

Mid-term evaluation  
of the project “Delivering  
sustainable environmental,  
social and economic benefits  
in West Africa through  
good governance, correct  
incentives and innovation”

**Project Evaluation Series  
10/2021**

**Mid-term evaluation of the project  
“Delivering sustainable environmental,  
social and economic benefits in West Africa  
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incentives and innovation”**

**GCP/RAF/837/GFF  
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## Abstract

“Delivering sustainable environmental, social and economic benefits in West Africa through good governance, correct incentives and innovation” is part of the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI), financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The mid-term evaluation covers the project design and the implementation period from its inception in October 2017 to December 2020. The evaluation’s methodology included a literature review, semi-structured interviews, field visits, meetings with beneficiaries in Cabo Verde and Côte D'Ivoire, and an electronic survey.

Overall, the evaluation rated the project as “relatively satisfactory”. The most important conclusions of the evaluation are:

- i. Despite delays in the start-up phase of the project and then due to COVID-19, more needs to be done, at the level of actors and institutions, to ensure that real learning and real changes in practices and behaviour take place.
- ii. The rate of disbursement has accelerated but remains relatively low; co-financing is not accurately measurable.
- iii. Apart from institutional anchoring with national administrations, few measures have so far been taken to ensure the sustainability of project results over time.
- iv. The project is managed in a very dynamic and adaptive manner. It has also taken into account the gender dimension and environmental and social concerns.

The evaluation made eight recommendations:

**Recommendation 1.** The recruitment and organization strategy should be reviewed.

**Recommendation 2.** The mobilization of financial counterparts from implementing partners is urgent, and the accountable monitoring of co-financing needs to be improved.

**Recommendation 3.** A rationalization of the results framework and consolidation of the remaining activities is needed.

**Recommendation 4.** A no-cost extension of at least one year, an exit strategy and guidance to the project's supervisory bodies are needed.

**Recommendation 5.** The way in which monitoring of activities is carried out should be continued.

**Recommendation 6.** Efforts should be made to improve the project’s visibility in the field and among all stakeholders, including women, and to develop closer relationships with projects active in the region.

**Recommendation 7.** A discussion should be initiated on the provision of small equipment. Thus, a budget review to this effect should be carried out as appropriate.

**Recommendation 8.** Efforts should be made to better share the project's lessons and promote its outputs.



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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CAOPA	African Confederation of Professional Organisations of Artisanal Fisheries
CFI	Coastal Fisheries Initiative
CFI-WA	Coastal Fisheries Initiative, West Africa
CLPA	Local Artisanal Fisheries Council
CPF	Country Programming Framework
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
EAF	Ecosystem approach to fisheries
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FENACOPECI	<i>National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives of Côte d'Ivoire</i>
FLO	Funding Liaison Officer
FPAI	Fisheries Performance Assessment Instrument
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GPP	Global Partnership Project
LTO	Lead Technical Officer
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPO	National Professional Officer
NTC	National Technical Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PESCAO	Programme for Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TOC	Theory of change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
VGSSF	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries

# Executive summary

## Introduction

1. This report presents the results of the mid-term evaluation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded project “Delivering sustainable environmental, social and economic benefits in West Africa through good governance, correct incentives and innovation” (GCP/RAF/837/GFF) of the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI) – hereafter referred to as the “CFI-WA project”. This project is implemented in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through the Abidjan Convention. FAO is the GEF implementing agency, while the executing agencies are the governments of Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, as well as the Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention.
2. The overall objective of CFI-WA is to strengthen fisheries governance, management and value chains through the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF), relevant international tools and innovative governance partnerships in three West African countries (Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal). Its environmental objective is to promote responsible governance and management of fisheries in these three countries, with a view to a more sustainable use of coastal fisheries resources and the safeguarding of marine ecosystems. Its development objective is to support the improvement of value chain governance and fisheries management by contributing sustainably to the social and economic development of these three countries.
3. CFI-WA was developed in 2016 to contribute to the objectives of the Coastal Fisheries Initiative, a global initiative implemented in Latin America, Indonesia and West Africa. Its overall objective is twofold: encouraging and showcasing the advantages of integrated ecosystem approaches towards the sustainable use and management of coastal fisheries, and improving the governance of coastal fisheries.
4. Through three components dealing respectively with Improving fisheries governance and management (Component 1), Strengthening the seafood value chain (Component 2) and Strategic communication, monitoring and evaluation, and upscaling of best practices (Component 3), CFI-WA aims at: addressing the lack of tools, resources and institutional arrangements such as coherent policies and strategies focused on the ecosystem approach to fisheries; considering and acknowledging the role of coastal fisheries stakeholders and resource users in the promotion of a responsible and sustainable fisheries sector – especially including women in the post-harvest sector; generating knowledge on value chain dynamics, incentives towards adopting best practices and approaches for dealing with coastal fisheries in a holistic and integrated manner; and better communication and sharing lessons learned from other initiatives and experiences.
5. In addition to general sector governance activities, the project operates in pilot sites chosen to represent the diversity of fisheries, ecosystems and stakeholders in the region: two in Cabo Verde, two in Côte d’Ivoire and one in Senegal.
6. The mid-term evaluation covers project design and the implementation period from its inception in October 2017 to December 2020. It covers the three project components, as well as the three countries where the activities were implemented. It assesses the relevance of the project; the achievement of anticipated results (effectiveness); the degree of efficiency in the use of resources; the potential sustainability of results; factors affecting project performance, such as conditions and mechanisms, as well as linkages and/or partnerships between the project and other major initiatives in the region; and the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues (gender and environmental and social safeguards).

7. The evaluation methodology includes a literature review, semi-structured interviews with key project informants at FAO headquarters and in-country, field visits and meetings with beneficiaries in Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire, and an electronic survey of communication and coordination facilities with all CFI sub-projects. It should be noted that the field visits could not be carried out in Senegal.

## **Main findings**

8. Despite delays in the start-up of the project and due to the impact of COVID-19, efforts are underway to make up for lost time and complete the activities outlined in the project results framework by the end of the project in May 2022.
9. **Relevance.** CFI-WA meets the development needs and priorities of the countries where it is implemented, of FAO and GEF. The advent of the blue economy only increases its relevance to the region.
10. **Effectiveness.** At mid-term, progress towards achieving the anticipated outcomes under each project component is rated as reasonably satisfactory (see Table 1). An essential step has been taken with the preparation of a situational analysis (hereinafter called "baseline study") on fisheries governance and value chains, but this has not yet induced the changes and improvements in practices envisaged, and not all countries are at the same level. Little progress has been made in implementing the Fisheries Performance Assessment Instrument (FPAI), while mangrove rehabilitation activities are ongoing. A cooperative of women fish processors has been established, but there is a lack of small-scale equipment (not foreseen by the project) to improve the quality of landing fish. Although the level of interaction within CFI-WA between the three countries is very high, and the project is formally recognized and approved by each government, interaction with other CFI projects is limited and has not yet allowed the knowledge sharing envisaged by the project. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in place is minimal and does not generate learning. Communication efforts are nevertheless underway.
11. **Efficiency.** Although disbursements accelerated in the 12 months preceding the evaluation – over the period from Q4 2019 to Q3 2020 – and though 33 percent of the budget (GEF grant) was reportedly spent by February 2021 (i.e. 2.5 years since the actual start of activities in September 2018), disbursement remains relatively low with only 17 months to go until the planned end of the project. However, disbursements by component are in line with expectations. There is little monitoring of the staff sharing mechanism between CFI-WA and the Global Partnership Project (GPP) managing CFI. It is also difficult to accurately assess the in-kind contributions of CFI-WA partners' co-funding.
12. **Sustainability.** Certain measures have been taken, particularly concerning the institutional anchoring of the project with partner government institutions, to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes. However, these measures still need to be strengthened so that the project outcomes reach at least a stable state by the end of the project. The difficulties related to mobilizing co-financing from partners, capitalizing on the foundations laid by the project, and the impact of COVID-19 may reduce the likelihood of the project's impact.
13. **Factors affecting project performance.** A number of factors work in favour of the project, while others undermine its progress. Among the positive factors there are: the dynamic management of the project and the good organization and adaptability of national teams, especially given the constraints imposed by the pandemic; the enthusiasm of staff and implementing partners; the resourcefulness (e.g. seeking alternatives to administrative bottlenecks and seeking human and technical capacity through memoranda of understanding) and the ability to seize opportunities

for collaboration within FAO and with other institutions on specific themes; the steps taken to institutionalize the project with partners; and exchanges between the teams in the three countries. These efforts, however, only just compensate for the challenges that hinder the progress of the project. These include: high staff turnover and consequent erosion of the project's "memory"; a considerable number of activities to be implemented equally in the three countries; the difficulty of tracking the time spent by all staff members of the project Coordination Unit at FAO headquarters and partners' counterparts; the partial functionality of some management bodies (e.g. the Steering Committee) which hinders the project progress; the relative isolation of the project operation from other CFI projects; insufficient partnerships – with the exception of the one established with the SIDA project on artisanal fisheries – with civil society organizations and the private sector. Communication and knowledge sharing activities have received recent attention, but still need to be developed. The monitoring and evaluation system is currently insufficient to track the project's contribution to CFI more generally and to meet the project's learning requirements.

14. **Cross-cutting issues.** The gender dimension has been well mainstreamed into the project, both at the level of activities (the results framework was gender-sensitive) and at the level of team awareness of the importance of this aspect. Environmental and social concerns are at the heart of CFI-WA and therefore well taken into account.

**Table 1. Project evaluation according to GEF criteria**

GEF criteria and sub criteria	Rating <sup>1</sup>	Comments The corresponding sections of the report are indicated in <b>bold</b> . The corresponding evaluation matrix questions are shown in <i>italics</i> .
<b>A. Strategic relevance</b>		
A1. Alignment with GEF and FAO Strategic Priorities	HS	<b>3.1, 1.1</b>
A2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities	HS	<b>3.1, 1.2</b>
A3. Complementarity with existing interventions	S	<b>3.1, 1.2</b>
A4. Overall strategic relevance	HS	<b>3.1</b>
<b>B. Effectiveness</b>		
B1. Overall evaluation of project outcomes	MS	<b>3.2</b>
B1.1 Output delivery	S	<b>3.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3</b>
B1.2 Progress towards project outcomes and objectives (overall)	MS	<b>3.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5</b>
- Component 1	MS	
- Component 2	S	
- Component 3	MU	
B1.3 Probability of impact	Unrated	<b>3.2, 2.6</b>
<b>C. Efficiency</b>		
C1. Efficiency	MS	<b>3.3, 3.1, 3.2</b>
<b>D. Sustainability of project outcomes</b>		
D1. Overall probability of sustainability	ML (if the necessary)	<b>3.4</b>

<sup>1</sup> Rating scales are provided in Appendix 2.

GEF criteria and sub criteria	Rating <sup>1</sup>	Comments The corresponding sections of the report are indicated in <b>bold</b> . The corresponding evaluation matrix questions are shown in <i>italics</i> .
	measures are taken)	
D2. Sustainability in relation to financial risks	MU	<b>3.4, 3.4</b>
D3. Sustainability in relation to socio-economic risks	MU	<b>3.4, 3.4</b>
D4. Sustainability in relation to institutional and governance risks	ML	<b>3.4, 3.4</b>
D5. Sustainability in relation to environmental risks	UR	Not considered
D6. Catalysis and replication	ML	<b>3.2, 2.5</b>
<b>E. Factors affecting performance</b>		
E1. Project design and preparation	MS	<b>3.5, 5.1</b>
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	<b>3.5, 5.4</b>
E2.1 Supervision of the project (FAO, Steering Committee)	MS	<b>3.5, 5.4</b>
E3. Quality of project execution	S	<b>3.5, 5.2</b>
E3.1 Project management and execution arrangements (Project Coordination Unit, Financial Management, etc.)	MS	<b>3.5, 5.2</b>
E4. Co-financing	I	<b>3.5, 5.3</b>
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder involvement	MU	<b>3.5, 5.5</b>
E6. Communication and knowledge management	MS	<b>3.5, 5.6</b>
E7. Overall quality of monitoring and evaluation (M&E)	MU	<b>3.5, 5.7</b>
E7.1 Design of the M&E system	MU	<b>3.5, 5.7</b>
E7.2 Implementation of the M&E plan (including financial and human resources)	MU	<b>3.5, 5.7</b>
E8. Overall evaluation of factors affecting performance	MS	<b>3.5</b>
<b>F. Cross-cutting concerns</b>		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S	<b>3.6, 6.1</b>
F2. Human rights issues	UR	Not included
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	HS	<b>3.6, 6.2</b>
<b>Overall project evaluation</b>	<b>MS</b>	

Notes: Rating (Strategic Relevance; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Factors affecting performance; Cross-cutting issues): Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), Unable to rate (UR)

Sustainability: Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U), Unable to rate (UR)  
The definition of each criterion is provided in Appendix 2.

15. CFI-WA has made efforts to ensure that its engagement with grassroots stakeholders is effective, but needs to be further strengthened through field activities to be implemented during the remaining time of the project. The engagement of women processors in particular will need to receive more attention to ensure that their participation in decision-making processes is increased and thus that the indicators and targets of the results framework are achieved. The impetus given to knowledge generation and sharing activities will need to continue.

## Conclusions

**Conclusion 1.** CFI-WA meets the development needs and priorities of the countries, FAO and GEF.

**Conclusion 2.** Despite an improvement in the rate of implementation of activities in recent months, and despite delays in the start-up phase of the project and then due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more needs to be done to ensure that there are real learning and real changes in practices and behaviour at the level of stakeholders and institutions.

**Conclusion 3.** *The rate of disbursement has accelerated but remains relatively low, and the level of commitment of co-financing partners is not measurable with accuracy.*

**Conclusion 4.** Apart from institutional anchoring with national administrations, *little has yet been done to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes over time.*

**Conclusion 5.** The project is managed in a very dynamic and adaptive manner. However, this is not quite sufficient to deal with all the problems associated with the project that affect its performance.

**Conclusion 6.** The project has successfully integrated gender, environmental and social concerns.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** The recruitment and organization strategy of CFI-WA staff should be reviewed and considered in conjunction with that of GPP.

**Recommendation 2.** The mobilization of financial counterparts from implementing partners is urgent, and the accountable monitoring of co-financing needs to be improved.

**Recommendation 3.** A rationalization of the results framework and consolidation of the remaining activities is needed.

**Recommendation 4.** A no-cost extension of at least one year, an exit strategy and guidance to the project's supervisory bodies are needed to steer the project more strategically towards its end and in preparation for the "post-project" period.

**Recommendation 5.** The way in which monitoring of activities is carried out should be continued and improved through increased interaction with the GPP.

**Recommendation 6.** Efforts should be made to improve CFI-WA visibility in the field and among all stakeholders, including women, and to develop closer relationships with projects active in the region.

**Recommendation 7.** A discussion should be initiated with the Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) and the GEF Secretariat on the provision of small equipment. Thus, a budget review to this effect should be carried out as appropriate.

**Recommendation 8.** Efforts should be made to better share the project's lessons and promote its outputs.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

16. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation of the project "Delivering sustainable environmental, social and economic benefits in West Africa through good governance, correct incentives and innovation" (GCP/RAF/837/GFF) of the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI) - hereinafter "CFI-WA" - is to provide accountability to stakeholders (beneficiaries, governments, donors and other development partners) on the progress of the project and to draw lessons from its implementation so far, in order to improve project implementation until its completion and to inform the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and stakeholders in their future decisions.

## 1.2 Target audience

17. This mid-term evaluation is intended for the following persons and organizations:
  - i. FAO (Regional Office for Africa (RAF), Subregional Office for West Africa (SFW), FAO Representations in Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, the project coordination team and FAO personnel at headquarters, members of the Task Force), as well as the partner agency United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who will be able to use the findings of the evaluation and its lessons learned to improve the implementation of project activities and ensure the sustainability of the outcomes achieved.
  - ii. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), which may use the evaluation findings to inform its future investment decisions in the West Africa region, , Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, and in relation to CFI.
  - iii. Regional, national and local partners who may use the evaluation results and findings in planning their future activities.
  - iv. Project beneficiaries, such as local fishing communities, fishers and workers in the sector.
  - v. Other donors, organizations and institutions interested in supporting or implementing similar projects.

## 1.3 Scope and objective of the mid-term evaluation

18. The evaluation covers the design and the implementation period of the project from its inception in October 2017 to December 2020. It covers the three components of the project, as well as the three countries where the activities were implemented: Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal.
19. The evaluation also examines the terms and mechanisms, as well as the linkages and/or partnerships between the project and other major initiatives in the region, which have worked (or not) towards the effective implementation of the planned activities.
20. The **objectives** of this mid-term evaluation are to:
  - i. Measure and evaluate the achievements and shortcomings of the project so far, in terms of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project outcomes, factors affecting performance and the delivery of expected outcomes, and cross-cutting issues, including gender, environmental and social safeguards.
  - ii. Draw conclusions, recommendations and lessons to inform the current implementation of the project and improve its performance and chances of success.

21. The **evaluation questions** are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Mid-term evaluation questions of the CFI-WA project**

<p><b>1. Pertinence (Rating required)</b></p>	<p>1.1 Are the project objectives and outcomes aligned with GEF themes/programmatic strategies, environmental priorities and FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) for Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, as well as its regional priorities in West Africa?</p> <p>1.2 Has the relevance of the project changed since its development, as a result of new policies, plans or programmes? If so, what changes are needed to make the project more relevant?</p>
<p><b>2. Effectiveness, achievement of expected results (Rating required)</b></p>	<p>To what extent has progress been made towards the achievement of project outcomes and its overall objective of strengthening fisheries governance, management and value chains through the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, relevant international tools and innovative governance partnerships in three West African countries (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal) so far, and how effective has it been?</p> <p><b>Sub-questions for each project component:</b></p> <p>2.1 Component 1: Has the project improved fisheries governance and management? If so, how (i.e. through national policies and support strategies)?</p> <p>2.2 Component 2: Has the project been able to strengthen the fisheries sector through improved quality of fisheries products and working conditions, make value chains more efficient and provide incentives for sustainability?</p> <p>2.3 Component 3: Have the knowledge generated and outcomes reached so far been effectively communicated with local, national and regional partners? Is a monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E) system in place and is the project monitored effectively and efficiently? What methods, experiences and lessons has the project been able to share with the Global Partnership Project (GPP) and other CFI projects? Conversely, what lessons has the project learned from other projects?</p> <p>2.4 Effectiveness of partnerships: Are the partnerships established by the project so far (i.e. with UNEP) functional? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's partnerships and interactions with local fishing communities?</p> <p>Moreover:</p> <p>2.5 Are there any unexpected outcomes so far?</p> <p>2.6 (Likelihood of impact) Are there any obstacles or risks in each of the three countries that could impede the future progress of the project and the achievement of its objectives? The evaluation will tackle in particular the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the project.</p>
<p><b>3. Efficiency (Rating required)</b></p>	<p>3.1 To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently? And to what extent has its management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of its implementation? Are project disbursements to date satisfactory?</p> <p>3.2 To what extent has the project developed agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects and partnerships, and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups?</p>
<p><b>4. Sustainability (Rating required)</b></p>	<p>4. Does the project include provisions to ensure the sustainability of its outcomes and benefits (i.e. an exit strategy) and are these provisions in place? What are the main risks that could affect the sustainability of the outcomes and benefits (i.e. financial, socio-economic, institutional and environmental)?</p>
<p><b>5. Factors affecting project performance (Rating required)</b></p>	<p>5.1 (Project design) Is the project design appropriate to lead to the anticipated outcomes? Is its logic clear and coherent? To what extent are the objectives and components of the project clear, concrete and feasible over the life of the project? Has the project adequately identified capacity gaps and needs?</p> <p>5.2 (Project implementation and management) To what extent have the project's implementing partners fulfilled their roles and responsibilities in relation to project</p>

	<p>management and administration? What have been the main management and administrative challenges so far and what changes are needed to improve its implementation in the second half of the project?</p> <p>5.3 (Financial management and co-financing) What challenges have been faced in the financial management of the project, and to what extent has the pledged co-financing been fulfilled?</p> <p>5.4 (Project supervision, role of the implementing agency) To what extent has FAO fulfilled its responsibilities in terms of project concept identification and preparation, evaluation, preparation, approval and start-up, as well as monitoring and supervision?<sup>2</sup></p> <p>5.5 (Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) In addition to the main project partners, to what extent have other partners, such as civil society, local fishing communities, and particularly the private sector (through the Challenge Fund) been involved in the design and implementation of the project?<sup>3</sup> What has been the impact of their involvement/non-involvement on the project outcomes so far?</p> <p>5.6 (Communication and knowledge management) How successful has the project been in consolidating, communicating and promoting its key messages and outcomes to partners, stakeholders and the general public? How could this be improved?<sup>4</sup></p> <p>5.7 (Design and M&amp;E implementation) Is the M&amp;E plan practical and sufficient? Is the M&amp;E system functioning according to the M&amp;E plan? Is the project monitored effectively and efficiently?</p>
<p><b>6. Cross-cutting issues (Rating required)</b></p>	<p>6.1 (<b>Gender and minorities</b>) To what extent has gender been taken into account in the project design and implementation (e.g. gender analysis, indicators and targets addressing gender mainstreaming needs)? Have women been able to benefit equally with men from project activities? In general, what progress has been made in terms of implementing gender-sensitive measures?</p> <p>6.2 (<b>Environmental and social safeguards</b>) To what extent have environmental and social concerns – including the effects of the project on the most vulnerable local populations – been taken into account in the project design and implementation?</p>

## 1.4 Methodology

22. This mid-term evaluation complies with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and is aligned with the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit's Guidelines for Mid-Term Reviews which detail the procedures to be followed. The evaluation adopted a consultative and transparent approach. The methodology used also incorporates lessons from the guidance note issued by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on good practices in conducting evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the experiences of the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED). Triangulation of the information collected underpins the outcomes obtained and therefore supports the conclusions and recommendations made.
23. The evaluation team consisted of the lead evaluator, two national consultants recruited to conduct field missions and meet with stakeholders in the three project countries, and the evaluation manager at FAO headquarters. The lead evaluator worked closely with the lead evaluator of the CFI Global Partnership Project (GPP).
24. The evaluation based its analysis and findings on:

<sup>2</sup> For this project, this includes the Task Force and the supervisory role of the Lead Technical Adviser.

<sup>3</sup> The evaluation team should note the extent of stakeholder involvement (progress to date), challenges and outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> The evaluation team should note which knowledge generation activities and outputs were used in this project.

- i. A literature review of all project documents available to the team, including the Project Document, semi-annual progress reports, annual work plans, meeting and workshop reports, mission reports, strategy documents on gender mainstreaming and communication, activity deliverables, budgets and any other relevant sources of information related to the project and its implementation. Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) of Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal as well as GEF policies and other strategic documents relevant to the project were also reviewed. In addition, key CFI and GPP documents were reviewed. The list of documents reviewed is provided in the References section.
  - ii. Semi-structured interviews with key informants from CFI-WA and GPP projects who have been directly and indirectly involved, both currently and in the past. These informants include members of the project teams at FAO headquarters and in the three countries concerned, and project partner organizations (GEF, UNEP). A total of 20 informants were consulted, some more than once. All interviews were conducted remotely (via Zoom and Skype) and sometimes in tandem with the lead evaluator of the GPP, given the relationship between the two projects. The list of interviewees is available in Appendix 5.
  - iii. Visits to the project pilot sites (Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire) were conducted by the national consultants recruited for the evaluation and in close liaison with the lead evaluator, to meet with the target groups and assess the project achievements at local and national levels. The deployment of the consultants in the field covered all the project's pilot sites in these two countries. The meetings targeted fishers and fish processors, as well as staff of local institutions and civil society organizations, using a non-random sampling approach. The list of surveyed people in each country, as well as the sites visited, is available in Appendix 6. Field visits were not carried out in Senegal.
  - iv. An electronic survey, common to both this evaluation and the GPP evaluation, focusing on the means of communication and coordination used by all CFI sub-projects, was conducted. This survey was conducted between 20 January and 11 February 2021. 20 questionnaires out of 96 sent were completed, half of which were from CFI-WA. Although relatively low, this response rate is standard (Baruch & Holtom, 2008).
25. The different sources of information used thus enabled the data collected to be triangulated, ensuring both reliability and credibility and largely remedying the difficulties in collecting information caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
26. The evaluation matrix linking the evaluation questions with the data sources is available in Annex 2.

## 1.5 Limitations

27. This mid-term evaluation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and had to cope with the major restrictions on travel, personal interaction and workshop organization imposed to minimize the spread of the virus. As a result,
- i. The lead evaluator was not able to travel to the three project countries herself, but used virtual means of interaction (e.g. Zoom, Skype) to connect as effectively as possible with the in-country teams, and to coordinate data collection from project stakeholders and beneficiaries with the national evaluation consultants (in Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire).
  - ii. The evaluators adopted the Do-No-Harm approach in collecting data from stakeholders in the field, in line with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) guidelines on this subject (UNDP, 2020). However, the opinions collected reflect individual views and not a consensus, as they might have been if collected in a workshop setting.

- iii. The field visits of the national evaluation consultant to Senegal had to be cancelled due to health reasons. This remains an important limitation of the evaluation, partly compensated for by more remote interviews with the project's national consultants in the Senegal pilot sites.

## **1.6 Structure of the report**

- 28. Following this introduction, the background and context of the CFI-WA project is presented in Section 2, which also introduces the project's contribution to the CFI theory of change (TOC). The evaluation findings for each criterion are presented and discussed in Section 3, answering each evaluation question. Section 4 presents conclusions and recommendations for project managers. More general lessons from the evaluation are drawn in Section 5. A series of appendices are presented at the end of the report.



## 2. Background and context of the project

### 2.1 Project overview

29. This mid-term evaluation concerns the project "Delivering sustainable environmental, social and economic benefits in West Africa through good governance, correct incentives and innovation" (GCP/RAF/837/GFF, hereafter "CFI-WA" which is part of CFI), described in Box 1.
30. Objectives of the project
31. The overall objective of CFI-WA is to strengthen fisheries governance, management and value chains through the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, relevant international tools and innovative governance partnerships in three West African countries (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal).
32. This objective is twofold: environmental and development:
  - i. Environmental objective: Promote responsible governance and management of fisheries in three West African countries (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal), with a view to a more sustainable use of coastal fisheries resources and the safeguarding of marine ecosystems.
  - ii. Development objective: Support the improvement of value chain governance and fisheries management, by contributing sustainably to the social and economic development of West Africa (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal).

#### Box 1. Brief description of the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI)

The Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI) aims at demonstrating the value and encouraging integrated ecosystem approaches leading to the sustainable use and management of coastal fisheries and improving coastal fisheries governance. Its environmental objective is to support the responsible management of coastal fisheries and the maintenance of ecosystem services through the implementation of more integrated and harmonized approaches. Its development objective is to increase the economic and social value of coastal fisheries to enhance livelihoods and well-being. CFI is structured around three components aimed at: improving policies, institutions and legislation and public and private sector capacity for sustainable and equitable fisheries management; strengthening seafood value chains through appropriate incentives that support the sustainable management of fisheries resources; and developing and sharing among stakeholders improved practical knowledge for sustainable fisheries management. [1] CFI has five interrelated sub-projects: three are regional and national (West Africa, Latin America, Indonesia) covering a total of six countries; one is a mechanism for funding fisheries improvement projects at the national level – the Challenge Fund; and one is a global partnership coordination and knowledge management project – the Global Partnership Project (GPP) – to exchange experiences and promote effective fisheries management worldwide.<sup>1</sup> CFI and its sub-projects are funded by GEF and by contributions from partners. The six GEF agencies in charge of implementing these sub-projects are: FAO, which is the lead organization for the Initiative, Conservation International, UNDP, UNEP, the World Bank and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Sources: CFI-WA Project Document, 2016, except [1]: Translated and summarised from the CFI Project Framework Document, 2015.

33. CFI-WA was developed in 2016 to contribute to the CFI objectives (Box 1) and its structure. Its expected outcomes (also called "outputs") are aligned with those of CFI.
34. A summary of the key elements of the project is provided in Box 2. It should be noted that for this project, FAO has a dual responsibility as implementing and executing agency. This was approved by the Chief Executive Officer of the GEF Secretariat at the time of project approval.

### **Box 2. Background information for project GCP/RAF/837/GFF**

- A. GEF project identification number: 9126
- B. Beneficiary countries: Cabo Verde (CPV), Côte d'Ivoire (CIV), Senegal (SEN)
- C. GEF Implementing Agency: FAO
- D. Implementing Agency: Governments of CPV, CIV, SEN, and Abidjan Convention Secretariat
- E. Themes: International waters; Biodiversity
- F. GEF Strategy/Programme: GEF-6 Programme 7 International Waters Strategy: *Promoting Sustainable Fisheries*, and Biodiversity Strategy Goal 4: *Integrating biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in land and seascapes and production sectors*.
- G. Approval date by GEF: 11 May 2017
- H. Project start date: 01 October 2017
- I. Project end date (original): 30 September 2021
- J. Revision end date of project implementation: 10 May 2022
- K. GEF Funding: USD 6 133 027  
UNEP funding: USD 300 000
- L. Co-financing (in kind): total USD 45 551 500  
FAO: USD 27 000 000  
UNEP: USD 150 000  
Govt. CPV: USD 3 000 000  
Govt. CIV: USD 6 000 000  
Govt. SEN: USD 5 000 000  
Abidjan Convention: USD 1 000 000  
NGO Birdlife International: USD 300 000  
NGO Marine Stewardship Council (MSC): USD 1 000 000  
CONXEMAR Industry Group: USD 2 000 000  
CSO CAOPA, FENACOPECI, Assoc. Cabo Verde Fishermen: USD 101 500

### **Challenges and organization of the project**

35. The CFI-WA project faces important challenges. The Atlantic coast of West Africa is one of the most productive regions in the world for aquatic resources, with the main upwelling areas located along the coast. Inshore fisheries and other fishing activities are essential for providing food and employment, supporting the livelihoods of men and women, and generating income for coastal countries, as fish is a major traded commodity in the region and around the world. However, the contribution of coastal fisheries to environmental, economic and social sustainability is threatened by high fishing pressure, unsustainable practices and waste in the post-harvest sector, resulting in loss of earnings and degradation of coastal habitats – including mangrove areas – as well as poor working conditions and livelihoods. In all three countries, the main obstacles to reducing threats to coastal fisheries and increasing their contribution to livelihoods, food security and sustainable development are mainly related to:
  - i. A lack of tools, means and institutional arrangements such as coherent policies and strategies based on the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) to create the enabling environment necessary for the sustainable management of coastal fisheries.
  - ii. Insufficient and fragmented knowledge about the dynamics of value chains, incentives for best practice and approaches to dealing with coastal fisheries in a holistic and integrated manner.

- iii. Lack of consideration and recognition of the role of coastal fisheries stakeholders and resource users in promoting a responsible and sustainable fisheries sector, particularly including women in the post-harvest sector.
    - iv. Insufficient communication and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned from other initiatives and experiences.
36. In order to address all the challenges described above in an integrated manner, the project has been structured into three interrelated components:
  - i. Component 1: Improving fisheries governance and management.
  - ii. Component 2: Strengthening the seafood value chain.
  - iii. Component 3: Strategic communication, monitoring and evaluation, and upscaling of best practices.
37. Components 1 and 2 are two sides of the same coin: primary production and post-harvest in the value chain. Indeed, while Component 1 aims at moving towards a more effective use of existing fisheries management tools and governance mechanisms, Component 2 is about reducing post-harvest losses and improving the quality of fish products, access to markets and working conditions of small-scale farmers and primary users of the raw material, especially women processors. The key assumption linking these two components is that improved incomes and livelihoods with similar or lower harvest levels should ultimately contribute to reducing pressure on fish stocks.
38. Component 3 aims at ensuring that project experiences and outcomes are widely shared, within the project countries, the region, CFI and worldwide. This component also aims at putting in place a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to allow close monitoring of the project progress.

### **Pilot sites and fisheries selected for project implementation**

39. In Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire, two pilot sites were selected (Figure 1 and Annex 3) to implement the activities of Components 1 ("governance") and 2 ("value chains") respectively, and to target their main beneficiaries: fishers and their associations, fish processors and their associations, communities living near mangroves (in Côte d'Ivoire, as there are no mangroves in Cabo Verde), according to the activities and lifestyles predominant in each site. In Senegal, a single pilot site was selected (covering more than 200 islands and islets) and combines the activities of both components. The mangrove restoration activities, carried out under Component 1, are integrated into the sites dealing with governance in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, and implemented by UNEP through the Abidjan Convention.

**Figure 1. Location of the CFI-WA pilot sites**



Source: UN. 2014. [Map No. 4533](#).

40. Following preliminary studies or based on existing knowledge, each country has selected species which activities for developing and applying the Fisheries Performance Assessment Instrument (FPAI), and for improving the value chain rely on. This is summarized in Table 3. The project has a holistic vision despite the separation between species, pilot sites and components, as this table shows.

**Table 3. Links between selected species, pilot sites and CFI-WA components**

<b>Selected species</b>	<b>Pilot sites</b>	<b>Planned implementation of CFI-WA components: 1- management and governance 2- processing and value chain</b>
<b>Cabo Verde (2 pilot sites)</b>		
<b>Grouper (Cephalopholis taeniops)</b>	Mayo, S. Vicente	1, 2
<b>Coastal lobsters: green lobster (<i>Panulirus regius</i>), brown lobster (<i>P. Echinatus</i>) and stone lobster (<i>Scyllarides latus</i>)</b>	Mayo	1, 2
<b>Côte d'Ivoire (2 pilot sites)</b>		
<b>41. Yellowfin tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>)</b>	Locodjro	2
<b>Small pelagics: sardines (<i>Sardinella maderensis</i> et <i>S. aurita</i>)</b>	Sassandra	1, 2
<b>Mangroves</b>	Sassandra	1, 2
<b>Senegal (1 pilot site)</b>		
<b>Coastal shrimp (<i>Penaeus notialis</i>)</b>	Saloum Islands (southern zone, Ndangane)	1, 2
<b>Mangrove oyster (<i>Crassostrea gasar</i>)</b>	Saloum Islands (northern zone, Foundiougne)	1, 2
<b>Mangroves</b>	Saloum Delta	1, 2

Source: Evaluation team.

## Structures in place to manage the project

42. The main bodies established to manage CFI-WA are:<sup>5</sup>
- i. the **Steering Committee**, bringing together (according to its terms of reference) key FAO personnel at headquarters, the Subregional Office for West Africa (SFW) and in-country, UNEP/Abidjan Convention, GEF, representatives of the three ministries concerned, representatives of the main (subregional) socio-professional organizations and regional projects; and
  - ii. the **Task Force**, made up exclusively of FAO personnel members, based mainly at FAO headquarters and multidisciplinary. The Task Force is composed of FAO officials with proven expertise and technical skills in the various focus areas of the project. It provides technical support to the CFI-WA project.
43. In each country there are **national teams**, composed of a National Professional Officer (NPO) employed by FAO and based in the offices of the FAO Representation and a National Project Coordinator (NPC), an official from the Ministry in charge of fisheries, appointed by the Minister and based in the premises of the national administration (in-kind counterpart). These are supported by teams of national consultants recruited by FAO on a more or less long-term basis for specific project support missions, e.g. studies. These teams are linked to the National Technical Committees (NTCs) established by decree in each country and which have the task of supervising the operational implementation of activities at country level.
44. There is a common management body for CFI-WA and GPP: the **Global Coordination Unit**, of which FAO personnel (at headquarters) and the GEF Secretariat are members.
45. In addition, some members of the CFI-WA Steering Committee and Task Force (Chief Technical Adviser (CTA), Lead Technical Officer (LTO), Budget Officer and staff of the FAO Senior Technical Unit) are also members of the GPP Global Coordination Unit and Task Force.
46. Finally, CFI-WA members are part of the CFI Global Reference Group, whose objective is to guide the Initiative as a whole and even manage conflicts. This group is not yet functional.

## A brief history

47. The process of developing and negotiating CFI-WA has been long and has been carried out in parallel with GPP, within the CFI framework. Although approved in May 2017 by GEF, for a duration of five years (60 months), the project finally held its launch workshop in Dakar, Senegal, in September 2018 (i.e. after one year and four months), due to a number of delays, notably in the recruitment of staff. Annex 4 provides a summary of key workshops and meetings held during and since the inception phase of the project, some of which were common to GPP and other CFI sub-projects.
48. Field activities with beneficiaries only began in the third quarter of 2019, following an extended start-up phase during which: the project's national staff and consultants were recruited, the project results framework was extensively redesigned and updated, and the project was formalized with the national partner institutions (recognition by decree in 2019 in Senegal and Cabo Verde, and in 2020 in Côte d'Ivoire). However, activities have slowed down during the crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.

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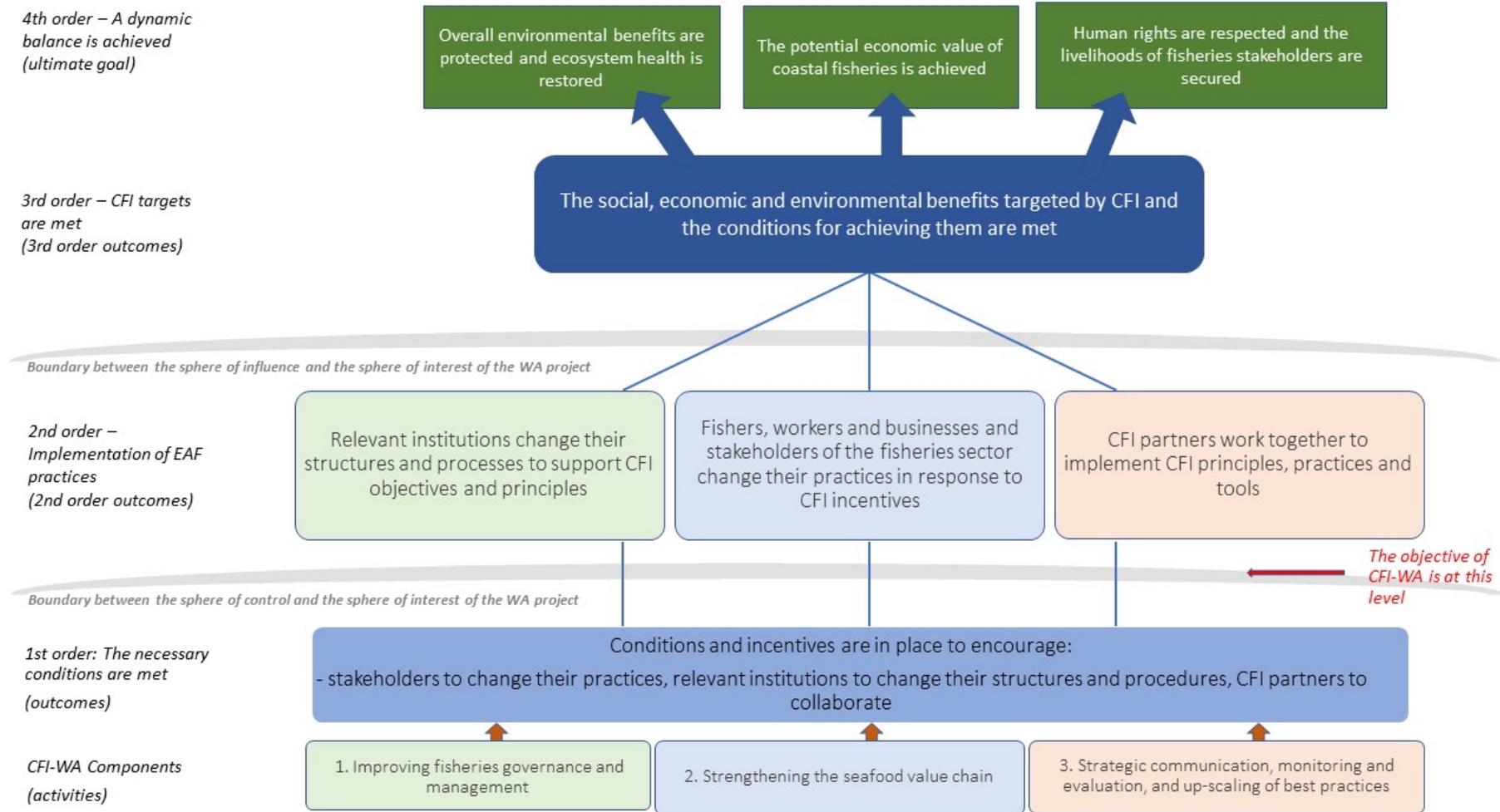
<sup>5</sup> An overview of these bodies is provided in Annex 8 (available only in French).

49. This first CFI-WA independent evaluation is therefore taking place approximately 24 months from the actual start of the project (42 months from the project approval date), and approximately 18 months from its planned end. This time lag is taken into account in the analysis. This evaluation is carried out in parallel with the GPP mid-term evaluation.

## **2.2 Theory of change**

50. The purpose of this section is to examine in detail how the anticipated project outcomes will lead to the desired changes in CFI-WA and contribute to the achievement of the CFI ambition. The following analysis is that of the evaluation team, based on CFI-WA and CFI documents.
51. CFI-WA has its own results framework but not its own theory of change. The one developed in 2016 for CFI, however, provides an adequate framework to visualize CFI-WA's contribution to CFI overall environmental and developmental objectives (see Box 1). Figure 2 traces CFI theory of change by adding the expected contribution of the three CFI-WA components.

**Figure 2. Relationship between CFI-WA components and the CFI theory of change**



Legend:

- Incentives for sustainability in value chains
- Institutional structures and processes
- Best practices, collaboration and performance assessment

Sources: GCP/GLO/838/GFF and GCP/RAF/837/GFF project documents, Townsley and Olsen, 2016.

52. The following aspects should be noted:
- i. Figure 2 makes clear the theoretical continuity that exists between the three CFI-WA components and the achievement of the three second-order CFI outcomes (or expected outcomes) regarding the implementation of practices anchored in the ecosystem approach to fisheries (represented by the same colour coding).
  - ii. Gathering the necessary conditions and incentives to encourage changes in practices and behaviours in terms of fisheries management, seafood processing, and collaboration and knowledge sharing, is part of CFI-WA operational and direct influence sphere. Analysis of the CFI-WA results framework and workshop reports suggests that the adoption of these new practices and behaviours (CFI second order outcome) is however no longer under CFI-WA direct influence, although CFI-WA is expected to contribute to it. The achievement of CFI targets (CFI third order outcome) is beyond CFI-WA influence and interest sphere and it is agreed in the CFI theory of change that CFI-WA can only aspire to achieve the third order conditions during the programme period (Townsend and Olsen, 2016). Thus, one can graphically locate the achievement of the overall CFI-WA objective at the boundary of the first sphere of influence (in light grey in the diagram).
  - iii. The impact of CFI can only be seen at the level of the fourth order outcome, when there is a dynamic balance between the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, the generation of income from fisheries products, and the well-being of coastal populations – provided that factors and influences external to the project do not get in the way. The notion of impact in CFI-WA is however unclear. The CFI-WA Project Document had anticipated impact at the national level "through locally created outcomes", and at the CFI level through "the generation of best practices that are relevant at the global level",<sup>6</sup> but the nature of these impacts was not clearly defined later.
  - iv. Indicators for measuring progress towards the achievement of first and second order outcomes, from which these impacts would arise, were intensely discussed. The indicators that were finally selected capture some of the signs of impact that could be expected as a result of achieving CFI-WA's overall objective (second order outcomes of the theory of change, Figure 2), for example:
    - changes in institutional structures and processes to support CFI goals and principles – linked to the indicator "Evidence of stakeholder participation in decision-making through collective choice/representative mechanisms";
    - new practices adopted in response to CPI incentives by fishers, fisheries workers, and associated businesses and groups - linked to the indicator "Women actively participate in and influence decision-making processes to support their role in coastal fisheries";
    - The application of CFI principles, practices and tools by CFI partners – linked to the indicator "Regular collaboration and dialogue between CFI agencies, partner institutions and fisheries stakeholders".
53. In the same way that the CFI theory of change (i.e. a "framework for collaborative learning on the evolution of coastal fisheries during the CFI project") and its results framework (i.e. a mechanism for "monitoring the CFI contribution to this evolution through the implementation of CFI activities") are complementary, the CFI-WA results framework, revised and adopted in 2019, is seen as supporting the CFI-WA contribution to CFI. However, while it provides a tangible basis against which the progress in implementing the activities of the three CFI-WA components can be measured, it does not yet clearly link the CFI-WA components with the first order outcome –

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<sup>6</sup> According to the CFI programmatic framework dated 28 April 2015.

this link is represented by the red arrows in Figure 1. It neither links them with the more distant components of behavioural change of fishers and workers in the sector (second order blue box), institutions (second order green box) and CFI partners (second order pink box) which it is nevertheless supposed to support.

54. This transition can only be effective if a number of hypotheses are verified. These concern changes that need to take place in order to move from activities to the first order outcome – thus meeting the overall CFI-WA objective of strengthening fisheries governance, management and value chains in the three countries – and then to move from this objective to the second order outcome, so that this finally contributes effectively to the achievement of the overall objective (goal) of the whole CFI. These hypotheses are detailed in Annex 5.

### 3. Observations and findings

#### 3.1 Relevance

**Question 1.1.** Are the project objectives and outcomes aligned with GEF themes and programmatic strategies, environmental priorities and FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) for Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, as well as its regional priorities in West Africa?

**Finding 1. The project objectives and outcomes are well aligned with GEF and FAO programmatic and environmental objectives and priorities, as well as those of the West Africa region.**

55. In particular, this project contributes to GEF-6 Programme 7 International Waters Strategy: *Promoting Sustainable Fisheries*, and to Biodiversity Strategy Goal 4: *Integrating biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in land and seascapes and production sectors*. It also aligns with the objective of enhancing opportunities in the Blue Economy of the GEF-7 International Waters Area.
56. The project was fully aligned with FAO's medium-term strategic objective 2014–2017 "Intensifying and improving the sustainable provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries" (FAO, 2015a). It complies with the medium-term strategic objective for the 2018–2021 period "Making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable" (FAO, 2017a). CFI-WA can be expected to contribute particularly to the "best" on governance, human capital and institutions supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 ("Aquatic Life") of the next FAO programming cycle currently under development (FAO, 2020).
57. CFI-WA was expected to contribute to three outcomes of the FAO results framework for the period 2014–2017. This contribution remains unchanged and is still relevant for the outcomes of the 2018–2021 results framework that replaced them (Box 3).

#### **Box 3. Contribution of CFI-WA to the outcomes of the FAO results frameworks for the 2014–2017 and 2018–2021 periods**

50 percent Outcome 2.2 (2014–2017) Stakeholders in Member Countries strengthen the governance framework – the set of policies, laws, management frameworks and institutions needed to support producers and resource managers – during the transition to sustainable agricultural farming systems. REPLACED BY (2018–2021) Countries have developed or improved policies and governance mechanisms to sustainably improve production and address climate change and environmental degradation in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors.

25 percent Outcome 2.1 (2014–2017) Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that sustainably increase and improve production in the agricultural sector. REPLACED BY (2018–2021) Countries have adopted practices to sustainably improve productivity while addressing climate change and environmental degradation in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors.

25 percent Outcome 2.4 (2014–2017) Stakeholders make evidence-based decisions on planning and management of agricultural and natural resource sectors to support the transition to sustainable agricultural farming systems through monitoring, statistics, evaluation and analysis. REPLACED BY (2018–2021) Countries have made evidence-based decisions towards sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, while addressing climate change and environmental degradation.

Source: FAO, 2017b.

58. The project is also consistent with national priorities and FAO country programming frameworks (CPFs). In **Cabo Verde**, the government has focused on the development of the blue economy. Under the 2018–2022 CPF (FAO, 2017c), FAO interventions are planned to address themes very close to CFI-WA objectives, such as strengthening fisheries and aquaculture management and value chain, by doing the following: supporting EAF implementation to take into account climate and pollution impacts; preparing a National Blue Economy Investment Plan (PNIEA) that involves

public-private partnerships (PPPs) and carries out the institutional adjustments and capacity building (public and private) necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the PNIEA. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, FAO intends to support the government in achieving its objective of developing environmentally friendly and value-added agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries production systems. In particular, it intends to intervene in the development of the blue economy and the integration of social protection strategies in the sector (FAO, undated). In **Senegal**, CFI-WA is aligned with FAO interventions of the 2019–2023 CPF which foresees i) strengthening the sustainable management of fisheries resources through the restoration of aquatic ecosystems and the creation of marine protected areas under Priority 3 – Sustainable management of the environment and natural resources; and ii) modernizing, diversifying and intensifying fisheries and aquaculture production in a sustainable manner within the framework of Priority 1 – Promoting a sustainable, diversified, competitive, inclusive and growth-generating agro-sylvo-pastoral, fisheries and aquaculture sector.

59. The ECOWAS Vision 2020 sets out the main development principles for the region, but does not mention the fisheries sector in particular. It must therefore be determined whether the Vision 2050 currently being developed will make reference to it.<sup>7</sup> However, it should be noted that the first Steering Committee meeting for the Programme for Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa (PESCAO), chaired by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was held in 2018. This programme aims at improving stock management, reducing illegal fishing and strengthening interinstitutional cooperation between Member Countries<sup>8</sup> – all of which CFI-WA is aligned with.
60. Finally, the celebration of the "International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture" in 2022, the anticipated date of the project closure, will be an opportunity to draw attention to the project's contribution to this theme.

**Question 1.2.** Has project relevance changed since its development, as a result of new policies, plans or programmes? If so, what changes are needed to make the project more relevant?

**Finding 2. Project relevance has not changed since its preparation in 2016. The adoption of the "blue economy" concept that has emerged since then could further increase the relevance of the CFI-WA project to ensure that inshore fisheries are given their rightful place.**

61. The relevance of CFI-WA remains unchanged, especially as the concept of the blue economy has emerged since project design. Indeed, the new Africa Blue Economy Strategy (AU-IBAR, 2019) aims at developing an "inclusive and sustainable blue economy that contributes significantly to the transformation and growth of the African continent", based on "strengthening knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnologies, environmental sustainability, the growth of a pan-African maritime shipping sector, the development of maritime, inland waterway and lake transport and fisheries; and the exploitation and development of mineral and other offshore resources". It recognizes the importance of governance and the economic and social challenges caused by the poverty of coastal communities, as well as the need for investment in product processing – all of which are common to CFI-WA and which reinforce its relevance to increasing the role of coastal

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<sup>7</sup> "Aspirations et priorités de développement de la Sous-Région : la Commission de la CEDEAO entame le processus d'élaboration de Vision 2050" by Omar Diack Seck. <https://www.lactuacho.com/aspirations-et-priorites-de-developpement-de-la-sous-region-la-commission-de-la-cedeao-entame-le-processus-delaboration-de-vision-2050/>

<sup>8</sup> First steering committee of the regional fisheries governance programme in Abuja. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 08/11/2018. <https://www.ecowas.int/first-steering-committee-of-the-regional-fisheries-governance-programme-holds-in-abuja/>

fisheries in achieving the Strategy's objective. In Cabo Verde, for example, Resolution No. 112/2015 initiating blue growth, has just been replaced by Resolution 172/2020 of 21 December 2020, which approved the Policy Charter for the Blue Economy. It will be necessary to ensure that project progress is taken into account in these developments.

## 3.2 Effectiveness, achievement of expected outcomes

### 3.2.1 Component 1

**Question 2.1.** Has the project improved fisheries governance and management? If so, how (i.e. through national policies and support strategies)?

**Observation 1. Though baseline studies on fisheries governance and management have been carried out and are an important step in the progress of activities, they have not yet led to changes in practice or visible improvements in fisheries governance and management.**

62. Apart from the review of legislative frameworks initiated during the April–October 2019 period, Component 1 activities only really started in the field from the end of October 2019.
63. The completion of baseline studies on fisheries governance, management and legislative framework review (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2) has been the focus of the country teams to date. Despite delays (see Section 3.5), the three countries have now reached the crucial stage of having these validated by national stakeholders.
64. The deployment of field surveys with grassroots stakeholders and local institutions, as well as the iterative process of reviewing and verifying the baseline study content, is a huge human effort. However, there are inequalities in the quality and depth of analysis between countries. Moreover, the three countries have not progressed at the same pace. Côte d'Ivoire, for example, lags behind Senegal (the most advanced) and Cabo Verde.
65. Given the interdependence between Components 1 and 2, several activities of these components were carried out simultaneously and coherently. This approach reflects the overdetailed results framework (see Section 3.5.1) and the difficulty of separating activities upstream and downstream of fish catching and landing. Thus, it can be noted that baseline studies on fisheries governance all address to a greater or lesser extent the organization of stakeholders in the post-harvest phase. This is the case, for example, of Cabo Verde reports, which include the implementation of several Component 1 and Component 2 activities. Another example is the SCOOPS MATRAPHAS (*Société coopérative simplifiée des Mareyeuses et Transformatrices de Produits Halieutiques de Sassandra*) women's processing cooperative created by the project in Côte d'Ivoire under Component 1 (Output 1.3.1,<sup>9</sup> although clearly related to Component 2), following ongoing support implemented under Activity 1.3.1.2 in the country.
66. Baseline studies, when well done and thorough, present new information and provide a solid and essential basis for refining future activity planning. They also form a basis for the CFI theory of change. However, they are not yet sufficient *per se* to achieve the milestones and targets set in the results framework (the targets in the results framework derive in fact from a number of activities that complement the information collected in baseline studies). Many of the "practical" governance improvement activities that flow from baseline studies (e.g. holding workshops, producing training materials, surveys etc.) are still in the programming phase (planned for 2020 and then deferred to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). It also seems that the logical progression of the project intervention is not always respected. For example, the cooperative of

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<sup>9</sup> Output 1.3.1: Formalized and/or strengthened coastal fisher and fisheries worker organizations.

women processors in Côte d'Ivoire (SCOOPS MATRAPHAS) under Activity 1.3.1.2 was created in 2019 while the assessment of the capacity building needs of grassroots stakeholders (Activity 1.3.1.1) had not yet been carried out in the country. Interviews with members of this new cooperative indicated that the cooperative was still in its infancy, with a poor grasp of the associative life and a low level of functioning, even though theoretically its statutory bodies are mentioned in the documentation.

67. Thus, it is still unclear how the results of the analyses and recommendations formulated in baseline studies concerning Component 1 on the one hand, and the emerging initiatives in or affecting the fisheries sector (e.g. new projects, development of the blue economy) on the other hand, will inform in a practical way the activities of the results framework to be put in place. The reports of the baseline validation workshops with stakeholders – most of which were held in the 4th quarter of 2020 in the three countries – were not yet available at the time of the mid-term evaluation. It is therefore difficult to know how they have been received by stakeholders and how they will influence the future implementation of planned activities.
68. The iterative and inclusive process of reviewing, revising and validating baseline studies ensures reliability and credibility, but is time-consuming and sensitive to cumulative delays. Indeed, it depends on the recruitment and availability of independent experts and members of the project coordination team at headquarters (Chief Technical Adviser and Finance Officer) to check the quality of the national consultants' reports. It also depends on the organization of workshops with national stakeholders and beneficiaries to obtain their approval of the baseline study content and the recommendations made. The health and travel constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have compounded the delays in this iterative verification process. It is therefore all the more essential that, given the energy and effort expended on these situational analyses, the reports be given the follow-up they deserve in terms of dissemination, capitalization of the knowledge generated within the project and beyond, and action to fill the gaps they have identified.
69. The choice of species and sectors was finalized on the basis of the results of baseline studies, while the selection of pilot sites was predetermined during project design, based on known characteristics and needs (Table 3). While these choices proved relevant in most cases, it should be noted that in Côte d'Ivoire, the choice of the new landing at Locorodjo remains problematic because it received little supply of fish (fishers prefer to use the old landing), while the processors are located there, and the species selected have not been assessed in as much detail as in the other countries.

**Observation 2. Little progress has been made in adapting the Fisheries Performance Assessment Instrument in the three countries, and critical aspects of its use in the project (and beyond) are still to be resolved.**

70. The use of FPAI was mandated by CFI. Although its potential is recognized by the national teams in charge of piloting it in the selected fisheries, and though training in its use has been provided within the framework of GPP – which is in charge of coordinating its development and implementation – this tool is still considered to be an academic and data-intensive tool that has not yet shown its full potential. The process of ownership of the tool by national teams is underway, thanks to efforts to make its development participatory.
71. It is envisaged that national tripartite agreements between FAO, fisheries directorates and national oceanographic research institutes, be established to implement the FPAI. These were not foreseen but are considered necessary by the national teams to promote sharing and access to the secondary data on which the use of the FPAI is based. However, it may take time to implement

them. Thus, it is possible that the results of the tool piloting on the selected fisheries will provide elements for their sustainable management and future monitoring, and on the applicability and relevance of the tool by the end of the project; but the improved management and monitoring of the selected fisheries will need to be complemented by the use of other management measures.

72. The key issues of roles and responsibilities for data collection and analyses, as well as intellectual property, are still under discussion. The long-term FPAI ownership by implementing partners at national level – if it proves useful in the context of the selected fisheries in the three countries – is still to be verified. A more in-depth assessment of the FPAI is available in the mid-term GPP evaluation report.

**Finding 3. Mangrove activities in Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal have made reasonable progress despite budgetary and seasonal constraints. However, the mangrove Output seems to be carried out independently of the other activities of the CFI-WA project.**

73. The signing of memoranda of understanding with two local environmental NGOs specializing in mangrove transplantation and community awareness raising have made it possible to start Output 1.2.2 activities in the field. In particular, this made it possible to overcome the constraints linked to the lack of budget allocated by the implementing partner (the Abidjan Convention) for this activity (see Section 3.5) and to act quickly so as not to lose an additional transplanting season.
74. In Senegal, the site chosen for mangrove rehabilitation and the pilot site for fisheries are the same. In Côte d’Ivoire, the sites are the same in Sassandra only. Although there is a link in principle between the project activities aimed at improving fisheries management and productivity and those raising awareness of the role of mangroves as spawning grounds and nurseries, this remains to be verified insofar as, in Côte d’Ivoire, the communities targeted by mangrove activities are not the same as those targeted by development activities. Interviews with the two communities targeted by mangrove rehabilitation activities in Côte d’Ivoire have however shown that the project has a good visibility among the communities.
75. Table 7.1 in Appendix 4 summarizes the progress towards the results described in the results framework for Component 1 with a semaphore notation.

### 3.2.2 Component 2

**Question 2.2.** Has the project been able to strengthen the seafood value chain through improved quality of fisheries products and working conditions, make value chains more efficient and provide incentives for sustainability?

**Finding 4. Baseline studies on seafood value chains have been completed in Cabo Verde and Senegal, and are underway in Côte d’Ivoire. They are based on detailed surveys and are intended to guide future interventions, particularly in relation to the fisheries identified in each country under Component 1, but it is still too early to see the benefits.**

76. As with Component 1 activities, field activities under Component 2 did not really start until late 2019. They were later on slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic and many of them were postponed until 2021.
77. The baseline reports produced under Component 2 are well documented. They gather new knowledge on the post-harvest environment and stakeholders and provide a solid basis for future project activities. In Côte d’Ivoire, baseline reports for Component 2 were not yet ready and

therefore not available for evaluation. In Cabo Verde and Senegal, these reports were validated in the second half of 2020 and will inform a number of capacity building and awareness raising actions on better processing practices. For example, in Senegal, it is envisaged that the production of semi-preserved oysters will be promoted among women processors on a site already equipped (by a previous project), thus strengthening the value chain of this fishery selected under Component 1 by the project. This logic does not yet seem to be established everywhere. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the species selected for value chain improvement work were not clearly identified during the fisheries inventory, and were still awaiting validation at the time of writing (Component 1, Activity 1.2.1.1). Similarly, in Cabo Verde, field visits and discussions with the national team revealed that fish from artisanal fisheries in Maio is mainly sold fresh, whereas the activities planned under Component 2 are mainly focused on value-added processing. This implies that complementary themes will have to be addressed, such as maintaining the cold chain, access to fresh food markets, studies of diversification and markets potential to assess demand for salted or dried products. The approach chosen to promote the species selected (grouper and lobster) remains to be clarified. This will depend on the predominant processing habits and consumer preferences.

78. Links exist between mangrove activities (Output 1.2.2 of Component 1): in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, mangrove wood for smoking fish is considered to have superior energy properties than other energy sources, and gives the fish a look and taste preferred by consumers. Meetings with fish processors suggest that these habits and preferences are deeply entrenched and may be difficult to change if energy alternatives are not found and promoted by the project.

**Finding 5. Significant needs for small equipment and materials were identified but their provision was not included in the CFI-WA formulation.**

79. Interviews with project staff in the countries, as well as meetings with grassroots stakeholders in pilot sites, revealed that women seafood sellers and processors lack small equipment (e.g. coolers, ovens, crates etc.) to enable them to capitalize on the training they have received and their new knowledge.
80. Even in Cabo Verde, where the Challenge Fund is active, it does not fulfil the function of investing in small-scale infrastructure and providing small equipment that would be necessary to reduce post-harvest losses. The public-private partnerships envisaged by the project (Output 2.1.2) have not yet been created in any of the countries to meet this demand and, more broadly, to improve working conditions and the quality of fishery products.
81. Thus there is a clear gap between the CFI-WA intervention policy (emphasis on capacity building) and the complex nature of the needs to be met on the field.
82. Table 7.2 in Appendix 4 summarizes the progress towards the results described in the results framework for Component 2 with a semaphore notation.

### 3.2.3 Component 3

**Question 2.3.** Have the knowledge generated and outcomes reached so far been effectively communicated with local, national and regional partners? Is an M&E system in place and is the project monitored effectively and efficiently? What methods, experiences and lessons has the project been able to share with the Global Partnership Project and other CFI projects? Conversely, what lessons has the project learned from other projects.

**Finding 6. The experiences, progress and outcomes achieved for each activity in the three countries are effectively and regularly shared between the teams in each country. These exchanges allow each team to refine and improve the implementation quality of their activities. Progress is also communicated to governments and stakeholders through the National Technical Committees but on a less regular basis.**

83. Bimonthly regional meetings, which are organized in turn by each country, are highly functional. They bring together all members of the national teams, the Abidjan Convention representative and members of the coordination team at headquarters. They are appreciated and seen as a very useful forum for exchange and inspiration by all. Examples of sharing and learning include: the case of Cabo Verde, which prepared its communication strategy first and shared it with Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal; the mutual sharing of the terms of reference drawn up by each team for the national consultants responsible for baseline studies; and the baseline report on Senegal's governance, which was used as a model by other countries.
84. The setting up by decree of National Technical Committees in each country – composed of the national FAO Project Officer (NPO), the National Project Coordinator representing the government, as well as representatives of the ministerial directorates linked to fisheries (e.g. ministries of the environment) and representatives of socio-professional organizations – promotes the communication of the project information and progress to the staff of each country, although the frequency of their meetings varies. In Cabo Verde, the National Technical Committees is also part of an extended national task force that includes members of fishermen's associations and civil society. This task force allows, in theory, for even wider dissemination of information (but with varying degrees of effectiveness as interviews with grassroots stakeholders suggested).
85. The effective coordination of legal framework review activities under the supervision of the FAO Legal Office (LEG) in Rome and the presence of an international legal expert based in the region who oversees the legal reviews in each country are an asset for the quality of the reviews and the related learning between the three countries.

**Finding 7. The system for monitoring and evaluating progress in project implementation and achievement of outcomes is limited to semi-annual and annual reports for FAO and GEF. Efforts are underway to improve this.**

86. The CFI-WA results framework is the main planning and monitoring instrument. National project coordination teams adhere strictly to its content to report on progress during the preparation of each semi-annual (FAO) and annual (GEF) progress report. As such, monitoring based on the results framework makes it possible to measure progress quantitatively/systematically. However, this monitoring method does not facilitate the monitoring of the indicators selected to measure the contribution of CFI-WA to the CFI theory of change (see Section 2.2). The GPP mid-term evaluation report also addresses these aspects. The closeness between the CFI theory of change (i.e. a tool to federate learning within CFI-WA and the whole CFI and to assess the changes these have brought about) and the CFI-WA project results framework (as the tool of choice for monitoring and measuring results) seems to have confused project staff. These points are taken up in Section 3.5.7.
87. However, it should be noted that at the time of the mid-term evaluation, an M&E manual was being drafted for all project staff (national teams, ministries and headquarters coordination). This manual breaks up the results framework indicators according to their nature (output, effect, gender, capacity) and allocates monitoring responsibilities to each for the collection, aggregation

and analysis of indicators. This should be very useful in monitoring the implementation and effects of the project carefully (see Section 3.5).

**Finding 8. The linkages between the CFI-WA project and GPP are weak and the project operates independently of other CFI sub-projects. Knowledge sharing between sub-projects is in its infancy. Exchanges of methods, experiences and lessons learned only really takes place during the global meetings of all CFI sub-projects.**

88. Component 3 was intended to be the anchor point between CFI-WA and other sub-projects, including GPP. It has not yet fully played this role. Contrary to what was expected, the sharing of FAO personnel time in the Global Coordination Unit between the CFI-WA and GPP projects has not strengthened the links between the two sub-projects (Section 3.5 details this aspect).
89. Mechanisms for sharing lessons between the sub-projects have been limited to the Global Steering Committee meetings (seven at the time of this report). Others, such as the production of common thematic materials based on the experiences of all sub-projects – decided at the Guayaquil workshop in October 2018 – have just been launched<sup>10</sup> and their preparation has accelerated during the evaluation period. However, it can be expected that these materials, which will be handled by each of the sub-projects, will lead to more exchanges and knowledge sharing between the sub-projects, as each will have to bring up its experience. For example, an interesting sharing of lessons has already taken place with the sub-project in Latin America on mangrove seeding techniques, allowing CFI-WA to adapt its technique and plant throughout the year. However, it would be unfortunate to limit knowledge sharing strictly to these thematic products. In addition to thematic materials, there are other important lessons to be learned in terms of operational learning, such as: how women can be better involved in meetings and better represented in fisheries governance and decision-making processes, and how project members and beneficiaries have had to adapt their work to unforeseen and constraining circumstances such as those created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Finding 9. In line with the results framework, CFI-based communication strategies have been developed by countries and guided the production of some communication materials. Some materials could be better promoted and disseminated.**

90. As described in the national communication strategies developed by Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire, communication materials have been produced (e.g. articles, thematic film, photos) and posted on the project website.<sup>11</sup> However, the CFI-WA web page is rarely visited by project partners, according to the results of the electronic survey (11 percent of survey respondents indicated that they opened it often, 68 percent occasionally and 21 percent never). The presentation of the thematic materials under development on the CFI website will need to be carefully designed so that, for an external audience, each of them does not become exclusively associated with one project (e.g. CFI-WA should not be seen as dealing only with women in fisheries value chains).

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<sup>10</sup> Sub-project responsibilities for delivering common thematic materials to CFI:

CFI-WA: Women in value chains.

CFI-Indonesia: spatial planning and fisheries management under EAF.

CFI-Latin America: mangrove management and protection.

CFI-Challenge Fund: investments in the coastal fisheries sector.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/coastal-fisheries-initiative/en/>

91. According to FAO's communication policy, individual projects cannot have social media accounts. Unlike the sub-project in Latin America for example,<sup>12</sup> CFI-WA does not yet have a Twitter account. Although the hashtag #CFIgef allows all partners and other interested parties to express themselves on the CFI project in general, this results in a disproportionate visibility of activities in Latin America compared to those in West Africa.
92. Although they provide an outline for communicating project outcomes among all stakeholders, communication strategies do not sufficiently address how common lessons and themes can be drawn from the experiences of different countries, and the different sub-projects in terms of sustainable management, governance and value chain improvement. As mentioned above, this is being addressed through the Experience capitalization method, developed by FAO and being accelerated with a view to producing and disseminating knowledge outputs in 2022.
93. The primary data generated by the project could be valorised and it is worth reflecting on how to do so. Very significant efforts have been made to collect, compile, verify and validate the information contained in "baseline reports" of project Components 1 and 2. Some of these reports are excellent and could be invaluable sources of information, not only for the countries, but for the wider scientific community. More synthesis efforts should also be made. For example, the synthesis of baseline reports on governance and value chains<sup>13</sup> in the three countries will be a key knowledge product generated by the project, but is still to be finalized. It is planned, eventually, to produce summary sheets and share them with the different partners.
94. Internal project communication mechanisms are discussed in Section 3.5.6.
95. Table 7.3 in Appendix 4 summarizes the progress towards the results described in the results framework for Component 3 with a semaphore notation.

### 3.2.4 Effectiveness of partnerships

**Question 2.4.** Are the partnerships established by the project so far (i.e. with UNEP) functional? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's partnerships and interactions with local fishing communities?

**Finding 10. The partnership between FAO and the UNEP Abidjan Convention is functional. The Abidjan Convention, however, operates in relative isolation from the rest of the project. CFI-WA has moved closer to other initiatives in Cabo Verde and Senegal.**

96. UNEP/Abidjan Convention is an implementing partner and co-financing partner of the project, participating in all biweekly regional meetings and those of CFI more generally.
97. The strengths of the partnership with the Abidjan Convention lie in the fact that:
  - i. the Abidjan Convention has enabled the project to broaden its scope to include environmental fisheries issues through mangrove management, and thus to strengthen the project's position in the GEF priorities (see Section 3.1);

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<sup>12</sup> Iniciativa Pesquerías Costeras América Latina: @IniciativaPesq1

<sup>13</sup> Under Activity 1.1.2.1 "Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of coastal fisheries governance to determine whether EAF and gender issues are being effectively implemented and the extent to which relevant international instruments are being taken into account".

- ii. the project capitalized on the linkages of the Abidjan Convention and FAO with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal respectively to involve NGOs in the implementation of mangrove activities with the beneficiary communities;
  - iii. it helped to act quickly and to overcome the constraints of transplantation seasonality (see Question 2.1), and budget (see Section 3.5.3) and to drive forward the activities described in the results framework.
98. However, by only dealing with the mangrove activities of Output 1.2.2, the Abidjan Convention operates in relative isolation from the rest of the project and the other project implementing partners. Nevertheless, it participates in all meetings concerning project implementation and it is the focal point for the implementation of FPAI activities in Côte d'Ivoire.
99. In Senegal, the project has established close links with local fisheries management bodies, local artisanal fisheries Councils (CLPA). This facilitates interactions with fishers and therefore with beneficiaries and allows for good dissemination of information between the latter and the fisheries management bodies at government level through the network they constitute.
100. Finally, since 2019, CFI-WA has seized the opportunity to get closer to and work with the global SSF-SIDA project<sup>14</sup> in these three countries, aiming at the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (VGSSF); and this project has made financial resources available to CFI-WA to carry out some activities. This should accelerate awareness of the issues raised by the Guidelines, including equity and human rights in artisanal fisheries, which are linked to the themes of improved governance and value chains that the project is working on.

### 3.2.5 Unexpected outcomes

**Question 2.5.** Are there any unexpected outcomes so far?

**Finding 11. Unexpected outcomes have not yet been observed but promising developments are underway.**

101. The project results framework, which is very detailed and prescriptive, leaves little room for "surprise", spontaneous or unexpected developments. The project has not yet had a significant catalytic effect, or generated outcomes or practices that can be replicated elsewhere. However, the way in which the project has operated between the three countries – through the establishment of a biweekly meeting for close consultation between the three national teams and the creation of National Technical Committees – has paved the way for the establishment of new exchange mechanisms, which could stimulate similar practices in other national or regional projects.
102. It is also worth noting that the project has sought to capitalize on the expertise available within FAO and other UN agencies and thus develop stronger collaborations to address specific aspects or themes of the project, although this was not explicitly envisaged at the time of project design. This is notably the case with the FAO Legal Office (LEG), which has appointed a focal point to oversee all country legal framework reviews. This is also the case with the Gender Team / Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP) at FAO headquarters, which was approached by the project and provided support during the development of the Gender Strategy and the revision of the project results framework, and which has since then been available to the project. This is also the case with the FAO Food Safety and Quality Unit which was involved to

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<sup>14</sup> Project SSF SIDA "GCP/GLO/965/SWE: Creating an enabling environment for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries".

support the implementation of activities on the quality and safety of fishery products under Component 2. Similarly, discussions were initiated between FAO and the Senegalese office of the International Labour Organization at the end of 2020, and due to the lack of available expertise from the Geneva headquarters, the project was directed towards the expertise available at the University of Dakar, while affirming its involvement in monitoring the implementation of activities on occupational safety and health. Terms of reference for university staff have been developed to assess the level of implementation of national occupational safety and health standards along the artisanal fisheries value chain and to propose measures to promote decent working conditions. The work is expected to start in the course of 2021. It is anticipated that this experience in Senegal will be replicated in Côte d'Ivoire (where ILO's expertise is available) and then in Cabo Verde.

### **3.2.6 Probability of impact**

**Question 2.6.** Are there any obstacles or risks in each of the three countries that could impede the future progress of the project and the achievement of its objectives? The evaluation will tackle in particular the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the project.

**Finding 12. The challenges associated with the project – such as the long-term availability and retention of qualified staff, the mobilization of country counterparts as well as the ability to capitalize on the foundations laid by the project and share the gains more widely – are likely to weigh heavily on the achievement of the project objectives.**

103. As mentioned above (Section 2.2), the notion of CFI-WA impact is unclear, as it can only be measured through the changes it would bring about within the entire CFI. To consider the probability of the project's impact, it is therefore useful to look back at the CFI theory of change and how the CFI-WA project, through the achievement of its overall objective, is expected to contribute to it.
104. The baseline studies carried out and the capacity building activities recently started in the field are an important step in achieving the project's environmental and developmental objectives. However, the project must continue its influence so that these should lead to the adoption of improved practices. Constraints that should not be underestimated include: staff turnover (see Section 3.5.2), lack of evaluation and partial mobilization of partners' counterparts (see Section 3.5.3), and the inherent slowness of the participatory processes with grassroots stakeholders initiated by the project in the field.

**Finding 13. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down activities but does not jeopardize project progress.**

105. The restrictions imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in the first three quarters of 2020 have undeniably slowed down activities at all levels and added to the implementation delays that already existed. However, the national teams were able to quickly adapt their work to the new conditions created by the pandemic and organize virtual meetings to strengthen their exchanges. The recent improvement in the health situation has allowed a return to near-normality through the respect of existing measures and barrier measures. Stakeholders' capacity building activities – which are an essential step in the achievement of the expected outcomes, and which must be held within the remaining time of the project – should therefore not be too affected. However, the postponement of 2020 field activities to 2021 will make this year, and the next, extremely busy for national teams.

### 3.2.7 Summary

106. Approximately 50 percent of project activities are completed at mid-term, but there are significant variations between countries.
107. On this basis, and taking into account the other effectiveness criteria discussed above and the potential for further achievement in the remaining time of the project, progress towards the achievement of expected project outcomes and its overall objective – strengthening fisheries governance, management and value chains through the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, relevant international tools and innovative governance partnerships in three West African countries (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal) – to date is rated as moderately satisfactory (i. e. "the level of outcomes has been achieved more or less as planned and/or there have been moderate shortcomings").

### 3.3 Efficiency

**Question 3.1.** To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently? And to what extent has its management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of its implementation? Are project disbursements to date satisfactory?

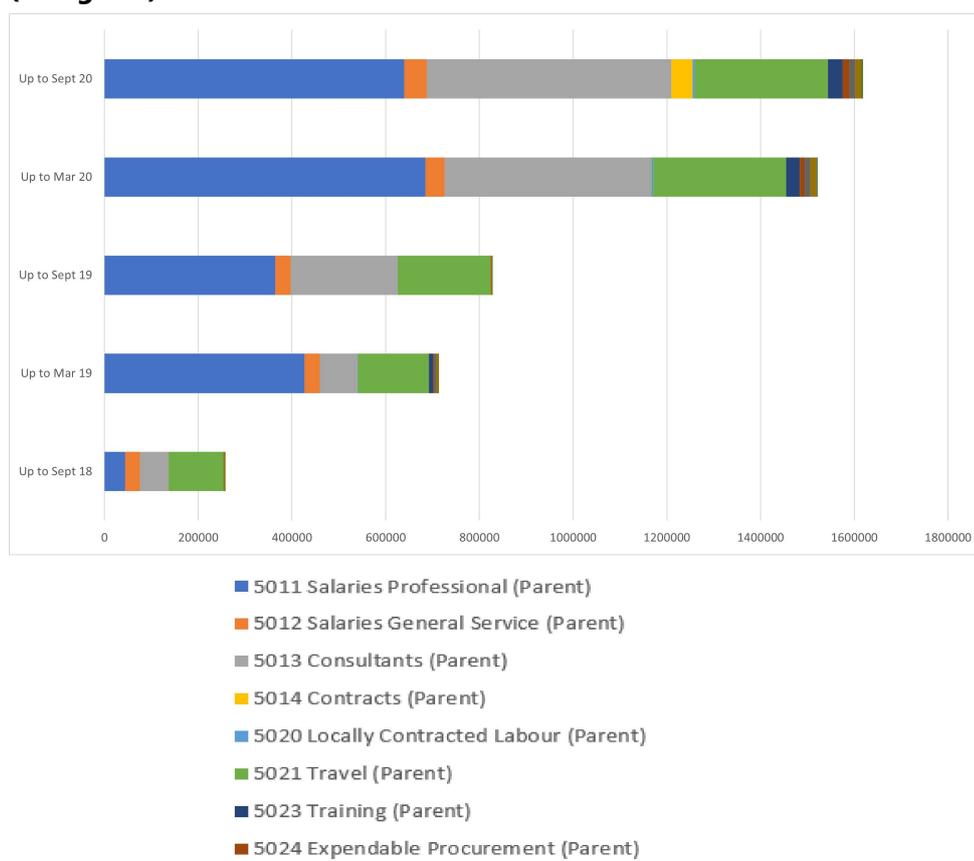
**Finding 14. Disbursements have accelerated since September 2019, but the disbursement rate remains relatively low.**

108. As of 30 September 2020, 26 percent of the budget (GEF grant) had been spent, i.e. USD 1 618 560, mostly for FAO personnel salaries (40 percent), consultants (32 percent) and travel (18 percent) (Figure 3). This rate of expenditure is low if one takes into account the official start date of the project (October 2017), but more reasonable if one takes into account that activities really started from the project launch workshop (Dakar, September 2018). At the time of this report (February 2021), the rate of disbursement was around 33 percent.<sup>15</sup> This acceleration of expenditure is a good sign, but there are only 17 months left before the official end of the project, and constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic may continue to hamper disbursements for the full implementation of activities.

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<sup>15</sup> This estimate was subsequently confirmed by updated figures provided by the project team in March 2021 – see Table 5.

**Figure 3. Accumulated disbursements of the CFI-WA project as of 30 September 2020, in USD (GEF grant)**



Source: Analysis of the evaluation team.

109. As of 31 December 2020, it was reported that 44 percent of the FAO co-financing had been spent (Table 4), which is lower than what would be expected at more than the official mid-point of the project, but reasonable if one takes into account the delays accumulated during the start-up.

**Table 4. Commitment and disbursement of FAO co-financing on CFI-WA**

Project Components	FAO co-financing commitment in USD	Percent of total committed	FAO co-financing expenditure in USD as at 31.12.2020	Percent of Comp spent	Percent of total
Component 1: Improving fisheries governance and management	10 295 000	38%	4 499 296	44%	17%
Component 2: Strengthening the seafood value chain	8 090 000	30%	3 535 630	44%	13%
Component 3: Strategic communication, monitoring and evaluation, and up-scaling of best practises	8 305 000	31%	3 629 593	44%	13%
PMC	310 000	1%	135 481	44%	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27 000 000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>11 800 000</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>

Source: Headquarters Coordination Unit. These data are estimates.

Notes: i) Funding for Components 1, 2 and 3 comes from projects funded by FAO's regular donors, such as NORAD, the European Union and Sweden; ii) Project Management Committee (PMC) funding comes from the in-kind contribution of FAO technical staff based at headquarters.

**Finding 15. The level of co-financing mobilization and of disbursements for the components are as foreseen.**

110. Given the importance of M&E as well as knowledge management and sharing in CFI-WA, it was initially foreseen in the Project Document that at least 25 percent of the total budget would be allocated to it, of which about 5 percent of the budget would be for M&E. The initial budgets indicate that 24 percent of the GEF grant, 31 percent of FAO co-financing and 23 percent of co-financing from all other partners were dedicated to Component 3, or an average of 27 percent of all funding combined.
111. The estimated mobilization of FAO co-financing as of 31 December 2020 indicates 17 percent for Component 1, 13 percent for Component 2 and 13 percent for Component 3 (Table 6). This is slightly less than half of what was foreseen for Component 3 (31 percent), but it is still reasonable at this stage of the project. It could be envisaged that part of the remaining 56 percent of the FAO counterpart be mobilized to support the communication and knowledge sharing activities of Component 3 and thus accelerate the materialization of FAO co-financing, subject to clarifications on the follow-up of these operations (see Section 3.5.4).
112. With regard to disbursements of the GEF grant, Table 5 shows the breakdown status of the GEF grant per component (details of expenditure per outcome and output are not available) of the project as of 22 March 2021.<sup>16</sup> It indicates that 45 percent, 27 percent and 43 percent of the funds allocated respectively to Component 1, Component 2 and Component 3, have been disbursed, which is satisfactory at this stage of the project. Furthermore, this table also indicates that the level of disbursement for Component 3 in relation to the total budget is 13 percent, which is slightly more than half of the percentage of the GEF grant that was to be dedicated to this Component, which is in line with what would be expected at the mid-term of the project.
113. The budget review recommended at the Mindelo workshop in July 2019 to reallocate USD 265 000 from Components 1 and 2 to Component 3 increased funds for Component 3 by 4 percent, but did not adversely affect the activities of the other two components. However, it is not possible for the evaluation team to estimate the benefits of this budget review on Component 3 activities at this time. The evaluation of these benefits will have to be carried out at a later stage.

**Table 5. Breakdown of the CFI-WA budget by component**

Components	Initial budget (USD)*	Actual expenditure (USD) as of 22 March 2021 **	Percentage of component budget	Percentage of total budget
Component 1	1 749 008	794 615	45%	13%
Component 2	2 286 413	621 487	27%	10%
Component 3	1 791 269	778 597	43%	13%
Total	6 133 026	2 342 957		38%

Source: Headquarters Coordination Unit and evaluation team.

Note (\*) Figures made available in March 2021.

Note (\*\*) Sum of "actuals" + "hard commitments".

<sup>16</sup> These figures were not available as of 31 December 2020 due to an operational problem with the Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) and could only be updated as of 22 March 2021.

114. The project followed existing financial management procedures, such as the use of field budget allocations (FBA) to transfer project funds to FAO offices in the three countries. So far, the project has been managed in an adaptive way. This method has allowed it to overcome challenges such as the lack of capacity in the field, for example, the recruitment of international consultants to support national consultants in the preparation of baseline studies. The memoranda of understanding signed between FAO and the Ministries of Fisheries of the three countries, as well as those under development, are another illustration of the adaptation of budget management to constraints, in particular, human capacity in the countries (e.g. Cabo Verde). Memoranda of understanding signed between the Abidjan Convention and local NGOs have been the usual, but effective, means of implementing Output 1.2.2 (mangrove transplantation and awareness raising) activities, and circumventing the associated budgetary and seasonal constraints (see Section 3.2.1).

**Finding 16. Some management mechanisms hamper the monitoring of FAO co-financing.**

115. Although CFI-WA and GPP have their own budgets, some activities (mainly those related to communication and knowledge sharing) are funded on a cost-sharing basis, not only between these two CFI sub-projects, but also with other FAO projects managed by the Fisheries Department's Fishcode Unit (such as the GEF project on areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) and the European Union's Fish4ACP project). There is no mechanism to monitor these operations and staff time allocation between projects.
116. The evaluation's review of finances and interviews with the project management team at headquarters also revealed a poor monitoring of FAO in-kind co-financing, both in terms of staff time allocation and use of overhead costs.
117. In practice, the project's Chief Technical Adviser spends more time on CFI-WA than on GPP (of which she is also the CTA), given the significant support needs required by the three countries (see Section 3.5.4).<sup>17</sup> While this is beneficial to CFI-WA (though less than full time), it is detrimental to GPP (see the GPP mid-term evaluation report).

**Finding 17. The project is facing difficulties in monitoring the mobilization of partners' co-financing.**

118. As of 30 June 2020, it was estimated that 38 percent of partner in-kind commitments had been mobilized (USD 17 420 600 out of USD 45 550 500 planned, see co-financing table in Appendix 3), but no partner co-financing report was available at that time to confirm these figures – as is normally expected for the monitoring of GEF funded projects. Apart from FAO's contribution, it was not possible to estimate the counterparts provided by the project co-financiers as of 31 December 2020 (Table 6). This co-financing is all the more necessary as the GEF cash grant is relatively small compared to the size of the project and the number of activities to be implemented.

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted, however, that its terms of reference do not specify the percentage of her time to be allocated to GPP and CFI-WA.

**Question 3.2.** To what extent has the project developed agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other projects and partnerships, and avoided duplication of similar activities by other groups?

**Finding 18. The project has not developed complementary agreements, except for some actions in synergy with the SSF-SIDA project.**

119. Some actions are now carried out in synergy with the SSF-SIDA project (in Cabo Verde and Senegal) as described in Sections 3.2.4 and 3.5.5.

### 3.4 Sustainability

**Question 4.** Does the project include provisions to ensure the sustainability of its outcomes and benefits (i.e. an exit strategy) and are these provisions in place? What are the main risks that could affect the sustainability of outcomes and benefits?

**Finding 19. As the project works to catch up and take activities on the field further, some arrangements have been made but need to be strengthened to ensure that the outcomes achieved are likely to be sustained over time.**

120. At the level of each country, the institutional anchoring of the project progress is well underway. The National Technical Committees, officially established and recognized in each country, constitute a governmental coordination mechanism for the project (linked to the activities of Output 1.1.3).<sup>18</sup> Although specific to the project, there is also a consultation mechanism which establishes a new practice of multi-stakeholder consultation that did not exist before and could play a crucial role in the maintenance of project achievements over time.

121. Based on the National Technical Committees established by ministerial decrees, multi-stakeholder working groups have been or are being created. For example, in Cabo Verde, there is a national task force, comprising National Technical Committees members plus women's associations (MORABI and OMCV) and fishermen's associations from the North, South, Salamansa and S. Pedro. In Côte d'Ivoire, a "technical working group on fisheries" (GTTP) similar to the one in Cabo Verde should be created under the memorandum of understanding signed between FAO and MIRAH. Its terms of reference are currently being developed. In Senegal, the intention is to use the existing group of technical and financial partners in the fisheries sector – currently chaired by FAO and including donors (e.g. *Agence Française pour le Développement, European Union, United States Agency for International Development*) – and the main stakeholders in the sector, as a framework for exploring synergies between the various past and ongoing projects. In addition, the close professional links that have been established between the members of the three national project teams are likely to continue over time.

122. However, there are significant risks that could affect the sustainability of project outcomes and benefits. These include:

- i. The difficulty in accurately assessing the in-kind co-financing mobilized: actually GEF policy considers this assessment as a guarantee for the project outcome sustainability over time.
- ii. Accumulated delays coupled with the maintenance or resumption of sanitary constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic: these have hindered the project from carrying out

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<sup>18</sup> Output 1.1.3: Government coordination mechanisms, including consultative frameworks, are established and promote coherence and synergies among existing projects and development initiatives in the coastal fisheries and related sectors.

its activities and expected outputs at its end planned in May 2022 and may jeopardize the latter's expected scope and capacity to be self-sustaining after the project.

- iii. A certain gap between the project progress at the institutional and national level (particularly in terms of awareness and capacities) and that at the local level, where, according to meetings with grassroots stakeholders (in Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire), the project has not yet led to real changes in practices.
- iv. The non-inclusion of project foundations in an exit strategy detailing the necessary measures to be taken or strengthened, with a view to sustain outcomes after the end of the project.<sup>19</sup> The list below reviews possible provisions and the attention they have received. Failure to implement them by the end of the project is a potential risk to the sustainability of the project.
  - Strengthening linkages and synergies with other initiatives in the fisheries sector: only SSF-SIDA at the regional level (currently in Cabo Verde and Senegal, soon in Côte d'Ivoire) is identified as a project the CFI-WA project has close links with. Other active projects in the region have been identified but the synergies needed not only to strengthen project activities and impacts, but also to ensure support beyond, have yet to be implemented.
  - Availability of funding and partnerships: the difficulties encountered in assessing in-kind co-financing from project partners, and the poor progress in establishing public-private partnerships among value chain stakeholders more than half way through the project, do not bode well. However, partnerships can be developed by the end of the project.
  - The management and fate of small-scale equipment acquired by grassroots stakeholders through the project (if implemented): the investment capacity of fishers and processors is currently very limited and will eventually constrain their adoption of the best practices that the project seeks to instil. Consideration should be given to the appropriate mechanisms to be put in place by stakeholders to encourage their independence and their own investments.
  - Capacity building of stakeholders at all levels and their deep involvement in the cause defended by the project: a large part of the training and capacity building actions planned by the project is still to be delivered, and the evaluation team meetings with grassroots stakeholders revealed that they do not yet have any tangible experience of the project benefits. The involvement of national consultants from the onset of the project has been uneven between countries due to difficult recruitment and the availability of national expertise, but remains a guarantee of the impact and sustainability of actions. Emphasis should be placed on consultants' retention and capacity building more generally to create a pool of expertise and motivation on which future project developments can be based.

123. In summary, based on the above analysis, project sustainability is rated at mid-term as **Moderately Likely** ("Sustainability is at moderate risk"), provided that the necessary measures are taken to limit the above risks, to contain the negative influence of factors external to the project and to verify the theory of change hypotheses.

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<sup>19</sup> No exit strategy is mentioned in the CFI-WA Project Document.

## 3.5 Factors affecting project performance

### 3.5.1 Project design

**Question 5.1.** Is the project design appropriate to lead to the anticipated outcomes? Is its logic clear and coherent? To what extent are the objectives and components of the project clear, concrete and feasible over the life of the project? Has the project adequately identified capacity gaps and needs?

**Finding 20.** **The project is designed as a coherent whole to address the need to integrate harvest and post-harvest aspects. However, it suffers from some shortcomings, in terms of the articulation between its objectives and components, the over-detailed results framework and the consideration of grassroots stakeholders' practical needs.**

124. The logic of the project is overall clear, and its design is consistent and apparently relatively simple (three components, two of which are closely linked, and one that underpins them and allows links with the other sub-projects). The particularity of the project is that it combines governance activities (Component 1) with post-harvest activities (Component 2) according to the integrated value chain approach. Table 3 and Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 highlight this in the case of species selected in the pilot sites of the three countries. Despite the break-up of upstream (Component 1) and downstream (Component 2) activities in the results framework, they are treated together at the pilot sites and sometimes in baseline studies. This gives them greater logic and continuity.
125. The choice of countries was made at the outset, when the CFI was developed, based on criteria to ensure the scope of actions and to represent the variety of fisheries in this region of the world. Five pilot sites (one in Senegal, two in Cabo Verde and two in Côte d'Ivoire) were previously selected (in 2016) on the basis of "their importance to fisheries-dependent communities, the existence of significant artisanal fish processing and their potential to create local and national benefits" (CFI-WA Project Document, November 2016 version). These choices were not changed at the time of the kick-off workshop and remain appropriate given the intent of the project and CFI more generally. The shift of FPAI-related activities from Component 3 to Component 1 following the redesign of the results framework was appropriate.
126. The completion of baseline studies in each country and the ability of country teams to tailor their activities to these baselines allowed for some flexibility in the project's regional approach, which aims, according to the results framework, at replicating the activities of each component in all three countries. However, as noted above, not all baseline studies are yet complete (Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.). Some latent and specific problems, such as the post-harvest inspection of fisheries and fishery products that contravenes the proper management and promotion of products in Cabo Verde, may remain unaddressed.
127. CFI-WA has been developed in strict accordance with CFI programmatic framework, without making explicit its contribution to CFI's ambition (see Section 2.2).
128. The organization of the project is complex and tries to represent as well as possible all the different roles of steering, decision-making, implementation and participation at all levels (see Section 2.1).
129. It is not clear how the three CFI-WA components fit together to support the achievement of its *environmental* and *development* objective, and its overall objective of implementing an ecosystem approach to fisheries, relevant international tools and innovative governance partnerships in three countries.

130. The results framework is excessively detailed. It remains overly prescriptive and insufficiently focused on the changes in behaviour and practices that need to take place to achieve the expected CFI outcomes more generally. Despite numerous revisions, it has an excessive number of activities (from 20 outputs and 80 activities, to 17 outputs and 63 activities) that all project staff are required to adhere to, and which contribute to a significant workload (see Section 3.5).
131. It is still unclear how species selection and (future) activities on their management and processing in pilot sites, baseline information and FPAI experimental use, consistently work together in support of the ecosystem approach to fisheries (see Section 3.2).
132. The project is focused on capacity building and does not provide (or facilitated access to) small-scale equipment to women fish vendors and processors, despite their needs to improve product preservation and quality as well as their working conditions (see Section 3.2.2). This also reduces the "visible" trace that the project could leave on the field with the beneficiaries. This problem, identified during the implementation of field activities, is being addressed through a budget review.

### 3.5.2 Implementation and management administration

**Question 5.2.** To what extent have the project's implementing partners fulfilled their roles and responsibilities in relation to project management and administration? What have been the main management and administrative challenges so far and what changes are needed to improve its implementation in the second half of the project?

**Finding 21. Efforts have been made by the project's implementing partners to contribute to the project as planned. Implementing partners' commitment to the project is well known, but faced with problems of capacity, procedures, staff retention and funding.**

133. Project implementation arrangements are consistent and relevant. In each country, arrangements have been made to formally link the project to implementing partners and to broaden the work to other stakeholders through the **National Technical Committees** established by national decree (decrees issued in Cabo Verde and Senegal in 2019, and in Côte d'Ivoire in 2020). However, although these committees are responsible for validating annual work plans (as well as baseline reports and any studies produced) and transmitting information generated by the project to the administration and all stakeholders (for example, through the facilitation of baseline restitution workshops), they do not have detailed terms of reference and have experienced delays in meeting (e.g. only one meeting since their creation).<sup>20</sup> It should also be noted that National Technical Committees are chaired by the national administration, so their work is only indirectly influenced by the project.
134. The **national work plans** established annually and in accordance with the CFI-WA results framework are a useful and flexible technical and budgetary planning tool (e.g. they have been revised and adapted to the health crisis imposed by COVID-19) for programming and monitoring progress in each country. They also facilitate **teamwork** between National Professional Officers, National Project Coordinators, and national consultants. Pairing the National Officer (FAO) and the National Coordinator (government) is a driving force and a sound mechanism for the smooth functioning of the project at the national level, and the strengthening of links between FAO and the government agencies concerned. In addition, the synergy between governance and value chain consultants when they are together at the same pilot site (e.g. Senegal) allows for a good

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<sup>20</sup> Based on the meeting minutes made available to the evaluation: July 2019 in Senegal, October 2020 in Côte d'Ivoire, none in Cabo Verde.

linkage between activities of the two components. The same is true when the legal consultant works closely with the latter (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire and other countries).

135. The **Abidjan Convention work** has been satisfactorily carried out through two memoranda of understanding with local NGOs in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, despite the budgetary limitations encountered.
136. National teams have shown great **adaptability**. Thus, it was decided not to revise the project design, but to take advantage of the lockdown conditions (office work) to finalize the baseline studies of Components 1 and 2. Zoom has become the new tool for communication between the teams of the three countries and has, in fact, promoted exchanges (e.g. holding biweekly meetings).
137. However, the **total number of activities to be implemented is still huge**, if not unrealistic given the delays accumulated at the start, the slowdowns due to COVID-19, and the short time remaining until the end of the project (2022), despite the updating and reworking of the project results framework, which allowed the country teams to become fully immersed in the project. The participatory approach advocated by the project (which is itself time-consuming) should not be sacrificed to the pressure to complete all the activities in the results framework.
138. The project also faced **significant human capacity gaps and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff**. These challenges (e.g. in Cabo Verde, recruitment and retention of national consultants at the pilot sites, and appointment of the NPC) were not sufficiently anticipated during the project risk assessment at the time of project design. At the time of the evaluation, Senegal did not have a National Professional Officer,<sup>21</sup> Côte d'Ivoire's had recently been replaced (February 2020), and Cabo Verde's National Project Coordinator was being replaced. The position of the Chief Technical Adviser was ad interim (by the Senegal NPO) for nine months following the resignation of the former CTA in August 2019, until her appointment as the CTA at FAO headquarters. Those in position are overworked and stretched on multiple tasks, some of which are only indirectly related to their work at the pilot sites (e.g. communication, planning, budgeting, etc.). They also have to deal with administrative bottlenecks related to the procedures in place to obtain field visit authorizations and to have their work plans validated. These have been compounded by the increased sanitary clearances due to COVID-19. However, some of the findings at the time of project development for specific support, such as that mentioned in the Project Document to support the Senegalese central fisheries administration,<sup>22</sup> were not necessary.
139. The **recording of financial commitments** in national budgets (the Treasury) by national executing agencies has been and continues to be problematic (see Sections 3.3 and 3.5.3) and hinders project ownership by national counterparts, despite the institutional anchoring given to the National Technical Committee.

**Finding 22. Alternatives had to be found to deal with administrative bottlenecks and lack of human capacity, and to stimulate the implementation of field activities.**

140. **Memoranda of understanding** have been signed with the Ministries of Fisheries (in Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire in August 2020, and are being signed in Senegal), after the establishment of

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<sup>21</sup> The evaluation has since learned that Senegal's NPO has been in office since 15 March 2021.

<sup>22</sup> For reference: the Project Document states that: "In Senegal, the administration needs more support. Consequently, three auxiliary staff will be assigned to the fisheries administration in addition to the staff assigned to each site. The exact profiles are to be decided but they should be similar to those barely mentioned."

National Technical Committees. These protocols are seen as a tool to motivate and further involve National Project Coordinators in the project and they also cover the costs related to the implementation of field activities (e.g. organization of workshops, data collection). Established midway through the project, they are also intended to fill human capacity gaps (e.g. difficulty in recruiting qualified staff/consultants in Cabo Verde) and improve the quality of certain activities (e.g. certain aspects of the baseline studies in Cabo Verde). Similarly, memoranda of understanding are currently being discussed in Cabo Verde between FAO and a local NGO to support activities in S. Vicente. These partnerships are not only a practical way to implement field activities and overcome staff retention challenges at pilot sites (e.g. Cabo Verde), but they also help to directly reach out to and involve grassroots stakeholders.

141. However, these memoranda of understanding are not a panacea: they comply with FAO procedures, but are heavy in terms of administration and expertise. Their follow-up is not easy either, as they have already suffered from delays in activities. They will have to be extended and the activities described are not always modelled on those of the results framework (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire), which may further complicate their monitoring.

**Finding 23. FAO's dual role of executing and implementing CFI-WA is justified by the nature of the project.**

142. During project design, the GEF Secretariat agreed that FAO would play an executing role whereas it was already designated as the implementing agency. This gives FAO a facilitating and executive role that reflects the Organization's global and national expertise in fisheries.

### 3.5.3 Finances and co-financing

**Question 5.3.** What challenges have been faced in the financial management of the project, and to what extent has the pledged co-financing been fulfilled?

FAO Counterpart

**Finding 24. The lack of traceability of FAO's in-kind contributions to the project jeopardizes the proper management of the inputs and the commitment of the Organization's personnel to the project.**

143. Staff time contributions to CFI-WA from different FAO units are ad hoc (e.g. administrative support and specific technical support such as gender, standards, law, communication) and therefore difficult to quantify. No technical staff from the Fisheries Division and the FishCode unit where CFI-WA is based, work on a full-time or long-term basis. FAO's in-kind contribution is therefore difficult to assess.

Partners' contributions

**Finding 25. The project has experienced major difficulties from its inception in mobilizing co-financing partners and making co-financing resources operational.**

144. Evaluation of in-kind resources from co-financing partners has been problematic from the onset of the project. Steps have not yet been taken to remedy this situation. This situation is detrimental not only to the project, but also to the synergies sought by the GEF co-financing principle.
145. Existing mechanisms for monitoring the commitments of co-financing partners are not effective or even non-existent, and it is difficult for the Coordination Unit at headquarters to obtain estimates, let alone regular updates of in-kind contributions from co-financing partners. Some organizations have not yet mobilized, or have been constrained in mobilizing funds pledged to

the project (e.g. CONXEMAR). If this is not corrected soon, initial commitments may falsely inflate the total project budget envelope and the resulting expectations.

146. With respect to the implementing partner governments, neither Cabo Verde nor Côte d'Ivoire had included their contributions in the national budget at the time of the evaluation; this hinders the Ministries' commitment and participation in the project (see Section 3.5.2).
147. The UNDP financial grant to the project (USD 300 000) is quite meagre given the cost of mangrove transplantation and awareness raising activities (this amount was largely absorbed by memoranda of understanding signed with local NGOs). 45 percent of UNEP's financial contribution and 40 percent of its in-kind contribution had been disbursed as of 30 June 2020, just before the halfway point, which is reasonable. The relative autonomy of the mangroves output, however, means that UNEP/Abidjan Convention can adapt the management of its cash and in-kind resources to the needs of this output activities. It should be noted, however, that the missions of the UNEP/Abidjan Convention coordinator and the communication activities to improve the partnership between the two institutions were funded by CFI-WA.

### 3.5.4 Project supervision, role of FAO

**Question 5.4.** To what extent has the implementing agency<sup>23</sup> fulfilled its responsibilities in terms of project concept identification and preparation, evaluation, preparation, approval and start-up, as well as monitoring and supervision?

**Finding 26. The project has experienced significant staff turnover, which has diminished its memory and caused significant delays in the start-up and supervision of activities in the countries.**

148. From its inception, the CFI-WA Coordination Unit has faced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff at headquarters (e.g. slow recruitment, retirements and resignations), and in the three countries.) Thus, the project has had two Chief Technical Advisers – the recruitment of the first one took almost a year, then there was a period without CTA (but with an interim provided at the headquarters level by the Senegal NPO) – two Lead Technical Officers and three Budget Officers. This was very detrimental given the importance of institutional memory for a project of this complexity. This turnover has also occurred in countries where not all FAO positions are filled. Due to the lack of a National Professional Officer in Senegal, the project depended on the three national consultants in place and on an increased supervision from headquarters. The same difficulties were encountered with the national coordinators, as discussed above (Section 3.5.2).
149. Administrative bottlenecks related to procedures for recruiting each person only exacerbated the delays.

**Finding 27. The project management and supervisory bodies are only partially functional and hamper the strategic direction of the project.**

150. As suggested in Section 2.1 and in the table in Annex 8, the structure of the project management bodies is complex. The Coordination Unit at FAO headquarters has an advisory and supervisory role and decision-making authority. Decisions are made by consensus as much as possible.
151. Meanwhile, the CFI-WA Steering Committee has only met once, in July 2019: lengthy discussions about its structure hampered successive meetings. Its role seems to be more or less filled by the Coordination Unit at headquarters. This unit, common to GPP, is made up of the Chief Technical Adviser, the Lead Technical Officer, the Budget Officer, administrators, communication and

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<sup>23</sup> As a reminder: the implementing agency is FAO.

knowledge sharing staff – supported where appropriate by the FAO GEF Office/Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) – who provide administrative and technical support to the country teams and liaise with the other sub-projects. The terms of reference of the Steering Committee, as defined in Mindelo 2019, are therefore only partially fulfilled and as a result the project lacks strategic steering.

152. According to the interviews conducted, the project's FAO Task Force has so far had only a minor, ad hoc role that has not provided strategic or practical guidance to the project. Its first meeting after updating its membership (but second in absolute) was only held in March 2020. Since then, it has not met again.

**Finding 28. The work of the coordination team is effective and the project has demonstrated initiative and adaptability. However, the joint CFI-WA and GPP management and supervision, the lack of tracking of the time spent on the project by FAO personnel, and administrative bottlenecks hinder the successful implementation of CFI-WA.**

153. Support from the FAO GEF Office to the project Coordination Unit at headquarters is effective and collaboration among the members of the Coordination Unit itself is satisfactory, which facilitates decision-making and timeliness of actions.
154. The collaboration with other technical teams within FAO, and the links established with other FAO projects (e.g. SSF-SIDA) and other UN agencies (e.g. ILO) also testify to the ability of the coordination team to seize opportunities as they arise.
155. The occasional use of international consultants to support national consultants has improved the quality of outputs and allowed for capacity building and learning at the national level. Similarly, the use of memoranda of understanding with Ministries in charge of fisheries, although not foreseen at the beginning of the project, has strengthened ownership of the project and its implementation in the field.
156. CFI-WA and GPP have the same Chief Technical Adviser. Although in principle her time is expected to be split 65 percent-35 percent respectively between these two projects, in practice more of her time is dedicated to the day-to-day management of CFI-WA and support to the national teams (estimated at 80 percent-20 percent). The project thus benefits from her dynamism and proactivity. Her role in guiding the national teams and monitoring is absolutely essential on a day-to-day basis, but this could change in the longer-term due to time constraints, impinge on and challenge her strategic guidance role and her focus on the broader lessons to be learned from the project (as was foreseen in the Project Document). However, the evaluation has since been informed of the recent recruitment of the National Professional Officer in Senegal, which should at least relieve the Chief Technical Adviser of her responsibility to monitor activities daily in that country.
157. For the sake of cost savings and synergies, it was also decided at the outset of the project that the staff of the CFI-WA Coordination Unit would be the same for the GPP Coordination Unit. While in principle this is a good idea as the two projects are very much linked, it however remains problematic for two reasons: first, there is no system for tracking the time spent by each FAO personnel member on the project, and second, the project coordination team staff do not allocate their time as planned to both projects. These two factors obscure the accounting of FAO's in-kind contributions to the project and this arrangement therefore only partially addresses the resource gap (see also the GPP mid-term evaluation report in this regard).

### 3.5.5 Partnerships and stakeholder engagement

**Question 5.5.** In addition to the main project partners, to what extent are **other partners**, such as civil society, local fishing communities, and particularly the private sector<sup>24</sup> (through the Challenge Fund) involved in the design and implementation of the project? What has been the impact of their involvement/non-involvement on the project outcomes?

**Finding 29. The active participation of civil society<sup>25</sup> organizations in the project is uneven.**

158. The involvement of international civil society organizations of fishers and fisheries workers in the CFI project, although envisaged in CFI design, has been a source of conflict, which to date has not been rectified. The latest semi-annual progress reports do not indicate any new developments in this area.
159. Only CAOPA, a fishermen's association in Cabo Verde, and FENACOPECI in Côte d'Ivoire officially participate in CFI-WA (as stakeholders and co-financers). In 2019 in Senegal, CAOPA organized a workshop on the working conditions in the fisheries sector. At the national level, the project is working closely on pilot sites with the fishermen's association of San Pedro (Cabo Verde) and with CLPAs in Senegal. It has also created a cooperative of women processors in Côte d'Ivoire (SCOOPS MATRAPHAS, in Sassandra). These partnerships provide a direct link with the grassroots stakeholders in each country and deserve to be further exploited in the implementation of activities. However, FENACOPECI's achievements were not brought to the attention of the evaluation.

**Finding 30. With the exception of the SIDA project on small-scale fisheries, there are not yet concrete linkages with active coastal fisheries management initiatives and projects in any of the countries, nor with other GEF-funded projects in the region.**

160. The engagement with other existing initiatives in the region foreseen in the Project Document (e.g. Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem, Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem and their successive phases), as well as those identified in the inventory of existing and planned fisheries projects and initiatives in the three countries, has yet to be materialized. The reason for this is not clear.
161. The CFI-WA Task Force also listed projects and initiatives in the region with which contacts could be established, such as the FAO FIRST and FISH4ACP programmes and the Programme for Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa launched by ECOWAS and the European Union in 2018. However, there were no visible signs of these relationships at the time of the evaluation.<sup>26</sup>
162. However, an exception is the SSF-SIDA project supporting the implementation of the FAO SSF Guidelines (FAO, 2015). The linkage between CFI-WA and the SSF-SIDA project (initially funded by NORAD and then by SIDA), which was envisaged at the very beginning of this project but set aside due to delays in the CFI-WA start-up phase, was finally materialized in 2020 in Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. In these three countries, SSF-SIDA provides financial support to CFI-WA to carry out activities that are complementary to those of CFI-WA on common themes (e.g.

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<sup>24</sup> The evaluation team should note the extent of these stakeholders' involvement (progress to date), challenges and outcomes.

<sup>25</sup> This includes fishers' organizations, producers and processors in the fisheries sector. A distinction is made with NGOs whose mandate is more environmental (although the line between NGOs and civil society organizations is blurred).

<sup>26</sup> The evaluation has since been notified that, with the exception of FIRST where contacts had been established, the other projects have just started effectively. This information could not be verified as it was provided after the completion of the data collection phase by the evaluation.

organization of workshops, translation of tools such as the "*Diagnostic Tool for Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries from an EAF perspective including addressing a human rights-based approach, and gender equality*"). These synergies are a positive development and should support the project achievements and progress.

**Finding 31. So far, apart from individual entrepreneurs such as fishers and processors, who are categorized according to their membership in civil society organizations, the private sector has not been directly involved in the project.**

163. The dissociation between CFI-WA pilot sites and countries where the Challenge Fund is operational (only in Cabo Verde), the themes it deals with (semi-industrial fishing and coastal tourism) and CFI-WA themes, so far has not promoted the development of potential partnerships with private companies in the fisheries sector.
164. The role of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) in the project to support the certification of some fisheries (Output 2.2.3) and the training of potential partnerships with private fishery or processing companies or exporters, has not yet borne fruit.

### 3.5.6 Communication and knowledge management

**Question 5.6.** Has the project been effective in consolidating, communicating and promoting its key messages and outcomes to partners, stakeholders and the general public? How could this be improved?

**Finding 32. Increased communication efforts are underway to increase the visibility of the project and improve contact between CFI-WA members and other sub-projects.**

165. Each country's communication strategy provides a framework for communicating project progress to a wider audience. Numerous press articles and short documentaries (videos) presenting the CFI-WA project (such as the one recently produced in Senegal<sup>27</sup> and in the other two countries) are widely available.
166. Within CFI-WA, regular meetings and exchanges of practical information have created a family atmosphere among project members that facilitates communications. Communication with other sub-projects has however been so far limited and reserved for CFI global meetings/conferences.<sup>28</sup> The time difference and language have proven to be important constraints to exchanges between members of the different sub-projects; they had been underestimated during the project design. Undoubtedly, the fact that Rome and the three countries are in similar or close time zones facilitates direct interactions (e.g. Zoom/Teams calls) between the Coordinating Unit and CFI-WA countries.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://vimeo.com/515262193>

<sup>28</sup> The evaluation has since been informed that since January 2021, three Working Committees (Committee 1/CFI-WA, Committee 2/CFI-Latin America & CFI Indonesia, Committee 3/Challenge Fund) have been formed, and nine working sessions were conducted between January and February 2021 to prepare the February 2021 global conference, and to help countries define a roadmap and a knowledge management work plan. These three working committees have since been converted into four committees to continue working on the development of thematic knowledge outputs. Bimonthly meetings are planned for sharing experiences and knowledge among the five sub-projects. This information could not be verified as it was provided after the completion of the data collection phase by the evaluation.

167. The CFI website is only rarely used and visited by the majority of CFI-WA survey respondents (64 percent occasionally, 14 percent never, 22 percent no response).<sup>29</sup> However, it remains the main interface between the project and the outside world.
168. Internal project communication mechanisms, such as Dgroups and SharePoint platforms, were still only rarely used (45 percent of survey respondents reported using their own archiving and communication system (email). Those who use SharePoint do so primarily for document archiving, while those who use Dgroups (21 percent of survey respondents, and 21 percent of CFI-WA members) do so primarily to share documents with project members (rather than emailing them, 25 percent) and to communicate with other CFI members (chat/email functions, 30 percent). Efforts were underway at the time of the mid-term evaluation to increase the rate of use of these platforms. It is hoped that the recent promotion of Dgroups will lead to its greater adoption and exploitation and improve interactions and exchanges between CFI-WA and all other sub-projects.

**Finding 33. Knowledge consolidation activities – within the project and between sub-projects – to contribute to the CFI ambition and theory of change, are in their infancy.**

169. Knowledge consolidation in the form of a synthesis of baseline reports on fisheries governance in the three countries is underway. As highlighted in Section 3.2 on Component 3, valuable information has been collected and deserves to be valorised and shared more widely.
170. Steps have recently been taken to consolidate the knowledge and experiences of CFI-WA and other sub-projects (independently of the theory of change) through the preparation of knowledge products on sustainable mangrove management, women in fisheries value chains, private sector engagement for sustainable fisheries, and EAF (see Section 3.2.3). CPI-WA is the leader in preparing the output on women in value chains. It is expected that the preparation of these outputs will lead to greater consultation between all sub-projects under the coordination of GPP.

**Finding 34. The project's knowledge management and sharing activities have not, however, received as much attention as envisaged at the time of project design.**

171. Although it forms an integral part of CPI-WA, Component 3 received less attention compared to the activities of the other two project components. This is justified insofar as priority was to be given first to the information-generating activities, so that it could then be shared and disseminated. However, this delay could have been used to put in place the necessary tools to facilitate and optimize information exchange and sharing within the project. However, the survey results show that so far, the communication tools deployed to stimulate exchanges and knowledge sharing between the sub-projects (SharePoint, Dgroups, CFI website) are only scarcely used and have had little impact on the way project staff exchange and manage project information, despite the efforts made by the project team on these aspects.
172. Component 3 benefited from a reallocation of resources of USD 265 000 from Components 1 and 2 (see Section 3.3). The level of disbursement for communication and knowledge sharing (13 percent of FAO co-financing disbursed, and 13 percent of the GEF grant disbursed) meets expectations at this stage of the project (see Tables 6 and 7 in Section 3.3).

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<sup>29</sup> It was reported earlier to the evaluation that according to statistics, the number of people visiting the CFI website more than doubled between late 2019 and early 2021. This information could not be verified, however, as it was provided after the completion of the data collection phase by the evaluation.

### 3.5.7 Design and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system

**Question 5.7.** Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient? Is the M&E system functioning according to the M&E plan? Is the project monitored effectively and efficiently?

**Finding 35. The project adheres to FAO and GEF M&E requirements and does not have its own M&E system linked to the CFI theory of change. Monitoring objectives tend to be conflated with the project's learning and knowledge sharing objectives.**

173. The CFI-WA results framework currently serves as the monitoring framework. Its updating and redesign, which took enough time in the early stages of the project, has nevertheless helped in refining the relevance of activities and deriving indicators and milestones against which the project reports its progress. The national work plans that are extracted annually have become the basis for work and indirectly serve in each country as an activity monitoring tool used by the national teams (see Section 3.2 on Component 3).
174. FAO semi-annual progress reports and GEF annual progress reports are completed on a regular basis and are the two main tools for monitoring the project. They are drafted by the project's Chief Technical Adviser based on information shared during biweekly meetings with national teams and on her own supervisory work. These progress reports are very detailed and useful for monitoring the implementation of CFI-WA according to the minimum FAO and GEF requirements in this regard.
175. The GEF-6 focus area monitoring tool was only completed once, at the beginning of the project (exact date unknown).
176. The different levels of understanding and multiple interpretations of the CFI theory of change, as well as attempts to match the CFI-WA results frameworks and CFI to the CFI theory of change, and to choose common indicators across sub-projects, made it confusing to assess the progress and contribution of CFI-WA to CFI. These aspects were discussed in Section 2.2, and are discussed in detail in the GPP mid-term evaluation report (GCP/GLO/838/GFF). Like all other sub-projects, CFI-WA has so far not reported its progress according to the theory of change indicators that were initially selected (see Section 2.2).
177. The CFI-WA results framework does not provide sufficient detail on the levers for generating changes in practices and behaviours on which the potential impact of the CFI-WA project is based. Its indicators, targets and milestones relate to the completion of the activities of each project component but do not go beyond that level (e.g. they relate only indirectly to the achievement of the first-order conditions of the CFI theory of change (see Section 2.2, Figure 2).
178. Finally, there is no clear distinction between learning and reporting. However, the recruitment of a knowledge management consultant in September 2020 and the promotion of the FAO experience capitalization tool, as well as the production of a new M&E manual in early 2021 for all project staff, focused on monitoring the results framework indicators, should make it possible to clearly distinguish these two actions. The new M&E manual should also facilitate and harmonize project monitoring (see Section 3.2.3) while meeting GEF requirements.

### 3.5.8 Summary

179. Based on the above considerations, both project implementation and execution are rated as **Moderately Satisfactory** ("There were some shortcomings and the quality of project design and preparation/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder involvement/communication and knowledge management, more or less met expectations").

## 3.6 Cross-cutting issues

### 3.6.1 Gender and minorities

**Question 6.1.** To what extent has gender been taken into account in the project design and implementation (e.g. gender analysis, indicators and targets addressing gender mainstreaming needs)? Have women been able to benefit equally with men from project activities? In general, what progress has been made in terms of implementing gender-sensitive measures?

**Finding 36. The participatory development of the CFI-WA gender strategy has been successful in embedding gender and gender mainstreaming issues in the activities implemented so far.**

180. The Rome (2019) and Mindelo (2019) workshops show the commitment to build capacity in view to ensure that gender is well considered in all project activities and that it particularly supports activities leading to Output 1.1.2.<sup>30</sup> The development of the CFI-WA gender strategy was done with all stakeholders in the fisheries (and environment) sector in the three countries which contributed to its ownership by the teams. In addition, the iterative process that led to the revision of the CFI-WA results framework, and the awareness raising actions done at the Mindelo upgrading workshop, only further anchored gender and gender mainstreaming considerations in the day-to-day work of national teams, even though the national action plans foreseen by the strategy were not implemented.
181. Thus, the project has become significantly more sensitive than foreseen in the Project Document. Women and men are almost in equal number in the project's staffing structure (headquarters and country coordination teams, national consultants); it thus fulfils this ambition as described in the Project Document.
182. Component 2 of the project is well suited to addressing gender issues. The baseline studies on governance and value chains carried out so far have well integrated this aspect by paying attention to the level of participation of women fish processors and sellers in these chains. Prior to the changes in the national teams, National Professional Officers in all three countries were women. In terms of the recruitment of national consultants at pilot sites, the minimum number of women envisaged in the Project Document has not yet been reached.
183. Gender mainstreaming in the project resulted from an ad hoc support of the FAO Economic and Social Protection Division (ESP) and not from the recruitment of a specialist in the field to be part of the Steering Committee and to work on this aspect in the longer-term in each country – as earlier foreseen in the Gender Strategy. However, given that ESP gender staff is available at the request of the coordination team, this gap is filled.

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<sup>30</sup> Output 1.1.2: A participatory and gender-specific evaluation of public policy in the area of fisheries is developed (in collaboration with FPAI development).

**Finding 37. It is still too early to say whether women in the field also benefit from the activities. Though they are consulted, they complain that they are not sufficiently listened to. Systematic lessons on gender mainstreaming at all levels of the project have yet to be learned.**

184. The field visits revealed that women's voices are not systematically taken into account in decision-making processes: the women with whom the evaluators spoke reported that they were not well informed about project activities, nor were they listened to when decisions were made regarding fisheries management and the improvement of their processing activities (e.g. Cabo Verde and Côte d'Ivoire). Given that relatively few activities have yet taken place in the field, it is possible that this perception is due to the prevailing situation and it is therefore difficult to attribute these shortcomings to the project alone.
185. The ultimate goal of the Gender Strategy was to "work for the achievement of changes that will contribute to the implementation of equality and equity between women and men, in accordance with the objectives of national strategies."<sup>31</sup> This ambition was based on the implementation of a number of actions stemming from the principles of participation, transparency, coherence, understanding of gender inequalities, comprehensiveness and inclusiveness, impartiality, regular updating, capacity building of the different stakeholders, empowerment of women and transformational process, and a careful monitoring of these changes after project completion. These actions and their follow-up – closely linked to the monitoring and capitalization/sharing of knowledge expected under Component 3 (and supported by GPP in this respect) – are still far from being all carried out.

### **3.6.2 Environmental and social safeguards**

**Question 6.2.** To what extent have environmental and social concerns – including the effects of the project on the most vulnerable local populations – been taken into account in the project design and implementation?

**Finding 38. The consideration of environmental and social issues is an integral part of the CFI-WA project.**

186. The project was assessed for potential environmental and social concerns in 2016 during its development. As a result, CFI-WA was classified as low risk and placed in "Category C" in accordance with the pre-approved list of projects excluded from further environmental assessment. It was classified as having little or no adverse environmental impact. The FAO GEF Unit has approved this categorization. No new environmental or social risks that could be caused by the project have since emerged.
187. The better management of mangroves, through their protection, replanting and the search for alternatives to mangrove wood for smoking, shows the project's environmental concern. This can also be seen in the project's desire to reduce overfishing and better manage fishery resources in the three countries.
188. Fisheries management and value chain improvement activities target, *inter alia*, vulnerable groups such as small-scale fishers and processors/sellers operating individually. Their support was identified during project design (section of the Project Document on risks and mitigation measures) and confirmed during the assessment of environmental and social concerns. These groups participated in surveys, needs assessments, workshops and trainings as part of project

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<sup>31</sup> Gender strategy for the Coastal Fisheries Initiative – West Africa (CFI-WA) project, 2017.

activities. Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are not included in the project and have not received special attention.

189. However, it was noted during the evaluation team's interviews and field visits that grassroots stakeholders are showing some signs of exhaustion from the frequent and repeated demands of the project (as they also have their jobs).
190. In summary, the way in which the project addresses cross-cutting issues is rated as **Satisfactory** ("The level of outcomes obtained was in line with expectations and/or there were no or minor developments").

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

191. The conclusions drawn from the above analysis are presented below.

#### 4.1.1 Relevance

**Conclusion 1. CFI-WA meets the development needs and priorities of countries, FAO and GEF.**

192. The strategic relevance of CFI-WA is highly satisfactory. The current and future development priorities only underscore the relevance of the work conducted by the project, which had identified them at the time of its conception.

#### 4.1.2 Effectiveness

**Conclusion 2. Despite an improvement in the rate of implementation of activities in recent months, and despite delays in the start-up phase of the project and then due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more needs to be done to ensure that there are real learning and real changes in practices and behaviour at the level of stakeholders and institutions.**

193. CPI-WA is a large but unwieldy project, not only in its complexity but also in its scope, covering three countries in which all activities are replicated. Its ambition and the achievement of the expected outcomes at the end of the project (2022) could be challenged by the full mobilization of the necessary co-financing and technical capacities at the national level, as well as by the slowness related to compliance with FAO implementation rules and administrative procedures. The impacts of COVID-19 on activities, although relatively well managed, may in time accentuate the accumulated delays.

194. The lack of clear linkages between baseline documents and the choice of pilot sites and species on which to focus activities, reflects an approach that is not as integrated and holistic as EAF principles and a "value chain" approach suggest. The influence of "baselines" (on governance and value chains) on field activity planning is unclear, and it is not clear how these will generate systematic analyses and consolidated knowledge. The broader informational value of these documents is underexploited.

195. The project still has little visibility among grassroots stakeholders, and there are no visible results and changes at their level yet. Ad hoc exchanges between CFI-WA and CFI sub-projects have so far limited the potential for learning, sharing and pooling of knowledge.

196. Rushing to complete the results framework activities during the remaining period of the project – which amounts to completing a large portion of those planned for 2020 and all of those for 2021 – could run counter to the participatory philosophy of CFI-WA's interventions with stakeholders. The organization of work will need to be reviewed to possibly consolidate and "synergise" activities, particularly between Components 1 and 2 (see Annex 6 for suggestions).

#### 4.1.3 Efficiency

**Conclusion 3. The rate of disbursement has accelerated but remains relatively low and the level of commitment of co-financing partners is not measurable with accuracy.**

197. The disbursement rate reflects the slow start-up of the project. At about 33 percent (GEF grant) and 44 percent (FAO co-financing) with only 17 months to go before the official end of the project, it remains insufficient. Disbursements on the three project components are as expected.

198. The lack of monitoring of costs shared between CFI-WA and GPP and other FAO-managed projects jeopardizes the efficient management of the technical support provided by FAO to the project.
199. Implementing and co-financing partners (including FAO) are not proactive enough to provide accurate data on their achievements under their contributions. This is an important constraint that needs to be addressed urgently in order not to jeopardize the remaining project activities.

#### **4.1.4 Sustainability**

**Conclusion 4. Apart from institutional anchoring with national administrations, little has yet been done to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes over time.**

200. Synergies with other national and regional projects and initiatives still need to be implemented, not only to strengthen project activities and impact, but also to ensure support.
201. Emphasis should be placed on developing public-private partnerships among value chain stakeholders, on staff retention and on capacity building more generally to create a pool of expertise and motivation on which future project developments can be based.

#### **4.1.5 Factors affecting performance**

**Conclusion 5. The project is managed in a very dynamic and adaptive manner. However, this is not quite sufficient to deal with all the problems associated with the project that affect its performance.**

##### **Positive points**

202. The project has demonstrated its ability to adapt its management to changing and unforeseen circumstances and its ability to seek expertise and explore collaborative opportunities to support its activities.
203. Its staff is motivated and dedicated to the project (within the limits of its capacities and resources, however).
204. The institutional anchoring of CFI-WA with the ministerial partners is recognized.
205. Interactions between the three countries are constructive and regular.

##### **Constraints**

206. The number of activities to be carried out and outputs to be produced remains huge, even unrealistic, especially given administrative bottlenecks related to implementation (which is not inherent to the project itself) and the delays that have accumulated as a result of, among other things, the long start-up phase of the project, changes in the personnel recruited and the COVID-19 pandemic.
207. Difficulty in retaining staff and the frequency of staff turnover led to delays, upgrades and erosion of the project's "memory".
208. Tracking the time allocations of Coordination Unit staff is problematic. In-country vacancies are heavily felt.
209. The suboptimal functionality of project management bodies does not favour strategic steering.

210. The relative isolation of the project from other sub-projects and the delay of the project have not yet allowed for full knowledge capitalization and sharing (the evaluation has since been informed that efforts are underway to remedy this).
211. Partnerships with other fisheries initiatives and NGOs other than those with which memoranda of understanding have been established, are not actively sought.
212. The minimum monitoring required by FAO and GEF under the project results framework is done. Monitoring and evaluation more broadly, and the use of the CFI theory of change, are topics on which the project and the coordination team have not yet managed to make progress.

#### 4.1.6 Cross-cutting issues

##### **Conclusion 6. The project has successfully integrated gender, environmental and social concerns.**

213. The project is gender-sensitive. However, the awareness of the national teams to this aspect has not yet led to visible changes in the field, such as a better recognition and participation of women in decision-making processes.

**Table 6. Summarizing the mid-term project evaluation according to GEF criteria**

GEF criteria and sub-criteria	Rating <sup>32</sup>	Comments The corresponding sections of the report are indicated in <b>bold</b> . The corresponding evaluation matrix questions are shown in <i>italics</i> .
<b>A. Strategic relevance</b>		
A1. Alignment with GEF and FAO Strategic Priorities	HS	<b>3.1, 1.1</b>
A2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities	HS	<b>3.1, 1.2</b>
A3. Complementarity with existing interventions	S	<b>3.1, 1.2</b>
A4. Overall strategic relevance	HS	<b>3.1</b>
<b>B. Effectiveness</b>		
B1. Overall evaluation of project outcomes	MS	<b>3.2</b>
B1.1 Output delivery	S	<b>3.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3</b>
B1.2 Progress towards project outcomes and objectives (overall)	MS	<b>3.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5</b>
- Component 1	MS	
- Component 2	S	
- Component 3	MU	
B1.3 Probability of impact	<i>Unrated</i>	<b>3.2, 2.6</b>
<b>C. Efficiency</b>		
C1. Efficiency	MS	<b>3.3, 3.1, 3.2</b>
<b>D. Sustainability of project outcomes</b>		
D1. Overall probability of sustainability	ML (if the necessary measures are taken)	<b>3.4</b>

<sup>32</sup> Rating scales are provided in Appendix 2.

GEF criteria and sub-criteria	Rating <sup>32</sup>	Comments The corresponding sections of the report are indicated in <b>bold</b> . The corresponding evaluation matrix questions are shown in <i>italics</i> .
D2. Sustainability in relation to financial risks	MU	<b>3.4, 3.4</b>
D3. Sustainability in relation to socio-economic risks	MU	<b>3.4, 3.4</b>
D4. Sustainability in relation to institutional and governance risks	ML	<b>3.4, 3.4</b>
D5. Sustainability in relation to environmental risks	UR	Not considered
D6. Catalysis and replication	ML	<b>3.2, 2.5</b>
<b>E. Factors affecting performance</b>		
E1. Project design and preparation	MS	<b>3.5, 5.1</b>
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	<b>3.5, 5.4</b>
E2.1 Supervision of the project (FAO, Steering Committee)	MS	<b>3.5, 5.4</b>
E3. Quality of project execution	S	<b>3.5, 5.2</b>
E3.1 Project management and execution arrangements (Project Coordination Unit, Financial Management, etc.)	MS	<b>3.5, 5.2</b>
E4. Co-financing	I	<b>3.5, 5.3</b>
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder involvement	MU	<b>3.5, 5.5</b>
E6. Communication and knowledge management	MS	<b>3.5, 5.6</b>
E7. Overall quality of monitoring and evaluation (M&E)	MU	<b>3.5, 5.7</b>
E7.1 Design of M&E	MU	<b>3.5, 5.7</b>
E7.2 Implementation of the M&E plan (including financial and human resources)	MU	<b>3.5, 5.7</b>
E8. Overall evaluation of factors affecting performance	MS	<b>3.5</b>
<b>F. Cross-cutting concerns</b>		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S	<b>3.6, 6.1</b>
F2. Human rights issues	UR	Not included
F3. Environmental and Social Safeguards	HS	<b>3.6, 6.2</b>
<b>Overall evaluation of the project</b>	<b>MS</b>	

Rating: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), Unable to rate (UR)

214. The rating given to project outcomes (Sections 1.1 and 1.2) in the table above (MS) is slightly lower than those given in the last GEF progress report dated June 2020, mainly due to Component 3. However, the rating in the table above acknowledges the rapid progress made over the past 18 months, despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 4.2 Recommendations

215. The recommendations made below are primarily for the FAO Coordination Unit of CFI-WA and Funding Liaison Officer. If they are relevant to countries and addressed to the national teams more specifically, or to FAO more generally, this is indicated.
216. The recommendations do not take into account any developments that may have taken place after the data collection, analysis and writing phase of this mid-term evaluation.

### 4.2.1 Implementation/Operation recommendations

#### **Recommendation 1. The recruitment and organization strategy of CFI-WA staff should be reviewed and considered in conjunction with that of GPP.**

217. Staff organization should take into consideration the importance of service continuity and project memory. At the headquarters level, the allocation of time and resources (from FAO co-funding or GEF grant) of the Coordination Unit members will need to be clearly established and monitored. CFI-WA and GPP will need to work together and agree on the recruitment of the necessary M&E and knowledge management/sharing expertise.
218. In-country recruitment of a National Professional Officer in Senegal is imperative. There is also a need to ensure that the national consultant teams are complete at each pilot site and that their workload and responsibilities are reasonably and realistically distributed. Efforts to fill gaps in expertise (e.g. memoranda of understanding with local organizations and/or ministries) should continue. Technical support from the staff of the Coordination Unit, FAO technical units at headquarters and in the region, and FAO country offices, will need to be continued and even increased (e.g. legal support, for the use of FPAI, for sanitary standards).

#### **Recommendation 2. The mobilization of financial counterparts from implementing partners is urgent, and the accounting monitoring of co-financing needs to be improved.**

219. The mechanisms for evaluating disburseable and non-disburseable co-financing (mobilized according to partners' letters of commitment) from implementing partners must be clarified quickly. Increased monitoring of accounting transactions is needed to easily establish financial implementation rates, including those for FAO's financial (in-kind) counterpart.

#### **Recommendation 3. A rationalization of the results framework and consolidation of the remaining activities is needed.**

220. In order to make up for the delays accumulated at the start of the project and following the COVID-19 crisis, and to achieve the expected outcomes more efficiently by the end of the project, it will be necessary to review the organization of activities within Components 1 and 2 and agree on how some of them could be blended and carried out jointly – while keeping the current structure of the results framework, with its components and outputs, approved in 2019, and not fundamentally changing its monitoring (see Recommendation 5). Suggestions for streamlining the results framework activities are provided in Annex 6.
221. It is important to focus human efforts on completing the activities that have been initiated, particularly those with grassroots stakeholders, and not to compromise the "participatory processes with grassroots stakeholders" that the project has initiated.

#### 4.1.1 Strategic recommendations

**Recommendation 4. A no-cost extension of at least one year, an exit strategy and guidance to the project's supervisory bodies are needed to steer the project more strategically towards its end and in preparation for the "post-project" period.**

222. A **minimum one-year no-cost extension** of CFI-WA is appropriate to compensate for the delays accumulated at the beginning of the project, the prolonged start-up phase and the slowdown of field activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It would also allow the financial commitments of the partners to be fully utilized, and disbursements to be made as planned. Discussions to this effect will need to be pursued.
223. The **exit strategy** will need to be worked out and ready by the end of the project in order to increase the sustainability of the outcomes achieved.
224. The project's **key supervisory bodies** (Steering Committee and Task Force) should be revived and meet more regularly to support the Coordination Unit and a more strategic steering of the project.

**Recommendation 5. The way in which monitoring of activities is carried out should be continued and improved through increased interaction with GPP.**

225. It is recommended that CFI-WA continue to build on its results framework and maintain its semi-annual and annual monitoring methodology (PPR, PIR), while incorporating the guidance and mechanisms recommended for this purpose by the recently produced monitoring manual. It is not recommended that the redesign of certain activities as called for in Recommendation 3 led to a revision of the milestones and indicators of the results framework. Care should be taken to ensure that accurate CFI-WA monitoring feeds into CFI (and its theory of change) monitoring.
226. The GEF-6 project monitoring tool should be diligently completed.

**Recommendation 6. Efforts should be made to improve CFI-WA visibility in the field and among all stakeholders, including women, and to develop closer relationships with projects active in the region.**

227. Awareness of the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes should not be limited to project staff. The visibility of the project actions among grassroots stakeholders needs to be further improved, particularly among women in the post-harvest sector. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that they are not only represented at meetings and training sessions, but more specifically that they are listened to and their needs taken into account. Retention of national consultants on the pilot sites is all the more important as they are the visible representation of the project in the field (see Recommendation 1).
228. A strategic reflection should be undertaken on the links and synergies of action to be sought not only with the GEF projects active in the region (Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem, Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem), depending on their progress, but also the projects currently being launched, such as PESCAO. This is all the more important for the sustainability of the project outcomes. The partnership with SSF-SIDA provides a good example in this regard and the current collaboration between SSF-SIDA and CFI-WA should be maintained.

**Recommendation 7. A discussion should be initiated with the Funding Liaison Officer and the GEF Secretariat on the provision of small equipment. Thus, a budget review to this effect should be carried out as appropriate.**

229. The provision of small equipment is possible and should be considered in parallel with the capacity building and organization of the stakeholders foreseen by the project. However, it is important that a reflection be undertaken upstream, on the pilot sites, to determine the needs. Besides, a support to the beneficiaries through awareness sessions on the importance of investments and the way to make them in the long run independently of the project (e.g. setting up of tontines or similar to promote the acquisition of small equipment for those targeted by Component 2 of the project) should be set up in parallel.
230. The planned activities concerning the development of public-private partnerships, as well as the potential action of the Challenge Fund (for Cabo Verde) in this regard (as initially planned at the time of the project's elaboration) will have to be discussed anew.

#### 4.1.2 Thematic recommendations

##### **Recommendation 8. Efforts should be made to better share the project's lessons and promote its outputs.**

231. **More exchanges between CFI-WA and other CFI sub-projects are required so that the knowledge and lessons generated by the project lead to real learning and broader knowledge than the four thematic outputs planned within CFI.** For example, complementary themes focusing on processes and experiences (i.e. the "how") from the project could provide useful insights not only for CFI-WA, but also for other CFI sub-projects and other fisheries initiatives.<sup>33</sup> Emphasis should be placed on the regular use of communication platforms common to all CFI sub-projects.
232. **The use of the knowledge outputs generated by the project until now is necessary in order to better carry out the next activities and to disseminate them more widely.** It is a matter of capitalizing urgently on the recommendations provided by the governance and value chain baselines in the three countries to inform the remaining activities to be implemented, to synthesize the quality information generated by the project and to promote them in order to better disseminate them to the scientific community and to a wider public.
233. In this regard, it is suggested that **case studies of each selected fishery in the countries and of the socio-ecological system in which they are embedded** be conducted.<sup>34</sup> These case studies would be both an *output* (e.g. a document, a "story") bringing together the data collected by baselines and gathered by the project, and a *process* uniting all supporters and stakeholders in the fishery and associated value chain. They would reinforce the intervention logic and coherence and determine the changes (in practice, in behaviour) that are still to be implemented by the end of the project, so that the project achieves its expected outcomes. They would also help to federate the information and knowledge generated thanks to the desire for change of grassroots stakeholders, institutions and other stakeholders involved in each fishery. Besides, they would ease the planning of the remaining project field activities by taking into account stakeholders' needs. An approach to carry this out is proposed in Annex 6. A case study could also be conducted on WA **mangroves**. These case studies would reinforce the holistic approach of the project, and involve national staff in their implementation.

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<sup>33</sup> For example: How legal reviews were conducted, and processes engaged to lead to improvements; how engagement approaches are used to improve the participation of grassroots stakeholders, including women, in pre- and post-harvest decision-making; necessary adaptations to the FPAI to improve its relevance to a particular context or to specific fisheries, etc.

<sup>34</sup> The principles of using and developing a theory of change could be adopted here, and these case studies could thus be akin to a "mini-theory of change" for each fishery.

234. Thus, it is recommended that a clear distinction be made here between the use of indicators to monitor the project, and the use of theories of change to organize knowledge and support learning and changes in behaviour/practices.
235. Finally, it will be worth **to continue supporting the ownership of the project and its progress by local and national administrations**, through existing structures (e.g. NTCs) to promote the knowledge and experiences as well as the changes in practices generated by the project.

## 5. Lessons learned

236. The following lessons can be drawn from the CFI-WA mid-term evaluation, with potential implications for the management, implementation and execution of other projects.
237. **Regarding human capacity.** The human resource requirements for the execution of projects as huge and complex as CFI-WA should not be underestimated when designing such projects.
238. **Regarding co-financing.** The concept of co-financing as it applies to GEF projects needs to be well explained to stakeholders, including governments and other project partners, so that they are aware of their responsibilities, particularly with regard to drafting their co-financing reports. This highlights the fact that this problem is also at a higher level, in the design of the co-financing system itself (and therefore not strictly related to the CFI project). Pledges of co-financing can make budgets appear larger than they end up being in reality. Moreover, modalities and mechanisms for evaluating and mobilizing co-financing (cash and non-cash) for future projects need to be improved both at FAO level and with other implementing partners.
239. **Regarding the planning of activities.** FAO's recruitment procedures are very lengthy, which can hinder the effective start of projects. It is therefore important to take this into account from the outset when planning activities in project documents and timelines.
240. **Regarding the monitoring of FAO personnel time on various projects.** Splitting staff time among several projects is not a problem *per se*, but failure to monitor it is a real issue. The evaluation recognizes that this problem is not unique to CFI-WA. However, staff time is an important resource for a project, and it is therefore worth to plan its use, allocation and monitoring accurately.
241. **Regarding the direct execution and implementation modality.** The implications of FAO's dual role as an implementing and executing agency could be further explored in the context of other fisheries projects and, if possible, in other thematic areas to clearly identify the benefits and constraints. In any case, it is certain that to be effective and to meet its objective of coordination and coherence in a programmatic framework comprising several sub-projects, this dual role requires more financial resources from donors.
242. **Regarding the distinction between learning and reporting.** A clear distinction should be made between monitoring indicators and milestones on the one hand, and a theory of change for learning and logical actions on the other. A results framework and a theory of change are not mutually exclusive but retrofitting a theory of change to a results framework can be problematic.
243. **Regarding virtual meetings.** Time differences and language barriers remain constraints that should not be underestimated in global projects, even though the use of platforms such as Zoom or Teams for communication has become widespread following the COVID-19 pandemic.



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## **Appendices and annexes**

Appendices are provided only in the French version of document.

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb6823fr/cb6823fr.pdf>

### **Annex 1. Terms of reference**

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb6200en/cb6200en.pdf>

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