

Towards inclusive development: The link between Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and social cohesion in Togo

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Introduction

- FLR projects are critical for environmental conservation and sustainable land management, particularly within diverse socio-economic contexts.
- Various dimensions of social cohesion significantly influence the implementation of FLR projects.
- Linking FLR to social outcomes is essential for effective project implementation.
- Research question:** How do FLR projects impact the social cohesion of local communities, and what context-specific factors influence these effects?



Figure: Community forest of the canton Affem.

Objective

- By exploring community perceptions and socio-economic outcomes, this research seeks to investigate the relationship between the social cohesion of communities and FLR projects outcomes

Methodology

- Study area:** Tchamba prefecture, Togo Central Region (3 cantons, 17 villages)
- Data collection:** Focus group discussions (31), semi-structured interviews (19) with villagers, NGO staff, and local government officials (150 respondents) and workshops (4)
- Data analysis:** Separate groups by age and gender, Comparison between localities with and without FLR project, The livelihood framework

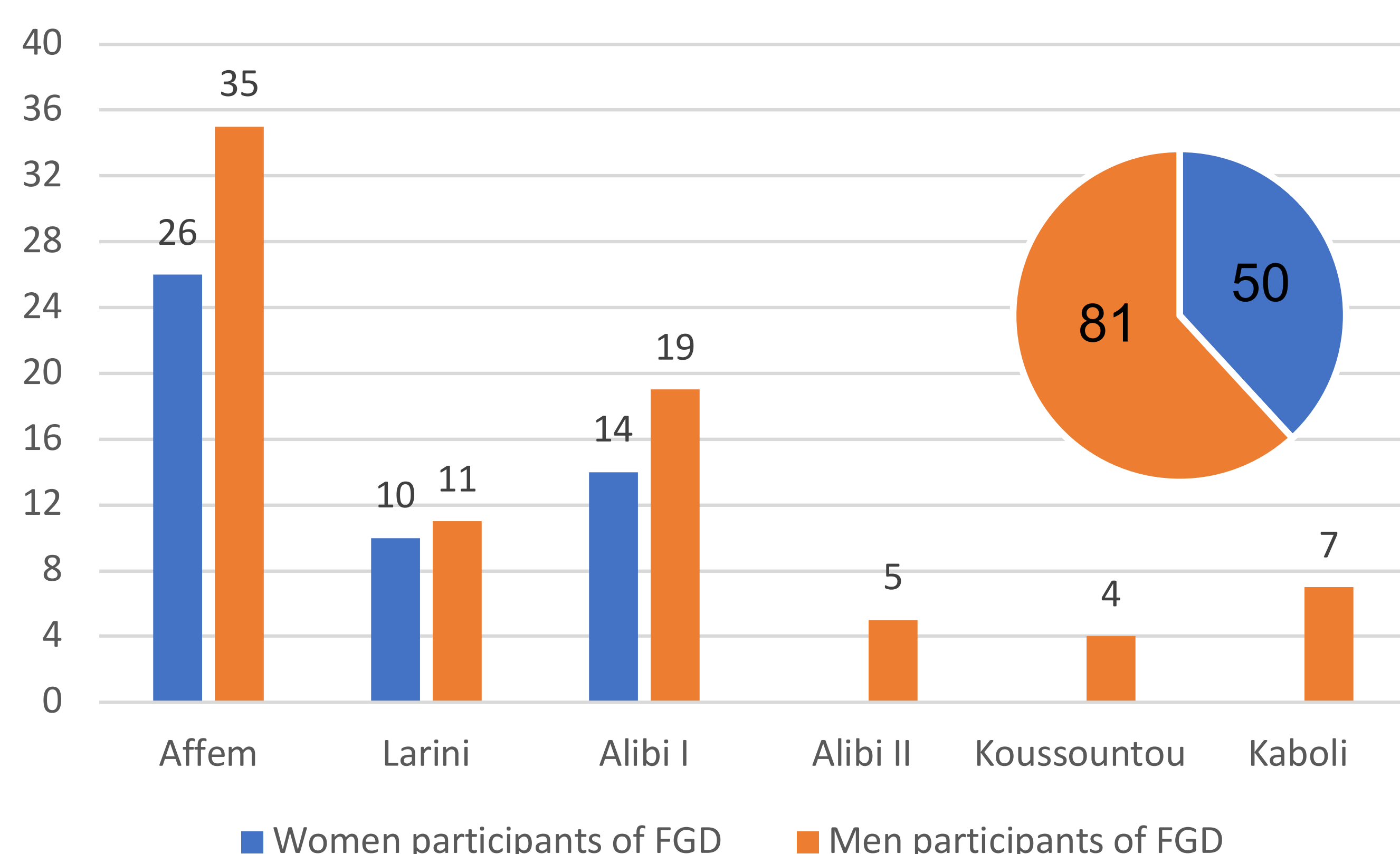


Figure: Distribution of participants of focus group discussions by age and gender

Results

- Quantitatively, the cantons with FLR showed the highest value for social motivation and social cohesion while the cantons without FLR demonstrated a lower value, which was confirmed by the qualitative results of the cantons *Affem* and *Larini*.

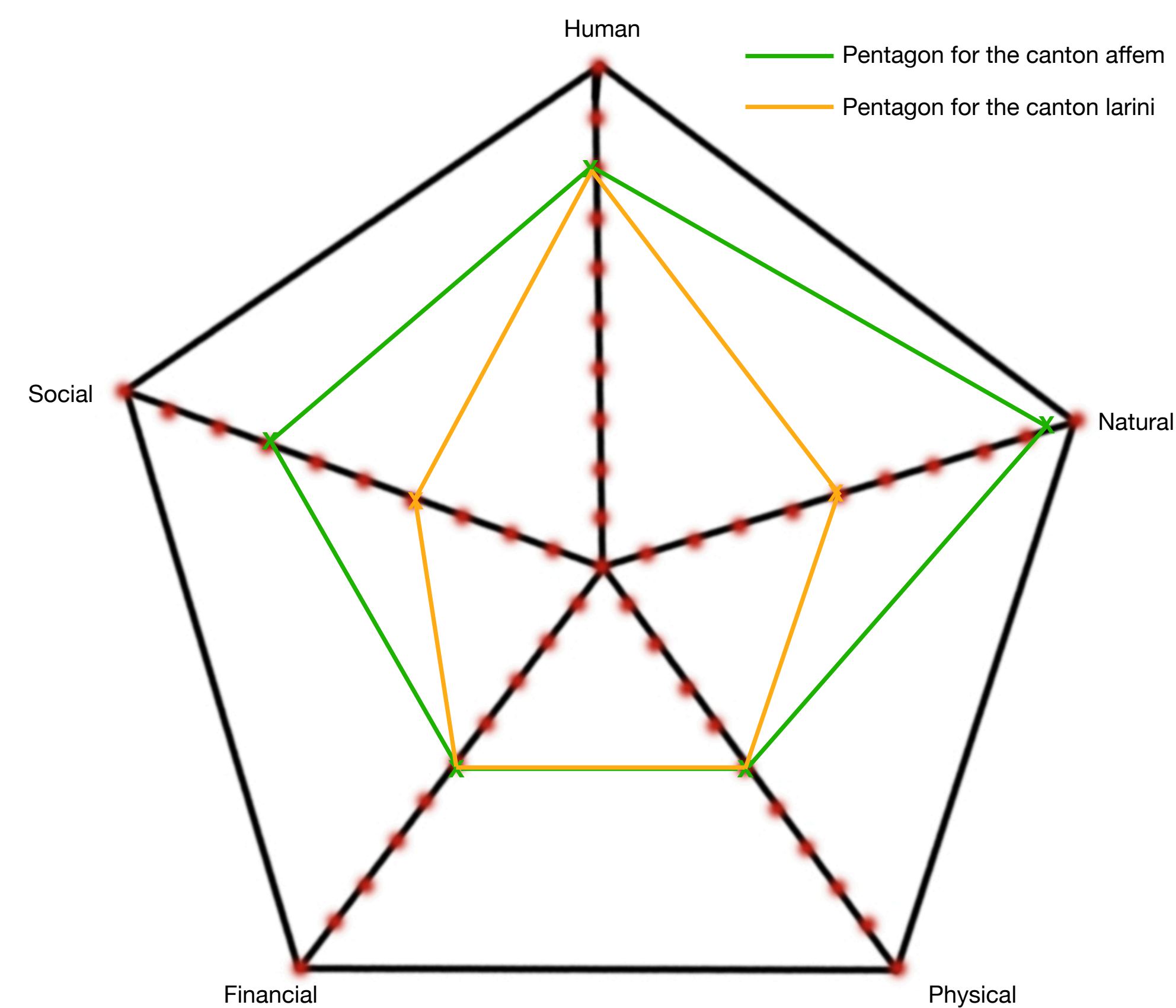


Figure: The particular livelihood pentagon of the cantons *Affem* (with FLR project) and *Larini* (without FLR project) of the workshop with the key informants.

Topic	Category	Success Factors	Obstacles	Improvements
	Community forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sacred forest pride of owning a forest community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> land-owners conflicts hunters in future the fauna may pose a problem for nearby fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouraging initiatives such as eco-villages emphasizing forests as educational purpose reintroducing traditional species
	Village prosperity and locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> great community engagement and communication (high social capital) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low social capital low physical capital context-specific conflicts and difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> context-specific strategies for implementation and evaluation of FLR activities
Context-specific factors influencing FLR projects	Social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> different FLR activities enhance cohesion -> higher cohesion in FLR villages different committees for the management of FLR activities seedling producers <p>→ local project supervisors are key for enhancing cohesion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> context-specific conflicts low community engagement cohesion challenges/ deterioration between in and outgroups (e.g., transhumance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involvement of local people in the projects for the long-term continuity of FLR emphasizing community benefits over individual benefits continued collaboration/communication (interaction)
	Gender and age disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensitization word of mouth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shift of interest in the younger generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more involvement of women sensitization employment opportunities for young people

Table: Overview of the key factors influencing FLR in the Tchamba Prefecture (Togo): Obstacles, success factors and improvements ideas reported by the study participants .

Outlook

- Regular interactions and support from project staff are essential to maintaining social cohesion over time.
- A continued focus on long-term community involvement helps reinforce the social networks and trust established through FLR projects.
- Tailoring FLR strategies to address age and gender dynamics, while considering the diverse needs of different community groups, can deepen social cohesion and ensure the long-term success of restoration efforts.