficulties, particularly to ensure that the project is designed to meet local needs (FARSYMABI, WRI), or to enhance the impact of the research project (SANBI).

Several project leaders therefore recognise that the support provided by AFD is distinct from that offered by other donors (SANBI, SURE-WET, WRI) due to the factors mentioned above. However, one project team expressed regret that the administrative formalities involved in drawing up the contract may have hindered the smooth launch of the project. In another project, despite advance payments from the AFD, the payment arrangements for the

handover of deliverables between the various consortium members limited the research organisations' ability to recruit staff or carry out field research necessary for the successful completion of the project (IIHS, SURE-WET). Finally, some project leaders maintained only tenuous links with AFD offices in certain countries, which may have hindered the effective dissemination of the work (ENSLAC, IIHS, SURE-WET; this analysis of dissemination is discussed in greater detail in the response to question 2).

Finally, to facilitate the production of the planned research outputs while taking into account the target stakeholders and the challenges associated with their future use throughout this process, the evaluation highlights several key factors for success:

- **Tailored, ongoing support from AFD** to improve the quality of research (all projects are covered).
- **Taking into account the needs of the relevant political and administrative stakeholders, by involving these target stakeholders and their needs in the research process** (FARSYMABI, WRI, SANBI, SURE-WET) and planning for this from the outset of the project (submission of the application), particularly where these projects aim to carry out work supporting the development of solutions for public policy.
- **The presence of a diverse range of profiles:** researchers/practitioners/teachers (ENSLAC, WRI, SANBI, SURE-WET, IHSS) and **the existence of pre-existing relationships** between the partners in the research team (ENSLAC).

<b>Box 1: Production of scientific articles by research project<sup>4</sup></b>	
The research projects produced a variety of outputs during and after the project (around ten on average). The publication of articles in scientific journals plays a role of varying importance depending on the progress of research projects and their respective dissemination objectives.	
<b>FARSYMABI:</b> 2 articles published, 6 currently being written or in the process of being published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "A farming system approach to exploring drivers of food insecurity among farm households in developing countries : the case study of Mozambique", Abbas M., Ribeiro Flores P., Lima Santos J. <i>Agronomy</i>, 2024, 14, 2608, <a href="https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4395/14/11/2608">https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4395/14/11/2608</a></li> <li>- "Conservation with people inside the protected areas: how to address local people's needs with no zero-sum game" Mbanze A. et al., 2025 <i>Biodiversity conservation – Ecological, Environmental and societal aspects</i> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1012328">http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1012328</a></li> </ul>
<b>IIHS:</b> 3 articles published, 3 in the process of being published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Effects of heat stress and green cover on urban birds in the megacity of Bengaluru", Jambhekar, Ravi, Dilip G. T. Naidu, and Jagdish Krishnaswamy. 2025. <i>Ecological Applications</i> 35(3): e70039. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.70039">https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.70039</a></li> <li>- "Integrating Nature-based Solutions for Urban Water Security in Global South". Abera L, Jumani S, van Rees CB, Krishnaswamy J, Seigerman CK, Nelson DR, et al. (2025). <i>PLOS Water</i> 4(6): e0000372. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pwat.0000372">https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pwat.0000372</a></li> </ul>
<b>SANBI:</b> 4 articles published, 1 in the process of being published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "The diverse socioeconomic contributions of wildlife ranching", Denner C., Clements H.S., Child, M.F, De Vos A., <i>Conservation Science and Practice</i>, 2024. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.13166">doi.org/10.1111/csp2.13166</a></li> <li>- "Unlocking opportunities for meaningful participation of land reform beneficiaries in wildlife economy". Swababwa S., Child M., De Vos A., Mneno N., Clements H., <i>Land Use Policy</i> 154 52025) 107565, 2025. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2025.107565">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2025.107565</a></li> </ul>
<b>ESGAP:</b> 3 articles published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Strong sustainability in the SEEA and the wider indicator landscape", Usubiaga-Liaño A, Selomane O, Comte A (2025) <i>One Ecosystem</i> 10: e141086. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3897/oneeco.10.e141086">https://doi.org/10.3897/oneeco.10.e141086</a></li> <li>- "Assessing Environmental Sustainability in Colombia: Metrics and Policy Recommendations." Garces, Estefany &amp; Franco, Carlos &amp; Usubiaga-Liaño, Arkaitz &amp; Ruiz-Agudelo, Cesar &amp; Fairbrass, Alison. (2025) <i>Environmental and Sustainability Indicators</i>. 27.100812.10.1016/j.indic.2025.100812. <a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393969367_Assessing_Environmental_Sustainability_in_Colombia_Metrics_and_Policy_Recommendations">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393969367_Assessing_Environmental_Sustainability_in_Colombia_Metrics_and_Policy_Recommendations</a></li> </ul>
<b>ENSLAC</b>	2 articles currently being published
<b>WRI</b>	1 article currently being published
<b>SURE-WET</b>	No articles have been published or are currently being published

<sup>4</sup> Listed in descending order of the number of articles published or currently being published/written per project. The two most recent articles published for each project are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list. Source: E-Sud

## Question 2 - Dissemination and reception of research findings - To what extent do strategies for disseminating research findings promote awareness of, legitimacy for, and ownership of that research among the target audience?

### 2.1 Strategies for disseminating research findings outside research teams

During the dissemination phase, the majority of the supported projects succeeded in **engaging stakeholders outside the research team**: political, administrative and community stakeholders, the private sector, other research stakeholders, NGOs, etc. All projects undertook science communication activities to make the research understandable and accessible during presentation sessions, eliciting positive reactions and interest from the targeted individuals and organisations.

However, beyond the publication of research findings and presentations, **only some of the projects organise the dissemination of their work over time, tailoring the content to different audiences and varying the formats of dissemination** to ensure that their findings are taken into account. **Projects designed to inform the development of solutions and decision-making, and which have carried out their research in collaboration with public sector stakeholders, are the most successful in implementing these dissemination strategies** (FARSYMABI, WRI, SURE-WET, SANBI). Some of the most successful examples of these strategies include:

- FARSYMABI: in Mozambique, the 'bottom-up' research methodology enabled the development of a strategy for disseminating research findings to all targeted stakeholders, notably departmental directors within the Ministry of Agriculture and Biodiversity, who took part in **training sessions** to facilitate their adoption of the project's mapping tool. A **conference in Maputo dedicated to the project** also provided a key opportunity for dialogue with public officials; **international stakeholders were also invited** with a view to raising international awareness, but also **to draw the attention of national political figures**.
- WRI: in Addis Ababa and Kigali, the inclusion of stakeholders throughout the strategic framework development phase, as well as the operational nature of the research outputs, enabled the practical dissemination of knowledge on nature-based solutions, **with the results being disseminated as part of the research process itself to the municipalities** of Kigali and Addis Ababa.
- SURE-WET: in Uganda, the dissemination of the knowledge generated is also facilitated by the involvement of stakeholders in the research process. This involvement has enabled **students, as well as officials from the relevant ministry**, to gain a good understanding of the research issues at stake.
- SANBI: the project is being carried out on the basis of a strong partnership between research organisations and public bodies (universities, SANBI, SAN Parks, the government, etc.) that existed prior to the project. Consequently, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) serves as a key intermediary body, **an interface through which researchers can** forge links with policy-makers, **advocate for their projects**, secure funding, and ultimately influence the shaping of public policy.

By comparison, the other projects disseminated their work to public sector stakeholders at a later stage and on fewer occasions (ENSLAC, ESGAP, IIHS). Their dissemination strategy **is limited to one-off debriefing sessions at the end of the project**. This can be explained in part by the lack of clearly defined targets within this research, or by studies that focus primarily on the research community:

- ENSLAC: across 15 cities in Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, the format of **sharing research findings via webinars** is the main method used by the project to make knowledge more accessible. This method was aimed at researchers and urban planning professionals, with the aim of illustrating the concept of nature-based solutions through local case studies to enhance student training and provide best practices that can be applied in the field. Disseminating results is more

challenging within public institutions, as these stakeholders are less involved in the research process and are difficult to engage through webinars.

- IIHS: despite a diversified dissemination strategy involving the publication of articles, the use of mapping tools, and engagement with both traditional media and social media, **the project does little to engage public sector stakeholders who might make use of this work.**
- ESGAP: the research project did not have the same roll-out ambitions as the other projects in the programme. The aim of the project was to strengthen the methodological rigour of the approach and to develop the indicator for use in new countries, rather than to roll it out to public bodies. To date, dissemination has been limited to **one-off presentations to Colombian national authorities**, and the South African team has not yet begun this dissemination phase, as the research outputs have not yet been finalised.

In parallel, and at programme level, the “**research conversations**” webinars organised by AFD enabled project teams to present their findings to a diverse audience, comprising mainly of staff from AFD and its partners (see the section below on research conversations for further details).

#### FOCUS on research conversations

**What are research conversations?** The format of the webinar, organised by AFD, enables research teams to present their projects and the lessons learnt to AFD and its network of partners, and to reach an audience different from those targeted within their own countries. All research projects were able to hold a research conversation between March 2024 (SANBI) and June 2025 (Farsymabi), with the exception of the project led by the IIHS (whose conversation is scheduled for 12 November 2025).

**Research conversation participants:** depending on the project, AFD accounts for between 36% (SANBI, ENSLAC) and 56% (SURE-WET) of participants; and between 55% (ENSLAC) and 70% (SANBI) of participants are French. After AFD, the organisations most strongly represented among the participants include French development research institutions (CIRAD, IRD, IDDRI) and other public organisations involved in development financing and/or engineering (Expertise France in particular). Other participants were present at a single research conversation: NGOs (Hamap Humanitaire, Care France, Acting for Life), major companies (Suez Consulting, Total Energies, Danone) and the organisations that spearheaded the research project.

**Audience:** The audience for research conversations is relatively large. Each webinar attracts between 100 and 200 participants, and each presentation generates a significant amount of interaction, with an average of 20 participants asking at least one question and nearly 40 posting at least one message.

## 2.2 Levels of uptake of the results by the target audience of the research

For projects that disseminate their findings to public sector stakeholders, this work has **in every case elicited positive feedback and genuine interest from the targeted stakeholders**. In some cases, the project has also fostered **greater mutual understanding** between different public bodies that previously rarely had occasion to work together. The issues raised by the research projects and the collaborative nature of the work led to this cross-sectoral meeting, enabling various departments to work together (SANBI, SURE-WET, WRI). Workshops attended by the target stakeholders, which enable the direct use of the research output (FARSYMABI), or the facilitation of a community of practice between the research team and the target audience of the research (SANBI), are **the approaches that have most facilitated the uptake of the research**:

- FARSYMABI: The **training sessions on the mapping tool** were fully booked at the seminar held on 17-18 July in Maputo, with participants including officials from several ministerial departments.
- SANBI: a **community of practice** has been established on the basis of the research findings, bringing together the wildlife sector, SANparks and the research project leaders, and involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Projects that had not set specific targets for the use of their work nevertheless attracted the interest of stakeholders involved in the research production or dissemination phases, and there were signs that the research findings were being taken on board (IIHS, ENSLAC, ESGAP):

- IIHS: the entire educational community (pupils, teachers and headteachers) was interested in the initiative, and **schools wish to continue their involvement in biodiversity projects**.
- ENSLAC: through workshops, interviews and webinars, those involved in the projects were able to learn from other case studies. **Certain professionals in the field of urban planning** (professional associations, etc.) **are interested in the subject** and are seeking content related to the research.
- ESGAP: positive feedback was received from those attending a **meeting with Colombian political figures** held in 2024 on the sidelines of the COP16 on biodiversity. However, the fact that the indicator was presented in an academic format, without any specific recommendations, meant that it was not entirely suitable for policymakers.

The ECOPRONAT programme coordinators also produced **specific materials** to disseminate the findings of certain research projects **to AFD's ARB and VIL divisions** which had expressed an interest in certain projects (see the section below for further details).

#### **FOCUS on dissemination and uptake within AFD**

A survey conducted at the end of each meeting to present ECOPRONAT's results, involving the ARB and VIL departments, demonstrates the interest shown by both divisions in the topics covered:

- Participants in the ARB division consider all the topics covered to be relevant to project management. Members of the VIL division say they are more interested in topics related to the WRI projects (method for identifying nature-based solutions for cities), as well as SURE-WET and ENSLAC (success factors/scaling up of nature-based solutions) projects than in the IIHS project (greening urban food systems).
- For both divisions, participants are interested in educational resources on "coordinating scales of intervention for development that integrates biodiversity".
- Both divisions consider that the most appropriate formats for communication and dissemination are technical summaries (2 pages) and infographics (1 to 4 pages), as well as short videos (5 mins) and summary reports (max. 15 pages). Among the least relevant formats cited are scientific articles, scientific bibliographies and webinars/recordings of research discussions (1 hour 30 minutes). While research output must be scientifically sound and peer-reviewed through the publication of academic articles, this highlights the need to work on making it accessible to a wider audience and translating it for non-academic readers.

### **2.3 Dissemination to the scientific community and capacity building**

In many projects, the scientific community has been **either directly involved in the project or the direct target audience of the research**(ESGAP, ENSLAC, IHSS, SANBI, SURE-WET). These projects have thus enabled undergraduates and PhD students to get involved in the research process and develop their skills in these areas:

- ENSLAC: Several university lecturers have asked the research teams if they can **use the materials produced in their teaching**. At UNAL (Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina) in Peru, a course launched in 2021 draws on examples from the ENSLAC project and also shares analyses of good practice derived from the case studies. According to one lecturer, the use of research findings helps to **change the way students view and understand the city**, and to broaden their perspectives through a wider range of knowledge sources.
- SANBI: the project has enabled **around 100 graduates** to be trained in wildlife economics, after which they were able to go out into the field to carry out surveys with wildlife ranchers. The monitoring of the research project's impact will continue through the **involvement of two students (at Master's and PhD level)** over several years.
- ESGAP: an interview was conducted and published in the journal of Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogotá, and **a lecturer at the university and his students are using the indicator as part of their dissertation project**.
- SURE-WET: **students have been trained and recruited**, particularly **for socio-economic surveys** and research into the ecosystem services provided by wetlands.

Conversely, some projects that have been particularly committed to engaging local stakeholders have focused less, apart from publishing articles, on specific strategies for disseminating their findings to the scientific community (FARSYMABI, WRI, IIHS).

Consequently, to encourage the dissemination of the research and its ownership by the target audience, the evaluation highlights several key factors for success:

- A publication on **stakeholder involvement in the research process** (WRI, FARSYMABI, SURE-WET, SANBI)
- Work focusing on the **dissemination of practical recommendations** (WRI, SURE-WET, SANBI, IIHS, FARSYMABI)
- **Existing relationships with the initiative's target stakeholders** (WRI, SANBI, SURE-WET, FARSYMABI)
- **A dissemination strategy tailored to different target audiences, with a variety of outputs** – local communities, students, practitioners, decision-makers, scientists, the general public (ENSLAC, IIHS, SANBI).

The box below outlines the range of media and dissemination methods used within the ECOPRONAT programme.

**Box 2. Media and methods of disseminating research, according to the target audience**

**For the scientific community:**

- Scientific articles → FARSYMABI, IIHS, ESGAP, SANBI
- Seminars, research webinars (excluding research conversations) → ENSLAC, FARSYMABI
- University Journal → ESGAP
- Practical Guide to the Use of Scientific Tools → ESGAP

**For decision-makers and public sector stakeholders**

- Policy paper, policy brief, summary/information notes, practical/strategic recommendations → FARSYMABI, WRI, ESGAP, SURE-WET, IIHS
- Seminars, webinars, conferences → FARSYMABI, ENSLAC, SURE-WET, IIHS
- Live meetings with political figures → ESGAP, SANBI, SURE-WET
- Training workshops, co-creation workshops → FARSYMABI, WRI
- Mapping tools, decision-making tools (opportunity matrix, evaluation guide, typologies, etc.) → WRI, SANBI, SURE-WET, FARSYMABI
- Policy instruments: certification mechanisms, investment platform → SANBI
- Community of practice, working groups → WRI, SANBI

**For local, professional and academic communities:**

- Educational resources (practical guides, fact sheets, PowerPoint presentations, children's games) → IIHS, ENSLAC
- Workshops, training/capacity-building sessions → FARSYMABI, SANBI, IIHS
- Academic presentations → ENSLAC, SURE-WET

**For the general public:**

- Online resources (summaries, videos) → SANBI, IIHS
- Social media posts → IIHS
- Press articles (regional or national) → SANBI, IIHS, FARSYMABI
- TV appearances (interview) → SANBI

**Question 3 - Impact of the research – To what extent, and under what conditions, are the activities carried out under this programme likely to generate short-, medium- or long-term effects that contribute to the development of a pro-nature economy and support AFD's operations?**

### 3.1 Initiatives focused on research outcomes

For the majority of projects, there is **significant momentum** surrounding the outcomes of the research, with several stakeholders expressing an interest in the work and a desire to continue this process of informing decision-making with scientific data.

Three projects (FARSYMABI, WRI, SANBI) stand out for their **sustainable momentum** centred on results, with the involvement of key public stakeholders, even after the project has ended. This

momentum can be explained by the wide range of stakeholders involved and their participation at various stages of the process, both in co-producing the research and in taking part in the dissemination sessions.

- FARSYMABI: Through this project, **the research team is in regular contact with the Ministry of Agriculture and Biodiversity** (which have now been merged into a single ministry).
- WRI: **the Kigali City Council** (in particular the Ministry of Urban Development and Infrastructure) and **international donors** have **set up a working group on nature-based solutions** for urban infrastructure, following on from the research. The pilot project development method proposed by the research is of interest to the city of Kigali, as it identifies projects that are ready for funding. **The city of Kigali also organises participatory capacity-building workshops**, at which the research team presents the research and pilot projects. In addition, the WRI **is currently testing the nature-based solutions framework process with other cities in Africa** (e.g.: Nairobi, Dire Dawa)
- SANBI: the generation of scientific knowledge on this subject helps to **inform the ongoing public policy dialogue in South Africa and Kenya** regarding the wildlife economy. In South Africa, this dialogue focuses in particular on the ban on foreign tourists taking home hunting trophies. The project leaders are therefore full participants in this dialogue, and they have an opportunity to promote the recommendations arising from the research. In Kenya, for example, the government asked the African Conservation Centre, a partner in the research project, to produce a white paper on options for developing activities related to ecotourism, wildlife and conservation.

Furthermore, these effects of use often emerge over time, and the period between the project's launch and the evaluation may also influence the results. The other projects followed a different approach, as their research focused either on the study and evaluation of initiatives (ENSLAC, SURE-WET, IIHS) or on the scientific consolidation of a generic tool (ESGAP). This type of research project either does not directly aim to put the findings into practice immediately upon completion, or requires a second phase dedicated to conducting research activities designed to formulate solutions to be implemented by public sector bodies and to engage in a targeted process with these stakeholders:

- ENSLAC: the case studies from the project were **used within AFD for the first time to illustrate a training course on nature-based solutions**, and they could be incorporated more regularly into internal training programmes. The three organisations leading the project are each continuing their research on nature-based solutions alongside various local stakeholders, and are looking to establish a longer-term partnership. Nevertheless, the research project did not directly contribute to sustainable collective initiatives involving public sector stakeholders in the field of nature-based solutions.
- ESGAP: a **meeting with Colombian political figures was organised during the project in 2024 on the sidelines of COP16** on biodiversity. The meeting sparked a lively debate on data sources and on the criteria used to define what constitutes biodiversity being in a "good condition". The ministries believed that the country's biodiversity was well preserved, but the findings revealed certain limitations. This provided an opportunity for an **initial discussion on the state of nature from a qualitative perspective** (for example, the health of the forest), **rather than solely a quantitative one** (for example, the surface area of the forest).
- IIHS: Communities involved in local action research projects supported by the scheme appear to have begun to **change their practices, promoting the presence of nature in urban areas in a way that is compatible with urban agriculture**. The project leaders hope to involve public sector stakeholders and potential funders in the development of nature-based solutions. Nevertheless, the research project does not yet appear to have generated any lasting collective momentum around nature-based solutions, as the dissemination of findings to these stakeholders has not yet begun.
- SURE-WET: one potential avenue for research is to generate momentum around restoration policies in Uganda or other African countries. At present, the research team has no evidence to

suggest that the government has changed its policy on this matter. Nevertheless, **the government wishes to review its wetland restoration strategy in light of the project's findings**, and has asked the research team for advice.

### **3.2 Implementation of research recommendations by the target audience of the research**

Several projects within the programme have **succeeded in influencing public policy** in their respective regions on the basis of research findings (SANBI, WRI, FARSYMABI). These contributions are made at various stages of the public policy cycle.

The FARSYMABI project is an example of a project that **contributes to the debate on the design of public agricultural policies** in Mozambique. The mapping tool and the resulting strategic recommendations enable the **Ministry of Agriculture and Biodiversity** to draw on this data. The project is also being taken up again by **AFD** (the local agency wishes to incorporate the recommendations into its work and continue to roll out the approach in other regions) and **local NGOs** (which wish to continue their work in line with the project's recommendations). Although this project sets out clear recommendations for improving the design of agricultural policies, several stakeholders have expressed regret that some of the recommendations are not sufficiently actionable, or that they rely primarily on external funding rather than domestic funding mechanisms within Mozambique.

The WRI project is an example of a project that **helps public sector stakeholders to choose a solution to implement**. The **city of Kigali** is heavily involved in the pilot project initiative: three are already being implemented, and nine clusters have been identified. It is seeking to set up an investment programme to support these solutions. According to the research team, **the strategic roadmap for the resilience of the city of Kigali drew heavily on the research carried out**, particularly the section on "climate resilience". In addition, **the local AFD branch** is involved in implementing decentralised cooperation between Addis Ababa and Lyon in relation to nature-based solutions.

Finally, the SANBI project is an example where the project's results help to support both **the implementation of a policy and its evaluation and review**. According to the research team, the findings were taken into account in the review of South Africa's Biodiversity Economy Strategy, and the researchers were able to provide input on the review (which is still ongoing). Furthermore, **the research findings are reportedly already being used by the country's national parks (SANParks)** to help them manage biodiversity (through the provision of data quantifying wildlife populations in certain protected areas). Finally, **some of the data provided by the research team has been adopted by the Department for Environment and is now available on their investment portal** (Biodiversity Sector Investment Portal).

Furthermore, these effects of use often emerge over time, and the period between the project's launch and the evaluation may also influence the results. It is worth noting that among the three projects at the most advanced stage are the two projects selected following the first call for proposals on biodiversity mainstreaming (FARSYMABI and SANBI), for which the agreements were signed in early 2022 – six months to a year earlier than the other projects (see Table 1).

To promote short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that contribute to the development of a pro-nature economy and support AFD's operations, this evaluation highlights the following conditions for success:

- Establish or strengthen **regular and long-term cooperation** between the various stakeholders regarding research outputs and the information needs of stakeholders in the field and decision-makers (WRI, FARSYMABI, SANBI)
- Diversify and secure the **project's funding sources** (WRI, SURE-WET)

#### **FOCUS on supporting researchers in the Global South and those leading pro-nature projects.**

In addition to funding research, Ecopronat supports and assists researchers from partner countries working on biodiversity issues through the Global Development Network (Component 3), as well as pro-nature project leaders through AFD Campus (Component 4).

#### **Component 3: "Biodiversity and Development" Awards for research in collaboration with the GDN**

In early 2021, AFD and the Global Development Network (GDN) launched the *Biodiversity and Development* Awards to support researchers in their projects aimed at preserving biodiversity. Awards were presented to four female researchers (from Ghana, Ethiopia, Madagascar and Fiji) and one male researcher (from Vietnam), along with a two-year research grant (mid-2021 to mid-2023). As part of the evaluation of the ECOPRONAT programme, Quadrant Conseil conducted an interview with the GDN and analysed the GDN's monitoring documents.

**Contribution of the awards to the production and dissemination of research:** the GDN's approach aims to support research projects that have the potential to inform public policy. The GDN has contributed to this in several ways:

- Candidates for the awards were encouraged to engage with political and administrative stakeholders before submitting their applications.
- They had to develop a dissemination strategy fairly early on in the project, so that it could be integrated into the research process.
- Specific financial support is provided for the dissemination of research output. The use of this "dissemination fund" enables, for example, the funding of travel to meet other researchers.

The selected projects were **monitored and supported by mentors**, and funded progressively based on deliverables, with flexibility granted by the GDN. Collaborative grants also encouraged the exchange of knowledge between projects. The self-assessment carried out on three occasions during the support process led to a number of observations:

- Throughout the process, **the researchers' confidence** in their ability to carry out a research project, devise a communication strategy and build relationships with political stakeholders **was strengthened**.
- Researchers have gradually come to realise the complexity of influencing public policy, and the importance of involving stakeholders in research.

**Relations with AFD:** the GDN appreciated the trust and independence granted by AFD, but would have liked to have established a more fruitful partnership.

**Reception and impact of the research:** some of the supported projects have already had an impact at various levels, notably in Ghana and Ethiopia.

- In Ghana, the project engages with local communities, and its dissemination is carried out through radio broadcasts and the production of a podcast.
- In Ethiopia, the research is regarded as pioneering and is of great interest to the government.
- In Fiji, efforts to influence public policy have been hampered by a change in government.
- In Vietnam, the project has more academic dissemination objectives; it is difficult to say whether the approach envisages any engagement with local communities beyond the data collection phase.

#### **GDN recommendations:**

- Allow four years for a similar process, rather than two. Some steps were underestimated (recruiting mentors), while others are taking time to come to fruition (involving communities in research projects).
- Initiatives supporting research should be designed to be repeated on an ongoing basis, so that lessons can be learned from previous phases, rather than being one-off initiatives.

Background note: the GDN was able to create a hub in Clermont-Ferrand, which received significant support from the AFD in April 2024, which should allow the GDN to plan its activities over the long term.

#### **Component 4: BiPP - AFD Campus.**

Since 2021, AFD Campus has organised three support cycles for pro-nature initiatives in Southern African countries as part of the Biodiversity Partners Programme (BiPP), in partnership with the Sustainability Institute, for 25 pro-nature project leaders. This support has been provided in areas as diverse as the incorporation of local knowledge, nature-based solutions, business management, deep

ecology, systems thinking and ecological design. As part of the evaluation of the ECOPRONAT programme, Quadrant Conseil carried out:

- A short survey of all BiPP participants. The survey was sent out by email in May 2025 to the hundred or so participants in the campus training course. A total of 20 former trainees responded, representing a response rate of 20%. Among them: 11 completed the training in 2022, 2 in 2023, 1 in 2024, and 6 in 2025
- An analysis of the responses to the end-of-course surveys distributed in 2023 by the project teams. These surveys were administered at the end of each learning module to the 13 participants and the trainers (two trainers for each module).

The aim of this data collection was to answer the following questions:

- To what extent were the participants' expectations and needs regarding skills development properly taken into account,
- To what extent were participants able to develop their understanding of biodiversity issues in their regions and enhance their ability to take action in their local areas through their projects,
- Whether there is evidence to suggest that the projects undertaken by the campus beneficiaries have created a local momentum towards greater consideration of biodiversity by other stakeholders (whether from the private sector, the public sector or the research community).

The programme has a **good understanding of the participants' expectations and needs**. Adapting the case studies and examples to real-life situations from African contexts has facilitated a better understanding of the concepts covered and provided practical frameworks for application. The supervisors noted that the trainers and the delivery methods were well **adapted** to the participants' local requirements, needs and context. The survey responses indicate a **very positive view of the programme**. Feedback suggests that the programme has helped to strengthen, or even restore, participants' confidence in their projects and in their own ability to see them through to a successful conclusion.

The training has clearly succeeded in generating local momentum for biodiversity within the projects. Participants reported:

- **Entrepreneurial development** through business management and leadership modules (9)
- **The implementation of new, more environmentally friendly methods** (focused on biodiversity) through modules on ecology and biodiversity (8)
- The creation of **new partnerships** through the strategy and new partner engagement modules (5)
- **Improved communication** with the Business Management and Leadership module (2)

Participants shared a number of suggestions, covering both practical aspects during the training and their need for support after the training. With regard to the need for support following the training, participants' suggestions focus on two main areas for improvement:

- **Strengthen the network** and the links between participants following the training.
- Offer **post-training support** to help participants put what they have learnt into practice, through a mentoring programme and the facilitation of a network.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the evaluation, the most frequently cited recommendations made by the research teams, and a workshop on the joint development of recommendations held at AFD in November 2025.

The evaluation team has organised these recommendations into proposed courses of action to be taken at the various stages of research project support.

### 1. During the project selection phase: identify potential applications for research findings at an early stage in order to better select and support projects.

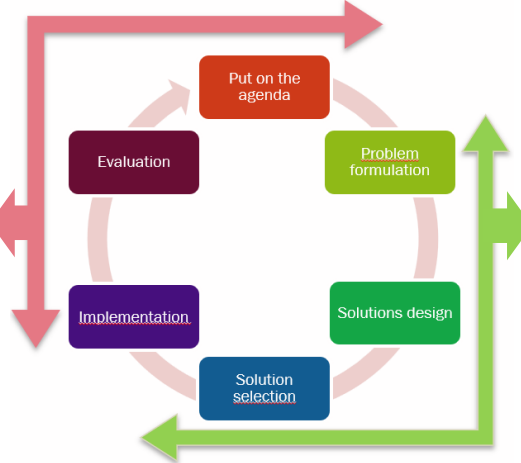
Research projects aimed at producing tools or findings to inform public policy are situated at varying degrees of proximity to public sector stakeholders, and the extent to which they anticipate and incorporate the potential uses of their findings depends on the nature of the project and its level of maturity. **Before any support is provided, it is essential to clarify where the project stands in this context and what the key issues are, so that the support provided can be tailored as effectively as possible.**

Some **research projects focus on generating knowledge about specific mechanisms or solely on the scientific validation** of measurement tools (ESGAP, ENSLAC, IIHS).

These projects rarely have specific target users in the field of public policy from the outset, and a significant amount of time is spent producing research findings with little contact with the target stakeholders.

The key considerations regarding these projects relate more to:

- Their **grounding in international frameworks, literature and tools, and their ability to strengthen their scientific rigour** (internal validity), as well as to generate knowledge about their transferability and adaptability to different contexts (external validity)
- The **research consortium therefore stands to gain by putting forward an international team** in order to choose a relevant research question for different contexts while ensuring its added value (by addressing a recognised knowledge gap) and strengthening its legitimacy.
- The **dissemination phase requires further work once the research results have been produced, and the dissemination strategy must be supported** by intermediary bodies. For these projects, support from AFD headquarters or regional offices appears to be essential in order to identify, once the research has been completed, the relevant target audiences, bodies or organisations where these findings might be well received.
- It is also possible for these projects to **include a public engagement officer in the research team**, making this a selection criterion in order to facilitate the dissemination and popularisation of the research.



Some **research projects focus on identifying solutions for public policy or providing guidance on the selection of solutions for public policy** (FARSYMABI, SURE-WET, WRI, SANBI).

These projects engage with future users from the outset, and they make data or tools available within a relatively short timeframe so that they can be quickly tested and refined by stakeholders.

The key considerations regarding these projects relate more to:

- **Prior links between the research team or a partner and the targeted political actors** or members of civil society
- Significant involvement in the project of **local research stakeholders** and students to promote local capacity-building and self-reliance in the continuation of the work
- A commitment to **jointly defining the research project** and its methodology between the research team and the future users of the results
- The **involvement of an intermediary organisation, or a mediator** (with a strong understanding of the target ecosystem and opportunities for dialogue) between research activities and policy-making is also an asset in enhancing the chances of success of the strategy for disseminating research findings. This requirement could be specified in the terms of reference.

In practice, these issues can be addressed as a priority in the terms of reference and during the project selection phase, but also during the project support phase. In order to encourage the subsequent use of the research findings or tools produced, it is also advisable, prior to the call for proposals, to organise an internal consultation within AFD to identify what the main needs are, or, ideally, what they should be, in terms of equipping operations or intervention strategies relating to the targeted theme.

## 2. During the project support phase: tailor support and funding to changes in the projects to encourage the use of the results

Following the project selection phase, and in addition to the scientific support provided by AFD, which was widely recognised and appreciated by the research teams, the recommendations put forward during the support phase focus primarily on the use of research outputs:

- **Through the research teams supported:** by engaging science communication specialists, whose inclusion in the teams was encouraged at the selection stage, or by helping researchers develop their science communication skills through **awareness-raising** or **training in communication and knowledge transfer** at programme level. Across the programme, **opportunities for knowledge-sharing between projects** are needed to facilitate contact between research teams and the sharing of best practices and challenges encountered, with a view to promoting the use of research findings and even exploring opportunities for cross-disciplinary applications.
- **Through AFD's budgetary support mechanisms,** where **additional support** (assistance from the AFD office, help in identifying funding, funding thresholds linked to dissemination, etc.) could enable dissemination activities to be continued among potential users at local, national or international levels, depending on opportunities. This applies in particular to research projects that do not directly target specific users and devote the majority of the project's time to generating knowledge, where the end of funding coincides with the initial steps to present the research findings.

### 3. At the end of the support phase: implement the various measures to promote the use of research within AFD and among its stakeholders

The ways in which research outputs are used depend largely on how stakeholders are likely to make use of them at different levels:

- **At the research programme level:** through programme monitoring and evaluation, identify projects for which applications are clearly identified or about to be observed, and consider continuing to provide methodological and financial support for these projects beyond the end of their funding period.
- **With regard to AFD offices:** despite the programme's various initiatives to involve **AFD's regional and local offices**, and gather their expressed interest in the programme, only some of them **have made a sufficient commitment to supporting research projects. It would be useful to take a closer look at the reasons behind this lack of engagement** (staff turnover, lack of time, difficulties in grasping research issues, etc.) **in order to identify the measures needed to enable them to play an active role in dialogue and support with the research teams.** They could then help to identify the relevant policy-makers or potential funders who are in a position to use or promote the tools or solutions proposed by the research teams. This would also make it possible to consider potential applications of the findings more quickly in the context of AFD's operations in the country.
- **More broadly, the use of research projects within AFD would also be facilitated by:**
  - the possibility of **incorporating a knowledge transfer officer role at programme level**, responsible for disseminating research findings internally.
  - **redesigning the digital spaces** for AFD resources in order to make them easier to use, particularly with regard to how resources are categorised by theme or geographical area.
  - **awareness-raising and training for AFD teams on the use of research outputs** at AFD, with a view to fostering an internal culture of research mobilisation. In particular, by providing concrete examples of how research findings have been incorporated into broader operations or strategies.

- An identification, over the long term and through open calls for expressions of interest, research projects in countries that have, or are about to have, AFD public policy dialogue projects or Development Policy Loan, so that the knowledge shared can benefit AFD operations more directly.

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FIND OUT MORE

- [Understanding evaluations at AFD](#)
  - [See the biennial Evaluations Report](#)
  - [Download the Evaluation Reports for the project](#)
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**About Agence Française de Développement:**

Agence Française de Développement (AFD) implements France's international development and solidarity policy. Through its public sector and NGO financing activities, its research and publications (AFD Editions), its training on sustainable development (AFD Campus) and its awareness raising activities in France, it finances, supports and accelerates transitions towards a more just and resilient world.

We build joint solutions with our partners, with and for the people of the Global South. Our teams are involved in more than 4,000 projects on the ground, in France's overseas territories and 115 countries, including areas in crisis. We strive to protect the common good—promoting peace, biodiversity and a stable climate, as well as gender equality, health and education. In this way, we contribute to the commitment of France and French people to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). For a world in common.

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