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Final Evaluation of the Project "Sustainable Community-Based Management and Conservation of Mangrove Ecosystems in Cameroon"

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PROJECT EVALUATION SERIES

**Final Evaluation of the Project
“Sustainable Community-Based
Management and Conservation of
Mangrove Ecosystems in Cameroon”**

(GCP/CMR/030/GFF PSBC)

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF EVALUATION
September 2018**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AMN	African Mangrove Network
Cam-Eco	Cameroon Ecology
CMN	Cameroon Mangrove Network
COMIFAC	Central African Forest Commission
COODEL	Londjié Development Cooperative
COPCVAM	Steering Committee for the Conservation and Development of Mangroves and Fishery Resources of Manoka
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWCS	Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society
EIDC	Environmental Information and Documentation Centre
EIG	Economic Interest Groups
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FESP	Forest & Environment Sector Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEAO	Study Mission for the Development of the Ocean region
MINADER	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MINEE	Ministry of Energy and Water Resources
MINEPAT	Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development
MINEPDED	Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development
MINEPIA	Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries
MINFOF	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
MINMIDT	Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development
MINRESI	Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation
MINTRANS	Ministry of Transport
OPED	Organisation pour l'Environnement et le Développement Durable
RLAs	Regional and Local Authorities

Executive summary

Introduction

1. Mangrove ecosystems provide a wide range of resources and services for people's livelihoods. However, the resources of these ecosystems give rise to strong economic, social and demographic pressure. In Cameroon, the challenges relating to mangrove conservation are many: on the one hand, these ecosystems constitute a source of livelihood for the communities using these resources to feed themselves, generate income or even to reside (access to land), on the other hand, these ecosystems are subject to pressure from economic actors through urban expansion, agro-industrial development, the development of port activities, exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons.
2. To address these challenges, FAO implemented the GCP/CMR/030/GFF project "Sustainable community-based management and conservation of mangrove ecosystems in Cameroon" financed by the GEF, over the August 2012 - December 2017 period. The conservation objective of this project was to enhance biodiversity conservation and reduce degradation of mangrove ecosystems, meanwhile the development objective was to ensure the long-term sustainability of the livelihoods of local communities living in and around mangrove areas.
3. A final project evaluation was carried out to determine whether the project objectives were met. The evaluation was conducted from 15 May to 2 June 2017 by a team of consultants including an expert in natural resource management and climate change and an expert in project management and evaluation, under the supervision of the Office of Evaluation (OED) of FAO and supported by the FAO Representation in Cameroon. The evaluation covered all the activities undertaken under the various components of the project since the beginning of interventions.
4. According to the GEF Evaluation Guidelines revised in 2017, the objective of the final evaluation is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of project performance by assessing: i) project design; ii) project implementation process; iii) project achievements against planned objectives; and iv) other potential results.
5. The evaluation methodology consisted of five chronological steps, namely: i) literature review; ii) exchanges with stakeholders at national and local levels; iii) site visits and exchanges with project beneficiaries; and iv) preparation of draft and final reports.

Main findings

6. The project is considered firstly relevant in view of all the threats and problems acknowledged to be drivers of deforestation and forest degradation that it proposes to address, and secondly, in view of its alignment with government policy on the environment including wetlands and coastal ecosystems. Its design was the subject of a thorough diagnosis and involved the key actors of mangrove management in Cameroon. In addition, the project provides solutions for community-based management of mangrove ecosystems. Indeed, this issue of community-based management of mangrove ecosystems was not taken into account in community forest management norms in Cameroon before the implementation of this project.

7. The project helped in creating an enabling environment for sustainable mangrove management, through the development of the *National strategy on sustainable management of mangrove and coastal ecosystems* (a five-year document) and the *Master plan for research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems of Cameroon*. At the time of the evaluation, the implementation of these two documents was still a challenge and funding sources had not been identified. The project also contributed to the creation of three platforms. However, the evaluation noted that other mangrove consultation frameworks already existed (for instance the Cameroon Mangrove Network) and the project could have focused on strengthening these networks. Issues about sustainability arose because these platforms do not have the financial resources to operate. Furthermore, the project did not provide for actions to monitor the implementation of their action plans.
8. With regards to the production of information and monitoring of mangrove ecosystems, the project contributed to the preparation of a *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves* and the publication of an *Atlas*. The use of the permanent parcel techniques established by the project is recognized as a robust approach for determining changes in the ecological status of these complex ecosystems. These permanent plots provide data with long-term statistical accuracy. The project has not yet put in place a strategy to use the results of permanent plot monitoring after its closure.
9. One of the results of this project was the strengthening of mangrove conservation through the creation and improved management of three protected areas. The evaluation found that the processes initiated were satisfactory. However, the final acts of approval for the classification of these protected areas (either Douala-Edea National Park or Ramsar sites) do not solely depend on the project. Consequently, at the time of the evaluation, no protected area covered by the project had obtained legal status. Furthermore, the evaluation of protected area management effectiveness, which is a requirement of this project and of GEF projects in general, has not been carried out.
10. The final result of the project was the improvement of sustainable management of mangrove resources and livelihoods of local communities living in the target sites. According to the viewpoints of the various institutional actors and the beneficiaries themselves, this aspect remained the soft underbelly of the project's achievements in terms of the financial and human resources made available. Indeed, the results and effects obtained appear to be lower than expected. However, one of the positive points remains the facilitation, through this component, of the grassroots structuring of communities through support to the grouping and their formalization into legal associations. The project also transferred knowledge and skills to the different actors involved in the economic sectors of the different intervention zones through several studies and training. In addition, the project filled an important gap in the *Manual of Procedures for the Attribution and Norms for the Management of Community Forests* by taking into account the specific management of mangroves at community level. It is in this perspective that the project facilitated the establishment of the first community mangrove forest in Cameroon. This community forest is a good example of an area dedicated to community-based management of mangrove resources.
11. *Gender* - In general, women were involved at all levels, although at varying scales: specific project activities targeted women and youth as primary beneficiaries and in project activities women were generally present. In addition, in terms of the approaches and strategies developed by the partners, women were represented in the various training

workshops and awareness-raising meetings. However, the studies carried out by the project did not always highlight gender specificities. Finally, at community level, women have been involved to a limited extent, particularly in communal forest inventories and in the executive office of the Manoka Community Forest legal entity.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The project contributed to several outcomes, namely: the production of strategic documents on mangroves (including the *National strategy on sustainable management of mangrove and coastal ecosystems* and the *Master plan for research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems*), the provision of information on these ecosystems (including the production of a *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves* and the publication of an *Atlas*), support for the creation of three platforms, the establishment of permanent plots, the launch and advancement to the final stages of protected area classification (i.e. the Douala-Edea National Park and the Ramsar sites). The achievement of the results of these processes does not depend solely on the implementing partners (as it is the case for the designation of protected areas and Ramsar sites), but also on the various interventions of high-level political actors both in Cameroon (the Prime Minister's Office, the Presidency of the Republic, the National Assembly) and internationally (the Ramsar Technical Secretariat). The project could have improved its performance by adding a lobbying and political advocacy component, in order to mobilize these high-level political actors in its favour and improve results and outputs.

Conclusion 2. The Project development objective, "to ensure the long-term sustainability of the livelihoods of local communities living in and around mangrove areas", has not achieved the expected results and the expected impacts appear unlikely. Indeed, most of the activities related to this objective were carried out in the form of demonstrations; they were too specific and too limited to induce the expected effects. However, it can be seen that a number of lessons were drawn that provide a solid basis to guide future actions that could be taken to improve livelihoods as a sustainable mangrove management strategy. The evaluation also noted that community awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems is well established and sometimes even reinforced by enthusiasm that was visible through their involvement in conservation and restoration operations.

Conclusion 3. An important action for the long-term monitoring of mangrove ecosystems was the establishment of a permanent plot system. However, the evaluation stressed that for sustainability reasons, it would be important to transfer this system to the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation – not currently involved in the project – as the mandated structure for research. The Ministry could contribute to the scientific credibility of the results and their dissemination.

Conclusion 4. The overall implementation strategy involving the main actors in the management and conservation of mangrove ecosystems was commendable and necessary, in view of the existing inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder threats and obstacles. Generally speaking, the implementing partners played their part in producing the expected deliverables. Despite some rather marginal problems related to a lack of understanding of FAO procedures at the beginning of the project, the project was a success in terms of efficient management of funding, monitoring and evaluation, coordination of implementation and stakeholder engagement. The report repeatedly highlighted the weak involvement of the private sector as a major issue, which is nevertheless a key actor as a user and potential polluter of mangrove ecosystems.

Conclusion 5. Finally, several results were achieved, but there is a need for a consolidation phase, at community level as well as at institutional level, to see the impacts. The platforms set up by the project, as a forum bringing together the main actors, can contribute to the sustainability of the project if they are able to set up lobbying and advocacy actions and mobilize additional resources.

Recommendations

With regard to FAO:

Recommendation 1. The project invested heavily in community capacity building at the local level, but these efforts will need to continue to have a real impact. FAO should seek mechanisms to facilitate the continuation of activities at community level, through local actors or the mobilization of additional resources. Particular attention should be given to women for their effective engagement in sustainable mangrove management.

Recommendation 2. The project contributed to raising awareness among stakeholders and populations about the specificity of mangrove ecosystems. FAO should continue to raise awareness among institutional actors to ensure that these ecosystems are taken into account in the preparation of development plans and other integrated planning documents.

Recommendation 3. FAO should advocate with financial partners and/or Regional and Local Authorities (RLAs), so that these actors continue to support platforms for sustainable mangrove management. It should also establish a link between these platforms and the mangrove network. These platforms could constitute forums for political dialogue between stakeholders, in order to put in place a dynamic force of proposals to continue improving the political, legal and institutional framework for mangrove management in Cameroon.

Suggestion: The operation of such platforms can build upon that of existing platforms, in particular, the Community and Forest Platform, in charge of issues concerning the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) and the REDD+ platform. The Cameroonian Government will thus be able to create synergies among the existing different platforms, the three mangrove local platforms supported by the project and the Cameroon Mangrove Network to improve Sustainable Forest Management in all its fullness.

Recommendation 4. FAO should continue to accompany MINFOF in advocating for the successful classification of protected areas and Ramsar sites supported by the project.

Recommendation 5. In the future, FAO should invest more, at the beginning of projects, in training implementing partners on its project management procedures. It should also conduct baseline studies and provide documents to be used during project implementation.

With regard to the Cameroonian Government:

Recommendation 6. MINFOF should transfer the permanent plot system to the Ministry of Scientific Research and Technological Innovation. In addition, synergy should be created between the network of permanent plots (managed by Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society) and strategic documents, in particular the *Master plan for research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems of Cameroon*.

1 About this evaluation

1.1 Introduction

1. A final evaluation of the GCP/CMR/030/GFF project called "Sustainable community-based management and conservation of mangrove ecosystems in Cameroon" was carried out to see if the project objectives were achieved. This evaluation follows a mid-term review which had already made it possible to assess progress towards results and the refocusing elements to be put in place.¹
2. This final evaluation was conducted from 15 May to 2 June 2017 by a team of consultants including an expert in management of natural resources and climate change and an expert in project management and evaluation (see Appendix 1 for evaluators' profiles). These consultants were supervised by the Office of Evaluation (OED) of FAO and supported by the FAO Representation in Cameroon. Field facilitation was provided by the Project Management Unit (PMU) and officials of implementing partners, namely *Cameroon Ecology* (Cam-Eco), the *Organisation pour l'environnement et le développement durable* (OPED) and *Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society* (CWCS). The evaluation covered all the activities undertaken under the various components of the project since the beginning of interventions in Cameroon in July 2012.
3. According to the 2017 GEF Evaluation Guidelines, the objective of the final evaluation is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of project performance by assessing: i) project design; ii) project implementation process; iii) project achievements against planned objectives; and iv) other potential results. Consequently, a series of questions was developed to better define the objectives of the evaluation. These questions are reported in the Box below.

Box 1: Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent does the design of the project and its activities meet the needs in the field of mangrove ecosystem management and protection in Cameroon?
2. To what extent have project outcomes been achieved?
3. Progress towards impact: as far as possible, the evaluation will analyse the extent to which the project made progress towards achieving its predefined objectives, in particular: a) enhancing biodiversity conservation and reducing degradation of mangrove ecosystems; as well as b) strengthening and increasing the sustainability of livelihoods for communities in or around mangrove ecosystems.

4. In addition, according to the GEF evaluation guidelines, the evaluation also took into account: the materialization of co-financing; the quality of the project's monitoring and

¹ Main recommendations of the project's mid-term review and actions undertaken are available in Annex 1 of this report.

evaluation system as well as the quality of its implementation and execution. Gender and Stakeholder involvement will be analysed in the report as cross-cutting themes.

5. This evaluation targets the following users: FAO, the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), local communities, civil society organizations (in particular: Cam-Eco, CWCS, OPED, the Mangroves Platforms supported by the project, the Cameroon Mangrove Network) and the Regional and Local Authorities (RLAs).
6. The expectations of these users are many: i) share lessons learned from the implementation of the project on sustainable mangrove ecosystem management in general and community-based management of the same in particular; ii) exchange on good options for capitalizing on and sustaining the project's achievements; iii) exchange on ways to share knowledge and other resources among stakeholders on community-based management of mangrove ecosystems in Central African countries; and iv) make recommendations to FAO for future actions.
7. At the time of developing the TORs, the Office of Evaluation in consultation with the GEF Unit had decided to conduct the evaluation of project GCP/CMR/030/GFF "Sustainable community-based management and conservation of mangrove ecosystems in Cameroon" in parallel with the evaluation of project GCP/PRC/007/GFF "Integrated management of mangroves, associated wetlands and coastal forest ecosystems in the Republic of Congo". Indeed, while being implemented in two different countries, the two initiatives had very similar objectives. However, at the beginning of the evaluation, it was decided to keep the two as separate processes with separate reports considering the very different context in the two countries (community forest management is an approach already well established in Cameroon while in Congo it is more at an early stage) and the different audiences the two reports were targeting. Indeed, stakeholders involved in these evaluations were mainly national partners interested in the results achieved at country level and the initiatives had two different project teams, one for each country.

1.2 Methodology

8. The evaluation methodology consisted of five chronological steps, namely: i) literature review; ii) exchanges with stakeholders at national and local levels; iii) site visits and exchanges with project beneficiaries; and iv) preparation of draft and final project evaluation reports.
9. A combination of four criteria was used to identify a purposive sample of sites to be visited by the team. These are: i) type of beneficiary (individual and group); ii) gender (woman, man, and mixed); iii) location; and iv) level of success of actions (success, failure, etc). A total of ten sites in four local communities were visited. During one week of field visit, the team conducted semi-structured interviews based on interview guides specifically developed for this evaluation.
10. Table 1 below presents the names of the sites visited with respect to the project intervention sites and the number of contacts and beneficiaries met. The list of persons interviewed during the evaluation is given in the Appendix.

Table 1: Sites visited during the evaluation

Blocks	Project intervention sites	Visited sites	Number of surveyed people
Rio Del Rey Estuary	Ekondo Titi		
	Boa		
	Bamusso		
	Idabato		
	Kombo		
	Abedimo		
	Tindi		
	Limbe 3	Limbe 3	1
Ntem Estuary	Kribi city	Kribi city	5
	Mbeka'a/Lobe (Kribi)	Mbeka'a/Lobe (Kribi)	8
	Mpolongwe 1	Mpolongwe 1	5
	Londji	Londji	15
	Mbongo	Mbongo	10
	Nziou		
	Béka		8
	Eboundja 1		
	Mpalla		
	Bidou		
Wouri estuary	Tiko		
	Mouanko (Yoyo 1 & 2, Mbiako, Bolondo, Youmé 2)	Mouanko	10
		Yoyo 2	30
	Lobethal		
	(Manoka),	Manoka	50
	Bakoko		
	Japoma	Japoma	3
	Malimba		
	Dizangué		
	Youpwé		

1.3 Limitations

- Time limits did not allow all three mangrove blocks to be visited, particularly the project intervention sites. In addition, some documents such as final reports and some activity reports were not yet available at the time of the evaluation as activities were still underway. Finally, it was difficult to access certain statistical data because the partners sometimes provided them in different, and therefore, not harmonized ways.

1.4 Structure of the report

12. The evaluation report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 presents the scope of the evaluation, the main questions, the methodology implemented and the limitations;
- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the evaluation subject including the context and the project description;
- Chapter 3 presents the main findings organized around the three evaluation questions, in particular relevance, results in relation to the expected end-of-project targets, progress towards impact and mainstreaming of the gender dimension in project design and implementation;
- Chapter 4 assesses the quality of project management and the involvement of partners;
- Chapter 5 provides the évaluation and rating of the project against GEF criteria and information on co-financing;
- Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions and recommendations.

2 Project and context description

2.1 Project description

13. The project started in August 2012 after a long waiting/preparation period. The Project Identification Form (PIF) was approved in June 2009 and the project document in December 2011. The project was implemented over a period of five years and five months (the five months corresponding to the extension period), from August 2012 to December 2017. The total budget was estimated at USD 6.4 million. Depending on the funding sources, the total cost of the project was broken down as follows: i) GEF – USD 1 733 180 million; ii) Government of Cameroon – USD 1.5 million; iii) Other contributors – USD 2.5 million; and iv) FAO – USD 0.7 million. The budget, including contributions from all actors, namely FAO and other partners, is presented in Table 4.
14. The project had two main objectives:
 - a conservation objective that was to strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce degradation of mangrove ecosystems;
 - a development objective that was to ensure the long-term sustainability of livelihoods for local communities living in and around mangrove areas.
15. The main project's outcomes were:
 - i. the legal and institutional framework for mangrove ecosystem management is improved;
 - ii. biodiversity conservation in mangroves is mainstreamed in coastal development plans and projects;
 - iii. mangrove conservation strengthened by the creation and improved management of three protected areas;
 - iv. local communities in the target sites are managing their mangrove resources more sustainably and their livelihoods have improved;
 - v. the successful execution of the project in a cost-effective manner.
16. This project follows an FAO project entitled "Participatory management and conservation of mangrove biodiversity in Cameroon" (TCP/CMR/2908) implemented by the Government and FAO during the period 2004-2006. This initiative had contributed to improving knowledge about mangroves in Cameroon, identifying the main problems and suggesting a strategy for action.
17. The project, which is the subject of this evaluation, was implemented in several regions of Cameroon, particularly in the coastal areas of the South (Rio Ntem mangroves), the Littoral (Estuary mangroves) and the South-West (Rio Del Rey mangroves) regions. A total of 27 communities benefited from the project. The list of sites targeted by the project is reported in Table 1.
18. This project belongs to the Cameroon Government, represented by the MINEPDED. FAO is the project executing agency designated by the Government. It is headed by the Representative of this Organization in Cameroon who is responsible for the project budget. Technical support is provided by the Forest Assessment, Management and Conservation Division within the FAO Forestry Department at the Headquarters. The main implementing

partner of the project for Cameroon is the MINEPDED. The project set up a management unit that was responsible for the day-to-day management and monitoring of activities. The management unit, which was initially in Limbe, was then moved to Kribi in order to be closer to the project sites and implementing partners. A steering committee comprising all stakeholders was set up.

19. Apart from FAO and the MINEPDED, the following implementing partners were represented: the MINFOF, more specifically its Forestry Department, as well as the Department of Wildlife and Protected Areas, and NGOs, including: Cam-Eco, OPED and CWCS.²
20. With regard to human resources, the Project Management Unit (PMU) included: a part-time National Project Coordinator (NPC); a full-time Technical Project Coordinator who, during implementation, resigned and was replaced by the Technical Officer (subsequently, the position of Technical Officer was cancelled); an administrative assistant; a driver and short-term consultants. The project was also supported by the Lead Technical Officer; the Budget Holder (the Representative of FAO in Cameroon) and the Operation Officer and Focal Point for FEM projects based in FAO Yaoundé.
21. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) also provided some staff members for the project. In particular:
 - For OPED: three people including the Project Leader, a facilitator and another staff for aspects related to indigenous peoples and women leaders.
 - For Cam-Eco: an internal project manager who, depending on the nature of the activity, was assisted by one or two colleagues specialized in Community Forestry and capacity building. Cam-Eco also mobilized external consultants for communication.
 - For CWCS: the Coordinator and Project Officer of this NGO were supported by their colleagues as needed.

2.2 Context description³

22. Mangroves are one of the most productive terrestrial ecosystems in the world and are a renewable natural resource. Through their ecosystem, they also provide a wide variety of resources and services for people's livelihoods including fisheries production, construction wood and firewood production, coastal protection, pollution reduction and carbon sequestration.
23. In Cameroon, mangroves are found in three areas, in particular:
 - The Rio Del Rey (100 000 ha), in the north between the Njangassa area and the Nigerian border covering all the islands of the Rio Del Rey estuary.
 - The estuary of Cameroon (88 000 ha), which extends from the mouth of the Sanaga River to Cape Bimbria where it cohabits with other systems such as river mangrove and estuary mangrove along the Wouri, Sanaga and Dibamba rivers (in the Littoral).

² CWCS and CAM-Eco are the national focal points of the Central African Mangrove Regional Network.

³ This Section is mainly based on information provided in the project document and in the publication *"Mangroves of Western and Central Africa"* (UNEP, 2007).

- The Ntem estuary (2 000 ha), which lies at the mouths of the following rivers: Nyong, Lokoundjé and Ntem in the South region.
24. Cameroon's mangrove area (UNEP, 2007) dropped from about 272 000 ha in 1980 to about 195 000 ha in 2005 (a reduction of about 30 percent over a period of 25 years, or 2 500 ha/year of mangrove loss). Some mangrove pockets in Cameroon are still relatively untouched and the most important can be found in the Rio Del Rey Estuary, the Cameroon estuary and smaller estuaries of the mouths of the Sanaga, Lokoundjé and Ntem rivers.
 25. While the Gulf of Guinea is not considered as one of the "world's biodiversity hotspots", the Rio Del Rey mangrove, which represents half (50 percent) of Cameroon's mangrove and 10 percent of West Africa's mangrove, is one of the last largely intact mangrove ecosystems along the West and Central African coast. In addition, the Douala-Edéa Nature Reserve (including the peripheral area) is considered a unique complex of coastal vegetation with a wide variety of habitat types, including giant mangroves along the coast measuring up to 100 cm in diameter and over 50 m high, wooded sand dunes, freshwater swamps, lakes and some giant forests on yellow clay soils.
 26. The resources of the mangrove ecosystems give rise to economic, social and demographic pressure. Indeed, the challenges relating to mangrove conservation in Cameroon are many: on the one hand, these ecosystems constitute a source of livelihood for the communities using these resources to feed themselves, generate income or reside (access to land); on the other hand, these ecosystems are subject to pressure from economic actors through urban expansion, agro-industrial development, the development of port activities, exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons.

3 Findings of the evaluation mission

3.1 To what extent does the design of the project and its activities meet the needs in the field of mangrove ecosystem management and protection in Cameroon?

Key Finding 1: The project is considered relevant, first, in view of all the threats and problems acknowledged to be drivers of deforestation and forest degradation that it proposes to address, and secondly, in view of its alignment with government policy on the environment including wetlands and coastal ecosystems. Its design was the subject of a thorough diagnosis and involved the key actors of mangrove management in Cameroon. In addition, the project provides solutions for community-based management of mangrove ecosystems. This issue of community-based management of mangrove ecosystems was not taken into account in community forest management norms in Cameroon before the implementation of this project.

3.1.1 Relevance

27. The project is aligned to national legislation⁴ and is also consistent with the country's main strategies.⁵ It is also in line with FAO Strategic Objective 2 "To make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable". In Cameroon, in particular, it contributes to Priority Area 1 of the Country Programming Framework 2013-17 "Support the implementation of national strategies for strong and sustainable growth in the rural sector" and in particular to output 1.3 "Sustainable development and rational management of natural resources are promoted".
28. The project design involved stakeholders working along the entire project results chain and those truly involved in the issue of sustainable mangrove management, namely: the Government of Cameroon (MINEPDED and MINFOF), the civil society, the regional and local authorities in the mangrove regions, the Cameroon Mangrove Network and beneficiary communities through baseline studies and workshops for the restitution and validation of the project document. The project therefore remains relevant and justified due to the quality of the diagnosis made at the time of its design and to the monitoring of and compliance with the stages of the projects financed by the GEF.

⁴ One can quote Law No. 96/12 of 5 August 1996 setting up a framework law on environmental management in the Republic of Cameroon, in particular Article 31(1) on the protection of the littoral and maritime waters and Article 94 which stipulates that: "Mangrove ecosystems are subject to special protection that takes into account their role and importance in conserving biological diversity and maintaining coastal ecological balances".

⁵ In particular, the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP, 2035), the Rural Sector Strategy and Development Paper (DSDSR), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the Master Plan for Fisheries and Aquaculture, the ITTO Work Plan 2002-2006, the National Action Plan (NAP) for Integrated Coastal Zone Management under the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) project, the National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP), the Forest & Environment Sector Program (FESP), Agenda 21 on the Protection of Oceans and Coastal Areas included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 7), the National REDD+ Strategy currently being developed.

29. In general, the evaluation found that the interests of the various groups involved were well taken into account both at the level of institutional implementing actors and at the level of beneficiaries:

- **At the institutional level:** With regard to Ministries, in particular MINEPDED, the project meets various needs: i) improve knowledge on wetland ecosystems and their valuation for socio-economic development, biodiversity and also the monitoring of all ecological dynamics taking place there (for this purpose, the project provided a response through the elaboration of the *Master plan for research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems of Cameroon*, the *Atlas* on mangroves, the establishment of permanent plots in Cameroon and the provision of information on mangroves to the Environmental Information and Documentation Centre (EIDC)); ii) set guidelines for the sustainable management of this specific ecosystem (to this end, the project supported the development of the *National strategy on sustainable management of mangrove and coastal ecosystems*, a five-year strategy); and iii) reduce overexploitation of mangroves by communities to ensure their livelihoods (to this end, the project implemented actions to build the capacities of community-based organizations for sustainable ecosystem management and develop Income-Generating Activities (IGAs). For MINFOF, the project was in line with its mandate, such as the classification of protected areas (Douala-Edéa Park, Lake Ossa Wildlife Reserve, among others) and the capacity building for its officials on sustainable mangrove management and community-based management strategies for mangrove resources (such as mangrove community forests). Thus, with regard to community mangrove management norms, MINFOF completed the *Manual of Procedures for the Attribution and Norms for the Management of Community Forests* by developing an annex specific to mangroves. This annex explains in practice how to develop a simple community mangrove forest management plan, thus enshrining community-based mangrove resource management at the legislative and normative levels. However, key institutional actors regret the lack of emphasis on mangrove restoration on the one hand and the lack of sufficient involvement from forest rangers for better mangrove safety, on the other.
- **At the level of Civil Society Organisations:** Regarding the different CSOs involved in the implementation, the project responded to several of their concerns, among others the need to consult stakeholders working on the issue of mangroves and the need for access to information. The project also capitalized on a number of initiatives carried out by them or other CSOs in the field with beneficiary communities (such as pilot projects on shrimp farming, processing oysters into minced meat...).
- **At the level of communities:** For communities, which are using mangrove resources for subsistence purposes, the introduction of Income-Generating Activities was seen as the beginning of a solution to their multiple expectations. However, as it will be seen in Section 3.2.4, the Income-Generating Activities identified were often conducted as pilot initiatives and in only two mangrove blocks, entailing a limited number of beneficiaries. Discussions with beneficiaries on the sites visited indicated that in some sites, activities did not always match with the wishes/interests of the communities.

3.1.2 Theory of change

30. The project document made a fairly detailed inventory of the various problems that led to its development (Section 2.1 of the project document). Based on the project logical framework, the team conducted an analysis of the theory of change that was planned for the project (see Appendix 2). In general, the theory of change seemed to have been well thought out. The analysis of the logical framework and of the results chain showed a complementarity between the different components of the project. The logical framework included actions at the political, strategic, institutional level (component 1) as well as actions on operational aspects (components 2, 3 and 4). In general, the analysis showed that the different objectives and outcomes were relevant, however:

- With regard to Outcome 4 on "livelihood improvement", the related activities were very limited since the outset of the project, making the expected impacts to be very ambitious. Moreover, these should have been better defined and a baseline study at the beginning of the project could have been carried out to assess the improved livelihoods of the targeted populations, but this was not done. The design of a second phase should focus on increasing cooperation between the population and the project designer.
- The logical framework, as well as the monitoring and evaluation plan, indicated the integration of mangrove management issues into the forestry law as one of the objectives, whereas there was no such problem at the beginning of the implementation of the project, because the revised law pending validation had already integrated the mangrove management issue. The project document made available to the evaluation team was not revised to reflect this change in context.⁶
- The logical framework showed results that were not entirely depending on implementing partners. In particular, the project had among its objectives the classification of Protected Areas and involved MINFOF in this process. MINFOF is mainly responsible for the technical aspects but the classification of a Protected Area in Cameroon must be finalized by a decree of the Prime Minister. Thus, although the process was well conducted by MINFOF, the classification of the Douala-Edéa National Park is still at the level of the Prime Minister's Office. It would have been appropriate to include in the project advocacy actions at the Presidency level to facilitate the outcome of the process.
- Component 1 of the project provided for the establishment of platforms for the coordination of actors. It should be noted that mangrove networks at the community level already existed, though with different modes of operation.⁷ The existing networks were integrated into the mangrove platforms created on different sites. However, the project could have strengthened these networks instead of creating new ones (see Section 3.2.1 for a discussion on the creation of the platforms).

⁶ Formally there were no changes because the mid-term review evaluation report was not accepted by all stakeholders (main recommendations of the project's mid-term review and actions undertaken are available in Annex 1 of this report). This evaluation would have made it possible to make changes to the logical framework and even provide for a budgetary revision. The Steering Committee changed some indicators, for example the project passed from ten community mangrove forests to two.

⁷ For instance, as far as the Cameroon Mangroves Network is concerned, it essentially brings together CSOs. Differently, the platforms created by the project include different types of actors.

3.2 To what extent have project outcomes been achieved?

31. Most of the activities foreseen in the project document were carried out. The mission estimates the project completion rate (including those in progress) at around 70 percent. Activities were conducted with more or less effective approaches depending on the different actors involved. This Section presents an analysis of the effectiveness of the actions implemented by the project in terms of the results they were supposed to achieve.

3.2.1 Improving the legal and institutional framework for mangrove ecosystem management

Key Finding 2: The project developed the *National strategy on sustainable management of mangrove and coastal ecosystems* and the *Master plan for the research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems*. The implementation of these two documents remains a challenge and funding sources have not been identified. The project also contributed to the creation of three platforms. However, the evaluation noted that other mangrove consultation frameworks already existed (for instance the Cameroun Mangrove Network) and the project could have strengthened these networks instead of creating new forums. Moreover, issues about sustainability arose because these platforms do not have the financial resources to operate and the project did not plan actions to monitor the implementation of their action plans.

End-of-Project Target: Sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems is included in the revised Forest Policy and legislation (including land tenure and rights) and the National Plan for Environmental Management.

32. The project document included the development, approval and implementation of a strategy and an action plan for integrated mangrove ecosystem management and the incorporation of mangrove management and protection into the forestry law.
33. The mission noted that several strategic documents on mangroves had been developed, including:
- The National strategy on sustainable management of mangrove and coastal ecosystems and its action plan to be reviewed in five years;
 - The Master plan for the research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems in Cameroon, together with an action plan;
 - A specific Protocol for Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA).
34. These documents were developed in a participatory manner through the organisation of workshops. The analysis of the reports of these activities shows a coherent and effective approach. Some outcomes were noted: the various documents were put on line on the MINEPDED site, which records an increasing number of views. Regarding the communication strategy in particular, a workshop was organized with the aim of raising awareness among the actors involved and identifying the various sectoral ministries' programmes that could contribute to its implementation.
35. As concerns the sustainability of the outcomes obtained, it should be noted that the strategic orientations provided by the project to the MINEPDED policy as well as to the research and the ESIA, are undoubtedly sustainable since they are planning documents. However, implementation remains a challenge and sources of financing have not been

identified (for example for the implementation of the national strategy which amounts to CFAF 6.08 billion).

36. One of the objectives of the project was to influence the legal framework for the management of coastal ecosystems in Cameroon. However, as already mentioned, at the time of its implementation, the Forestry Law had just been revised and was in the process of validation. The new version already included the issue of sustainable mangrove ecosystem management.
37. As a result of the project's actions at the strategic level, the evaluation noted a significant awareness raising on sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems with the integration of reforestation activities in the work plans of MINFOF and MINEPDED. These activities were included in the public investment budgets of both ministries and carried out in the field.

End-of-Project Target: Information centre established with a clear mandate and adequate resources (from outside the project) for long-term sustainability.

38. The project provided for the establishment of an information centre under the auspices of the Environmental Information and Documentation Centre (EIDC). It is important to note that the EIDC already existed before the implementation of this project funded by the Cameroon's Forest and Environment Sector Program (FESP) under MINEPDED. The added value of this project was to provide the Centre with additional information on mangroves. In this context, it should be noted that the project provided the Centre with documents and articles on mangroves in electronic version, in particular: the *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves*, the *Atlas*, the *National Strategy* and the *Matanda Newsletter*. These documents, according to the Centre, fill a gap in terms of information on mangrove ecosystems. The *Matanda Newsletter*,⁸ the Cameroon Mangrove Network newsletter funded by the project, produced by CWCS every six months, was distributed in soft copy (to at least 500 people) and in hard copy (approximately 250 copies) to the various project stakeholders. Thanks to the funding from the project, nine editions of the newsletter were published. However, the publication might be interrupted in the absence of other sources of funding.
39. The project document indicated among the results "the dissemination of relevant and useful information to public and private decision-makers". It should be noted that the results of the project have been published in the FAO newsletter and other publications. However, the production of policy briefs or other specific communication products targeted to public and private decision-makers could have also been relevant.

End-of-Project Target: Platform(s) for inter-sectoral dialogue and co-ordination functioning properly and meeting regularly (to include public-private-partnership with oil companies, as applicable).

40. The project provided for the creation and technical support of four platforms including local populations, municipal councillors, civil servants and representatives of the private

⁸ *Matanda Newsletter* publishes communication articles relating to research findings, reviews, practical experiences, field activity reports, meeting reports, conferences, seminars and workshops on mangroves and wetlands or related issues.

sector. The objectives of the platforms were to promote inter-sectoral and inter-institutional dialogue and the integration of mangrove ecosystem issues into the national and local development agenda and local planning. In addition, these platforms were supposed to explore the possibility of mobilizing financial resources (from the private sector) for mangrove ecosystem management.

41. The setting up of the platforms (or their revitalization, in particular, the Wouri Estuary platform which already existed) was entrusted to a Civil Society Organisation, which did a preliminary job of identifying the structures to be involved in the platforms through a documentary review and consultation of stakeholders in the field. Cam-Eco provided training and support to all the platforms on the development of action plans, their charters and capacity building plans. An analysis of the action plans produced showed some variability in quality. For instance, in the case of Rio Del Rey, the action plan did not specify the precise responsibilities of the various actors.
42. The evaluation notes that since their establishment (between 2015 and 2016), the platforms have served as a framework for consultation and information exchange between the various stakeholders. To this end, meetings were held to harmonize the different platforms. Various stakeholders were involved, including civil society organisations, representatives of councils, academics, representatives of the Cameroon Mangrove Network, wood users, fishermen, women fish smokers, traditional chiefs, MINEPDED, MINFOF, indigenous peoples, particularly Bagyé. However, as already mentioned, platforms including the Cameroon Mangrove Network and its branches already existed. The project implemented a strategy to strengthen this Network through technical support from CWCS, by funding the development of their strategic plan and action plan and by improving coordination of actions between the CMN and the platforms established by the project. To this end, the real challenge for these platforms is to succeed in self-financing and therefore in implementing⁹ the various action plans developed within the project.
43. The project document provided for the inclusion in the platforms of the various actors involved in the management and preservation of mangrove ecosystems, including representatives of the private sector. However, the participation of private sector actors was not being felt. Indeed, for the Rio Ntem platform, the Study Mission for the Development of the Ocean Region (MEAO), a public-private structure, was part of the coordination. Whereas, for the Rio Del Rey platform, 21 members were represented, but there were no private companies; just as among the representatives of the workshop setting up the Wouri Estuary platform, private companies were absent. In general, the evaluation noted an absence of extractive industries that were identified not only as stakeholders when the project was formulated, but as potential polluters and therefore important participants in these activities (as stated by project managers and partner CSOs). Indeed, private companies have not shown interest in participating in this process of setting up the platforms as planned.

⁹ In the charters, it is indeed provided that the platforms should be funded by: i) contributions from members (networks/EIG/associations/mayors/cooperatives/private sector companies/academic institution); ii) contributions from international or national foundations and financial institutions; iii) contributions from development partners and international organizations; and iv) contributions from any other interested donor.

44. Although activities seeking funds for the platforms have been included in the action plans, no clear funding mechanism has been identified (e.g. revolving funding by each actor, or financial support by councils, etc.) making the holding of meetings precarious. The project document indicated that platforms had to explore the possibility of mobilizing financial resources (from the private sector) for mangrove ecosystem management, which should have contributed to sustainability, but the fact that private companies were not involved was a limitation for resource mobilization.
45. Finally, with regard to sustainability analysis, the mission was doubtful as to the regular functioning of these platforms without a budget foreseen, without follow-up after the closure of the project and considering the prior existence of mangrove networks which themselves have difficulty meeting and mobilizing funding for their activities.

3.2.2 Conservation of mangrove biodiversity and their integration into coastal development plans and projects

Key Finding 3: The project contributed to making information available to stakeholders through the production of a *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves* and the publication of an *Atlas*. The use of the permanent parcel techniques established by the project is recognized as a robust approach for determining changes in the ecological status of these complex ecosystems. These permanent plots provide data with long-term statistical accuracy. However, the project did not put in place a strategy to use the results of the permanent plot monitoring system after its closure.

End-of Project Target: Information about Cameroon's mangrove ecosystems (maps, inventory results, technical studies of biodiversity, management and uses) is published and used by decision-makers.

46. Several information documents were produced by the project, in particular an *Atlas* and a *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves* taking into account not only the issues, but also the problems and solutions, related to mangrove management. The information on mangrove ecosystems presented in these documents is relevant and appears reliable. This information was validated, and the documents improved during a participatory workshop in February 2017 including all stakeholders. The documents produced constitute a good database. However, these data must be updated regularly in order to maintain their reliability.
47. In addition, the project has set up and supported a permanent plot system, which constitutes a long-term forest monitoring technique that makes it possible to obtain data with statistical accuracy. It is a significant achievement. The use of the permanent plot techniques has long been recognized as a robust approach for determining changes in the ecological status of these complex ecosystems. The plot system has been managed by CWCS. After the end of the project, it will be difficult for this actor to continue collecting data. The Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, which is the relevant institution for managing this system, was only indirectly involved in the project through the Universities of Douala, Buea, Dschang, and Yaoundé.
48. Finally, the project ensured the establishment of a station and the collection of mangrove tidal and phenological data in 2014-2015 in the three mangrove blocks.

End-of-Project Target: NGO and government conservation staff have adequate skills to perform these tasks.

49. The project included the training for government officials and NGO staff on environmental and social impact assessment and the assessment by NGOs of existing mitigation programmes.
50. The elaboration of the protocol for the Environmental and Social Impact Studies (ESIA) was done through a participatory process in stages, which allowed a good appropriation on the part of the target public. It should be noted that MINEPDED, which was in charge of drafting the protocol, was also the structure that validated this document, which can be seen as a conflict of interest. After the protocol was validated, NGO and government conservation staff were trained on ESIA, and monitoring and evaluation.¹⁰
51. In Cameroon, ESIA require MINEPDED's approval. Consequently, this exercise is normally carried out by competent experts and mainly by approved consulting firms recognized in the field. However, while the project included NGOs and government officials in the training on ESIA, consulting firms were not included, although in practice they are the ones conducting ESIA and prepare Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs). In addition, the number of administrative staff trained remained very limited compared to what the project expected. However, the evaluation noted that these trainings remain useful. Indeed, even if the NGOs trained do not all have an accreditation allowing them to legally operate, they can report in case ESIA are poorly carried out on the ground, as it is often the case for some projects in Cameroon. Administration officials will take advantage of this training by properly evaluating ESIA documents submitted to MINEPDED for approval and by better monitoring the implementation of ESMPs in the field.
52. It is important to note that assessments of existing mitigation programmes, although foreseen by the project, have not been carried out.

End-of-Project Target: Actions/activities to support mangrove conservation are implemented in ESIA and/or local development projects (at least ten examples in total - with priority given to any future oil sector developments).

53. The project document provided for the incorporation of mangrove conservation issues into ESIA and local development plans with priority given to the oil sector.
54. The development of management plans was planned as part of the classification processes of certain sites targeted by the project, namely: the Douala-Edéa National Park, the Sanaga Delta and Lake Ossa site and the Nkam-Wouri watershed site (as part of the process of their classification as Ramsar sites) and the Bamusso-Ekondo-Titi Communal Forest. The process of developing the management plans for the Douala-Edea National Park was jointly led by CWCS and the MINFOF. The process was finalized and the technical files were transmitted to the Prime Minister's Office. For the Ramsar sites, descriptive sheets were developed, data collected and a draft simple management plan of these sites was

¹⁰ The ESIA assessment protocol was first developed and pre-validated during a workshop organized by MINEPDED in September 2014 in Mbalmayo. Then the same protocol was validated during a workshop held in Douala in October 2014. Two other local training workshops on the use of the protocol were held in Tiko, Kribi and Mouanko.

prepared. As far as the Bamoussou and Ekondo-Titi Communal Forest is concerned, at the time of the evaluation, the process was blocked (see Section 3.2.3).

55. The project through the NGO Cam-Eco supported the Study Mission for the Development of the Ocean Region (MEAO) – the Cameroonian Government structure in charge of managing the coastal zone development under the Ocean Department – for the revision of the Ocean management plan in order to take into account the specific issue of mangroves. This is a positive outcome of the project. Indeed, this structure confirms having received continuous and effective technical support from the NGO.
56. The project document identified oil sector development as a priority. However, the oil sector, which generally represents a strong threat given that it is a major source of mangrove pollution, was not involved in this project.

3.2.3 Strengthening mangrove conservation through the creation and improved management of three protected areas

Key Finding 4: As concerns the conservation and establishment of Protected Areas, at the time of the evaluation, no protected area covered by the project had obtained legal status. The processes initiated are satisfactory, but the final acts of approval for the classification of these protected areas (either the Douala-Edea National Park or the Ramsar sites) do not solely depend on the project. Furthermore, the evaluation of protected area management effectiveness, which is a requirement of this project and of GEF projects in general, has not been carried out.

End-of-Project Target: Rio Del Rey: 20 000 ha (Ramsar site) included in the new Ndongore National Park; Cameroon Estuary: 36 000 ha included in the new Douala-Edéa National Park. Rio Ntem: 1 000 ha (in Campo Ma'an UTO) designated as a Ramsar site.

57. The project document provided for the creation of the Ndongoré and Douala-Edéa National Parks and the designation of the mangrove zone located in the Rio Ntem estuary as a Ramsar site,¹¹ the elaboration and approval of management plans for the three zones, and the elaboration and approval of a financing plan for the management of the Douala-Edéa Park.
58. The evaluation found that:
 - For the **Douala-Edéa Reserve**, the socio-economic study, which is one of the important prerequisites for the elaboration of a development plan, was carried out as well as the whole process of classification of the reserve as a National Park. All the related technical files are at the level of the Prime Minister's Office. As already mentioned, since the final acts of the process depend on the Prime Minister's Office, advocacy actions should be conducted to ensure the success of the process.
 - With regard to **Ndongoré**, it should be noted that the creation of the National Park in this locality, provided for by the project, was a former MINFOF initiative. However, communities have shown a preference for the creation of communal forests over a

¹¹ Differently from what was indicated in the project document, the Ramsar sites supported by the project are not in the Rio Ntem area.

national park, which have relatively fewer restrictions on natural resource use. For the Bamoussou and Ekondo-Titi sites in particular, where the project, following the communities' request, tried to create a communal forest, there was a boundary conflict with the national park initially planned by MINFOF. The project wanted to change this site into a communal forest, but MINFOF did not deem this change relevant. In short, it became clear that the project and MINFOF did not work together to find a joint solution.

- For the mangrove zones, which were to be designated as Ramsar sites, the technical process was done at the project level and the technical file (all the elements required by the Ramsar technical secretariat to classify a site) was finalized. It remains the approval by the Ramsar technical secretariat.

59. Finally, the GEF projects have among their requirements the evaluation of the effectiveness of protected area management. This evaluation was planned at the level of the project's outcome 3 with regard to Rio Del Rey, the Cameroon Estuary and Rio Ntem. The evaluation noted that this exercise, which was MINFOF's responsibility, was not carried out. However, this type of evaluation is well mastered within MINFOF, which manages protected areas and was one of the project's major institutional partners. The practical consequence of the lack of evaluation is that it is difficult to give an objective opinion on the quality of the management of the protected areas.

3.2.4 Improving sustainable management of mangrove resources and livelihoods of local communities

Key Finding 5: According to the viewpoints of the various institutional actors and the beneficiaries themselves, this aspect remained the weak point of the project's achievements considering the financial and human resources made available by the project. Indeed, the results and outcomes obtained appear to be lower than expected. However, one of the positive points remains the facilitation of community structuring through support provided to groups and their formalization into legal associations. The project also transferred knowledge and skills to the different actors involved in the economic sectors of the different intervention zones through several studies and training. In addition, the project filled an important gap in the *Manual of Procedures for the Attribution and Norms for the Management of Community Forests* by taking into account specifically the management of mangroves at the community level. It is in this perspective that the project facilitated the acquisition of the first community mangrove forest in Cameroon. This community forest is a good example of an area dedicated to community-based management of mangrove resources.

End-of-Project Target: 50 fishing camps are organised for local control and management of mangrove resources, with economic interest groups and agreed fishing rules.

60. To achieve this objective, the project planned to: stabilize fishing camps and strengthen cohesion; strengthen groups in order to support the creation of Common Economic Interest Groups; build community capacities in the field of sustainable management of mangrove resources; prevent conflicts by building the capacities of stakeholders in conflict prevention and management; and create a platform for exchanges between villages and the administration.
61. On the ground, activities were implemented by CSO partners in the different project implementation areas. With regard to awareness raising, community sessions focused

mainly on sustainable harvesting techniques for fishing and mangrove wood. In the context of the settlement of fishermen's camps and support for grouping, several field visits were made in the Mouanko area, the main production area for clams. Groups were identified and sensitized to the advantages of group work. Initially, the groups followed a training on group management, the concept of grouping and its advantages and subsequently, the project supported the organization of communities into Economic Interest Grouping (EIGs) and associations, either by supporting the establishment of new groups, or by revitalizing existing groups that were experiencing operational problems.

62. At the end of these field visits, which took place in the various villages, eleven groups were identified, among which eight groups were selected because of their progress in organising themselves into groups. This seems relevant considering the fact that the project had the intention to rely upon existing local dynamics. The groups were supported in the drafting of the internal regulations, the by-laws, the organization of the General Assemblies setting up the members and presenting to the local authorities the documents for registration and legal recognition of the associations. The areas of intervention targeted for support were: fishing, smoking, packaging, processing and sale of oysters. In the field, the evaluation team was able to observe the dynamism and the cohesion of certain groups, particularly in the collection and processing of oyster shells into feed.
63. Furthermore, in the Londjié area, the project supported the setting up of a community development organization: the Londjié Development Cooperative (COODEL) with 42 members, including 11 women, which brings together the socio-professional groups that exert various pressures on mangrove resources. This structure was set up as part of the implementation of the project activities and has become an essential reference framework for actors working on mangrove resources in Londjié. The project supported this cooperative precisely through organizational analyses and trainings in sustainable resource management and conflict management provided to members. Finally, in an effort to improve the living conditions of its members, this cooperative benefited from training on how to develop a project.
64. The project has also among its achievements support provided to the existing consultation platform between the communities and the local administration in Mouanko: the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Development of Mangroves and Fishery Resources of Mouanko (COPCVAM). COPCVAM brings together all stakeholders involved in natural resource management in Mouanko, in particular: the Sous-divisional Officer, Civil Society Organisations, communities, the councils, the MINFOF, the MINEPIA, the forestry and hunting post, the vigilance committees, etc. COPCVAM monitored the implementation of major project activities on the basis of an action plan. COPCVAM meetings made it possible to update the knowledge of the various stakeholders, coordinate activities in the field and the synergy of actions, and facilitate the management of difficulties encountered in the implementation of the project in the field.
65. The project also defined an important activity, namely the carrying out of a study on the fishing and fish marketing sector in Mouanko in order to accompany the subsequent establishment of a consultation framework for stakeholders and their networks of farmers' organizations, intervening in the fishing sectors at the local level.
66. With regard to the outcomes and results observed following the implementation of these activities, very few impacts were observed. The study on the fish industry, which was

supposed to lead to the establishment of a consultation framework, did not succeed and in the study report, no recommendations were formulated and implemented in this sense. The outcomes relating to the setting up of the groups are still hard to pin down at the current stage. No outcome on improving the living conditions of members was noted, except for the COODEL cooperative, whose support process was efficient. Members of the cooperative who had also been trained in the sustainable management of mangrove resources, especially mangrove wood, had formed a watch group, particularly in reforested areas (reforestation in which the cooperative participated), denouncing illegal logging. This cooperative mobilizes savings through its members' contributions in order to finance projects. Finally, in the context of sustainability, the CSO partner intends to continue to involve the cooperative in environmental protection activities funded by other partners.

67. Another positive outcome to note is the fact that sensitized communities seem to have understood the issues of mangrove wood and resource protection, but the needs are still urgent. In general, they have not developed new fishing or collection habits in the affected areas.

End-of-Project Target: 10 000 ha of mangroves covered by simple management plans in ten sites.

68. This outcome included the creation of community forests and the development of Simple Management Plans with a focus on zoning and land use aspects, and the development of a Community-based Mangrove Forest Management Guide. Initially, the project's aim was to get about ten community forests. The target has reduced to 02.¹²
69. Community forest creation processes were initiated for the Manoka (2 350 ha) and Japoma (2 500 ha) sites. An interim management agreement was obtained for Manoka and pending the signing of the final agreement for the said forest. On the field, members of the Manoka Community Forest had started to exploit it in accordance with the Simple Management Plan, which highlights community-based management of mangrove resources. For Japoma, the process did not result in an interim agreement. During the consultation meeting, the last stage of the first phase of the establishment of the Community Forest, part of the population, including their chiefs, did not agree, not wishing that all the lands become community lands. Subsequently, a solution was proposed and adopted, namely the removal of enclaves, i.e. areas that would not be affected by the Community Forest, which allowed the process to continue. The application file for the allocation of the Community Forest was therefore sent in May 2016, but at the time of the evaluation no reply had been received.
70. Thus, the results obtained remain limited insofar as only about 5 000 ha have been committed in community forests with 2 700 ha effectively covered by a simple management plan. It should be noted that the process for the creation of the Manoka community forest was completed almost at the end of the project (the various processes of elaboration of the simple management plans having taken time), and therefore the

¹² Indeed, the initial project document underwent changes before its implementation, which were validated at the project launch meeting in 2013. Several factors were involved in the review of activities: the security problem in the Bakassi area, the time gap between project development and validation (almost seven years), which meant that some activities were no longer relevant, and the withdrawal of IUCN and ACP-Flegt involved during the drafting but no longer in the implementation.

outcomes of mangrove management within the framework of the concession given to them were still not visible or perceptible at the time of the evaluation. In Japoma, internal conflicts within the community did not allow the process to be completed.

71. As for the community mangrove forest development guide developed by the project, it was welcomed by the MINFOF during the mission's visit, which pointed out that there were no norms for the establishment of community mangrove forests. In fact, the guide that had been validated by an official note from the Ministry as Annex 13 to the Ministry's *Manual of Procedures for the Attribution and Norms for the Management of Community Forests*, sets out the specificities of the elaboration of the simple plan and the final agreement for the management of community mangrove forests (title given to this annex).

End-of-Project Target: 50 percent of the inhabitants in community mangrove forests using more sustainable techniques and practices as outlined in management plans.

72. Achieving this effect included as activity: the rehabilitation and management of mangrove species in the Douala-Edéa wildlife reserve; the strengthening of the regeneration and protection of the new mangrove sites inventoried; a study on the trade in mangrove wood between Cameroon and border countries (concerning the Rio del Rey and which mentioned Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as alternatives); the training of populations in techniques for the regeneration and sustainable management of mangroves, and in conflict prevention management; and a study on the assessment of potential mangrove reforestation sites in the Ntem estuary.
73. For the rehabilitation of mangrove species, all the expected activities on awareness raising were carried out. The different CSO partners in their intervention area sensitized 157 people in Bolondo, Yoyo and Mbiako, and organized training at the community level on reforestation activities. A nursery was set up in Bolondo with the support of a partner CSO; the Bolondo and Yoyo sites were reforested on 02 ha. These activities were implemented in collaboration with COPCVAM, which participated in a number of initiatives, including reforestation, as well as contribution to studies and community awareness.
74. In the South, Mpolongwé was selected as a mangrove rehabilitation site (after a selection study of potential reforestation sites followed by a sylvo-socio-economic study of the urban mangrove pockets of Kribi) with a total of 3.12 ha planted from 6 494 seedlings. On this site, reports showed an 88 percent planting success rate. This experience resulted in the development of a practical guide to mangrove regeneration based on lessons learned.
75. MINEPDED also implemented reforestation activities funded through its co-financing. A total of 9.14 ha were reforested in the Yoyo 2 and Mouanko areas by the Council.
76. A study was also carried out to analyse the transboundary flow of mangrove wood between Cameroon and neighbouring countries, Nigeria in particular, and the level of cooperation between the two States to limit illegal cross-border trade of mangrove wood. However, it was not capitalized because it targeted an area that subsequently ceased activities under this project. This raises doubts as to the relevance of this study. Such a study would have been more useful if it also included the areas of Manoka, Mouanko and Yoyo in general, where the exploitation of mangrove wood is also carried out by foreigners.
77. As for sustainability, the mortality rates of seedlings planted in reforested areas was around 20 percent. The Bolondo, Yoyo, Mbiako and Mpolongwé sites are now in full expansion.

78. The land hectares reforested thanks to the project represent a tiny portion compared to the needs: "The potential restoration sites are located in the four sub-divisions covering more than 300 ha: 60 ha in Lokoundjée, 100 ha in Kribi I, 30 ha in Kribi II and over 100 ha in the Campo region."¹³ With regard to regeneration, the report of the implementing partner mentioned CFAF 6 700 000 for the reforestation of one ha. As reforestation activities have now been entrusted to the councils as part of decentralization, replication of this type of initiatives can only be done with the support of the councils through financing mechanisms such as the Public Investment Budget. To this end, there were some limitations in the implementation of this activity, namely the non-involvement of councils.
79. Before concluding on this chapter, a direct outcome to be analysed is the management of the Manoka Community Forest during its first year. In this Community Forest (made up of eight people from the executive office and 32 members in total), the objectives related to the preservation of mangrove areas were well defined, namely: develop woody species as part of Income Generating Activities, conserve resources and group the community around a federating project. In relation to these objectives, the community effectively identified 760 ha of mangroves to be preserved as a tourist area and set up a mangrove monitoring committee. This tends to confirm that the outcome was achieved at this level.
80. Another positive outcome observed by the mission was the development of expertise within the communities that followed-up the training and implemented reforestation activities. This remains an asset for the councils willing to continue these reforestation activities.

End-of-Project Target: At least 400 people benefiting from the income-generating activities supported by the project, with a 20 percent increase in income (e.g. fishing by women, agriculture, oyster business, and improved smoked and dried fish chain).

81. The activities planned to achieve this effect were: training, support and assistance to women in the construction of improved smoking ovens; training groups to set up projects and income-generating activities; raising awareness of micro-finance products; training groups to draw up business plans; support to groups as concerns mobilising savings; a study on the oyster industry; pilot testing of aquaculture; and support for the creation of vigilance committees at the local level.
82. With regard to the support and assistance to women in the construction of improved smoking ovens, 20 women were identified in Mpolongwé. They were supported in the use of the improved smoking ovens and involved in their construction. In the Eboundja I area, an improved smoking oven was set up at the Women and Family Empowerment Centre.
83. In order to improve the living conditions of the groups, members were trained in income-generating activities such as making bread with artisanal ovens and doughnuts at the request of the beneficiaries. However, the activity was not continued. The follow-up missions found that these activities were not carried out by groups but by very few women who did so on a very small scale and in isolation. This led the implementing partner to redirect the training towards processing oysters into minced meat. 42 women were trained, but only 3 made it an economic activity.

¹³ Mangrove Site Selection Study Report CWCS/OPED

84. With regard to microfinance activities, the project trained women's groups in four areas of income-generating activities related to mangrove ecosystem services: fish farmers and women fish smokers in Kribi, oyster growers in Mouanko and community forest product farmers in Bakoko-Douala. A total of 14 groups were involved. The trainings led to the elaboration of business plans (with training on the revolving guarantee). At the time of the mission visit, two of the four business plans were available. A study was conducted to identify and propose two micro-finance institutes that could accommodate the savings of women's groups.
85. The activities on aquaculture aimed to build the capacity of women shrimp fishers in freshwater shrimp aquaculture techniques. The project thus supported and accompanied 20 women from five women's groups in setting up shrimp aquaculture activities by strengthening their capacities, identifying new priority sites and building 20 breeding cages. This was done through training workshops (involving about thirty women), the provision of materials and the organization of an evaluation workshop. This experience was capitalized with the development of a technical sheet on aquaculture.
86. As for the vigilance committees, five committees were set up in the Mouanko area with the objective of protecting and regenerating mangrove wood. Committee members (ranging from 16 to 8 members) were trained in their roles and responsibilities. Conservation and eco-guards were involved and worked in collaboration with the members of the vigilance committee.
87. However, few outcomes could be noted in relation to the implementation of these activities, due to an ineffective strategy and activities that were not always relevant, at least in the areas where they were implemented:
- As far as **smoking ovens** are concerned, although feasibility studies showed that they were profitable, it is worth noting that they were not regularly used in the field. Smoking ovens were proven to be of little use in this area of the South region where fish is extremely rare, while Mouanko, Yoyo or Mbiako are areas where fish and smoked oysters are produced. In these areas, means of conservation are lacking and it is therefore essential to smoke the fish produced in large quantity. However, it was noted that only one smoking oven was installed in these areas thanks to the project but was unsuitable because of its size (which allows only small quantities of fish to be smoked, whereas the usual smoking ovens, although not ecological, allow for greater production). In general, the improved smoking ovens did not result in increased production and wood savings as anticipated by the project.
 - **Studies on the oyster industry** did not lead to relevant recommendations with a view to identify the most appropriate and profitable economic options for communities. Moreover, this study, which had to specify all the economic opportunities and niches for improving the living conditions of these groups, was not conducted in the Mouanko area where women fish oysters and dry them, but rather in six localities in the Kribi area (where women only collect oysters which are scarcely sold). This remains a limitation within the project.
 - The outcomes relating to **support for the mobilization of savings and credit** were not observed due to the fact that not all business plans had been drawn up, and the various members of the groups that were to mobilize solidarity savings had not yet agreed on the modalities of contributions (amount, frequency, etc.). In addition, the

project had included a financial allocation to each group as working capital, which had not yet been made available to savers.

- The pilot testing on **aquaculture** did not produce satisfactory results that could generate sustainable community interest in aquaculture. The activity remains for those who tested it tedious, generating little income.
- The experienced **Income-Generating Activities** (including bread and doughnut making, processing clam meat into pâté...), did not have favourable spill-over effects.

88. Generally speaking, the populations surveyed during the missions did not confirm an increase in income following their training in the new Income-Generating Activities. This suggests that a thorough analysis of the practical needs and strategic interests of the communities was not well done. This would certainly have helped to avoid useless smoking ovens, pilot experiences on aquaculture, which proved to be painful and costly (for aquaculture, 65 people initially involved, then 23, then 10, then 7 supervised), and the mobilization of communities for savings activities in which they were not finally involved.
89. With regard to specific activities such as aquaculture, which was a pilot experience, the mission noted that it was premature for the project to formulate performance indicators in this respect. Indeed, if the objective was to carry out pilots, lessons learned could have helped to better understand shrimp farming in the context of mangroves in Cameroon. To this end, the project could have identified the various success factors in shrimp farming and in making adapted traps that could have been later improved and popularized in mangrove areas. As for sustainability, for the moment, there is no real ownership by the populations of IGA-related activities within the framework of this outcome.
90. The vigilance committees have been active in the fight against the illegal exploitation of mangrove wood, particularly that of Bolondo, which reportedly raised several cases with the Sub-divisional Officer who informed COPCVAM. However, these cases have so far not given rise to any reactions from the administration. Indeed, according to the information gathered, during the implementation phase of the project, the authorities carried out a "lightening raid" operation in which it seized cut timber that did not respect the required diameters and applied fines to the persons involved in this cutting. However, the actions were limited to this operation, despite the denunciations subsequently made by the vigilance committees. This can undermine the motivation of the vigilance committees later on.
91. In the absence of final project reports, it was not possible to determine the exact number of beneficiaries in relation to the indicators reported in the logical framework, but the evaluation mission concludes that in quantitative terms the results obtained under component 4 are significantly below the estimated targets. In qualitative terms as well, methods were not always effective or sustainable.
92. Beyond this analysis, component 4 seemed problematic from the outset and looked more as an impact that would be more visible in the long term, whereas the outcome as formulated cannot be apprehended at the end of the project. On the other hand, this component appears too large and not SMART¹⁴ (improvement at what level? which communities? etc.). The social and economic change the project wanted to achieve should

¹⁴ An indicator is SMART when it is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

have been better defined in consultation with the final beneficiaries, the communities. The challenge for future projects will be to identify realistic and sustainable alternatives to substantially improve the incomes of communities living off the benefits of mangroves.

3.3 Progress towards impact

93. The project had two main objectives:

- a conservation objective that was to strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce degradation of mangrove ecosystems;
- a development objective that was to ensure the long-term sustainability of livelihoods for local communities living in and around mangrove areas.

94. The analysis carried out as part of this evaluation shows that the project made mangrove documentation available to stakeholders, improved the knowledge of all stakeholders on mangrove issues, and supported the development of useful strategic documents to facilitate the mission of MINEPDED. In addition, in the field, the project constantly raised awareness on the importance of mangroves conservation among communities and actors responsible for the degradation of these ecosystems. The report noted several positive results of the project. Despite this, the reduction in mangrove degradation is not noticeable for the moment. Indeed, it would be necessary to consolidate the achievements of the project to have a real impact, in particular disseminate the various documents and continue to accompany the communities so that they can find real alternatives. As far as the communities are concerned, no new habits have been observed to preserve this resource, particularly in the areas of the estuary and Rio Del Rey where practically all the mangroves are found.

95. Mangrove timber harvesting is still largely carried out by foreigners; pressure on mangrove lands is persistent in Douala, despite project efforts to secure areas such as the Manoka Community Forest or those to be classified (Douala-Edea Park and Ramsar sites). In these areas, it should be noted that the project helped in the establishment of a vigilance committee and the organization of watch communities. But these initiatives and the means implemented remain very limited to ensure the monitoring and seizure of illegally cut timber.

96. In addition, the project also helped in carrying out reforestation activities which, although limited (about 7 ha out of 300 ha to be reforested), made it possible to extend the surface area of mangroves, and above all to ensure the protection of these sites by the local populations that have been involved.

3.4 Gender

Key Finding 6: In general, women were involved at all levels, although at varying scales: specific project activities targeted women and youth as primary beneficiaries and in project activities, women were generally present. In addition, in terms of the approaches and strategies developed by the partners, women were represented in the various training workshops and awareness-raising meetings. However, the studies carried out by the project did not always highlight gender specificities. Finally, at the community level, women have been involved at a low proportion, in particular, in communal forest inventories and in the executive office of the Manoka Community Forest.

97. Gender was taken into account during the implementation of the project either as a cross-cutting issue or specifically.
98. Women were involved in various activities such as reforestation and in the process of setting up the Manoka community forest (one woman out of 14 people was present during the multi-resource inventories and two women were present in the community forest office including a treasurer and a conflict delegate). In addition, activities related to women were identified and planned in relation to the use of the forest resources, in trainings on conflict management and on capacity development of groups, and in the support to the COODEL cooperative that brought together 11 women out of 42 members.
99. The project also implemented specific activities for women involved in fishing and the collecting of various mangrove products (wood, oysters, fish, etc.). Indeed, several activities have targeted women, in particular trainings on Income-Generating Activities, the provision of improved smoking ovens, trainings in revolving guarantee and support for microfinance activities (including women's groups working in aquaculture and fish smoking), and training and support for women in freshwater shrimp aquaculture.
100. Specific women's groups received support, including the Association des Femmes Dynamiques de Lobethal (the project supported their structuring and legalization) and accompanied them in the framework of microfinance activities.
101. At the level of the various studies, there were some disaggregated data, notably in the study of the fishing and fish-marketing sector in Mouanko. However, for the other studies, few data were integrated concerning gender aspects.
102. Finally, with regard to the human resources made available to conduct the project, the team noted the involvement of a woman in MINEPDED whose role was not defined in particular, but who was acting as the national coordinator in supervision missions.
103. At the level of monitoring activities, there were reports from the project team and from partners that mentioned data disaggregated by sex in relation to the activities implemented (number of women involved in activities in relation to men), although this was not systematic.

4 Quality of project management and stakeholder involvement

4.1 Quality of project monitoring and evaluation

104. As regards to the quality of monitoring, it should be noted that monitoring was carried out at different levels: by the project coordination team during the monthly project coordination meetings,¹⁵ by the various stakeholders involved in project planning and therefore also in project monitoring, by the Project Steering Committee and by the Project Management Unit (PMU) as well as by the international consultant specifically in charge of the project monitoring.
105. The evaluation found that the main monitoring-evaluation tool used by the national coordination team was the annual work plan based on the logical framework (consisting of five components, seventeen outputs, twenty-six activities and one hundred and five sub-activities assigned to each implementation manager with an implementation schedule). The monitoring missions were carried out in two sequences, in particular an interview in the office and a field visit. The interview in the office consisted of reviewing and exchanging on the activity reports produced by the partners. To this end, each partner was invited to prepare a presentation on the implementation status of its activities in relation to the Work Plan. The field visits focused on interviewing the target groups who benefited from the project's activities (their appreciation of the project's achievements) and field observations. These national coordination-monitoring missions were more in the South and Littoral regions. The project had also set up a data collection site in the Rio del Rey area, particularly in Boa (Bongo)/Ekondo Titi.
106. The project had established a Project Technical Consultation Mechanism (PTCM) whose main role was to provide technical and scientific advice to the project through meetings attended by relevant Government Technical Experts, Representatives of co-financing partners and Representatives of other institutions with relevant mangrove expertise and experience. This mechanism also played an important role in the monitoring-evaluation of the project.
107. In addition, all activities were monitored and evaluated through the Activity and Output Monitoring and Evaluation Plan of the project via a consultant who was part of the project team and whose monitoring-evaluation was one of its missions. Indeed, the integration of a consultant in charge of the monitoring and evaluation aspects was a plus that helped in taking stock of the progress towards results.
108. It should also be noted that the mid-term review conducted in December 2016 – although not accepted – made recommendations, some of which were taken into account while others were deemed irrelevant by the Lead Technical Officer and the PMU (main recommendations of the project's mid-term review and actions undertaken are available in Annex 1 of this report).

¹⁵ Comprising MINEPDED, MINFOF, MINEPIA, PMU, National Coordinator, Technical Project Coordinator, International Project Consultant and partners (in particular, OPED, CAMECO and CWCS).

4.2 Quality of implementation and execution

109. The Table below presents the strengths and weaknesses of the project implementation.

Table 2: Project management strengths and weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Technical and operational capacities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In terms of the technical and operational capacities of the project team and the majority of partners, the human resources involved proved to be competent, working in synergy. - Coordination meetings were held regularly, as was the Steering Committee (SC), which involved a large majority of stakeholders (see Section on coordination and monitoring). - CSOs involved in the project had been working for years in the project area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The specifications of some staff were not sufficiently precise from the outset (case of the international consultant). This situation led to duplication of certain functions with the technical coordinator (former technical officer who became coordinator and whose position was cancelled). - Some limitations were observed in the technical capacities of some of the CSOs involved. Yet the project had planned capacity building activities for these organizations, but some of them considered that the activity was not relevant. Yet the mission noted a poor mastery in community support, whether in support to shrimp farming techniques or to IGAs or micro-credits. These CSOs made several attempts/experiments before defining the techniques and approaches to be used.
At the level of the execution of activities by service providers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The above analysis at the outcome level shows the effectiveness of certain actions taken. In general, the implementation strategies and approaches were effective except particularly for Component 4. The various awareness-raising and training sessions were carried out effectively. 	<p>Several limitations to be raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was a disconnection in the approaches used by the CSOs involved in the project, each of them implementing its activities without sharing and harmonizing. - Some activities were transferred during implementation due to constraints, however the proposed solutions did not always lead to the result.¹⁶ - As regards the division of work between partners, some of the ministries' activities were initially carried out by CSOs, although this was subsequently reframed, but caused some discrepancies (for example, at the beginning of the project, the CWCS was responsible for the classification of Douala-Edea National Park, which was subsequently

¹⁶ This is the case of the Ndongoré forest, which already received a public notice published in 2005 by MINFOP and which remains valid for the future Ndongoré Park. But the population through their council wished to have a Communal Forest Bamouso and Ekondo-Titi with the support of CWCS. FAO, present at the workshop on the revitalization of the creation process, had already noted the fact that it was necessary to review if the boundaries of the CF overlapped with the future National Park; this was the case and consequently the process could not succeed.

Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>transferred to MINFOF).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initially, partners did not master sufficiently FAO procedures. In addition, the commitments of the various parties were not sufficiently clarified in the Letters of Agreement (LOAs). This did not allow for effective activities in the first year. Subsequently, the LOAs and annexes that were added allowed for better implementation and monitoring through project coordination.
Coordination and monitoring	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the level of the project's steering and monitoring bodies, technical coordination meetings involving all stakeholders were held regularly. The coordination meetings were held twice a year and were preceded by follow-up missions (visits to the intervention sites). - MINEPDED undertook follow-up missions, which contributed to refocusing certain actions (two times per year). - The PMU followed the pilot sites in the three mangrove blocks and the indicators were informed when the project team was complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With regard to the Steering Committee in practice, meetings were held once a year instead of twice a year. This seemed insufficient for some partners. However, it must be recognized that the relevance of multiplying the Steering Committee meetings depends on the execution of activities between two meetings and for the project team, given the progress of activities, two meetings were still not justified. - MINEPIA, which generally monitors fisheries and other activities at the level of these delegations, has not been involved in this project, at least not at the level of implementation. - MINFOF noted that it had not been involved in monitoring activities outside its own in the field, which is a limitation.
Budget management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The means made available by the project were considered reasonable by a majority of the partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A concern for transparency was noted by MINEPDED, in particular on financial reporting, including what remains in the budget. - The financial justification for the activities carried out by the partners was not made explicit from the outset.

4.3 Stakeholder involvement

110. In Cameroon, several stakeholders are involved in mangrove resource management. These actors, identified during the elaboration of the project, include at the international level INGOs; at the national level public administrations (in particular MINFOF, MINEPDED, MINEPIA, MINEPAT, MINADER, MINTRANS, MINMIDT, MINEE and MINRESI) and at the local level councils and more in general local authorities, non-governmental organizations, local communities and the private sector.
111. In the implementation of this project, international stakeholders and some local stakeholders – such as local authorities, councils, non-governmental organizations and

local communities – more or less played their role. The private sector remained on the sidelines of this initiative. As far as national stakeholders are concerned, only MINEPDED and MINFOF were involved.

112. The approach of involving different actors is likely to bring sustainability. FAO's partnerships with the government and the civil society were complementary and synergistic. The combined efforts of Cam-Eco and MINFOF, for example – with regard to taking into account the specificities of mangroves in the *Manual of Procedures for the Attribution and Norms of Management of Community Forests* – are a good example of synergy, sharing of experience and complementarity of actions, both at the local level in Manoka and at the central level in Yaoundé.
113. The project communicated regularly between stakeholders and other actors through the *Matanda Newsletter*. Distribution was done online and through hard copies. Two video documentaries were also produced by the project on community forests and women's involvement.

5 Evaluation of the project against GEF criteria and co-financing

114. In conclusion to all the above analysis, the evaluation notes the success of the project against the GEF criteria reported in the Table below.

Table 3: Evaluation according to GEF criteria

Evaluation criteria	Rating	Comments
Evaluation/Rating of Project outcomes:		
Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), Unable to rate (UR)		
Component 1: political and institutional strengthening		
a. Relevance	MS	The component was relevant as a whole, especially with regard to strategic documents. The creation of platforms was not entirely relevant because consultation frameworks were already in place (see Section 3.1 and Appendix 2).
b. Efficiency	HS	Strategic documents have been developed and validated. The platforms have been set up (see Section 3.2.1).
c. Sustainability	MU	The documents produced are planning documents and sustainable by their nature. Funding remains a challenge. The sustainability of the platforms is not ensured because there are no funding mechanisms and meetings are not regular (see Section 3.2.1).
d. Efficiency	S	As the financial data were not organized by component, the evaluation team was unable to provide an opinion on the efficiency of each particular component. The report presents in its various sections findings concerning the efficiency of the project as a whole that is considered satisfactory.
Component 2: Introducing mangrove conservation into local development		
a. Relevance	HS	The component was relevant (see Section 3.1 and Appendix 2).
b. Efficiency	S	The project provided important information on mangrove ecosystems, laid the basis for a permanent monitoring system (plots), trained several stakeholders on ESIA and integrated mangrove management into the management scheme of the Ocean Division (see Section 3.2.2). It would have been appropriate to involve the approved consulting firms in ESIA training and the Ministry of Research in the permanent monitoring system.
c. Sustainability	HS	The plot system is a sustainable tracking device. The ESIA protocol is also an instrument that stakeholders will continue to use (see Section 3.2.2).

d. Efficiency	S	As the financial data were not organized by component, the evaluation team was unable to provide an opinion on the efficiency of each particular component. The report presents in its various sections findings concerning the efficiency of the project as a whole that is considered satisfactory.
Component 3: establishing mangrove protected areas		
a. Relevance	HS	The component was relevant (see Section 3.1 and Appendix 2).
b. Efficiency	S	Component 3 on the establishment of mangrove-protected areas has laid an important foundation for achieving the expected results. All the results foreseen did not depend solely on the project (see Section 3.2.3).
c. Sustainability	HS	The project laid the foundations for the Douala-Edea National Park classifications and for the Ramsar sites. If these results are achieved they will, by their nature, be sustainable (see Section 3.2.3).
d. Efficiency	S	As the financial data were not organized by component, the evaluation team was unable to provide an opinion on the efficiency of each particular component. The report presents in its various sections findings concerning the efficiency of the project as a whole that is considered satisfactory.
Component 4: Sustainable management of mangrove resources		
a. Relevance	MS	The component was too ambitious, and the proposed activities were not always relevant (see Section 3.1 and Appendix 2).
b. Efficiency	MU	The areas were not always appropriate for the interventions and the activities implemented were not based on endogenous knowledge (IGAs proposed as alternatives were in some cases unsuitable and not relevant). In addition, pilot experiences were not conclusive. However, the transfer of knowledge (training and information) remains a plus and was done effectively (see Section 3.2.4).
c. Sustainability	MU	A consolidation phase will be necessary to really see the impacts of these actions (see Section 3.4).
d. Efficiency	S	As the financial data were not organized by component, the evaluation team was unable to provide an opinion on the efficiency of each particular component. The report presents in its various sections findings concerning the efficiency of the project as a whole that is considered satisfactory.
Sustainability Evaluation/Rating:		
Likely (L), Moderately likely (ML), Moderately unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U), Unable to rate (UR)		

a. Financial resources	MU	The project did not allow the mobilization of resources after its end in order to continue the implementation of activities: Government did not mobilize specific resources for the implementation of its national mangrove management plan; CSOs other than CWCS do not yet have funding or potential partners to support the continuation of activities. Similarly, since the implementation of IGAs has not been successful, sustainability cannot be expected from them.
b. Socio-political risks	ML	Given that the political environment is evolving positively towards mangrove protection (although not yet materialized in the land and forest laws), the continuation of this dynamic can be expected from the partners involved.
c. Institutional risks	ML	
d. Environmental risks	ML	Insofar as there could only be a positive influence of the project on the environment, the mission did not note any contrary outcome or dynamics.
M&E Evaluation/Rating:		
Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), Unable to rate (UR)		
a. Design of the monitoring and evaluation system	MS	The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan, based on a results-based management (RBM) system, was put in place by the mangrove conservation expert consultant accompanying the implementation of the project. This plan, which integrates the regular collection of ecological and socio-economic data for the monitoring of conservation and development indicators and the production of consequent reports, is a dashboard for project monitoring, which highlights the activities fully carried out and to be capitalized, as well as those to be reprogrammed. Report templates for partners were proposed in the monitoring/evaluation document of the project, but partners did not always complete this template in a timely and adequate manner, and this did not always allow the actual level of achievement to be estimated.
b. Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system	MS	The monitoring and evaluation system gradually improved, particularly for activities carried out by CSOs with increasingly demanding LOAs on the quality of implementation of activities and reporting of results. In addition, coordination meetings were decisive in the monitoring. The Steering Committee also played a role in reframing the project from the beginning of implementation and during implementation.
Implementation and execution Evaluation/Rating		
Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), Unable to rate (UR)		

a. Quality of implementation	MS	GEF focal points provided a follow-up, which was deemed moderately satisfactory by the project team. In reality, the limitations come from the fact that there was a replacement of the GEF focal points before the end of the project, but also of the LTO. In fact, the new focal points did not always have enough background knowledge for a more effective follow-up.
b. Quality of execution	MS	It was not always effective, as project resources were limited; field monitoring could not be carried out as desired according to the project team. But follow-up missions and coordination meetings made it possible on several occasions to reframe the activities.

Table 4: Sources of co-financing¹⁷

Name of Partner or Contributor (including the Private Sector)	Nature of Contributor	Expected Total Disbursement by end of project
GEF Contribution	Multilateral donor	1 733 180
In-Kind Co-financing	Project governments contribution	1 495 000
In-Kind Co-financing	GEF Agency (FAO)	425 000
Grant	GEF Agency (FAO)	382 000
Grant	NGO (OPED)	650 000
In-Kind Co-financing	NGO (CAM-ECO)	200 000
Grant	NGO (CAM-ECO)	550 000
In-Kind Co-financing	NGO (CWCS)	64 000
Grant	NGO (CWCS)	890 000
Total for Project		6 389 180

115. The project provided co-financing in kind and in grants. The evaluation did not conduct an in-depth investigation to determine whether all of the co-financing stated was actually mobilized. However, in view of the involvement of the various stakeholders and the important contributions they made to the implementation of this project and the results achieved, there is no doubt that co-financing in kind was mobilized.
116. The evaluation of the mobilization of co-financing in the form of grants had to make use of the financial data, which unfortunately were not made available to the evaluation team.

¹⁷ Source: Project Document page 1 and Table 7.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The project contributed to several outcomes, namely: the production of strategic documents on mangroves (including the *National strategy on sustainable management of mangrove and coastal ecosystems* and the *Master plan for research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems*), the provision of information on these ecosystems (including the production of a *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves* and the publication of an *Atlas*), support for the creation of three platforms, the establishment of permanent plots, the launch and advancement to the final stages of protected area classification (i.e. the Douala-Edea National Park and the Ramsar sites). The achievement of the results of these processes does not depend solely on the implementing partners (as it is the case for the designation of protected areas and Ramsar sites), but also on the various interventions of high-level political actors both in Cameroon (the Prime Minister's Office, the Presidency of the Republic, the National Assembly) and internationally (the Ramsar Technical Secretariat). The project could have improved its performance by adding a lobbying and political advocacy component, in order to mobilize these high-level political actors in its favour and improve results and outputs.

Conclusion 2. The Project development objective, "to ensure the long-term sustainability of the livelihoods of local communities living in and around mangrove areas", has not achieved the expected results and the expected impacts appear unlikely. Indeed, most of the activities related to this objective were carried out in the form of demonstrations; they were too specific and too limited to induce the expected effects. However, it can be seen that a number of lessons were drawn that provide a solid basis to guide future actions that could be taken to improve livelihoods as a sustainable mangrove management strategy. The evaluation also noted that community awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems is well established and sometimes even reinforced by enthusiasm that was visible through their involvement in conservation and restoration operations.

Conclusion 3. An important action for the long-term monitoring of mangrove ecosystems was the establishment of a permanent plot system. However, the evaluation stressed that for sustainability reasons, it would be important to transfer this system to the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation – not currently involved in the project – as the mandated structure for research. The Ministry could contribute to the scientific credibility of the results and their dissemination.

Conclusion 4. The overall implementation strategy involving the main actors in the management and conservation of mangrove ecosystems was commendable and necessary, in view of the existing inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder threats and obstacles. Generally speaking, the implementing partners played their part in producing the expected deliverables. Despite some rather marginal problems related to a lack of understanding of FAO procedures at the beginning of the project, the project was a success in terms of efficient management of funding, monitoring and evaluation, coordination of implementation and stakeholder engagement. The report repeatedly highlighted the weak involvement of the private sector as a major issue, which is nevertheless a key actor as a user and potential polluter of mangrove ecosystems.

Conclusion 5. Finally, several results were achieved, but there is a need for a consolidation phase, at community level as well as at institutional level, to see the impacts. The platforms set up by the project, as a forum bringing together the main actors, can contribute to the sustainability of the

project if they are able to set up lobbying and advocacy actions and mobilize additional resources.

6.2 Recommendations

With regard to FAO:

Recommendation 1. The project invested heavily in community capacity building at the local level, but these efforts will need to continue to have a real impact. FAO should seek mechanisms to facilitate the continuation of activities at community level, through local actors or the mobilization of additional resources. Particular attention should be given to women for their effective engagement in sustainable mangrove management.

Recommendation 2. The project contributed to raising awareness among stakeholders and populations about the specificity of mangrove ecosystems. FAO should continue to raise awareness among institutional actors to ensure that these ecosystems are taken into account in the preparation of development plans and other integrated planning documents.

Recommendation 3. FAO should advocate with financial partners and/or Regional and Local Authorities (RLAs), so that these actors continue to support platforms for sustainable mangrove management. It should also establish a link between these platforms and the mangrove network. These platforms could constitute forums for political dialogue between stakeholders, in order to put in place a dynamic force of proposals to continue improving the political, legal and institutional framework for mangrove management in Cameroon.

Suggestion: The operation of such platforms can build upon that of existing platforms, in particular, the Community and Forest Platform, in charge of issues concerning the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) and the REDD+ platform. The Cameroonian Government will thus be able to create synergies among the existing different platforms, the three mangrove local platforms supported by the project and the Cameroon Mangrove Network to improve Sustainable Forest Management in all its fullness.

Recommendation 4. FAO should continue to accompany MINFOF in advocating for the successful classification of protected areas and Ramsar sites supported by the project.

Recommendation 5. In the future, FAO should invest more, at the beginning of projects, in training implementing partners on its project management procedures. It should also conduct baseline studies and provide documents to be used during project implementation.

With regard to the Cameroonian Government:

Recommendation 6. MINFOF should transfer the permanent plot system to the Ministry of Scientific Research and Technological Innovation. In addition, synergy should be created between the network of permanent plots (managed by Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society) and strategic documents, in particular the *Master plan for research and monitoring of mangrove and coastal ecosystems of Cameroon*.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1. Profile and competences of team members

Ananie Cyrille EKOUMOU ABANDA is a Water, Forestry and Hunting Engineer with extensive experience in natural resource management issues and climate change (REDD+) and project evaluation. He has carried out several missions as a consultant for major international organizations (including ADB, UNEP, UNOPS, GIZ, SNV, CIFOR and FAO), the private sector (Rougier Group) and some consulting firms (such as Eco Consult, Louis-Berger, UNIQUE and Eureval). He has been working for 17 years in the ten COMIFAC countries, Tunisia and Burkina Faso. From 2010 to 2012, he held the position of Forestry Specialist at the World Bank based in Yaoundé, Cameroon after working for the Thanry Group, WWF and TFT.

Christiane TOBITH is a Project Management Expert with over 15 years of experience in the management, monitoring and evaluation of development projects in various areas including natural resources management. She implemented community-based forest management projects and documented her experience as a gender adviser to an international NGO by writing a guide on gender mainstreaming in community forestry, thereby building the capacities of different actors in gender mainstreaming in community-based forest management. She has a perfect command of the project management cycle (programming, identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and of project management tools as well as evaluation tools for development projects and programmes financed by various donors.

Appendix 2. Analysis of the coherence of the Logical Framework

GOAL or vision of the project: Integrated management approach for the sustainable use of natural resources in mangrove ecosystems.

The goal seemed well linked to GEF, FAO, and partners' objectives: MINFOF, MINEPDED and CSOs. The vision seemed relevant and realistic in practice; the means seemed adequate and the team noted the mobilization of all partners as well as an overall effective implementation strategy.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen biodiversity conservation and reduce degradation of mangrove ecosystems (conservation objective);
2. Ensure the long-term sustainability of livelihoods for local communities living in and around mangrove areas (project development objective).

Through these objectives, the environmental, social and economic dimensions were taken into account. These objectives were coherent and complementary, provided that sufficient resources in terms of material and financial resources and time were made available to achieve each of these aspects. On the other hand, each objective required the implementation of adapted approaches and the mobilization of the different actors. The second objective, in particular, would have required an analysis of the different alternatives, the real needs of the communities and the definition of activities taking into account endogenous knowledge.

Outcomes:

- Outcome 1: The legal and institutional framework for mangrove ecosystem management is improved;
- Outcome 2: Biodiversity conservation in mangroves is mainstreamed in coastal development plans and projects;
- Outcome 3: Mangrove conservation strengthened by the creation and improved management of three protected areas;
- Outcome 4: Local communities in the target sites are managing their mangrove resources more sustainably and their livelihoods have improved;
- Outcome 5: The successful execution of the project in a cost-effective manner.

Outcome 1, improving the legal and institutional framework, seems realistic and accessible because it is based on the fact that this framework already exists and can be improved.

Outcome 2, concerning the integration of conservation issues into coastal development plans, is relevant as mangroves are a resource in these coastal areas. This will require – and the project integrated – collaboration with regional and local authorities of the areas concerned and awareness-raising with the State in order to put in place a methodology making it possible to integrate the various aspects concerning mangrove conservation into development plans or into the various ESIA's.

As for **Outcome 3**, it is directly linked to Objective 2 because the classification of certain areas effectively ensures conservation, provided that a share is granted to use rights (all the more so as communities live on these sites and live above all from the benefits generated by the natural

resources of the mangroves). In addition, conservation at these sites must be ensured with the participation of communities.

Finally, for **Outcome 4**, the need to make mangrove resource management more sustainable remains relevant. However, the outcome appears ambitious and indicators should have been developed to define more accurately the level of livelihood improvement expected. Outcome 4 seemed problematic from the outset, it is closer to an impact, the effect having to be visible in a short term, which is not realistic. In fact, improved livelihoods must be seen over time. On the other hand, this component seemed too large and not SMART (the following questions can be asked: improvement at what level? which communities? etc.). The analysis and definition of social and economic changes to be achieved should have been more thorough, particularly in consultation with the final beneficiaries, the communities. The challenge of the project at this level will be to identify realistic and sustainable alternatives to substantially improve beneficiaries' revenues. Furthermore, these results or outcomes are not defined in a specific area, which implies that in all project areas, this improvement should be observable.

As for **Outcome 5**, which is not always presented at this level in some projects, it makes the monitoring dimension important.

Assumptions:

Assumptions formulated in the project document appear relevant:

- open institutions able to engage in constructive dialogue with all stakeholders;
- migrant resource users interested in sustainable mangrove management;
- ability of government and local NGOs to manage and implement project activities;
- effective intersectoral dialogue and collaboration;
- no large-scale pollution due to oil spills and other industrial accidents;
- no sea level rise due to climate change.

The evaluation team has identified other assumptions that the project could have taken into account given the impact they had later on the results achieved, in particular:

- timely and effective mobilization of the various co-financing operations;
- harmonized and concerted approaches of various partners;
- effective involvement of Regional and Local Authorities (RLAs);
- time frame for the implementation of processes (including site classification or development of Simple Management Plans) not long and defined;
- effective appropriation by the populations of the various techniques and innovations brought by the project.

Activities:

The majority of activities remain relevant. It was observed that the project adapted to environmental constraints and factors. The deterioration of security issues in Bakassi did not allow all planned activities to be retained. Similarly, some activities were adapted according to the evolution of the context between the drafting period of the project and its implementation.

The choice of certain activities is questionable, in particular their relevance. These activities are:

- setting up platforms when the CMN was undergoing dismembering whereas it should simply have been reinforced;

- the choice of the types of Income-Generating Activities implemented;
- the integrated mangrove management plan of the Cameroon estuary given that, shortly after, the State undertook to make a master plan of all Cameroon.
- the sedentary lifestyle of fishermen: It would have been appropriate to review the term sedentary lifestyle, that can take to some confusion, and which in itself could constitute a whole project.
- the planned communal forest, which shows loopholes in the analysis of the context.

While some actions would have been relevant to integrate:

- A study on options for community involvement in park management, as part of the Douala-Edéa National Park classification issue.
- For IGAs, the strengthening of alternatives such as livestock and agriculture, which already existed in the field.

Appendix 3. Documents consulted

MINEPDED. *Stratégie nationale de gestion durable des mangroves et des écosystèmes côtiers au Cameroun et son plan de mise en œuvre.* Rapport provisoire. Ministère de l'environnement, de la protection de la nature et du développement durable, République du Cameroun.

MINEPDED. *Plan directeur de recherche et de suivi des mangroves et des écosystèmes côtiers du Cameroun et son plan de mise en œuvre.* Rapport pré-validé. Ministère de l'environnement, de la protection de la nature et du développement durable, République du Cameroun.

MINFOF. 2009. *Manuel des procédures d'attribution et des normes de gestion des forêts communautaires.* Ministre de forêts et de la faune, Gouvernement du Cameroun.

UNEP. 2007. *Mangroves of Western and Central Africa.* UNEP-Regional Seas Programme/UNEP-WCMC.

The documentary review took into account:

- the project document, progress reports produced by the project team and the report of the mid-term review;
- reports of workshops conducted during the project (workshops on capacity building, on the discussion of strategic documents and studies carried out, etc.);
- LoAs signed with partners and progress reports on the implementation of activities produced by them;
- the platform meeting reports and the documents produced in relation to this component (platform charters, action plans, monitoring reports etc.);
- the publication *Matanda Newsletter* funded by the project;
- reports of coordination meetings and Steering Committee meetings;
- reports of monitoring and evaluation missions;
- studies carried out under the project (see Annex 1);
- the *Atlas* and the *Report on the State of Cameroon's Mangroves* produced by the project.

The lists of studies carried out during the project and the trainings delivered are available in Annexes 2 and 3.

Appendix 4. List of people interviewed

Government

Collins Bruno Mboufack, *Focal Point Mangroves and member of the monitoring and evaluation project team*, MINEPDED

Wassouni, *Project National Coordinator*, MINEPDED

Angèle Wadou, *Member of the monitoring and evaluation project team*, MINEPDED

Michel Tianguieu, *Divisional Delegate of the Ocean Division*, MINEPDED

Jean Mewoli, *Divisional Delegation of the Ocean Division*, MINEPDED

Gaetan Fabrice Ottou Mbida, *Focal Point Mangroves*, MINFOF

Evouna Mani Ze, *Chief of Forest Post*, MINFOF

Jacques Mabouong, *Head of the cartography unit, Platform Secretary*, MEAO

Charles Eyobo Mbonjo, *Deputy SDO*, D.O.'s office

Ernest Edimo, *Mayor of Douala 6*, Council

FAO

Armand Asseng Zé, *Operational Officer and Focal Point GEF projects*, FAOCM

Jean Hude Moudingo, *Project technical Coordinator*, FAOCM

George Chuyong, *PMU Adviser - FAO Mangrove project*, FAOCM

Civil Society Organizations

Cécile Ndjebet, *Coordinator*, Cam-Eco

Patrice Ngokoy, *Responsable for FAO Project*, Cam-Eco

Sahmo Jean Calvin, *Developpement Officer*, Cam-Eco

Joseph Désiré Mbeleg, *Developpement Officer*, Cam-Eco

Emile Noël Bassock, *President*, COODEL

Clément Dobate, *Chairman of the Vigilance Committee*, Yoyo II

Frédéric Keme, *Auditor of the Vigilance Committee*, Mbianko

Eugène Diyouke, *Cartographer*, CWCS

Eugène Yo Manga, *President*, Manoka Community Forest

Joseph Dibo Nguea, *General Secretary*, Manoka Community Forest

Jean Folack, *Consultant on Environment, coastal planning and sustainable management of natural resources*, NGO ENVIREP

Jonas Kemajou Syapze, *Director*, OPED

In addition, in the visited sites, the team met with members of the cooperatives, communities and economic interest groups supported by the project, beneficiaries of income generating activities and members of the Manoka community forest.

8 List of Annexes

Annexes in French available at <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed-home/en/>

Annex 1. Main recommendations of the project's mid-term review and actions undertaken
(Original title: *Principales recommandations de la revue à mi-parcours du projet et actions entreprises*)

Annex 2. List of studies conducted as part of the project (Original title: *Liste des études menées dans le cadre du projet*)

Annex 3. Trainings delivered as part of the project (Original title: *Formations conduites dans le cadre du projet*)

