



Vi Agroforestry

**Availability of Expertise for
Carbon Projects Validation
and Verification in Africa under
the Verified Carbon Standard
(VCS) Framework**



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Context of Carbon Markets and VVB:s	3
1.2 Objectives of the study	4
1.3 Significance of the Study	4
1.4 Methodology	4
2. Desktop Review	5
2.1 Role of VVB:s in the VCS Framework	5
2.2 Global Mapping of VVB:s	5
2.3 Operating as VVB under the VCS	6
2.4 Sectoral Scope of Existing VVB:s	7
2.5 Challenges faced by VVB:s in validating and verifying carbon projects in Africa	8
2.5.1 Logistical and infrastructure constraints	8
2.5.2 Language and legal barriers	8
2.5.3 Shortage of sectoral experts and limited local capacity	8
2.5.4 Longer turnaround times and high cost	8
2.6 Literature Gaps addressed	9
3. Survey Findings	10
3.1 Profile of the respondents	10
3.2 Sectoral scope	11
3.3 Project Volumes and Turnaround Time	12
3.4 VVB Presence and Operation in Africa	12
3.5 Experience in verifying projects in Africa	13
3.6 Validation and Verification Costs for Carbon Projects in Africa	13
3.7 Main challenges VVB:s face when operating in Africa	13
3.7.1 Logistics and cost barriers	14
3.7.2 Security and political risks	14
3.7.3 Knowledge gaps and limited local expertise	14
3.7.4 Legal and regulatory constraints	15
3.7.5 Language and cultural barriers	15
3.8 Key capacity gaps	15
4. Conclusions	16
5. References	18
6. Annexes	19
Annex 1: Full VVB Questionnaire	19
Annex 2: List of VVB:s Accredited under VCS (2024)	20



As demand for verified carbon credits grows, Africa faces a shortage of locally present Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs), leading to higher costs and delays for carbon projects.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context of Carbon Markets and VVB:s

In the face of climate change, carbon markets have emerged as a global strategy in efforts to mitigate its effects leading to the surge in the demand for verified carbon credits. Africa is at the forefront of the climate crisis despite contributing minimally to the GHGs emissions. With over 90% of the population relying heavily on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, severe impacts on lives, livelihoods and ecosystems are being experienced across the continent. The voluntary carbon market has presented an opportunity to deal with these impacts while gaining from the sale of carbon credits. At the heart of a functioning carbon market ecosystem are the Validation and Verification Bodies (vVB:s), third party auditors who ensure that verified credits are of high quality and achieve high environmental integrity. Globally, the Verified Carbon Standard (vcs) administered by Verra is a leading crediting program with over 90% of credits validated under the vcs, placing a heavy demand on vVB:s accredited under this standard. vVB:s have a significant impact on the success and scaling up of carbon projects especially when countries and corporations are scaling up their climate commitments to Net Zero targets under frameworks like the Paris Agreement and Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi). Therefore, the demand for high-quality, independently verified carbon credits is rising making the availability of skilled, accessible and regionally relevant vVB:s more important than ever.

vVB:s, located anywhere in the world, are eligible to provide validation and verification services if they meet the set criteria by different standards. Under vcs framework, there are over 50 vVB:s accredited and spread across the 16 sectoral scopes most of which are headquartered in North America, Europe, and Asia. In Africa, however, the number of vVB:s actively operating is limited. Out of the 50 accredited

vVB:s only 3 have established offices within Africa i.e. RINA, TÜV NORD and Gasto. This poses challenges for project developers who often face high verification costs and long delays due to the reliance on international teams with limited presence on the continent.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- Identify the existing vVB:s in Africa under vCS and analyzing their operational capacity (in terms of experience, number of qualified experts, turnaround time, site specificity, sectoral and regional expertise) and identify significant gaps hindering timely carbon project validation and verification.
- To understand vVB:s limitations, challenges and opportunities in delivering verification services in Africa.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Africa has immense potential to participate in the global carbon market through nature-based carbon projects, yet verification challenges are slowing project implementation, scaling up as well as access to carbon finance. Project developers have reported long verification delays, high verification costs and inconsistent availability of sector-specific experts. Prior studies on carbon market development have been on global perspective with a limited focus on Africa. This study aims to map vVB availability and gather direct insights from accredited vVB:s to identify the root causes of verification delays and high costs. This study will significantly contribute to understanding the structural and operational causes of delays in the validation and verification of carbon projects in Africa. The findings will inform key carbon market players i.e. Verra, carbon project developers, donors, proponents and policymakers on ways to enhance the continent's ability to contribute to global climate action through high-quality carbon projects.

1.4 Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining a structured desktop review (objective 1) with primary data collection through questionnaires and interviews (objective 2). Data sources included Verra's vCS registry, Ecosystem Marketplace reports and publicly available literature on vVB operations. The review focused on identifying the number, geographic coverage and sectoral expertise of accredited vVB:s under vCS framework. It also consulted secondary sources such as reports from the Africa Carbon Markets Initiative (ACMI), the International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance (ICROA) and sustainability-focused research institutions. These sources provided insights into Africa's carbon market landscape, validation and verification challenges.

A structured questionnaire was administered to 22 sampled vVB:s and additional semi-structured interviews were conducted to validate and deepen the findings with priority given to those who have verified African projects. It included both closed and open-ended questions on capacity, turnaround time, geographic coverage, challenges and recommendations. Data from the survey was thematically analyzed. The study faced limitations in response rates; however, triangulation of multiple sources enhanced the validity of the findings.



Africa has only three VCS-accredited Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs), contributing to higher costs and delays in carbon project verification.

2. Desktop Review

This section presents a review of existing literature and data related to the availability and capacity of Validation and Verification Bodies (VVB:s) under VCS framework with a specific focus on Africa. This establishes an understanding of the global VVB landscape, their sectoral expertise and the unique operational challenges faced in Africa, while identifying the knowledge gaps this study seeks to address.

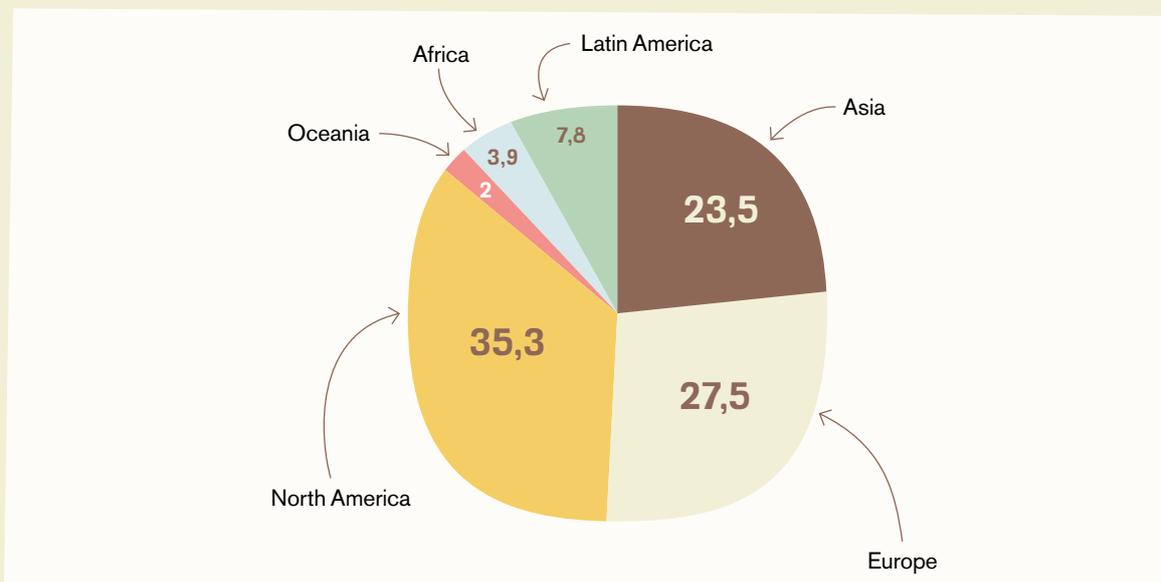
2.1 Role of VVB:s in the VCS Framework

Validation and Verification Bodies (VVB:s) are independent third-party entities accredited to assess whether carbon projects meet the eligibility and performance criteria under specific carbon standards. They conduct validation (evaluating the design and proposed outcomes of a carbon project) and verification (confirming the actual emission reductions or removals achieved) of carbon projects (Verra, 2024). The accreditation process, to become a VVB under the VCS involves a recognized accreditation bodies such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and compliance with ISO standards primarily ISO 14065:2020 (for GHG validation and verification bodies) and ISO/IEC 17029.

2.2 Global Mapping of VVB:s

According to Verra's VCS registry (2024), there are over 50 accredited VVB:s globally most of which operate out of developed countries such as North America, Europe and Asia. This is attributed to strong regulatory frameworks, technical institutions and robust carbon markets in those regions. In contrast, Africa is home to only three accredited VVB:s i.e. RINA, TÜV NORD and Gasto with most verification services in the region being conducted by international firms that fly in external experts.

While a few international vvb:s maintain partnerships in Africa (e.g., in Kenya, South Africa or Ghana), there remains no Africa-based vvb with full accreditation across all relevant sectoral scopes. This has contributed to verification delays and higher project development costs on the continent (Goldstein & Gonzalez, 2021). According to Verra, less than 20% of accredited vvb:s are known to work consistently in African contexts.



SOURCE: VERRA REGISTRY (2024)

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of VCS-accredited VVBs

This pie chart shows the huge vvb imbalance, with the vast majority based in North America, Europe and Asia and Africa’s underrepresentation in the global verification ecosystem.

2.3 Operating as VVB under the VCS

To operate as a Validation and Verification Body (vvb) under the vcs, an organization must meet rigorous requirements. These requirements are:

Accreditation: The first step is accreditation which come from a recognized body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). A prospective vvb must be accredited under the ISO 14065 standard, which sets requirements for bodies validating and verifying. This process ensures that the verifier has the institutional capacity, systems, and safeguards needed to perform high-quality validation and verification.

Application Process with Verra: The organization applies directly to Verra, providing evidence of its accreditation status. The application demonstrates competence in at least one of the vcs sectoral scopes (e.g., energy, AFOLU, waste, industrial processes) then Verra conducts a desk review to confirm the organization’s technical capacity, sectoral expertise before granting an approval. This application involves a financial commitment.

Fees and Costs: Depending on the scope of accreditation being sought, Verra charges an application fee of USD 5,000–10,000. Additionally, vvb:s also incur ongoing annual fees and per-project verification costs, which sustain compliance and contribute to Verra’s oversight and quality assurance processes.

Training and Certification Pathways for vvb Personnel: Validation and verification work is highly technical thus require auditors who possess both sector-specific expertise and a deep knowledge of carbon markets. However, there is no single global institution exclusively responsible for training vvb auditors; instead, multiple pathways exist. Most auditors undertake **ISO Lead Auditor Training**, which covers ISO 14064 (greenhouse gas inventories) and ISO 14065 (requirements for verification bodies). In addition, institutions such as the Greenhouse Gas Management Institute (GHGMI) offer specialized training on greenhouse gas accounting, monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV). In Africa however, access

to training and certification opportunities remains limited as most accredited auditors continue to be based in Europe and Asia. This underscores the urgent need for donor and government investment in African-based auditor training and accreditation programs.

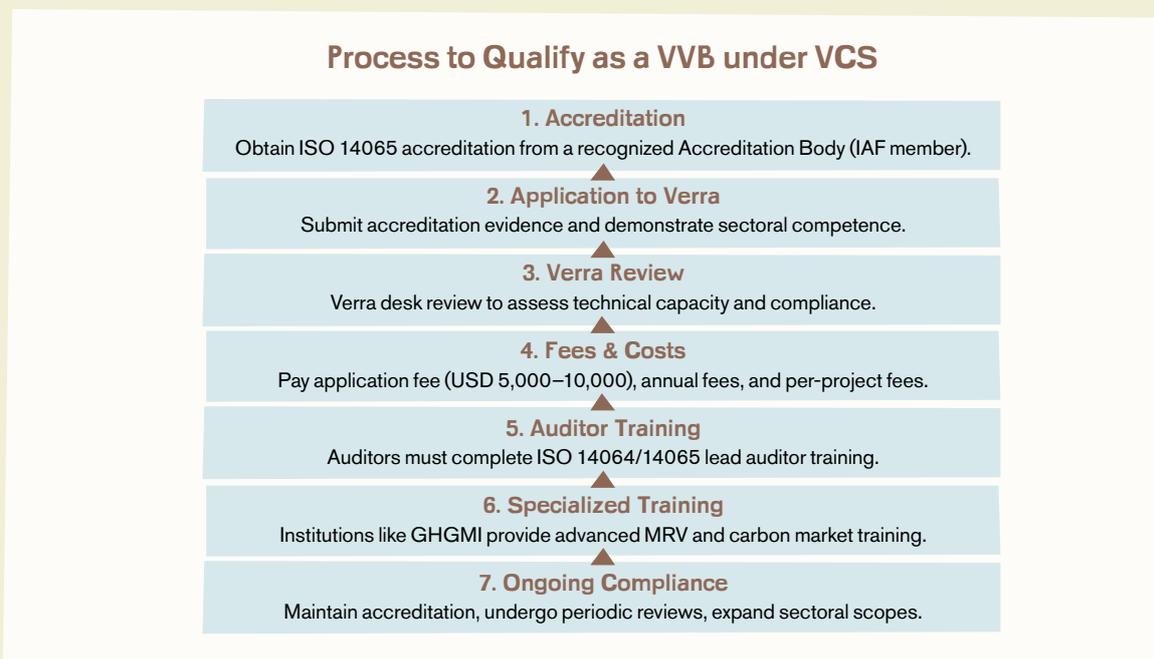


Figure 2: Steps to qualify as VVB

2.4 Sectoral Scope of Existing VVB:s

Under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) framework, projects and activities are spread across 16 sectoral scopes (Verra, 2024). This reflects the diverse array of opportunities for greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation. These sectors include: Energy (renewable/non-renewable), Energy distribution, Energy demand, Manufacturing industries, Chemical industry, Construction, Transport, Mining/Mineral production, Metal production, Fugitive emissions from fuels (solid, oil, and gas), Fugitive emissions from Industrial gases (halocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride), Solvents use, Waste handling and disposal, Agriculture, forestry and other land uses (AFOLU), Livestock and manure management, Carbon capture and storage (CCS). Moreover, these sectoral scopes utilize specific methodologies to ensure accurate quantification, monitoring and verification of emission reductions or removals.

Due to historical demand and familiarity with ISO-based auditing systems, most VVB:s tend to concentrate on industrial sectors such as energy, waste and manufacturing. Africa's carbon project portfolio is dominated by AFOLU projects, especially those involving agroforestry, REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and sustainable land use. However, relatively few VVB:s have deep AFOLU expertise with fewer than 20% of VVB:s globally listing AFOLU as a core area of specialization which is a key need in Africa. Verification of AFOLU projects often requires more fieldwork, ecological expertise and familiarity with local land-use practices. Therefore, this mismatch results in prolonged timelines for project validation and verification due to increased reliance on external auditors, drives up costs and slows down verification cycles. This underscores the need for region-specific capacity building.

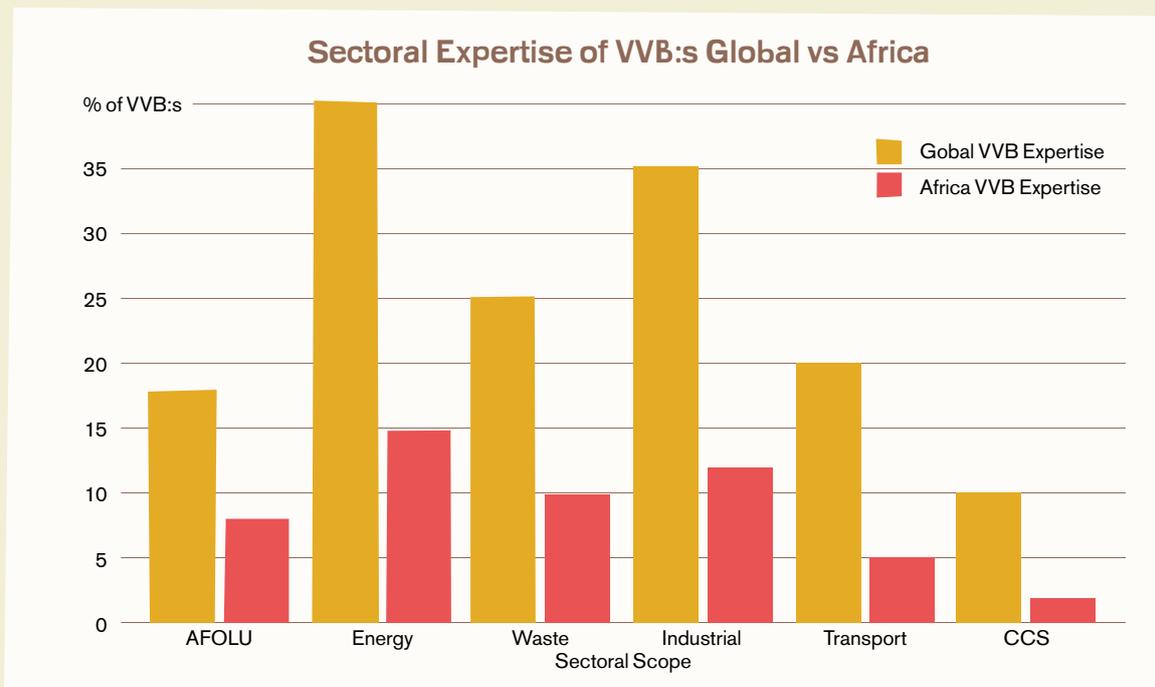


Figure 3: VVB sectoral expertise globally versus in Africa.

2.5 Challenges faced by VVB:s in validating and verifying carbon projects in Africa

Prior reports and literature highlight challenges faced by vvb:s in Africa and key barriers to scaling African carbon markets.

2.5.1 Logistical and infrastructure constraints

Logistics remains one of the most pressing challenges for vvb:s working on carbon projects in Africa. In reaching remote rural areas where most AFOLU and nature-based projects are located, vvb:s face challenges for on-the-ground verification due to poor infrastructure. In addition, visa restrictions and security concerns further complicate travel planning field visits limiting efficient and safe field verification visits (World Bank, 2022; ICAP, 2021).

2.5.2 Language and legal barriers.

Africa's rich linguistic diversity presents another complexity for vvb operations. With languages such as French, Arabic, Portuguese and local dialects, international teams often struggle with effective communication and project document interpretation (Narloch et al., 2021). This can result in misunderstandings during consultations, stakeholder engagement, or data verification. Moreover, many African countries lack standard legal framework on carbon projects which leads to legal ambiguity and slows approval processes (UNEP, 2022).

2.5.3 Shortage of sectoral experts and limited local capacity

Another barrier arising from many vvb:s operating in Africa having no permanent local presence and instead relying heavily on international firms or freelance consultants (Verra, 2023; Gold standard, 2021). The absence of local sectoral experts limits the quality and speed of verification processes. Therefore, building and retaining a pool of well-trained validators and verifiers in Africa remains a critical gap.

2.5.4 Longer turnaround times and high cost

Verification processes in Africa also tend to take significantly longer than in other regions. According to World Bank (2022) data, while the global average turnaround time for project verification is between 4 to 6 months, in Africa it often stretches to 12 months (ICAT, 2020; ACMI, 2022). In turn, these delays lead to higher costs for project developers, who may spend 15–30% more than they would for compara-

ble projects in Latin America or Asia. For small-scale or community-led projects especially in African context, these added expenses threaten the overall feasibility and long-term sustainability of carbon initiatives (Carbon Market Watch, 2022).

2.6 Literature Gaps addressed

This study addresses important gaps in the existing literature on carbon market development in Africa. Most previous research on VVB:s tends to take a global perspective, offering limited region-specific analysis. As a result, there has been little effort to map the presence of accredited VVB:s across Africa, assess their staffing and technical capacity or examine their sectoral expertise within the continent's unique context. According to the ACMI, 2024/2025 outlook report, concerns about credit integrity were identified as a setback slowing down the carbon market ecosystem. Integrity, equity and transparency are significant to ensuring that carbon markets drive real climate action and achieve meaningful scale. Additionally, the voices of VVB:s themselves have been largely absent from policy-oriented discussions. While much of the focus has been on project developers, governments and financiers, the practical insights of VVB:s, who play a critical role in ensuring the environmental integrity of carbon markets, have not been sufficiently explored. This study seeks to fill these gaps by gathering direct input from VVB:s operating in Africa through structured surveys and interviews.



This study fills a key gap in existing research by mapping the presence and capacity of VVBs in Africa and capturing their voices through surveys and interviews.



Accurate measurement is central to credible carbon credits—yet VVBs differ widely in capacity, expertise, and ability to scale verification work.

3. Survey Findings

Out of a total of 20 Validation and Verification Bodies (vvb:s) contacted for this study, 8 organizations responded to the online survey, a response rate of 40%. 2 vvb:s were selected for in-depth interviews to provide qualitative insights that complemented the survey data. The combined data set formed the thematic analysis presented in this study.

3.1 Profile of the respondents

The survey data revealed a diverse representation of vvb:s across countries and capacities with most of them based in Europe, Latin America and Asia attributed to market demand and established institutional capacity. In terms of accreditation timelines, the earliest vvb was accredited in 2005 (AENOR International), while the most recent was in 2024 (Preferred by Nature). Most of the vvb:s were accredited between 2009 and 2014, reflecting a period of accelerated growth and engagement in the carbon market. This trend aligns with the global increase in climate financing mechanisms and interest in the voluntary carbon market during that time. The number of qualified experts across vvb:s varies considerably, reflecting differences in capacity and experience. While some vvb:s, like KBS Certification Services, have over 100 experts and are well-positioned to handle large-scale validations others like Preferred by Nature have smaller teams, likely due to their recent entry into the market. This suggests that staffing capacity is not only regionally diverse but also closely tied to how long a vvb has been accredited.

Organization profiles		
Name of VVB/Headquarters	Year of Accreditation	No of Qualified Experts
Estonia		
Preferred by Nature	2024	7
Germany		
TÜV NORD CERT GmbH	2010	42
India		
Earthood services limited	2014	55
EcoLance Private Limited	2022	25
KBS Certification Services Limited	2011	100+
SPAIN		
AENOR International S.A.U.	2005	20
USA		
SCS Global Service	2009	25

Table 1: VVB profiles

The diversity in geographic location and operational scale reflects the international nature of the carbon verification ecosystem. Overall, there's a reasonable spread of expertise, with several vvb:s showing strong potential to support carbon project validation and verification in Africa. This is because of a combination of experience, methodological relevance and demonstrated capacity in AFOLU methodologies, the very area where Africa has a growing pipeline of carbon projects. Many vvb:s have prior experience working on African projects whether in forestry, renewable energy or agriculture which reduces the learning curve when navigating the cultural and regulatory contexts.

3.2 Sectoral scope

The result on sectoral scope shows that all surveyed vvb:s are engaged in Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) projects. This strong alignment with AFOLU reflects the global demand for nature-based solutions and the key role these sectors play in voluntary carbon markets, particularly in Africa. Beyond AFOLU, 88% of the vvb:s also work in waste management, forest/REDD+ and energy suggesting a high level of technical scope. Despite their significance, industrial processes are covered by a slightly lower percentage (75%), indicating that fewer vvb:s specialize in this area. The findings highlight a global trend among vvb:s toward prioritizing AFOLU and related sectors such as energy and reinforce the capacity of these vvb:s to support Africa's growing portfolio of land-use-based carbon projects.

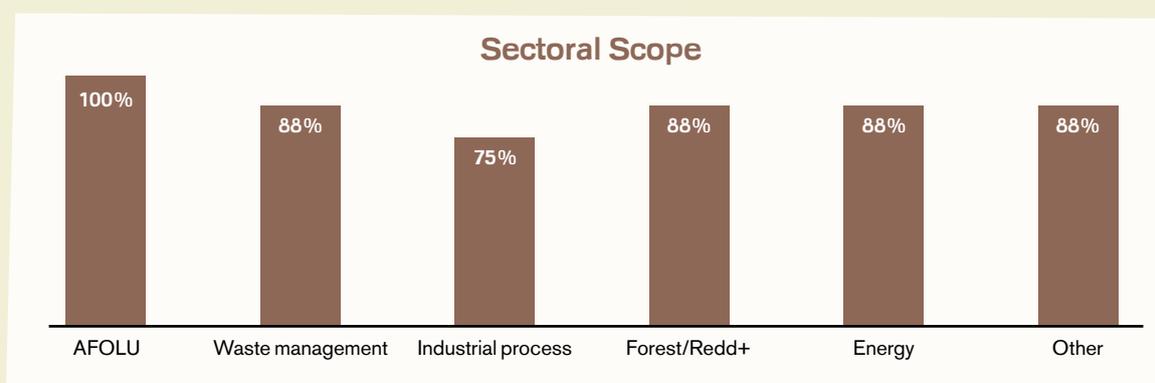


Figure 4: Sectoral scopes

3.3 Project Volumes and Turnaround Time

The data reveals a wide variation in the number of carbon projects validated and verified by vvb:s under the vcs framework in Africa. For project validations, **38%** of vvb:s reported validating between 11 and 30 projects, while **25%** each had either validated fewer than 10 projects or more than 50 projects. For project verifications, the distribution is more balanced but still shows that the majority (**38%**) of vvb:s have verified between 11 and 30 projects. Additionally, **25%** have verified over 50 projects, and only **13%** have handled fewer than 10 or between 31 and 50 projects respectively. This implies that while many vvb:s are actively engaged in verification, only a few have substantial experience with higher project volumes in Africa.

Regarding turnaround times, most vvb:s (**50%**) reported that they typically complete verifications within **6 to 12 months** while **13%** indicated turnaround times **above 12 months**. This reflects the technical and monitoring complexity such as incomplete documentation or limited vvb availability involved in the vcs validation and verification processes leading to extended delays. However, **38%** reported completing verifications in **under 6 months**, indicating that quicker verifications are possible especially for well-resourced vvb:s, projects with clear documentations, regions with limited logistical challenges.

For well-managed and adequately documented projects, the average turnaround time for verification under the vcs globally falls within **6 to 12 months** from the point of verification request to issuance of Verified Carbon Units (vcu:s) (Verra 2023). This aligns closely with the findings of this study, where 50% of surveyed vvb:s reported completing verifications within the same timeframe. The findings point to varying experience levels and turnaround times among the vvb:s thus an opportunity exists to expand capacity for handling more projects efficiently in Africa.

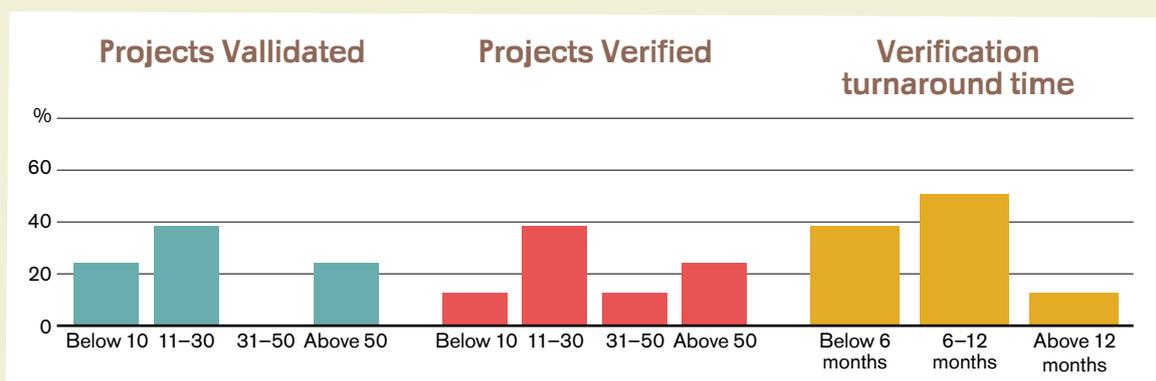


Figure 5: No. of projects validated/verified and turnaround time

3.4 VVB Presence and Operation in Africa

Out of the eight vvb:s surveyed, only one (**12.5%**) Preferred by Nature has a physical office in Africa, while the remaining seven (**87.5%**) lack formal presence on the continent. Most of the vvb:s rely on remote coordination to manage their African assignments by deploying international auditors from their home countries (e.g., USA, India, Spain, Germany) for physical audits and working closely with local experts in different capacities. These local experts serve in multiple roles including freelance auditor, technical experts, language and legal support specialists, contractors or team leads who manage country-specific audits. For instance, KBS Certification Services Limited reported having empaneled local experts who support with language interpretation and adherence to country-specific rules and norms, especially in East and West Africa. Although vvb:s have widely adopted the operation model of integrating the local professionals with external auditing teams to navigate linguistic, regulatory and cultural contexts, it is not as efficient or cost-effective as having a formal presence in bid to scaling up the carbon market in Africa.

The responses to limitations were analyzed and highlighted several key barriers to vvb:s establishing a formal presence in Africa. A major limitation was the fragmented regulatory environment where each country operates under different and often inconsistent rules, making it difficult to navigate compliance

efficiently. Second, market limitations such as the relatively small number of carbon projects which reduce the incentive for long-term investment in local offices. Political instability and security risks in some regions further discourage physical expansion. Another significant limitation indicated was the shortage of qualified local experts which undermines efforts to localize operations and ensure consistent service delivery. Moreover, a few VVB:s expressed concern about inadequate compensation for the time and expertise required, especially when trying to uphold high verification standards in resource-constrained settings like in Africa.

3.5 Experience in verifying projects in Africa

The VVB:s surveyed reported diverse experience in validating and verifying carbon projects across Africa. Many have operated in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Gabon, Sao Tome and Madagascar. 80% of VVB:s had a track record in the energy sector (solar PV, wind, cookstoves) and safe water projects (borehole rehabilitation and water purification technologies that reduce biomass dependency) while approximately 20% reported engagement in AFOLU, REDD+ and community-based carbon initiatives. Additionally, the VVB:s have delivered verification and validation services under multiple standards such as VCS, Gold Standard, CDM or Plan Vivo working with both public entities (e.g. Kengen, government ministries) and private clients. Earthhood Services noted verifying over 1,000 projects globally, with over 15 years of experience in Africa alone. Respondents consistently emphasized their commitment to high-quality and socially inclusive project validation and verification across the continent.

3.6 Validation and Verification Costs for Carbon Projects in Africa

The responses from the VVB:s indicate that the cost of validation and verification services is generally project-based and ranges from USD 15,000 to 80,000 depending on project size, technology type, sector, location and the quality of documentation. Average cost per project ranges around USD 44,700 and most projects fall between \$30K and \$60K indicating variability in project scale, methodology used and logistics.

Metric	Min Cost (USD)	Max Cost (USD)	Average Cost (USD)
Mean	30,4	59	44,7
Minimum	15	40	27,5
Maximum	50	80	65
Std Deviation	14,433	20,125	17,116
25th Percentile (Q1)	20	40	30
Median (Q2)	27	55	41
75th Percentile (Q3)	40	80	60

Table 2: Estimated Validation/Verification Costs (USD) in Africa

Results indicate no universal agreement on whether African projects incur higher costs with several VVB:s stating that they treat all projects equally, regardless of geographical location while others acknowledged clear differences in cost when operating in Africa, pointing out to greater variability due on-the-ground realities. Additionally, VVB:s observed that varying levels of developer expertise in Africa, coupled with higher community engagement often contribute to delayed project turnaround times.

3.7 Main challenges VVB:s face when operating in Africa

The survey revealed the challenges experienced by VVB:s while operating in African countries.

3.7.1 Logistics and cost barriers

75% of VVB:s cited logistical and cost-related issues as a major challenge when operating in Africa. While regions like Asia, Europe and South America benefit from better road infrastructure, established transport systems and in-country auditor networks, African countries often face; travel and accommodation expenses for international auditors, poor or inaccessible infrastructure (e.g., roads, airports, electricity) in remote project areas. Deploying auditors from outside Africa or across long distances increases costs for flights, accommodation, and insurance. In addition, poor digital connectivity delays documentation, data transfer and communications. These challenges not only raise operational costs but also delay project timelines and reduce efficiency in field data collection and site audits making project delivery more difficult and costly. It also makes Africa less cost-efficient for VVB:s compared to regions with more developed logistics ecosystems.

3.7.2 Security and political risks

Half of the respondents (50%) flagged security concerns as a major operational constraint. Some African regions are prone to political instability or unrest, localized conflicts, travel advisories or restrictions. These factors not only endanger auditing teams but also raise insurance premiums and risk calculations, discouraging deeper regional engagement. Although not an exclusive challenge in Africa, other regions offer a more predictable and manageable security environment.

3.7.3 Knowledge gaps and limited local expertise

50% of surveyed VVB:s identified knowledge gaps and limited local expertise as a major constraint in Africa. They noted a shortage of skilled verifiers and technical experts within the region, alongside larger gaps in understanding the complex carbon market standards, project documentation requirements and monitoring methodologies. In contrast, developers in countries such as India, Thailand or Brazil are often more experienced in carbon market dynamics, having participated in earlier mechanisms like the CDM. This lack of local capacity forces VVB:s to rely heavily on external teams, which in turn extends timelines for capacity building, drives up operational costs contributing to delays in validation and verification processes.



Carbon projects in Africa need strong local capacity to grow—yet VVBs face high logistical costs, security risks, and limited regional expertise during verification.

3.7.4 Legal and regulatory constraints

Another 50% of vvb:s highlighted difficulties navigating the legal and regulatory frameworks in different African countries. In Africa where carbon markets are still emerging, many countries still lack clear carbon market laws, fragmented and inconsistent legal frameworks as well as Visa restrictions. Such issues have resulted in delays and increased compliance costs in the continent and sharply contrast with more mature regulatory environments in other regions like Europe.

3.7.5 Language and cultural barriers

38% of vvb:s indicated that language and cultural differences add complexity especially during stakeholder engagement and community consultations. While verifying projects in Africa there is need for translation of documents and stakeholder interviews. Difficulty in understanding local dialects and unfamiliarity with local customs can lead to miscommunication during community engagements or community resistance. This can complicate both the auditing process and the interpretation of project documentation or monitoring reports causing delays in audit reporting.

Other constraints raised include unfair compensation for the depth of work required for verification and validation of carbon projects as well as technical limitations in project design or monitoring and stakeholder resistance. The chart below shows the percentage distribution of challenges reported by vvb:s in African carbon project operations.

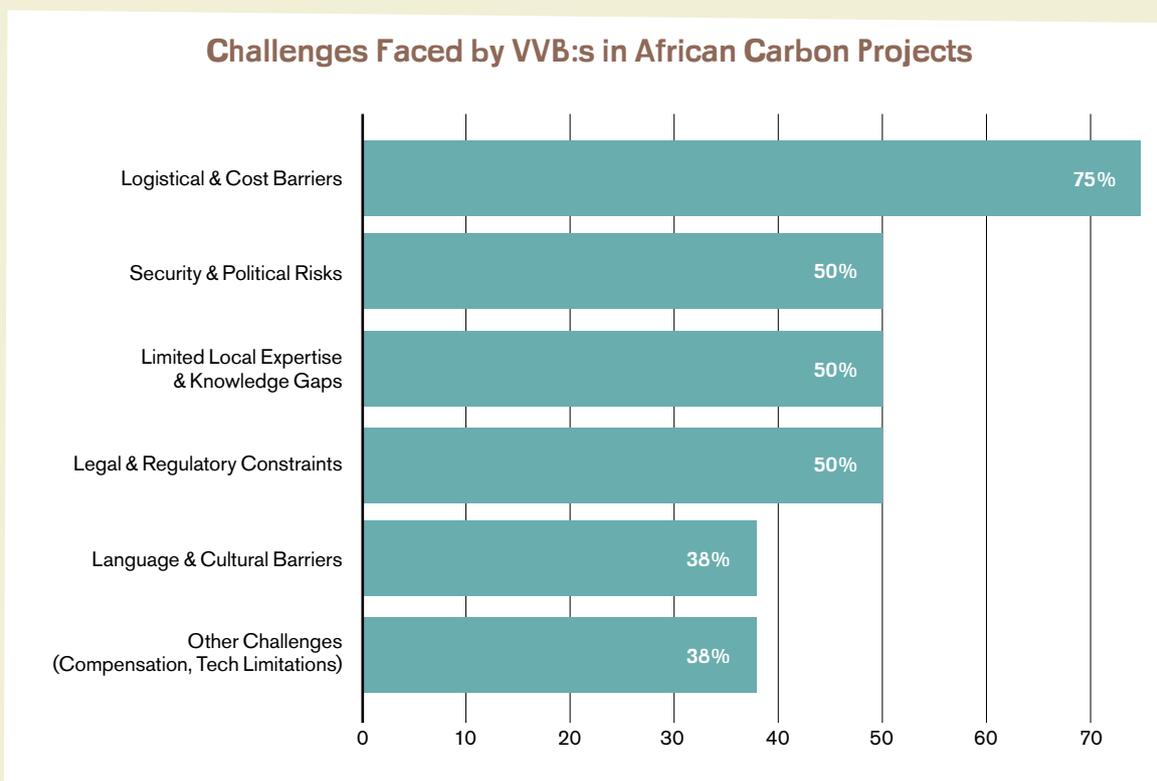


Figure 6: Percentage distribution of challenges faced by VVB:s in Africa

3.8. Key capacity gaps

Based on the survey responses, several key capacity gaps are affecting the validation and verification of carbon projects in Africa. Limited technical expertise and lack of awareness among project developers about carbon standards increases the burden on vvb:s and slows project readiness. Most vvb:s emphasized the broader regulatory and institutional weaknesses in African carbon markets. Fragmented governance contributes to uncertainty and slows down project approvals. Also, weak MRV systems and regional familiarity were flagged as barriers to effective stakeholder engagement and documentation review.



Limited local verification capacity and too few VVBs in Africa make field measurements more costly and time-consuming—slowing the scale-up of high-integrity carbon projects.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate Africa's immense potential to lead in global carbon market is being slowed down by two major challenges: too few Validation and Verification Bodies (vvb:s) and limited in-region capacity. **75%** of vvb:s cited logistical and cost-related issues as a major challenge with very few vvb:s operating in Africa and those that do lacking local presence and sectoral expertise (especially in AFOLU). Only three vvb:s under Verra have a physical presence on the continent; one out of all surveyed vvb:s (**12.5%**) i.e. preferred by nature had physical offices in Africa while the rest operate remotely. Also, vvb:s accredited under VCS specialize in industrial sectors like energy and waste, with limited AFOLU expertise. **80%** of vvb:s had a track record in the energy sector and only **20%** in the AFOLU sector which is a major mismatch for Africa's nature-based project portfolio. For well-managed and adequately documented projects, the average turnaround time for verification under the VCS globally falls within 6 to 12 months. **50%** of vvb:s achieve this timeline while **13%** take over 12 months to complete verification up to the issuance of credits. However, turnaround times are significantly longer in Africa than in other regions and costs are notably higher, attributed to other factors such as travel logistics and stakeholder engagement.

Half of the respondents (**50%**) cited regulatory constraints, knowledge gap and limited local expertise and security concerns as major operational constraints. Additionally, **38%** of vvb:s indicated language and cultural differences complicating the auditing processes. Thus, many developers, especially small and community-based projects struggle with data management, documentation and limited awareness of verification requirements leading to costly delays. Moreover, results indicate average cost per project ranges around **USD 44,700** and most projects fall between **\$30K** and **\$60K** indicating variability in project scale, methodology used and logistics. Although there is no universal agreement on projects in

Africa incurring high costs, the VVB:s acknowledged clear differences in cost when operating in Africa, pointing out to greater variability due on-the-ground realities compared to other regions. The results imply that the verification services are not equitably distributed, and the underdeveloped validation and verification ecosystem undermines the timely scaling of high-integrity carbon projects across the continent. Therefore, Africa could miss out on carbon finance opportunities and project developers would continue to face delays and loss revenue impacting on the smallholder farmers without improvements from all relevant actors. A direction needed from the findings of this study is a collective action from policy makers, governments, project developers and donors/investors to build a strong verification ecosystem that matches Africa's climate ambitions. Donors and carbon market investors have a strategic leverage point by investing in Africa's verification infrastructure because Africa is not short on carbon potential but on verification muscle as evidenced from this study.



Unequal access to verification services is slowing the scale-up of high-integrity carbon projects in Africa—making investment in regional verification capacity a strategic priority.

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6. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Full VVB Questionnaire

Title: Assessing the Availability of Validation and Verification Bodies (VVB:s) under the VCS Framework

Purpose: To collect information from VVB:s on their operational scope, sectoral expertise, capacity and challenges related to the validation and verification of carbon projects in Africa.

Section A: General Information

1. Name of organization
2. Year of VCS accreditation
3. Location of Headquarters
4. Number of qualified validation/verification experts

Section B: Experience, Operational Presence and Technical Capacity

5. Please indicate the VCS sectors your organization is accredited for:
 - AFOLU
 - Energy (Renewable/nonrenewable Energy)
 - Waste Management
 - Industrial Processes
 - Forestry/REDD+
 - Others (please specify)
6. Have you validated/verified any carbon projects in Africa?
Yes/No
If yes, how many? Validated-----Verified
If no, briefly explain why.
7. What types of carbon projects are most common in your Africa portfolio?
8. Do you have a physical presence in any African countries?
Yes/No
If no, how do you manage African assignments?
9. Do you employ or partner with Africa-based experts?
Yes/No
If yes, in what roles?
10. Could you briefly describe your organization's experience with carbon project validation and verification in Africa?

Section C: Verification Duration and Fee Estimates

11. What is the average turnaround time for verifying carbon projects under the VCS framework (in weeks/months)?
Please specify separately for projects in Africa and those outside Africa?
12. What are your estimated costs in USD for verifying carbon projects by project size? (Specify if there is a cost differential for African projects)
13. If there are differences in turnaround time or fees for African projects, please briefly explain the main reasons.

Section D: Challenges and Limitations

14. What are the main challenges you face when validating/verifying projects in Africa?
15. How do the challenges encountered in African projects compare to those in other regions where you operate?
16. What specific limitations (e.g. technical, financial, regulatory) currently restrict your organization's ability to set up or scale up verification services in Africa?

Section E: Recommendations

17. Have you observed an increase in demand for VVB services in Africa in recent years?
18. **a)** Based on your experience, what are the key capacity gaps in Africa that affect validation and verification of carbon projects?
b) What measures would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of VVB operations in Africa?
19. In your view, what role could local institutions, governments or international carbon market players (e.g., Verra, governments, development partners) play in addressing the current limitations and challenges in Africa?

Annex 2: List of VVB:s Accredited under VCS (2024)

<https://verra.org/validation-verification/>



