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W+ VERIFICATION REPORT 2026

**Costa Rica REDD+ Result-based Payment
(RBP) for results period 2014-2015**



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Summary

Costa Rica has made notable progress in integrating gender-responsive approaches into forest governance and environmental policy, recognizing women’s empowerment as a critical component of climate action and sustainable development. Within this context, rural and Indigenous women play a vital role in forest conservation, territorial management, and community resilience. Indigenous women, in particular, sustain traditional agroforestry systems that combine productive species with timber and non-timber forest resources, contributing to biodiversity conservation, livelihoods, and ecosystem resilience. Despite these contributions, gender gaps persist in the agricultural and environmental sectors, with women often facing barriers to accessing decision-making spaces, technical training, and formal recognition within forest-related institutions.

In response to these challenges, the project “Pago basado en resultados REDD+ de Costa Rica (RBP) para el período 2014-2015” was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP/PNUD) in coordination with national institutions, community organizations, and women’s groups across multiple territories in Costa Rica. Project activities focused on two key areas of interventions: strengthening women’s participation in governance and decision -making processes at national and territorial levels; and enhancing women’s technical knowledge, gender awareness and understanding of forest governance and forest fire management, while supporting more informed and active participation in conservation and management processes.

The aim of the verification report is to confirm the results contained in the Monitoring Report of W+ Standard application, for measurement and quantification of Leadership and Education & Knowledge domains and its impacts on women’s lives.

The verification process confirmed the outcomes reported under both the **Leadership** and **Education & Knowledge** domains of the project. Under the **Leadership domain**, the verification process also confirmed a **173% increase in leadership scores from baseline**, resulting in the generation of **61,536 W+ Credits** as mentioned in the monitoring report. The findings of the verification process indicate that differentiated strategies tailored to rural and Indigenous women—such as the National Forum of Rural Women and territorially grounded processes linked to the Territorial Forest Action Plans (PAFT)—significantly strengthened women’s leadership capacities. These initiatives supported women in mobilizing others, navigating resistance, communicating across diverse interests, and influencing governance processes. Beyond individual skills, the results reflect broader behavioral and social changes, including increased confidence, stronger collective action, and greater recognition of women’s leadership within their communities.

Under the **Education & Knowledge domain**, the verification process also confirmed a **34% increase in knowledge scores from baseline**, corresponding to the issuance of **367 W+ Credits as mentioned in the monitoring report**. Participants demonstrated improved understanding of



gender equality, women’s rights, forest governance, and climate change through targeted capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities. While the results indicate strong progress in knowledge acquisition and confidence, the findings also highlight the importance of strengthening opportunities for practical application of learning. Enhancing continuity between training activities and operational contexts—particularly in areas such as forest fire management—will be important for consolidating knowledge gains and supporting sustained participation in forest governance processes.

In addition, statistical analysis confirms that the project’s data collection and analysis of W+ Credits are robust and consistent with **W+ Standard guidelines**. A two-sample **t-test** comparing the monitoring and verification datasets shows **no statistically significant difference between the two phases**, confirming the reliability of the reported results. These findings demonstrate that the improvements recorded in both the **Leadership** and **Education & Knowledge** domains are accurate and reflect consistent progress achieved through the project

The **independent verification process** was conducted in **February 2026** using multiple methods. These included a review of key project documents (W+ Project Idea Note / PIN, Project Design Document/PDD, and Monitoring Report/ MR of January 2026), analysis of survey datasets and questionnaires, focus group discussions with women beneficiaries and interviews with the project developer team.

On this basis, the verification team concludes that the project meets the W+ Standard requirements for effectiveness and impact and recommends the certification of **61,536** W+ credits under Leadership and **367** W+ credits under Education and Knowledge.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objective

The independent verification of the REDD+ results-based payments for 2014 and 2015 (*Pago basado en resultados REDD+ de Costa Rica (RBP) para el período 2014-2015*) financed by the GCF was carried out in February 2026. The assessment aimed to confirm the project’s results against the W+ Standard criteria and determine whether it delivered the intended positive impacts for women within the Education & Knowledge and Leadership domains.

1.2 Scope and Criteria

The scope of the verification included the W+ Education & Knowledge and Leadership domains and considered the following indicators as evidence of successful implementation, as outlined in the Project Design Document (PDD).

Leadership Domain	Outcome	Indicators
Outcome	Knowledge & Education Indicators	Leadership Indicators
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women reporting confidence in applying knowledge related to fire management, safety, and a gender-responsive approach. • Evidence of active and safe participation in prevention and response actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women who report having effective influence in governance decisions. • Evidence of collective advocacy influencing policies, plans, or territorial agreements.
End Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women applying learned safety and fire management practices. • Evidence of knowledge exchange within brigades or community-based teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of leadership spaces where women report influence over outcomes. • Diversity of women’s profiles participating (age, territory, ethnic identity).
Intermediate Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women completing training on fire management and gender. • % of women reporting that they understand and can explain key content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women in leadership or spokesperson roles. • % of sustained participation over time. • Existence of spokesperson mechanisms, networks, or expanded representation structures.
Immediate Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % improvement in pre- and post-training evaluation scores. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women reporting increased confidence to speak and make decisions. • % of women reporting greater capacity to articulate collective interests.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women report greater clarity in applying protocols and tools. 	
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of training delivered. • # of women trained. • # of adapted training modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of leadership trainings, mentoring, or accompaniment processes. • # of collective spaces (forums, working groups, territorial processes) strengthened. • # of processes incorporating intercultural and differentiated approaches
Inputs	Human, technical, and organizational resources are mobilized to support women's leadership in a sustained and context-sensitive manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources allocated to women's leadership. • Availability of cultural mediators and translators. • Availability of travel allowances, logistical support, and arrangements facilitating participation. • Existence of institutional support for the sustainability of collective spaces

In addition to the above indicators, the Project's Intentionality for women's empowerment and Do-No-Harm indicators were assessed based on existing mechanisms supporting gender equality. UNDP has an established gender policy, which the project operationalized through a Gender Action Plan with a dedicated budget and monitoring and evaluation framework. The verification process confirmed that the technical team demonstrated strong experience in integrating gender perspectives into projects and public policy, including women's empowerment in the conservation sector and intersectional approaches with Indigenous peoples. The PAFT (Environmental, development and territorial plans) development process has applied selection criteria intended to ensure equal participation opportunities for women from diverse social groups. Verification found that participation in some spaces and training activities within the National Rural Women's Forum primarily involved women who already had prior experience in political advocacy.

Consultations with the selected participant groups mentioned that the participants did not identify any direct harm attributable to the project. Women members confirmed that participation in project activities did not lead to increased physical or emotional violence at the household or community level, the sale of assets to cover participation costs, or widening income gaps between women and men.

The primary challenge of time required to participate in activities, was reported to be mitigated by reorganising domestic, caregiving, or work responsibilities. The participants indicated that the benefits from the project including learning, increased confidence, support networks, access to information, and new opportunities, in fact outweighed the additional time commitment.



During the discussion, it was mentioned that the project created spaces and networks that increased participants' awareness of available support services and pathways for seeking help in cases of gender-based violence, as an unintended impact.

1.3 Level of Assurance

The verification was conducted at a reasonable level of assurance in accordance with the W+ Standard. This level of assurance is supported by evidence of significant and consistent positive outcomes across the two verified domains: Leadership and Education & Knowledge

To verify the reliability of reported outcomes in the Knowledge and Leadership domains, an independent verification survey was conducted and compared with the primary monitoring dataset. The verification sample was selected using the criterion of approximately 10% of the monitoring sample, consistent with standard verification practices. In addition, representativeness in terms of diversity, such as Indigenous peoples, Indigenous territories, and geographic distribution was considered in the final selection of participants. For the Knowledge domain, the monitoring survey included 47 participants, while the verification survey included 6 participants, and all variables used in the monitoring analysis were retained for the verification analysis. For the Leadership domain, outcomes were assessed using the Monitoring Survey (n = 68) and the Verification Survey (n = 11). While the monitoring analysis used 47 variables, the verification analysis applied 40% of these variables, selected to ensure that all key dimensions of leadership change measured during monitoring were still captured. Comparing the monitoring and verification datasets provided an independent check on the reported improvements and strengthened confidence in the reliability of the findings.

Our statistical analysis confirms that the project's data collection and analysis of W+ credits is robust and according to the W+ Standard guidelines. The two-sample t-test was conducted to compare the monitoring and verification datasets. The verification results confirm that the project's data is reliable and reflects consistent progress. Statistical testing shows no significant difference between the monitoring and verification phases¹, proving that the reported gains in the two domains of Leadership and Education and Knowledge are accurate.

These findings validate the original results and highlight the sustained success of the project. The verification process confirmed that the three main core strategies of targeted capacity development, creating collective spaces, and differentiated strategies for different target groups strengthened women's agency and their participation in forest governance, adding to greater coherence and continuity required to sustain these results.

¹ Although the verification survey was conducted with a smaller sample and shows a slightly lower percentage improvement, the difference between the two results falls within the range of normal sampling variation



The verification process reaffirmed the effectiveness of using differentiated strategies tailored to the distinct territorial contexts in Costa Rica. For rural and Indigenous women, the project strengthened women's leadership through the development of a social participation platform, where UNDP's role in facilitating collective spaces and leadership development was strongly recognized. In contrast, for women forest firefighters, the strategy focused on awareness-raising and capacity building on gender and forests, representing an initial but important step in strengthening knowledge and technical skills of the women participants.

Verification confirmed that the development of the Environmental, Forest and Territorial Plans (PAFT) in the 24 Indigenous Territories functioned not only as a planning instrument but also as a mechanism to strengthen community organization, participation, and visibility. The process increased women's participation and enabled them to assume specific roles, including monitoring and oversight, while supporting activities such as outreach, coordination, and mentorship.

The project activities with rural women contributed to the development of a broader platform for women's participation. Beyond training on gender and forests, the process supported women's engagement in public policy advocacy, including contributions toward a proposed Land Law aimed at strengthening women's access to land tenure benefits.

The approach to leadership strengthening built on the existing capacities of women already recognized in their communities, with project activities activating and further developing these abilities rather than creating leadership from scratch, was an important contributor to the project's success. Verification also found that Indigenous women's leadership is expressed more as collective, culturally grounded, and territorially embedded, emphasizing accompaniment and community processes rather than individual directive roles.

In summary, the verification results validate that the project's interventions are not only statistically sound but are successfully driving meaningful, upward progress in creating women leadership and stewardship in forest governance in Costa Rica.

The detailed results of the verification survey are presented in the subsequent subsections.

a) Leadership Domain

The data analysis from the verification survey confirms the outcomes reported in the monitoring survey and indicates a significant improvement in leadership scores following the project intervention. In the monitoring analysis, using approximately 10% of the participant sample and 40% of the variables applied in the full monitoring dataset, the average leadership score increased from 38 at baseline to 98 after the project, representing a 158% increase. Using the same reduced sample approach and variable set for verification, the verification survey shows a similar trend, with scores increasing from 45 to 97, reflecting a 116% improvement. These results demonstrate a consistent and significant positive change in leadership outcomes following the project intervention. While the percentage increase observed in the verification survey is slightly lower than that reported in the monitoring survey, both datasets demonstrate a clear and consistent positive change in leadership outcomes following the project.



A t-test comparing the results of the two datasets indicates that the difference between the monitoring and verification results is statistically insignificant. This suggests that the variation in percentage improvement can be attributed to normal sampling variation, particularly given the smaller sample size used in the verification survey, and that the verification findings are consistent with the outcomes reported in the monitoring survey.

Table: Leadership module

	Monitoring Survey		Verification Survey	
	n	Score	n	Score
After project	68	98	11	97
Before project	68	38	11	45
Percentage Change		158%		116%

The verification process validated the key findings of the monitoring report, confirming the positive changes in women’s leadership outcomes and highlighting several factors that contributed to the sustained leadership gains observed among participants.

- **Sustained leadership outcomes through adaptive implementation:** The strong leadership outcomes among women participants are the result of the project’s strategic approach and adaptive measures taken by the project team. Women participants widely recognized UNDP’s role in facilitating collective spaces for dialogue, learning, and organization, which significantly supported the strengthening of women’s leadership.
- **PAFT as a leadership mechanism:** The Environmental, Forest and Territorial Plans (PAFT) in 24 Indigenous Territories served not only as planning tools but also as mechanisms for strengthening community organization, participation, and women’s visibility in roles such as monitoring, coordination, outreach, and mentorship.
- **Expanded participation and advocacy:** Project activities helped create broader platforms for rural women’s participation, including engagement in public policy advocacy and contributions to a proposed Land Law aimed at improving women’s access to land tenure benefits.
- **Building on existing leadership:** The project’s approach strengthened existing leadership capacities among women already recognized in their communities. Indigenous women’s leadership was found to be collective, culturally grounded, and territorially embedded, emphasizing accompaniment and community-based processes rather than individual directive roles.



b) Education and Knowledge Domain

The verification process and subsequent statistical analysis confirm that the project’s data collection and analysis related to W+ credits are robust and consistent with the W+ Standard guidelines.

	Monitoring Survey		Verification Survey	
	n	Score	N	Score
After project	44	59	6	54
Before project	44	44	6	44
Percentage Change		34%		23%

In the monitoring analysis, using approximately 10% of the participant sample and 40% of the variables applied in the full monitoring dataset, the average leadership score increased from 38 at baseline to 98 after the project, representing a 158% increase. Using the same reduced sample approach and variable set for verification, the verification survey shows a similar trend, with scores increasing from 45 to 97, reflecting a 116% improvement. These results demonstrate a consistent and significant positive change in leadership outcomes following the project intervention. Although the monitoring group demonstrates a higher level of improvement, the statistical analysis accounts for the smaller size of the verification sample as well as natural variability in survey responses. A t-test comparing the results of the two datasets indicates that the difference between the monitoring and verification results is statistically insignificant. This suggests that the variation in percentage improvement can be attributed to normal sampling variation, particularly given the smaller sample size used in the verification survey, and that the verification findings are consistent with the outcomes reported in the monitoring survey.

The verification process validated the key findings of the monitoring report, confirming that the project significantly improved participants’ knowledge and understanding of gender equality, women’s rights, forest governance, and climate change, enabling more informed participation in forest management and governance processes. The following factors contributed to these results:

- **Targeted capacity-building:** Training on gender equality, women’s rights, forest governance, and climate change strengthened beneficiaries’ knowledge and created enabling conditions for women’s informed engagement in forest management and governance.
- **Knowledge exchange and practical learning:** Knowledge-sharing spaces and practical learning opportunities improved participants’ ability to retain, understand, and apply technical and legal information, while also increasing their confidence to share knowledge



and engage more actively in community and governance processes.

Based on the survey and focus group discussions conducted, the verification process confirmed the outcomes reported in the Monitoring Report. **The key findings** are summarized below.

- **Confirmed improvements in women’s leadership capacity**

Monitoring results show substantial gains in the Leadership domain, with leadership scores increasing significantly between baseline and endline and generating a considerable volume of W+ Credits. The verification survey and FGDs confirm these results, validating the marked improvement in leadership scores and **participants’ leadership engagement**. Both monitoring and verification findings highlight qualitative shifts, including **increased confidence, stronger community trust, expanded networking, and a greater ability among women to navigate resistance and participate in collective decision-making processes**.

- **Effectiveness of context-specific leadership pathways**

Both monitoring and verification findings confirm that the **project’s differentiated approach for rural and Indigenous women enabled leadership to develop in ways aligned with local governance systems and cultural contexts**. Rural women **benefited from national collective platforms that facilitated peer exchange and policy engagement**, while Indigenous women **strengthened leadership through territorially grounded and relational governance processes linked to community structures and cultural mediation**.

- **Strong gains in knowledge acquisition and confidence**

Monitoring results in the Education & Knowledge domain show significant improvements in participants’ **understanding of gender equality, women’s rights, forest governance, legal frameworks, and climate change**, reflected in increased knowledge scores and W+ Credit generation. The verification findings confirm these improvements and indicate that capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities **strengthened participants’ ability to understand, retain, and share technical and legal knowledge, creating enabling conditions for more informed participation in forest governance**.

- **Knowledge exchange strengthened peer learning and participation**

Verification findings further highlight that knowledge-sharing spaces and practical learning opportunities helped participants **consolidate knowledge and increased their confidence to share information with others in their communities**. These collective learning processes contributed to **wider dissemination of knowledge and strengthened women’s engagement in governance and community processes**.

- **Constraints in applying knowledge and sustaining leadership engagement**



Both monitoring and verification results point to **challenges in translating knowledge into practice and sustaining leadership engagement**. Opportunities for practical application of **training were uneven**, particularly where learning activities were short or not fully integrated into operational processes. In addition, women often invest significant time in leadership and governance activities alongside existing livelihood and care responsibilities, especially where leadership roles are **unpaid**. Structural constraints and limited peer networks also mean that external-facing leadership roles—such as networking and public representation—are **still emerging** for some participants, particularly Indigenous women.

- **Implications for sustainability and future programming**

Taken together, the monitoring and verification findings demonstrate that targeted capacity development, collective spaces, and context-responsive strategies effectively **strengthened women’s leadership and knowledge in forest governance**. At the same time, the results highlight the **importance of addressing time constraints, economic sustainability, and opportunities for practical application of knowledge** to consolidate and sustain these gains in future phases of the project

1.4 Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report Summary

The project applied the Leadership and Education & Knowledge domains of the W+ Standard to assess the impact of its activities on women beneficiaries and their communities. The monitoring findings indicate meaningful progress in both Leadership and Education & Knowledge, demonstrating that targeted capacity development, collective spaces, and context-specific strategies strengthened women’s agency and participation in forest governance.

Leadership

The monitoring findings show substantial gains in the **Leadership domain**, with leadership scores increasing significantly between baseline and endline, resulting in the generation of a considerable volume of W+ Credits. Beyond quantitative improvements, the results reflect qualitative shifts in women’s leadership, including increased confidence, reduced perceptions of resistance, stronger community trust, and expanded networking. These outcomes indicate that leadership development was effectively strengthened through collective spaces and shared processes rather than through isolated individual advancement.

At the same time, sustaining leadership engagement requires significant time investments from women who balance leadership roles with existing livelihood and care responsibilities, particularly where leadership roles are unpaid. The project’s differentiated approach for rural and Indigenous women enabled leadership to emerge in contextually relevant ways—through national collective platforms and policy engagement for rural women, and through territorially grounded governance processes for Indigenous women. However, while leadership capacity increased across both groups, differences in consolidation and visibility remain, particularly for Indigenous women, as



external-facing leadership roles such as networking, communication, and public recognition are still developing due to structural constraints and limited peer networks.

Under the Leadership domain, changes were assessed across 68 women participants. The project achieved a 173% increase in leadership scores from baseline conditions, resulting in the generation of 61,536 W+ Credits.

Education and Knowledge

The monitoring findings in the **Education & Knowledge domain** indicate strong progress in knowledge acquisition and comprehension among participants. Clear improvements were observed across thematic areas such as forest governance, gender-responsive forestry, legal frameworks, and climate change, resulting in measurable increases in knowledge scores and W+ Credit generation. Many beneficiaries also reported greater confidence in sharing knowledge with others, suggesting strong potential for peer learning and wider dissemination within communities.

At the same time, the findings highlight limitations in the practical application of knowledge. While retention and confidence improved significantly, opportunities to apply learning were uneven, particularly where training activities were short, isolated, or not fully integrated into broader project processes. In operational areas such as forest fire prevention and response, limited opportunities for collective and team-based practice further constrained the translation of knowledge into action.

In the Education & Knowledge domain, 47 women participants were surveyed and the project generated a 34% increase in knowledge scores from baseline, corresponding to the issuance of 367 W+ Credits.

2. VERIFICATION PROCESS AND APPROACH

The verification process was designed to assess and validate the results contained in the monitoring Report of Costa Rica REDD+ Result-based Payment (RBP) for results period 2014-2015 (*Pago basado en resultados REDD+ de Costa Rica (RBP) para el período 2014-2015*)

The verification focused on the Leadership and Education & Knowledge domains. The approach combined a rigorous review of documents with observations and direct engagement of project stakeholders to ensure accuracy, credibility, and alignment with W+ requirements. This approach ensured flexibility and enabled the verifier to gain insights into the reported experiences of the women.

2.1 Method and Criteria

The study followed the following approaches and methods:



- Examination of the data collection process as presented in the Monitoring Report and accuracy of the W+ calculation approach.
- Virtual and in-situ interviews and group discussions to:
 - Verify the information from document review and interviews and discussions with the stakeholders
 - Gain an understanding of the level and nature of the impacts on women who have participated in the project
 - Gain an understanding of the project developer's purpose and processes of implementing the activities and plans to address the challenges outlined in the gender analysis component of the PDD

2.1.1 Document Review

A detailed examination of relevant documents was conducted to ensure consistency of reported results and accuracy of the W+ calculation methodology. The documents reviewed included the Monitoring Report, PIN and PDD. The data collection process as presented in the Monitoring Report and accuracy of the W+ calculation approach was also examined.

To verify the results of the Leadership and Education and Knowledge domains, the following documents were reviewed:

- a) W+ Project Idea Note (PIN)
 - Background of the project
- b) W+ Project Design Document (PDD)
 - Stakeholder Analysis
 - Gender Analysis
 - Women's Empowerment Plan (WEP)
 - Project's Intentionality
 - Do No Harm Indicators
 - Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
 - Benefit Sharing Mechanism
 - Survey questionnaire
- c) Monitoring Report, July 2025, including:
 - Summary and Analysis of W+ Results (Including calculation of the percentage of change)
 - W+ unit calculation approach
- d) PAFT (Environmental and Social Management Plan), 2025 which provides a



framework for managing environmental and social risks, strengthening community benefits, and promoting gender inclusion, while ensuring compliance with national regulations and UNDP social and Environmental Standards (SES).

Each document was cross-checked against the others and compared with insights from the interviews and stakeholder consultations to ensure consistency and accuracy. This comprehensive review of documentation provided strong support for the findings presented.

2.1.2 Interviews and Consultations

In-situ verification interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with women beneficiaries were conducted between February 16th to 18th 2026. The purpose of these consultations was to deepen understanding of the types and extent of outcomes experienced by women who participated in the capacity building training for technical skill enhancement and leadership for improved forest management and governance. Stakeholder interviews and consultations included the following steps:

i. Engagement with Project Staff

Engagements with project staff focused on clarifying project interventions and outcomes and understanding how identified challenges were being addressed in practice. Verification interviews with key stakeholders included an initial meeting with UNDP on 16th February 2026. These discussions aimed to gather perspectives on achievements and challenges, validate information presented in the January 2026 Monitoring Report, and assess how the project was aligning with the *do no harm* principle, particularly in response to women's concerns related to drudgery (physical, time and emotional).

ii. Surveys

The verification survey used a purposive sampling approach to ensure representation across key participant groups and contexts, considering socioeconomic status, Indigenous identity, territorial representation, and geographic diversity. For the Education & Knowledge domain, the survey targeted women forest firefighters through a virtual modality, with six participants, representing approximately 15% of the 47 participants surveyed in the monitoring survey. For the Leadership domain, the survey was conducted in person with ten participants-six Indigenous women and five rural women, representing approximately 10% of the participants included in the monitoring survey. Data collection was conducted by certified W+ Verifier.

iii. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

FGDs were conducted separately to understand the impact especially in the Leadership domain. Two separate FGDs were conducted, one with six women from the indigenous territories and five women from the rural territories to understand in depth the impact of



differentiated project interventions and strategy and also to determine differentiated impact which was reported in the monitoring report. FGDs were conducted in Spanish and provided collective perspectives that complemented the individual survey findings.

2.1.3 Observations

Observation was used as a complementary technique during focus group discussions (FGDs) with the different groups of women participants to better validate the project's impacts beyond self-reported responses. During the discussions, W+ verification expert observed group dynamics, levels of participation, confidence in expressing opinions, interactions among participants, and the ways women articulated their experiences related to leadership, knowledge, and community engagement. These observations helped contextualize survey responses and provided additional insights into how project activities influenced women's agency, collective participation, and application of knowledge in their communities.

2.1.4. Triangulation of Evidence

Findings from the document review, interviews, surveys, FGDs, and observations were triangulated to ensure consistency and accuracy. This analysis strengthened the reliability of the conclusions regarding the project's contributions to Leadership and Knowledge in forest management and governance. The insights were then consolidated into a clear and coherent report that reflects both the evidence gathered and the patterns identified across all data sources.

Discussion Questions for the Women Beneficiaries

During the document review, the verification team developed data-collection checklists to validate information in the Monitoring Report and to better understand women's experiences within the project. For understanding the impact of the project, the questions outlined below were organized as broad guiding prompts during discussions with the women beneficiaries, intended to steer the discussions rather than function as strict or prescriptive directives. The following key questions guided the discussions:

Domain	Key questions
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflecting on your experience before the project and now after participating in the training, what knowledge, skills, or practices have most strengthened your capacity and confidence as women leaders?• The project used different strategies and forms of support for rural and Indigenous women (such as PSA, Fire Management, PAFT, and others). Which of these activities or approaches were most meaningful or useful for you, and why?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From your experience in the project, which activities or processes have helped strengthen your recognition within the community and support collective leadership among women? ● For Indigenous women: Thinking about before and after participating in the leadership training, how has your way of exercising leadership within your territory and community changed, particularly in relation to cultural values, relationships, and collective decision-making? ● What types of emotional, social, and institutional obstacles have you encountered and overcome? ● What are some of the opportunities that helped you move forward and new stories you can tell about yourselves (counter narratives) ● How do you use your leadership skills and knowledge in your work (organization) and what results have you achieved?
Education and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What new understanding or skills have you gained regarding gender rights, forest management and governance and how does your current knowledge compare to what you knew before the project? ● In what ways have you put this new knowledge into practice? For example, have you trained others, or experienced greater confidence and impact in your work?
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you encountered any challenges while participating in this project? If so, please describe them. ● In what ways has the project helped to resolve or respond to these challenges?
Project staff	<p>What actions have been taken to address women concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equal access to opportunities and participation for women from diverse groups, including rural and Indigenous women. ● Avoid drudgery and facilitate active participation ● Access to collective space for advocacy ● Access to women leadership in forest governance ● Created informal and formal space to channel concerns ● Addressed structural and cultural challenges



2.4 Resolution of Findings

The Monitoring Report (July 2025) and the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted during the verification process indicate that while the project has created important opportunities for women’s leadership and participation, some unintended challenges affecting women’s engagement—particularly in capacity-building activities and governance processes—also emerged. The discussions, consistent with the monitoring findings, highlighted structural and contextual barriers that influence women’s ability to fully participate.

These insights provide an important opportunity for the project to further align with the “do no harm” principle, ensuring that efforts to strengthen women’s empowerment do not inadvertently create additional burdens or compromise their well-being. The issues identified through the monitoring and verification processes, along with the responses adopted or areas requiring further attention, are summarized below.

1. Participation constraints due to time, care responsibilities, and financial limitations

Women face challenges balancing leadership activities with work, family, and unpaid care responsibilities, which limits their ability to attend meetings and participate consistently.

- **Resolution observed: Both PAFT and National Forum for Rural Women provided financial support for participation costs, such as transportation and meeting expenses, which participants highlighted as crucial in enabling their continued engagement.**

2. Administrative and technical complexity

Women reported difficulties managing accounting, proposals, and other technical requirements, especially for those without formal education. Administrative formats were perceived as complex and poorly adapted to community realities.

- **Resolution:** The National Forum for Rural Women addressed this by providing specific trainings, which could not be fully addressed for PAFT.

3. Limited Infrastructure and Resources for Women Led Initiatives

Women-led productive projects are constrained by lack of land, physical infrastructure, and resources, which restricts women’s ability to organize and expand economic activities.



- **Resolution identified:** Participants emphasized the importance of stronger institutional support to improve access to resources, infrastructure, and productive opportunities.

4. Cultural and social barriers to women's leadership

Machismo, discrimination against Indigenous women, and fear of speaking publicly were identified as longstanding barriers to participation and leadership.

- **Resolution observed:** Leadership training and collective participation spaces created by the project have helped build confidence, challenge machismo, and increase women's visibility, contributing to gradual cultural change.

5. Emerging empowerment and social recognition

Participants noted increased visibility and empowerment of both young women and elders in leadership roles.

- **Resolution outcome:** The project's capacity-building and collective engagement processes are contributing to growing recognition of women's leadership and strengthening intergenerational participation.

2.6 Forward Action Request

Future project phases should strengthen the enabling conditions that support women's leadership, ensuring that capacity-building efforts are complemented by structural and institutional support. Continued use of differentiated, intercultural, and collective approaches is recommended, while also addressing barriers such as time constraints, limited resources, and unpaid workloads that may affect women's sustained participation.

In the Education & Knowledge domain, it is recommended to better integrate training within broader project processes to strengthen the transition from knowledge acquisition to practical application. This may include follow-up sessions, peer-learning opportunities, and hands-on practice. Strengthening collective learning spaces and links between knowledge development, community practice, and institutional processes will help consolidate learning outcomes and support sustained engagement in forest governance and conservation.



3. VALIDATION FINDINGS

3.1 Project Description Deviations

There are no deviations from the project description.

3.2. Project Eligibility of any new activities initiated during monitoring period

The project qualifies for the consideration under the W+ Standard's eligibility criteria. The verification team has thoroughly examined the method (Leadership and Education and Knowledge). After reviewing the method documents and conducting wider consultations, the team confidently affirms that the project activities and implemented methods align with the project's stated purpose and have been effectively applied and verified.

3.3 Method Deviations

There have been no method deviations applied to this program.



4. VERIFICATION FINDINGS

4.1 Project Implementation Status

The project implementation has been in accordance with the project description and monitored effectively using appropriate sampling techniques, as well as group and individual interviews. No significant material discrepancies have been found between the implemented monitoring system, the project description, and the W+ methods applied. The verification team can confidently confirm that the project was implemented as outlined in its description.

4.2 Accuracy of Calculations of Women's Empowerment Benefits

To ensure the highest standards of data quality, the following verification methods were applied to address the overall questions:

i) Were the steps for the W+ calculation followed?

Verification: Yes, the steps for the W+ calculation were followed according to the guidelines when generating W+ units.

ii) Does the sampling method follow the W+ data collection methods?

Verification: Yes, the sampling method adheres to W+ data collection methods. The sample size was calculated in accordance with W+ guidelines, achieving a 95% confidence level (Source: Ghana monitoring report), which exceeds the minimum requirement of 90%.

iii) Is there reasonable assurance that the data collection methods being used do not produce systematically biased data?

Verification: Yes, there is reasonable assurance that the data collection methods do not produce systematically biased data. The verification team examined the selection process of sample beneficiaries and found no evidence of biased selection. The respondents were chosen randomly from the list of beneficiaries.

iv) Does the information collected measure what it is supposed to measure?

Verification: Yes, the information collected measures what it is supposed to measure. The Leadership and Education and Knowledge domains collected data following the guidelines from W+ with program-specific contextualization.

v) Are mechanisms in place to prevent unauthorized changes to the data?

Verification: Yes, mechanisms are in place to prevent unauthorized changes to the data. The data



was collected using Kobo Collect on mobile devices. Once submitted, enumerators do not have the authority to edit it. Meanwhile, the data analyst performs real-time data checks to identify any inconsistencies.

vi) Has the data analysis method/W+ calculation been documented?

Verification: Yes, the data analysis method and W+ unit generation have been thoroughly documented. The verification team reviewed the documentation and double-checked the data used for the calculations. We reran the provided syntax file and found no inconsistencies, confirming the accuracy and reliability of the documented procedures. It was confirmed that the following formula is used as of the W+ guidelines.

W+ Results Calculation for Leadership

Calculation of the percentage of change =
$$\frac{(\text{Beneficiary average Leadership score} - \text{Non beneficiary Leadership score}) \times 100}{\text{Non beneficiary average income}}$$

Calculation of the number of W+ Credits

- 1 unit = 1 % improvement in one woman's life, in relation to one domain over the monitoring period.
- Total number of units = percentage of change x number of woman beneficiaries

W+ Results Calculation for Education and Knowledge

The total increase in Education and Knowledge for women benefiting from project interventions is calculated by comparing the increase in their knowledge after the project intervention compared to before it.

Calculation of the percentage of change =
$$\frac{(\text{Beneficiary average Knowledge score} - \text{Non beneficiary average Knowledge score}) \times 100}{\text{Non beneficiary average Knowledge score}}$$

Calculation of the number of W+ Credits

- 1 unit = 1 % improvement in one woman's life, in relation to one domain over the monitoring period.
- Total number of units= percentage of change x number of woman beneficiaries

In conclusion, the verification process confirmed that all aspects of data quality assurance were followed, ensuring the integrity and reliability of the collected data.



4.3 Quality of Evidence to Determine Women's Empowerment Benefits

The verifier used various sources of evidence to determine the women's empowerment benefits.

- The Monitoring Report includes the explanation of data flow from data generation to data aggregation and unit calculation.
- Interview with the Project staff.
- FGDs with women participating in REDD+ project.
- The survey data derived directly from women beneficiaries collected and analyzed following the W+ measurement standards.

Testimonials and Examples from Women Beneficiaries

- Indigenous women, who participated as community leader in the PAFT development process, and as monitor or audit committee members.

Johanna:

"The training gave me confidence to speak and overcome the barriers of machismo. Now I feel stronger in my role as a leader."

"In our communities there has been fear of speaking up, especially for Indigenous women. But through this process we have gained confidence and begun to challenge machismo and discrimination."

Iris:

"Before, women's leadership was timid. Now we see organized groups of women leading initiatives and participating actively in our communities."

Abigail:

"The process gave us tools to make the needs of Indigenous women visible and to strengthen the leadership that already existed in our territories."

"Sometimes we are expected to manage accounting, proposals, and technical requirements without having formal training. We need support that understands our realities and helps us learn without feeling overwhelmed."

Sesia:

"For me, leadership is not about authority—it is about supporting others, listening, and taking action when the community needs it."



"Many of us work and care for our families, so finding time for meetings is not always easy. The support from the PAFT to cover transportation and participation costs has made it possible for us to stay involved and continue contributing to our communities."

Lidia:

"We have ideas and initiatives, but sometimes we lack land, infrastructure, or spaces to develop them. With stronger institutional support, women's projects could grow and benefit the whole community."

- Rural women, who participate in leadership training and as representatives of rural areas in policy advocacy processes.

Ana Gaitán:

"We are those people who have to take these tools to other rural women, it is not to keep it, it is to replicate it."

Patricia:

"The most concrete thing is to recognize and appropriate the legal framework... to recognize it, understand it and apply it."

Laura:

"I'm not ashamed to stand in front of anyone and talk about what we've been through and the rights we have."

Lourdes:

"The UNDP project has helped us to open our eyes and to fight for these inequality gaps."

Lidieth:

"They taught us to value ourselves as people, as women, and to defend women's human rights."

The verification exercise confirms the following

The verification process confirms the monitoring findings across both the Leadership and Education & Knowledge domains. In the Leadership domain, results show substantial improvement in women's leadership capacity, with leadership scores increasing significantly between baseline and endline among 68 participants, resulting in a 173% increase and the generation of 61,536 W+ Credits. Verification findings also confirm qualitative changes, including increased confidence, stronger community trust, expanded networking, and greater ability among women to engage in collective leadership processes. The results further validate that the project's differentiated strategies for rural and Indigenous women supported context-specific leadership pathways, although external visibility and networking for Indigenous women continue to develop gradually.



In the Education & Knowledge domain, verification confirms strong improvements in participants' knowledge of forest governance, gender-responsive forestry, legal frameworks, and climate change. These gains translated into measurable increases in knowledge scores and the issuance of 367 W+ Credits, with participants reporting greater confidence in sharing knowledge within their communities. At the same time, verification findings confirm the monitoring observation that while knowledge acquisition improved significantly, opportunities for practical application were sometimes limited, particularly where training activities were short or not fully integrated into operational contexts such as forest fire management.

In conclusion, the field findings are robust and dependable, accurately capturing the experiences and perspectives of the women beneficiaries of the project.



5. W+ RESULTS

5.1 W+ Domains

Method (W+ Domain)	Leadership	Education and Knowledge
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained participation of women in leadership and governance spaces • Effective influence on processes and decisions • Improved capacity and trust building • Established Collective leadership and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to training programs • Improvement in technical and gender knowledge • Understanding and appropriation of the content • Ability to apply knowledge • Enabling conditions for participation • Intercultural and gender approach
Indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women who report active participation in decision-making spaces • % of women who report influence on outcomes or agreements • % of women who report greater confidence in expressing themselves and leading • Evidence of active collective spaces (forums, networks, spokespeople) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women who complete training • % improvement in scores before and after training • % of women who report understanding and explaining the content • % of women who report confidence in applying tools and protocols • Identification of persistent barriers (time mobility, language) • Evidence of the use of cultural mediation, translation, and adapted formats



<p>Situation</p>	<p>The project resulted in significant strengthening of women’s leadership, agency, and participation in governance processes. By applying differentiated strategies tailored to the distinct contexts of rural and Indigenous women, the project created opportunities for women to engage more actively in collective spaces, capacity-building initiatives, and decision-making processes. These efforts enhanced women’s ability to mobilize others, address resistance, and contribute to organizational and governance outcomes within their communities and territories. The results demonstrate that leadership development extended beyond individual skill-building to include broader behavioral and social changes. Women reported greater confidence, stronger collective action, and increased recognition of their leadership roles within communities, organizations, and territorial governance structures, reinforcing their position as active agents of change.</p>	<p>The project led to notable improvements in participants’ knowledge and awareness across key areas, including gender equality, women’s rights, forest governance, and climate change. Through targeted capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities, beneficiaries enhanced their ability to understand, retain, and use technical and legal information relevant to forest management. Many participants also reported increased confidence in sharing this knowledge within their communities. These improvements are reflected in measurable increases in knowledge scores and the generation of W+ Credits. Overall, the results indicate that the project successfully strengthened knowledge and awareness as important enabling factors for women’s more informed and active participation in forest management and governance processes.</p>
<p>Justification</p>	<p>There is substantial improvement in women’s leadership capacity. Verification findings also confirm qualitative changes, including increased confidence, stronger community trust, expanded networking, and greater ability among women to engage in collective leadership processes. The results further validate that the project’s differentiated</p>	<p>The verification process confirms strong improvements in participants’ knowledge of forest governance, gender-responsive forestry, legal frameworks, and climate change. These gains translated into measurable increases in knowledge scores with participants reporting greater confidence in sharing knowledge within their communities. At the same time, verification findings confirm the monitoring observation</p>



	<p>strategies for rural and Indigenous women supported context-specific leadership pathways, although external visibility and networking for Indigenous women continue to develop gradually.</p>	<p>that while knowledge acquisition improved significantly, opportunities for practical application were sometimes limited, particularly where training activities were short or not fully integrated into operational contexts such as forest fire management.</p>
<p>Evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Report • FGDs and Surveys results • Discussions with the Project Developer team. • Observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Report • FGDs and Surveys results • Records • Discussions with the Project Developer team. • Observations

5.2 Direct Payment Mechanism

The W+ Credits generated through this project can support the continued strengthening of women’s leadership, knowledge, and participation in forest governance within the REDD+ framework in Costa Rica. Revenue from the sale of W+ Credits may be reinvested in activities that expand capacity-building, leadership development, and technical training for rural and Indigenous women, including initiatives related to forest conservation, fire management, and climate resilience. These resources can help sustain women’s participation in territorial and national decision-making spaces and support women-led initiatives that contribute to sustainable forest management and community resilience. Through this approach, W+ Credits can reinforce the social co-benefits of REDD+ while ensuring that women remain active agents in climate and forest governance processes. A clear coordinated and transparent monitoring system will be essential to ensure accountability and traceability.



6. ANALYSIS OF W+ RESULTS

6.1. Current Performance

The verification focused upon the Leadership and Education and Knowledge domains.

The score reflects a comprehensive verification of all evidence provided to the verification team, including interviews with women beneficiaries, project developers, and feedback received. This evidence supports the conclusion that the project has successfully achieved its immediate, intermediate, and end outcomes. The leadership score suggests that the impact is very strongly demonstrated both at governance and advocacy level, the knowledge score indicates that there is scope to further strengthen aspects of translating knowledge into practice. The project achieved an average score of **2.22 out of 3**, placing the overall impact in between ‘much better’ to ‘very much better’ categories.

W+ Domain	Desired Outcome	No Change (0)	Somewhat Better (+1)	Much Better (+2)	Very Much Better (+3)
Leadership	Sustained participation of women in leadership and governance spaces				X
	Effective influence on processes and decisions			X	
	Improved capacity and trust building				X
	Established Collective leadership and support				X
Education and Knowledge	Access to training programs			X	
	Improvement in technical and gender knowledge			X	
	Understanding and appropriation of the content			X	
	Ability to apply knowledge		X		



	Enabling conditions for participation			X	
	Intercultural and gender approach			X	

6.2. Non-Permanence Risk Analysis

No major risks to project continuity or overall sustainability were identified.



7. VERIFICATION OF (AUDIT) CONCLUSION

The project meets the verification criteria for projects and women’s empowerment benefits as outlined in the W+ Standard and Program Guide. The verification team confirms that the project has been implemented in accordance with its project description.

During the verification period, the project achieved **61903 credits**

Women’s Empowerment Benefits	W+ Credits generated in Verification Period 1.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Substantial gains in leadership capacity through collective action ● Qualitative shifts in how women participate in leadership activities, apply leadership skills, navigate resistance, and contribute to collective outcomes. ● Reductions in perceived resistance, increases in self-confidence, improved trust from communities, and expanded networking ● Benefits from collective national platforms 	Leadership 61536 W+ Credits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge acquisition and comprehension, with clear improvements across thematic areas on gender, forest management and governance ● Confidence in sharing knowledge with others 	Education and Knowledge 367 W+ Credits
Total	61903 W+ Credits



8. W+ VERIFICATION – STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

During the W+ project verification, the verification team observed clear evidence of significant improvements in women’s knowledge related to gender equality, forest management and governance, and climate change. The findings indicate that women participants have developed greater confidence and capacity to engage in forest governance processes and to advocate for women’s rights within their communities and organizations. These outcomes are supported by documented evidence and are consistent with the data and records presented in the project’s monitoring reports.

Based on the extent of these observed changes and their potential sustainability, the verification team concludes that the project “Costa Rica REDD+ Result-based Payment (RBP) for results period 2014-2015” warrants a reasonable level of assurance.

Signed, 12th March 2026

Integrity Verifiers LLC

Reviewed, 5 March 2026

Barun Gurung
Integrity Verifiers



Annex 1: Consultation Schedule

February 14-20.

February 14-15	Monday, February 16	Tuesday, February 17	Wednesday, February 18	Thursday 19	Friday 20
<p>Saturday 14: Arrives in the country at 11:35 p.m.</p> <p>Sunday 15: Preparation of materials.</p>	<p>8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Background meeting and coordination (project team and W+ Verifiers).</p> <p>Zoom link required.</p>	<p>8:00 to 14:00 Face-to-face session on leadership with 6 indigenous women.</p> <p>(i) 6 individual surveys (30min each) (ii) 1 Focus group</p> <p>14:00-15:00 Virtual Session- Leadership Mastery with Amanda Acosta. Link/Zoom link required.</p>	<p>8:00 to 14:00 Face-to-face session on leadership with 4 rural women.</p> <p>(i) 5 Individual Surveys (30min each) (ii) 1 Focus group</p>	<p>08:00 to 10:00 Feedback meeting and next steps (project team and W+ verifiers).</p> <p>10:00 to 12:00 Virtual session - Knowledge Mastery with 2 women:</p> <p>Woman 5: 10:00 (1hr) Woman 5: 11:00 (1hr)</p>	<p>Departure from the country: 13:22</p>
	<p>15:00-16:00 Virtual session - Knowledge Mastery with 1 woman:</p> <p>Woman 1: 15:00 (1hr)</p> <p>Link/Zoom link required.</p>	<p>16:00 a 18:00 Virtual session - Knowledge Domain with 2 women:</p> <p>Virtual session - Knowledge Domain with 2 women:</p> <p>Woman 2: 16:00 (1 hour) Woman 3: 18:00 (1 hour)</p> <p>Zoom link</p>	<p>18:00-19:00 Virtual session - Knowledge domain with 1 woman:</p> <p>Woman 4: 18:00 (1hr)</p> <p>Link/Zoom link required.</p>	<p>Link/Zoom link required.</p> <p>13:00 to 17:00 Systematization of surveys and FGDs (W+ Verifiers).</p>	



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Annex 2: List of Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) Participants

Knowledge Domain: 6 Women Forest Firefighters

- Pamela Campos Chávez
- Daphnie Robleto Arias
- Gloriela Valerín Mena
- Adriana Ortega Campos
- María Luisa Arias Jiménez
- María Badilla Prado

Leadership Domain: 6 Indigenous Women and 5 Rural Women

Indigenous Women

- Sesia Sandoval Domínguez
- Iris Leck Quirós
- Abigail Rodríguez Calderón
- Amanda Acosta
- Johanna Arias Cascante
- Lidia Ruiz Bejarano

Rural Women

- Patricia Ruiz
- Ana Gaitán Estrada
- Lidieth Sequeira Obregón
- Laura Alfaro González
- Lourdes Acosta Moraga