



MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

for the project:

Conservation and Sustainable Use of Liberia's Coastal Natural Capital (GEF ID: 9573)

Prepared for: Conservation International

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The analysis and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of CI, CI-GEF, CI-Liberia or the Government of Liberia. This document reflects the views of the evaluation team.

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GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

GEF Project ID	9573
GEF Focal Area(s)	Biodiversity and Land Degradation
Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) Period of execution (actual)	November 23, 2022 - 30th October 2023
Project name	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Liberia's Coastal Natural Capital
Project objective	To improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia's development trajectory
GEF Project Financing	\$3,944,220 ¹
Planned co-financing (for the entire project)	\$11,194,248
Materialized co-financing during the MTE period	TBA
Project Duration	February 1, 2020 – June 30, 2025 (65 Months)
GEF Agency	Conservation International
Project countries	Liberia
Key dates	Start Date: February 1, 2020 Inception Workshop (virtual): June 16, 2020 Terminal Evaluation: April 1, 2025 (Indicative)
Name of the Project Executing Agency(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) • Conservation International – Liberia <p>Other partners involved in the project execution are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forestry Development Authority • The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning • The Ministry of Agriculture/Bureau of National Fisheries • The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection • The Liberia Land Authority and Ministry of Internal Affairs

¹ PPG Grant: 120,000 USD

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGM	Accountability and Grievance Mechanism	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
AWP	Annual Work Plan	GEF	Global Environment Facility
BNF	National Bureau of Fisheries	GHG	Greenhouse Gases
CAs	Conservation Agreements	GMP	Gender Mainstreaming Plan
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	GOL	Government of Liberia
CI	Conservation International	IA	Implementing Agency
CI-GEF	Conservation International Project Agency	IAPG	Irish Aid Program Grant
DAI	DAI Global, LLC	IDEEA	Institute for Development of Environmental-Economic Accounting
EA	Executing Agency	LCAF	Liberia Conservation Action Fund
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	LCF	Liberia Conservation Fund
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	LiMA	Liberia Maritime Authority
ERC Center	Evaluation Result	LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework	LLA	Liberia Land Authority
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan	LMA	Liberia Maritime Authority
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards	LSA	Liberia Strategic Analysis
FACE	Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
FC	Focal Community	MASC	Multi-Agency Steering Committee
FDA	Forestry Development Authority	MCS	Moore Centre for Science and Ocean
FDP	Finance and Development Planning	MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
FFI	Fauna and Flora International	MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent	MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
FSP	Full-Sized Project	MLME	Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy
FY	Financial Year	MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
GCO	General Counsel's Office		

MOG	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection	PSC	Project Steering Committee
MPAs	Management of Protected Areas	RBA	Rights-Based Approach
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification	RBM	Results-Based Management
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation	RICCE	Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment
MTR	Mid-Term Report	SADS	Skills and Agricultural Development Services
NACUL	National Charcoal Union of Liberia	SAMFU	Save My Future Foundation
NC	Natural Capital	SCNL	Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia
NCA	Natural Capital Accounting	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment	SEEA	System of Environmental Economic Accounting
NDC	National Determined Contributions	SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index	SGAC	Small Grants Appraisal Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization	SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
NSAP	National Strategy and Action Plan	SNA	System of Natural Account
NSC	National Steering Committee	SoP	Standard Operating Procedure
OFF	Operational Focal Point	TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development	TBA	To Be Assessed
PAs	Protected Areas	TBC	To Be Confirmed
PIF	Project Implementation Form	TE	Term Evaluations
PIP	Project Implementation Plan	TEEB	The Economic of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
PIR	Project Implementation Report	ToC	Theory of Change
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning	ToR	Term of Reference
PM	Project Manager	UN	United Nations
PMU	Project Management Unit	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PO	Project Officer	UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
PPG	Project Preparation Grant		
ProDoc	Project Document		

UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD (\$)	United States Dollars
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brief project description

1. The CI-implemented, GEF-funded Full-Size Project “Conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital” (herein referred to interchangeably as either the NCA project or the Project), GEF Project ID: 9573 to improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory and demonstrates the recognition of the government on the importance of coastal and mangrove ecosystems in the country for biodiversity and the numerous benefits they provide to livelihoods and economics. The project seeks to advance the understanding of the value of those benefits, identifying opportunities to finance the long-term maintenance and sustainable use of coastal natural capital, while institutionalizing benefit-sharing mechanisms that provide incentives at the local level. The Project’s three-pronged approach aims to (i) develop Liberia’s first mangrove account leveraging a Natural Capital Accounting framework, to ensure that the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services, particularly for coastal areas, is incorporated into national decision-making; (ii) increase and diversify resource flows for the sustainable management and restoration of mangrove and coastal ecosystems; and (iii) nurture conservation finance mechanisms that can motivate a shift away from conventional and unsustainable resource use practices in favour of preservation, restoration, and sustainable management. The Project commenced operations in February 2020 and is slated for operational closure at the end of June 2025.

Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) Approach and methodology

2. The purpose of the MTE was to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. This MTE was conducted by a team of four independent evaluation subject-matter experts, consisting of 3 international and 1 national consultant, at the request of Conservation International Project Agency (CI-GEF) to provide information about the status of implementation of the NCA project to ensure accountability for the expenditures to date and the delivery of outputs so that the managers can make midcourse corrections as appropriate.
3. The evaluation methodology was consistent with the GEF evaluation policy and CI-GEF monitoring and evaluation policy for GEF-funded projects. The evaluation was evidence-based and relied on mixed methods, mostly with a lead of qualitative methods, strongly backed up with quantitative methods. Even though the MTE faced considerable limitations mostly due to administrative and documentation hurdles, the MTE consultant team considers the findings to be valid in light of the objectives.
4. The MTE was conducted between December 2022 and October 2023 and looked at the holistic project implementation from the beginning of operations in February 2020 to mid-May 2023. Please see narrative section for additional information regarding the MTE approach and methodology.

Project Theory of Change (ToC)

5. A ToC was not developed at the project design phase however, an detailed Results Framework was. Nevertheless, a ToC is a critical aspect of project design to tease out the impact pathways of an intervention and to inform the allocation of resources; it is also a requirement for all GEF-funded projects from GEF-6 onwards. While a consultative workshop to discuss the ToC was not possible during the fact-finding stage, the MTE consultant team reconstructed one leveraging the Project

Document, per the Terms of Reference. This will be presented to project stakeholders and taken forward by the project for further refinement post-MTE.

Project Results and main conclusions

6. Per its original design, the Project remains highly relevant in the current socio-political context and is aligned with the priorities of Liberia, GEF, and CI. There is strong traceability and connections made towards the achievement of GEF-6 Focal Areas (Biodiversity (Program 10) and Land Degradation (Program 1), as well as key Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEAs) targets and objectives.
7. The project was well formulated. There is a good logical “chain of results” – activities, outputs, outcomes, and objective - to reach the expected results. It was a clear response to national priority needs and recognition that coastal ecosystems are critical to maintaining human well-being and global biodiversity, as well as to account for the value that mangroves provide in Liberia, and to help internalize the unpriced costs of development to improve consideration of impacts and tradeoffs of development decisions among policy-makers. No changes were made to the core design and intervention logic during the inception phase of the project, as documented in the Inception Report.
8. At the current pace of delivery and without significant adjustment to and/or acceleration of core products and services to be used as an anchor-point to enable mainstreaming to take root, it is unlikely that the Project will fully meet the core objective *“to improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory”*. Notwithstanding, the MTE has found the Project to have partially met the objective-level indicator at mid-term. It has progressively invested in improving data quality and availability (a prerequisite of quantifying the value of nature), as well as initial capacity building efforts. The Project could benefit however, from a modification to the results hierarchy and a “rethink” to prioritize core deliverables and impact pathways identified in the ToC, that will add the most value in the time remaining. This is a sentiment shared by multiple stakeholder consultations and corroborated by the results of the online questionnaire.
9. The MTE findings indicate that progress toward the Project’s Outcome is at an intermediate stage, with some potential for high levels of achievement by the end of operations. There is emerging evidence of synergies being made with national policy goals and development plans starting to be underpinned by National Capital Accounting concepts (an example being NCA project activities being integrated into the Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan for Liberia), although strategic thinking is required to clearly identify and articulate a roadmap of which policies and plans will be targeted, as well as the project's products and services – including any tools and techniques - that will be used to ensure mainstreaming. The project has sufficiently recognized that success is contingent on strengthened policy implementation capacities, improved biodiversity monitoring in targeted communities, and greater engagement of the private sector.
10. The Project has made some important strides forward and progress towards end-of-project targets for several outcome-level indicators under Outcome 1.1 with 2 of its 3 underlying indicators partially met and the remaining one at risk of not being met. However, the project continues to face challenges and significant shortcomings which limit the attainment of certain end-of-project targets and jeopardize the sustainability of some of the more complex results for Outcomes 2.1 and 3.1. For Outcome 2.1, 2 out of the 3 underlying indicators are at risk of not being met and the remaining indicator partially met. For Outcome 3.1, 1 out of the 3 underlying indicators are at risk of not being met with the remaining 2 indicators partially met at mid-term.

11. The level of progress and shortcomings can, in part, be attributed to the project facing a series of serious disruptive shocks which necessitated the regular use of adaptive management measures. The project had to navigated COVID-19 restrictions which prevented field work and forced the use of virtual tools for much of its duration. There are been persistent changes and turnover to the project's management preventing dedicated support and requiring CI-Liberia staff to step in on multiple occasions. There was also disruption to the delivery of core products due to issues with sub-contractors, principally the Moore Centre for Science and Oceans. These have cumulatively disrupted the momentum of the project and led to protracted delays and ability to progress towards achieving a number of outcome-level indicators.
12. Even when considering the external shocks and unforeseen challenges faced by the project, there are some significant technical shortcomings which have prevented the project from reaching is full potential.
13. With the exception of the Nationally Determined Contribution, there are few conduits being explored for ensuring coastal natural capital is effectively mainstreamed into the national development policies and strategies. There are few activities in place to effectively integrate the conservation and maintenance of natural capital and ecosystem services into development actions. Public officers and decision makers responsible for the design and implementation of national development policies and strategies were involved in the project activities, are aware of the importance of NCA, and are capacitated, but there is no concrete action (such as a road-map) in place to translate technical knowledge and awareness in policy actions. This is exacerbated by the detachment observed by some government entities. The Policy Assessment Report, while a step in the right direction, falls short of defining a roadmap and articulating which national development policies, strategies and plans will be targeted for this project specifically, and how.
14. It is still difficult and somewhat premature to verify with conviction the true impact of the NCA project at mid-term, since there are still products in the process of delivery given the delays incurred thus far, which in the most extreme cases are 2 years behind schedule from the original milestone dates identified in the early Annual Work Plans before being pushed out in successive progress reports and PIRs due to delays (i.e., Output 1.1.2, Output 1.1.3, Output 1.1.4, Output 1.1.5, Output 1.1.7, Output 2.1.2, Output 2.1.3, Output 3.1.2). There are other deliverables in the early stages of validation, are still in draft format or have yet to be formally presented and approved by the Project's governance mechanisms.
15. Despite having established some foundational biodiversity baseline and thematic mapping of the target landscapes, the methodologies used in some cases could be improved on (as in the case of the site level blue carbon feasibility assessment described in Section 6.3), with more time spent in the field and interfacing with the implementation team and starting with a solid understanding of how their studies will contribute to the achievement of the Project's objectives.
16. While the MTE consulting team requested to be engaged in real-time to help triage and learn more about the circumstances resulting in the Moore Centre for Science and Oceans (MCS) no longer prioritizing NCA at the organizational level due to changes in CI's institutional priorities and the impacts on the Project and delivery, it was neither involved nor has core information (adaptive management plan with options analysis) been provided for review. Therefore, the MTE consulting team does not have sufficient data points nor the contextual background to recommend a way forward at this juncture. It is also not possible to assess what adaptive management measures were employed by the project to address this challenge.
17. Progress on community-based conservation is substantially behind schedule. Capacity building on fostering a deeper appreciation of NCA and sustainable resource use is adequate for government

staff, but less so for communities. Conservation International Liberia has generated recognized contributions in capacity and policy development, partnership building, and the piloting of innovative approaches that have the potential to inform policy and to be replicable on a wider scale. Support from the National Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee are critical in enabling the policies and developments incorporating NCA, in partnership with the EPA.

18. Enhancing carbon sequestration in and around coastal areas in target mangrove forests is progressing at the theoretical level through studies of blue carbon potential. Carbon coefficients were developed, and carbon stocks have for the most part been assessed but are not exhaustive. Financial resource targets for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems however are not on track.
19. Community experiences in sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity monitoring offer insight and lessons that are relevant to the sustainable management of protected areas. Government partners have expanded contacts with other government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs through consultative processes and joint collaborations.
20. However, there are operational constraints and externalities that restrict opportunities for project development and resource mobilization. Project implementation and adaptive management is poor with few examples of out-of-the-box thinking when problems arise. Core project management arrangements are sub-optimal with segregation of delivery and back-office operations causing persistent problems with disbursement and not creating the atmosphere that can enable an effective PMU. While work planning appears to be ambitious, delivery is not aligned and work planning is insufficiently results-based.
21. Contracting delays and slow project start-up are the main threats to project performance and impact. Qualified environmental expertise is available in Liberia but not called upon leading to perception of an overreliance of international consulting firms with no clear knowledge transfer. As a result, various technical deliverables face extended contracting delays that weaken implementation and lower project delivery. Project timelines are sometimes insufficient to achieve project objectives or contribute meaningfully to the outcome also given the outsourcing model.
22. The M&E plan is a satisfactory monitoring framework to measure the performance of the project with a good mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The 24 indicators are, for the most part, SMART indicators with clear targets; they have been used to report progress made in the Quarterly / PIR reports. Monitoring needs to be improved and the PMU is currently ill-equipped and does not have sufficient bandwidth (nor will it have going forward given the acceleration needed) to keep pace with the monitoring required for both outcome- and output-level indicators, which warrant a sustained field presence. It is encouraging that gender-specific data are collected to the extent possible largely due to the project being in-tune with making the project as gender-responsive as possible. Going forward however, technical documents prepared by the project, such as feasibility study and analysis, should consider more gender mainstreaming, by introducing how specific actions impact men and women differently, and to provide more concrete opportunities to women and other disadvantaged groups for sustainable (i.e., eco-friendly) economic activities, conservation activities, as well as support the development of women leadership in management and sustainable valorization of natural capital in the coastal zones. The implementation of the actions identified by these documents shall be technically and financially supported by the project.
23. Government agencies and academic, research, and technical consulting institutions were onboarded effectively, although there is a palpable atmosphere of detachment and resentment. The private sector was not engaged. Community awareness and engagement are not yet adequate. Reporting is timely, but PIRs are missing traceability to original planning milestones leading to

overoptimistic ratings and continuity with Quarterly reports is difficult to follow. The documentation of risks and adaptive management responses may be improved and corresponding mitigations included as activities in Annual Work Planning; but could be quickly resolved with a seasoned Project Manager.

24. Internal communication and external communication are satisfactory and have attracted visibility. The Project can make better use of social media and awareness events. Communication through printed brochures, briefs, etc. is strong, but a designated project website is not operational, currently leveraging CI’s infrastructure. The latter could help address gaps identified in knowledge management, which is inconsistent with the vision articulated in the Project Document. Conversely, communication gaps with government partners have affected coordination. Due to workload pressures and staffing constraints, there is limited bandwidth within the CI-Liberia to follow-up on critical tasks, provide in-depth monitoring, or support knowledge management processes. The combination of factors raises the time, level of effort, and transactional costs needed to successfully at tightly integrated project.

Sustainability

25. The sustainability of project achievements is moderately unlikely. Financial risks are high. While the project is working towards operationalizing a small grants facility and there has also been moderate success in securing resources for sustainable management of mangroves and improvement of livelihoods in coastal communities, sustainable financing mechanisms have yet to take shape making the project dependent on external resources as opposed to the innovative financial schemes articulated in the Project Document under Component 2. Socio-political risks are minimal in terms of strong and continued political capital and support toward project objectives and achievements, but can quickly become compromised if mainstreaming of NCA is not integrated into broader development objectives, plans and strategies. Significant institutional risks prevail as there has not been discussion on an exit strategy and transitioning the products and services to other entities. It is unclear how the Project will replace the involvement of key institutions key to NCA accounts. This is compounded by weak coordination and communication with government and other partners. Governance risks are substantial for community agreements and community-based organizations established by the Project also bear substantial governance risks due to limited capacities and lack of political equity. Environmental risks are high and concerning since the Project is putting insufficient emphasis on environmental sustainability through conservation agreements, which have been allowed to lapse.

Table 1: Mid-Term Evaluation Summary Rating Table

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
Outcomes		
Outcomes (Relevance)	Highly Satisfactory (HS) Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings	Project outcomes are consistent with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming for GEF-6; • The strategic priorities of CI both at the global level and in Liberia; • The priorities of the Government of Liberia; • The needs of local communities; • Project design is overall appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes.
Outcomes (Effectiveness)	Unsatisfactory (U) Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings	The project has experienced considerable delays and the project was able to provide progress on one outcome out of three Components based on the respective outcome-level indicators. While

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
		sufficient progress has been made in Component 1 on mainstreaming natural capital accounting into Government of Liberia development strategy, policy and planning, Component 2 on innovative financial mechanisms and Component 3 on community incentives are still at initial stages and significantly behind schedule.
Outcomes (Efficiency)	Unsatisfactory (U) Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings	The project presents significant delays and low disbursements. The implementation of the work plans have not been timely overall with activities regularly spilling into the subsequent years, mainly due to changes in the human resources of the PMU, periods without the PM and the inability of the implementing partners to temporarily take care of the tasks of the PM.
Outcomes (Overall rating)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings	While project design is appropriate to deliver outcomes, progress has been lower than expected due to significant delays in execution. This is due both to effectiveness and efficiency challenges and to external factors, namely COVID-19 restrictions, prolonged periods of inadequate management and disruptions to core activities due to changes in partner priorities. The Project is making efforts to catch up and, if further delays are prevented it may still be able to deliver core products and services by project completion, but likely fall short of the ambition of the original vision and design.
Sustainability		
Overall	Moderately Unlikely (MU) There are significant risks to sustainability.	Risks to the overall sustainability of the Project are high and a reflection of the ratings of individual gauges of sustainability. While the policy environment is favourable, there are significant financial risks to sustainability and dependency on external resources is not favorable to the overall sustainability profile. There have been issues with ownership and communication between partners and the community agreements have been allowed to lapse.
Financial Sustainability	Moderately Unlikely (MU) There are significant risks to sustainability.	Overdependence on external donor resources as opposed to making financial mechanisms envisioned in Component 2 take root.
Institutional Sustainability	Moderately Unlikely (MU) There are significant risks to sustainability.	Significant institutional risks prevail as there has not been discussion on an exit strategy and transitioning the products and services to other entities. It is unclear how the Project will replace the involvement of key institutions key to NCA accounts. This is compounded by weak coordination and communication with government and other partners.
Socio-Political Sustainability	Moderately Likely (ML) There are moderate risks to sustainability	Socio-political risks are minimal in terms of strong and continued political capital and support toward

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
		project objectives and achievements, but can quickly become compromised if mainstreaming of NCA is not integrated into broader development objectives, plans and strategies.
Environmental Sustainability	Moderately Unlikely (MU) There are significant risks to sustainability	Environmental risks are high and concerning since the Project is putting insufficient emphasis on environmental sustainability through conservation agreements, which have been allowed to lapse. There is again, an overreliance on external donor funding.
Monitoring & Evaluation		
Monitoring & Evaluation (Design)	Highly satisfactory (HS) There were no shortcomings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations	The M&E plan included in the Project Document is sound and detailed. The budget covers key M&E activities, but does not allow for detailed monitoring of the multiple activities occurring in the field. The M&E systems of the Project were designed with standard CI-GEF components and reflected in the Project Document, consisting of the inception workshop and accompanying report, Project Results Monitoring Plan, GEF Core Indicators, Project Steering Committee, CI-GEF Project Agency Field Supervision Missions, Quarterly Progress Reporting, PIRs, MTE, as well as terminal reporting and terminal evaluation.
Monitoring & Evaluation (Implementation)	Moderately Satisfactory (MS) There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations	Additional dedicated staff would help improve reporting, and, there is a need to further systematize project information to facilitate its use for decision-making. Decentralization of the compilation of the PIR would allow for multiple points of view from PMU and CI-GEF on the progress of the Project and restore confidence of the ratings being ascribed. Better traceability and continuity between the quarterly reports and PIRs would also improve overall cohesiveness.
Implementation and Execution		
Implementation	Moderately Satisfactory (MS) There were some shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations	Project implementation is not successful, despite the project's identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed project proposal and approval were adequate. Roles of executing partners are not playing out as envisaged in the Project's design. CI-GEF has provided moderately sufficient supervision and has allowed challenges to accrue, perhaps a function of weak governance. CI-GEF did address challenges in implementation when they became a bottleneck.
Execution	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) Level of execution somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings	The absence and turnover of the Project Manager during the first two years represented a significant limitation to the execution of the Project. CI Liberia had to adapt and build internal capacity for execution on multiple occasions due to inadequate and/or gaps in management. There have been

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
		lengthy administrative and procurement processes. There remain challenges in governance, planning, communication and monitoring, partly owing to different visions for the project by different stakeholders.
Environmental and Social Safeguards		
Environmental and Social Safeguards	Moderately Satisfactory (MS) There were some shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation more or less met expectations	The quality of environmental and social safeguard plans were strong in their design. In compliance with CI-GEF project safeguards policies and recommendations, a Process Framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, a Gender Mainstreaming Plan, and an Accountability and Grievance Mechanism have been developed. The quality of environmental and social safeguard plans is satisfactory and there is evidence that they have been implemented, but ownership of safeguards by the PMU is still an ongoing process, and there are opportunities to broaden inclusion with Project stakeholders.
Grievance Mechanism	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) There were significant shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation somewhat lower than expected	Communities interviewed had no knowledge of a grievance mechanism and there is limited evidence that it has been implemented per design.
Gender	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) There were significant shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation somewhat lower than expected	The application of the gender mainstreaming safeguard is moderately unsatisfactory. There is an unbalance between men and women in the engagement in the project activities, mostly during the first year. Strategies, plans and policies derived by the project include gender considerations, but most of the time the gender questions are just mentioned, without identifying specific actions to address gender issues or to benefit women and disadvantaged target groups. There is no evidence of the (potential) impact on gender mainstreaming of these documents.
Stakeholder Engagement	Moderately Satisfactory (MS) There were some shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation more or less met expectations	The Stakeholder Engagement Plan is largely consistent with the annex to the ProDoc also articulating the expected roles of each partner and stakeholder, as well as their respective interests in and anticipated benefits from the implementation of the Project. Some shortcomings resulted in insufficient socialization and internalization of the expected roles.

For rating scales please refer to Annex 1 of the MTE report.

Summary of recommendations and lessons learnt

Most important lessons

26. **Emerging lesson 1** - more pragmatism and appreciation of systemic constraints (at national and local level) at the design of project targets during the project formulation phase, so they are not entirely out of reach from those who ultimately manage projects: While GEF projects must be ambitious to achieve global environmental benefits, they need to balance and take into consideration the sphere of influence of the management teams that implement them so as not to set them up for failure with unrealistic expectations and targets that are complex, especially those related to species. This is especially true in mainstreaming projects where there is a need to ensure that projects straddle and feed into government processes and timelines. Contexts change and projects should be afforded the flexibility to revise outcomes and outputs that clearly cannot be achieved at the end of the project period and replace them with more rational and feasible alternatives.
27. **Emerging lesson 2** - continuity in leadership and resourcing² is key to project delivery and even more so in complex ones: too many resource changes within a project, especially key decision makers, can have significant negative impacts. Team chemistry and careful selection of project management can make or break projects.
28. **Emerging lesson 3** - project teams need to be empowered to make decisions: Projects must be country-owned and country-led and delivery teams must have the latitude to make mistakes, learn from them and make firm decisions that stick. As part of the UN Secretary General's Development Reform, accountability should be concentrated on the Project Manager. The PSC or Advisory Committee(s) should be sufficiently involved in daily execution (more than twice per year) to ensure engagement and facilitate rapid decision-making when needed. Based on Project Management best practice, clear escalation channels and service levels for triaging and resolving issues should be established so projects can focus on delivery.
29. **Emerging lesson 4** - too much time focusing on procurement, contracting, and administrative modalities can derail delivery: introduction of new requirements and the reopening of administrative procedures derail projects with many stakeholder contracts and disbursements. These need to be locked from the outset.
30. **Emerging lesson 5** - Budget management should rest with the Project Manager if they are to be accountable for delivery. Projects with remote communities must be prepared financially to spend a lot of time in the field, as these are the key beneficiaries of projects in the GEF's eyes.
31. **Emerging lesson 6** - In complex projects with multiple stakeholders, there is immense value of having a dedicated Relationship Manager as an integral part of the project implementation team. The Relationship Manager plays a crucial role in fostering effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders, promoting project ownership, and ensuring the successful delivery of project outcomes. GEF projects often involve multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, local communities, private sector partners, and international organizations. Coordinating and aligning their efforts can be complex. A Relationship Manager acts as a central point of contact, building strong relationships with all stakeholders, understanding their perspectives and interests, and effectively communicating the project's objectives and progress.

² Resourcing means assigning actual resources (a rather cold expression in Project Management lexicon, which normally means people) to the project. There are two very different aspects to this: deciding which resources to apply to which work items in the project plan, and, actually getting the resources to work for the project.

This fosters trust, transparency, and active engagement among all parties. Having a dedicated Relationship Manager empowers stakeholders by involving them in the decision-making process. By actively seeking their input, concerns, and feedback, the Relationship Manager helps create a sense of ownership among stakeholders. This sense of ownership encourages active participation, commitment, and a shared responsibility for project success. It can also help in abating emerging conflicts before intractable disagreements arise.

Most important recommendations

32. The recommendations which have evolved out of the MTE process, and which are presented in this report, are grouped into two categories: augmentative, and corrective. The **augmentative** recommendations are those which are intended to expand upon, strengthen, or replicate project actions that have shown relative success thus far in achieving project results (or leading in that direction). The **corrective** recommendations are those which are meant to provide a means for strengthening or putting back on-track those aspects of the project which have shown deficiencies, or which have met persistent obstacles which have hampered successful implementation.

Table 2: Summary of findings and recommendations

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
<p>Undertake a comprehensive, participatory, and strategic review of the project design and Project Logical Framework. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the overall scope of work to core deliverables based on an assessment on what is realistic in the time remaining given project and government constraints; • review the financial needs assessment (the financial resources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems); • prioritizing interventions that are likely to have the greatest sustainable impact by the end of the project as per outcomes of the reconstructed Theory of Change; • paring down and ensuring indicators are uniquely impact-oriented; • ensuring all indicators are SMART; • apply a holistic, integrated, and participatory strategy to the planning and management of the project’s 3 Outcomes, with careful attention to dependencies, to strengthen the present ‘scattergun’ approach; • ensuring that project progress and impacts can be measured systematically and rolls up to the objective level; • taking a Theory of Change approach to the prioritization of investments; • systematically recording all major changes to the original project design described in the Project Document and seeking approval from the Project Steering Committee. 	Corrective	PMU, CI-Liberia, CI-GEF and PSC (Immediately following MTE)
<p>To meet its potential, the Project needs to accelerate delivery within the next year. Failure to achieve core deliverables will likely lead to sub-optimal results in the achievement of the core objective. As such, the Project should be on a milestone-based performance plan. Any extension request should be weighed against the achievement of clear yearly milestones. Indicative milestones are as follows:</p> <p>2023 (Calendar year):</p>	Corrective	CI-GEF (Immediately following MTE)

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of the NCA Liberia National Strategy and Action Plan, which includes endorsement and sign-off by the TAC and NSC; • Recruitment of a dedicated Project Manager and M&E Officer; • Finalization of NCA Liberia Training Modules; • Renewal of Community Conservation Agreements based on lessons learned; • Update roadmap of policies, strategies, and development plans targeted with key milestones and how to get there. The road map shall identify at least 3 policies/strategies to be prepared with an effective mainstreaming of NCA into their objectives and concrete actions <p>2024 (Calendar year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of Mangrove Accounts; • Pilot multiple sustainable financing mechanisms; • Engagement of at least 1 private sector partner in coastal conservation; • Delivery of training programme; • Implement financial mechanisms with the most promise to deliver sustainable benefits; • Increase Community Conservation Agreements. <p>2025 (Calendar year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target policies and development plans for the incorporation of NCA, including also actions on gender mainstreaming; • Transition strategy 		
<p>Approve a no-cost extension on the basis of the successful realization of milestone targets and if not, wind down the project gracefully.</p>	Corrective	CI-GEF, Project Steering Committee (initiate process mid-2024 following PIR, based on achievement of and progress towards milestones)
<p>PMU is ill-equipped to fully meet and address the monitoring requirements of the project and should engage an M&E Officer. Once onboard, a review of the Monitoring Plan should be conducted.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, CI-GEF (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Gender and social inclusion measures should be reviewed and updated as necessary as part of the role of a newly assigned or recruited M&E Officer. Indicators should be checked and opportunities to disaggregate data maximized for gender, youth, elderly, indigenous, etc.</p> <p>Going forward technical documents prepared by the project, such as feasibility study and analysis, should consider more the gender mainstreaming, by introducing specific actions to provide more concrete opportunities to women and other disadvantaged groups for sustainable (eco-friendly) economic activities, conservation activities and to support the development of women leadership in management and sustainable valorization of natural capital in the coastal zones.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Once recruitment of M&E Officer is complete and individual is onboarded)
<p>Revisit environmental and social safeguard risks and include training to communities on grievance mechanisms and Free Prior</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Immediately following

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
and Informed Consent (FPIC). Training should not be one-off, but an ongoing activity to ensure communities internalize concepts and recourse. As a part of the ongoing process to mainstream safeguards in project operations, the PMU should make efforts to foster broader inclusion within the communities and organizations supported by the project.		MTE)
The current management structure of the project needs to be re-aligned to empower the PMU and enable the Project Manager (PM) to be fully accountable for delivery. This includes oversight of the budget, including the travel budget.	Corrective	CI-GEF, Project Steering Committee (Immediately following MTE)
More travel to the field and a key is to rebuild trust and relationships with communities, per the stakeholder engagement model and ambition in the Project Document.	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Next Annual Work Planning cycle)
Ensure that community conservation agreements are renewed and not left to expire. Ensure to demonstrate early value so communities see the benefits of extending these agreements.	Corrective	PMU (Immediately following MTE)
Strengthen reporting, particularly the traceability between Quarterly Reports and PIRs. It is recommended that something akin to a ‘traffic lights’ dashboard system is adopted for reporting quarterly at output level (not activity level which is likely to be too time-consuming), using self-assessed quantitative estimates of progress towards completion, supported by qualitative evidence (photos, etc.).	Corrective	PMU, CI-Liberia, CI-GEF (Following MTE and next PIR)
<p>In the remaining part of the project, the PMU should devote more efforts to systematizing and disseminating the lessons learned from the project, especially those regarding the project’s intervention model. With the help of CI-Liberia, any barriers should be removed for communication activities to take place. This should include developing and implementing a Communications Strategy and Action Plan, as well as regular regimented updates to connect stakeholders to the broader narrative.</p> <p>The Project must invest in a robust Knowledge Management system, including a designated website/repository for technical studies long-term. The project should also establish a dataset, with a GIS component, with all the relevant data needed to implement the NCA in Liberia. The dataset shall be shared online with the relevant stakeholders, that will be able to download and use them. The Project shall also identify external stakeholders which could benefit of this dataset.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, EPA, PMU (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Improve the efficiency of decision-making and communication processes. The Executing Entities should address the challenges identified for efficient decision-making and communication by improving the project’s governance system.</p> <p>In particular, multiple layers of approval should be reserved for the most strategic issues, thus letting operational decisions be made by the PMU. As for communication, the Executing Entities should make sure that staff involved in the project in different geographical locations and organizational roles can access updated information regarding project planning, progress and upcoming activities in a timely and user-friendly manner. This might be done either by creating new communication channels, or by improving the quality of those already existing, as considered appropriate. In</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, EPA, Project Steering Committee (Immediately following MTE)

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
any case, this should not cause an additional workload to the staff.		
<p>Develop an adaptation management strategy. Given the delays in implementation, CI-GEF and the Executing Entities, including the PMU, should jointly develop an adaptation management strategy to ensure the achievement of project targets.</p> <p>This strategy should draw on a realistic assessment of a) potential delays in the remaining part of the project (e.g., caused by COVID-19, disruption in management and MCS), b) available cofinancing; and c) of the scope that the project can achieve given the available human and financial resources, without sacrificing quality and depth of support.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Develop a consultative transition plan / sustainability strategy. Given the importance of linking the project with other initiatives to ensure continued work in the priority landscapes and sustained outcomes, the Executing Entities, with the support of the PMU, should formalize and implement a systematic, updated exit strategy. This strategy should be developed by involving project partners and cofinanciers, thus providing articulating the different opportunities that have been emerging, and should consider existing risks to project sustainability, including political risks (elections) and environmental risks (climate change impacts) among others.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, EPA, PMU (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Consider changing the format and approach to the PIR so that the narrative and ratings of the PMU, CI-Liberia and CI-GEF are treated as separate entris. This is best practice and aligned to the approach taken by other GEF Agencies. Decentralizing narrative and comments on progress would be an important check and balance, as well as improve the credibility of the project rating.</p>	Augmentative	CI-GEF (by 2024 PIR)
<p>Consider a neutral third-party entity to manage GEF-funded projects going forward.</p>	Augmentative	CI-GEF (No distinct timeline)

1 INTRODUCTION: PROJECT OVERVIEW

33. The Project titled “*Conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal Natural capital*”, (hereafter referred to as “Project”) is a Full-Sized Project (FSP) with a \$3,944,220 GEF grant and \$11,194,248 co-financing totalling **\$15,138,468**. Conservation International (CI-GEF) is the GEF Implementing Agency, whereas Liberia’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the Executing Agency and Conservation International Liberia is the Executing support partner. Other important partners involved in the project execution are The Forestry Development Authority, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture/Bureau of National Fisheries, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, the Liberia Land Authority and Ministry of Internal Affairs. The project implementation phase commenced on July 1st, 2020.
34. The Project Objective is “*To improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory*”. The project is structured in 3 components as follows:
- Component 1: Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) in Coastal Ecosystems.
 - Component 2: Innovative Financing Schemes for Conserving Coastal Natural Capital.
 - Component 3: Community Incentives to Conserve and Sustainably Manage Natural Capital in Coastal Ecosystems.

Environmental problems, root causes, and barriers that the project seeks to address

35. The global environmental problems, root causes, and barriers that the project seeks to address are described below:
- Population growth and technological advances have fuelled unprecedented and unsustainable exploitation of coastal resources in the past century, at the global level and in Liberia.
 - Liberia’s immense natural wealth is under threat and biological diversity has suffered a notable decline over the past 20 years. Liberia has lost about 350,000 ha of its forest cover over the last 20 years (Global Forest Watch, online database³) and about 60% over the last 2 centuries. About ¼ of its forests are considered disturbed (Global Forest Watch, online database). Coastal ecosystems are threatened by the overexploitation of demersal fish species and other species, beach sand mining, beach erosion, and mangrove loss.
 - Liberia is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and variability and is ranked 177th out of 182 countries in the global ranking on climate vulnerability (ND-GAIN Country Index, online⁴). Extensive poverty combined with high dependence on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry tend to exacerbate the problems related to climate change; moreover, coastal zones in sub-tropical climates are more vulnerable to climate change, due to their environmental conditions.
 - According to The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) database, mangroves are one of the most important coastal ecosystems in West Africa in terms of economic value and ecosystem functions. The main threats to Liberia’s mangroves are 1) infrastructure development, 2) over-harvesting of natural resources, 3) agriculture expansion, particularly for lowland rice, 4) illegal sand mining; and 5) unregulated waste disposal.

³ www.globalforestwatch.org

⁴ gain-new.crc.nd.edu

- Liberia's post-conflict economic recovery and increased population (more than 2% per year in the last 10 years and more than 3% in the previous 10; World Bank data, 2022) have overwhelmed the urban plans for its coastal cities and, more in general, for all the human settlements in coastal areas; in Liberian coastal areas, urban expansion and accompanying landfills cause mangrove destruction, resulting in increased erosion and increasing vulnerability to storms and flooding.
- Demand for food, energy, and building materials is leading to overexploitation of natural resources in and around major urban settlements. Demand for land, food, charcoal, and construction materials is driving degradation and deforestation in forests, mangroves, and other ecosystems in the coastal areas of Liberia.
- Agriculture expansion is threatening natural areas, especially in the coastal zones, due to governmental policies and private initiatives, mostly for rice and palm oil cultivation.
- Beach sand mining poses a serious threat to the coastline and marine environment. The resulting sand pits cause slight embayment that exacerbates shoreline erosion. Incidents of beach erosion along the Monrovia coastline have resulted in the loss of land and shorefront properties. Erosion is causing shoreline recession in several cities, including Buchanan, Greenville, Harper, and Robertsport.
- Increased waste production, due to the growing population and good consumption, implies environmental degradation and risks to human health, mostly in urban and suburban areas, including coastal zones.

36. The main barriers to addressing the above-mentioned environmental problems and root causes as described in the GEF Endorsed project documents are:

Barrier 1: *Lack of data about the value of Liberia's natural capital:* this is a common issue in developing countries, especially in Africa. In Liberia, institutions face shortages of scientific information pertaining to environmental management, including those on natural resources and natural capital.

Barrier 2: *Lack of awareness and knowledge among decision-makers about the value of Liberia's natural capital.*

Barrier 3: *Inadequate legislation and gaps in national policy.* Liberia lacks the policy, regulatory and informational frameworks necessary to integrate ecosystem and biodiversity protection into national actions.

Barrier 4: *Limited capacity (institutional and individual) and coordination in government ministries,* to assess, plan, and monitor natural resource use in coastal areas and to determine how these resources contribute to the economy.

Barrier 5: *Poverty.* Limited employment opportunities and pervasive poverty result in heavy local community dependence on coastal resources for subsistence and local commerce. The combination of these economic pressures and limited awareness of ecosystem function and value results in unsustainable extraction methods and levels, undermining the viability of coastal ecosystems.

Barrier 6: *Limited financing for conservation and sustainable management of coastal resources,* with inadequate funds, often for short-term.

2 MID-TERM EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation

37. The Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) is an adaptive management tool by GEF Implementing Agencies and a portfolio monitoring tool for the GEF Secretariat.
38. At its core, the purpose of the MTE is to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTE provides an independent, systematic, and comprehensive review of the progress made in achieving the project's objective and expected outcomes during the first two years of implementation, by assessing its design, implementation processes, and achievements to-date relative to its objectives and targets. The MTE also provides feedback and recommendations to CI, EPA, and stakeholders to continue the project activities and support the sustainability of the project after its completion. The GEF can also benefit from the MTE conclusions, to better orient future projects and initiatives focused on natural capital accounting.
39. The MTE will not only consider the project outcomes and outputs but also the perspective for:
 - Mainstreaming NCA into the Government of Liberia's (GOL) development strategy, policy, and planning. Specifically, the MTE will offer a window into the extent to which valuation is leading to the development of policy reforms needed to mitigate the drivers of biodiversity loss and encourage sustainable development through the better management of biodiversity and natural capital, as well as triggering changes in the use and scale of public and private finance flows on the scale necessary to address threats.
 - Raising sustainable financial resources for the management and restoration of coastal ecosystems.
 - Community-level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources.
40. The MTE was conducted between December 2022 and October 2023 and looked at the holistic project implementation from the beginning of operations in February 2020 to mid-May 2023. It was conducted by a team of four independent evaluation subject-matter experts, consisting of 3 international and 1 national consultant, at the request of Conservation International Project Agency (CI-GEF) to provide information about the status of implementation of the NCA project to ensure accountability for the expenditures to date and the delivery of outputs so that the managers can make midcourse corrections as appropriate.
41. The MTE was carried out following a structured process of data collection and analysis to assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability of the project, and taking into consideration the GEF Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy (especially Annex 12). The evaluation methodology was also informed by the GEF evaluation policy and CI-GEF monitoring and evaluation policy for GEF-funded projects. The evaluation was evidence-based and relied on mixed methods, mostly with a lead of qualitative methods, strongly backed up with quantitative methods.

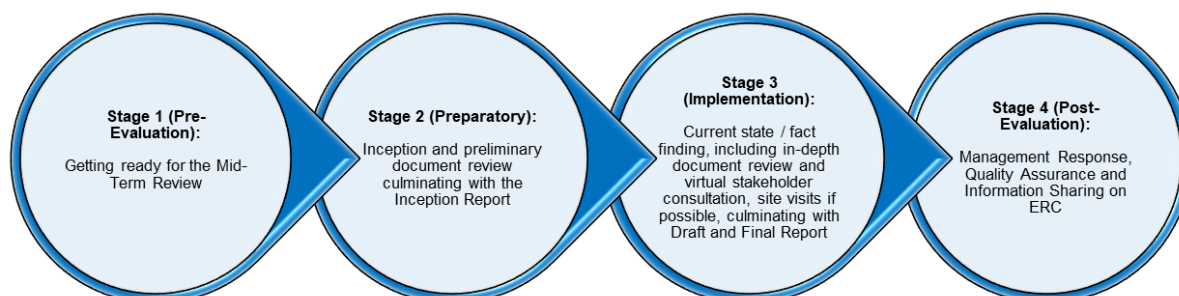
2.2 The Inception Phase

42. To prepare for and as a precursor to this MTE report, a preliminary review of project documents shared by the PMU was carried out, and an introductory call was held on 29 November 2022 between the MTE consulting team and the CI-GEF Senior Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation and CI-GEF Director, Project Management and Technical Oversight. This allowed the evaluation team to develop a preliminary evaluation matrix, which included the specific evaluation questions to be considered for each evaluation criterion, details the most relevant qualitative and quantitative indicators that will inform the evaluation questions, and specifies the key sources of information and data collection methods. These inputs were validated through an inception workshop with the PMU, the Implementing Agency and the Executing Agencies, which was held on 3 February 2023 with participation of 9 individuals, including 2 women. This culminated in the formal approval and sign-off of the inception report, which was updated based on the feedback received at the inception workshop.

"THE APPROVED INCEPTION REPORT WILL BE THE MTE'S PRIMARY REFERENCE DOCUMENT GOING FORWARD AND ANY SUBSEQUENT CHANGES THEREAFTER TO THE METHODOLOGY OR WORKPLAN PROPOSED BY EITHER CI OR MTE CONSULTING TEAM MUST BE FORMALLY DOCUMENTED, MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE, AND SUBJECT TO A CHANGE REQUEST, IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE"

- FROM THE APPROVED INCEPTION REPORT

Figure 1: Stages of the Mid-Term Evaluation



2.3 MTE Guiding Principles, Criteria, Definitions and Corresponding Questions

2.3.1 The GEF's evaluation guiding principles

43. The MTE was guided by the GEF's internationally recognized principles outlined below:

- **Independence.** Evaluations must be conducted independently from both the policymaking process and from the delivery and management of assistance. Evaluation team members should not be personally engaged in the activities to be evaluated or responsible in the past for the design, implementation, or supervision/midterm review of the project, program, or policy to be evaluated.

- **Credibility.** Evaluations must be credible and based on reliable data and observations. Evaluation reports should reflect consistency and dependability in data, findings, judgments, and lessons learned, with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures, and analysis used to collect and interpret information.
- **Utility.** Evaluations must serve the information needs of intended users. Partners, evaluators, and units commissioning evaluations should endeavor to ensure that the work is well-informed, relevant, and timely and that it is clearly and concisely presented so as to be of maximum benefit to intended users. Evaluation reports should present the evidence, findings, issues, conclusions, and recommendations in a complete and balanced way. They should be both results- and action-oriented.
- **Impartiality.** Evaluations must give a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, program, policy, strategy, or organizational unit being evaluated. The evaluation process should reflect impartiality at all stages and consider the views of all stakeholders. Units commissioning evaluations should endeavor to ensure that the selected evaluators are impartial and unbiased.
- **Transparency.** An essential feature at all stages of the evaluation process, transparency involves clear communication concerning decisions for the program of work and areas for evaluation, the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied, the evaluation approach and methods, and the intended use of the findings. Documentation related to evaluations must be freely available, easily accessible, and readable for transparency and legitimacy.
- **Integrity.** Evaluations must provide due regard to the welfare, beliefs, and customs of those involved or affected, avoiding, or disclosing any conflict of interest. Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information on the facts confidentially, as well as be sensitive to local contexts.
- **Participation.** GEF evaluations must be inclusive so that the diverse perspectives and the values on which they are based as well as the types of power and consequences associated with each perspective are represented.
- **Gender equality.** Gender equality and women's empowerment is a strategic and operational imperative for the GEF. To ensure this project's successful implementation and long-term sustainability, it is essential to consider how project interventions may impact men and women differently. Therefore, gender and community development are two of the cross-cutting issues that will be considered. As a gender-responsive approach is applied throughout the GEF project cycle, it also applies to evaluations, as clearly stated in the 2017 GEF Policy on Gender Equality.
- **Competencies and capacities.** GEF evaluations require a range of expertise that may be technical, environmental, cultural, or within a social science or the evaluation profession. Units commissioning evaluations are responsible for selecting evaluators with sufficient experience and skills in the appropriate field/s, and for adopting a rigorous methodology for the assessment of results and performance. Evaluations of GEF activities shall make the best possible use of local expertise, both technical and evaluative.

2.3.2 Mid-Term Evaluation criteria, scope and questions

44. The detailed MTE criteria is described in the table below. An assessment of project performance was carried out against expectations set out in the Logical Framework, which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of

verification. The MTE at a minimum, covered the criteria of: **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results, and Sustainability.**

Table 3: MTE Evaluation criteria, scope and questions

Relevance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national environmental priorities and policies and to global environmental benefits to which the GEF is dedicated; this analysis includes an assessment of changes in relevance over time. The extent to which the project is in line with the GEF Operational Programs or the strategic priorities under which the project was funded. <p>Also, per GEF guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the project contributes to gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and No-One Left Behind. <p>Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances, including the social, political and economic context.</p>
Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved; <p>Also, per GEF guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of project strategy/approach including RBM, partnership and cross cutting approach, as it relates to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project management; Potentiality of project to effectively expand achievements, learning from failures; Factors contributing to effectiveness / failures. The extent to which progress has been made towards the programme goals, including gender equality, women’s empowerment and other cross-cutting issues such as community development.
Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost effectiveness or efficacy. <p>Also, per GEF guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which efficient of project management resulted in outputs/results towards outcomes coming together in a timely manner; The extent to which resources (financial, technical and gender expertise) adequate to address gender inequalities and root causes.
Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and progress toward longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects, and other local effects. <p>Also, per GEF guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results in the GEF are measured by global environmental benefit indicators, according to the results frameworks approved in each replenishment phase. Social and economic co-benefits achieved while contributing to global environmental benefits are also measured. As per the GEF Policy on Gender Equality, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and information on gender, and the use of gender-sensitive indicators, sex-disaggregated targets and results, as relevant, are to be regularly incorporated in monitoring and evaluation.
Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion; projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable. <p>Also, per GEF guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the project established mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the programme benefits for women, men and other vulnerable groups;

- How and to what extent risk management, documentation of lessons learned and work on exit strategies contribute to sustainability.

Note: Projects need to be environmentally, as well as financially and socially sustainable.

2.4 Data Collection, Approach and Methodology

45. Data collection took place between 3 February and 10 May, 2023 and included an in-depth desk review, including the documents provided at inception, as well as additional information provided by the PMU and policy documents. In parallel, 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 52 project stakeholders, including 35 beneficiaries of the Mandoe and Bendu communities (individually or as a focus group discussion, as appropriate), using the questionnaires included in the Inception Report as a guide. Stakeholders interviewed include, the Implementing Agency, the Executing Agencies, the PMU, as well as selected cofinanciers and participants (see the full list in Annex 3: consulted stakeholders). The interviews were carried out in either face-to-face (during a field mission between 10-24 February 2023), by Zoom, MS Teams, or telephone, depending on the access of project stakeholders to communication technologies. Constant communication was maintained with the PMU throughout the data collection phase to schedule interviews and address questions on the information provided. As an additional data collection tool, an online questionnaire was deployed to more than 52 individuals with a response rate of approximately 30%.
46. The data collected were then systematized and matched with the evaluation questions included in the evaluation matrix. For each question, data from different sources were triangulated to ensure that evaluation findings are grounded in evidence and reflect the perspectives of different stakeholders. Based on the findings thus obtained, project results were assessed against the project's results framework - which provides performance and impact indicators along with their corresponding means of verification - and against the reconstructed ToC presented, which was used as a reference to assess progress toward impacts and the relevance of the intervention model. Results from the online questionnaire were also used to support and validate findings codified above. While a consultative workshop to collectively reconstruct the Theory of Change with input from project stakeholders was originally envisioned as part of the MTE during the fact-finding stage, CI-GEF advised the MTE consultant team to undertake a desk study instead. SETIN had also been invited to present and garner input on the reconstructed TOC at a meeting organized by CI-Liberia on 29 June but the agenda went behind schedule which did not permit the MTE consultant team to socialize its work. Per the recommendations, it will be incumbent on the PMU to take the validation of the TOC forward and organize a dedicated workshop with key project stakeholders.

2.5 Reporting

47. The present report was elaborated considering the feedback received in mid-June from CI-GEF and CI-Liberia. The report includes a short overview of the project (Section 2), the reconstructed ToC of the project (Section 3), evaluation findings for each of the evaluation criteria (Section 4), as well as conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations (Section 11). Outcomes, sustainability, project M&E, implementation & execution, and environmental & social safeguards were rated according to the scales provided in the Annex to the ToR.

2.6 System for data management and maintenance of records

48. Data and documents were catalogued internally in specific folders, in compliance with the ISO 9001:2015 certified Quality Management System adopted by SETIN.

2.7 Intended products and reporting procedures

49. The products (= deliverables) of the MTE are included in the delivery schedule. For each product, CI provided comments that were addressed by the evaluation team.

Table 4: MTE engagement plan and deliverables

No	Activity	Deliverable	Due Date
1	Introductory Call	Work plan for evaluation Summary of the introductory call to introduce team members and review evaluation timeline	29 th November 2022
2	Desk review of all relevant project documents	a. Draft Mid-Term Evaluation Inception Report outline b. Key Informant Questionnaires	16 th January 2023
3	Host Evaluation Inception workshop with Executing Agencies (virtual)	Mid-Term Evaluation Inception Workshop Report	3 rd February 2023
4	Evaluation of the project via interviews and site visits (virtual and in person)	Mid-Term Evaluation Report (Draft)	12 th May 2023
5	Present Mid Term Evaluation findings during a virtual stakeholder validation meeting	Draft Final Report (with comments from the virtual stakeholder validation meeting addressed)	12 th August 2023 (TBC)
6	Revised report incorporating any additional comments from CI and stakeholders	Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report (word and PDF), including document showing how comments/questions were incorporated	12 th September 2023 (TBC)

2.8 Limitations to the evaluation

50. Following discussions amongst the MTE consulting team and based on the analysis during the inception phase which also took stock of discussions with key Project stakeholders during the inception workshop, no major methodological limitations or shortcomings were encountered that were deemed to be an impediment to the MTE. Notwithstanding, there were procedural limitations faced by the MTE consulting team as follows:

- a. **Delays and limitation sharing of key documentation by the Executing Agency:** The timely availability of documentation was a persistent and ongoing limitation to the MTE, with the bulk shared during the mission to Liberia and some technical reports even trickling into March and April 2023. In some cases, these materialized in early May 2023, a week before the submission of the draft report (as in the Quarterly Reports for FY23), and in other cases not at all (such as the request for summary documentation regarding the issues encountered with the Moore Centre and adaptive management plan under development). In spite of constant reminders made by the MTE consulting team, the slow response time and in some cases the unavailability of documentation altogether, prevented the MTE

consulting team from formulating a holistic picture of Project status from the outset during the Inception Phase and in many respects was like evaluating a moving target.

- b. **Material updates on Project developments:** During the engagement there was an ongoing sense that CI-Liberia was only sharing the minimum information and not openly volunteering data points material to the Project's performance and only provided information at a superficial level when it was brought up by the MTE consulting team for cross-referencing. In other cases, explicit requests for updates and to be included in technical discussions as an observer were made by the MTE consulting team and not followed up on a timely manner until it was too late and the opportunity lost altogether. The MTE consulting team believes an important lesson is that evaluations can only be as successful and useful as the timely flow of information and engagement from stakeholders. Consultants undertaking evaluations should be regarded by Project stakeholders as agents of change to help course correct rather than a hinderance.

"I CAN MAKE TIME TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE PROJECT BUT IT WILL COST YOU \$500 FOR ½ HOUR"

- STATEMENT BY ONE POTENTIAL INTERVIEW WHEN ASKED TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR THE MTE

"WHILE THE TERMINAL EVALUATION IS IMPORTANT FOR THE GEF TO SEE WHAT WAS ACHIEVED FOR THEIR INVESTMENT. THE MIDTERM EVALUATION IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU BECAUSE IF PERFORMANCE IS POOR, THINGS CAN STILL BE TURNED AROUND"

- MTE TEAM DURING INCEPTION WORKSHOP

- c. **Poor follow-up from CI-Liberia and, partially, EPA:** Generally, there were poor response times from CI-Liberia and, partially, the EPA. This resulted in elongated timelines and left the MTE consulting team waiting for information or having to make assumptions.
- d. **GEF evaluation policy not followed with respect to GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) engagement:** The GEF Evaluation policy is unequivocal about the roles and responsibilities of the GEF OFP and how they ought to interface with an MTE. Per the policy, *"The GEF OFPs will be informed of midterm reviews and terminal evaluations and will, where applicable and feasible, be briefed and debriefed at the start and at the end of evaluation missions. They will receive a draft report for comment, will be invited to contribute to the management response (where applicable), and will receive the final evaluation report within 12 months of project or program completion"*. Despite several requests made to CI-Liberia and the GEF Agency, the MTE consulting team was not able to engage with the OFP. There is a clear misalignment of the role of the GEF OFP and their function to collaborate on monitoring and evaluation at project, program and portfolio level.
- e. **Reluctance by stakeholders to openly participate and value the MTE:** On several occasions, key stakeholders were reluctant to actively participate in interviews and

stakeholder consultation and embrace the opportunity that the MTE brings, with a case of verbal aggressive reaction and a couple of cases of requests for financial compensation to participate to the consultative meetings. This is consistent with an undercurrent of resentment that has been observed in a number of interviews, which characterizes some of the relationships between stakeholders.

- f. **Difficulties accessing local communities and beneficiaries:** One of the key beneficiaries of the NCA project are local communities. Per the methodology outlined in the Inception Report, the MTE consulting team places great importance on the engagement of local communities. However, efforts to access communities during the fact-finding mission and thereafter faced multiple hurdles, stonewalling and resistance to problem-solve and find viable solutions in accessing remote communities. In some cases there was a palpable feeling that restrictions were being placed on accessing communities of the MTE consulting team's choosing.
- g. **Actions which impinge on the independence of the MTE:** During the MTE there were a number of events or actions taken which encroach on the independence of the consultant team's findings and entitlement to independence. Other instances of unprofessional behaviour have created a challenging work environment for the MTE consultant team. Some examples include the following:
- Conservation International questioning reasons why the MTE consultant team would like to request an interview with previous Project Managers, mentioning questions from stakeholders;
 - CI-GEF recommending and dissuading the MTE consultant team from engaging with and interviewing the Moore Centre as part of the evaluation;
 - Inserting recommendations into the draft MTE report which have not been discussed and corroborated by evaluation team as part of the fact finding phase;
 - Inserting figures and requesting data in the draft MTE report be presented in ways in which the TORs are not prescriptive;
 - CI-Liberia contacting SETIN's national consultant and displaying unprofessional and aggressive behaviour towards them regarding the findings of the MTE;
 - CI-Liberia contacting the EPA in July 2023 to indicate SETIN had yet to submit a draft MTE report, when in fact, it submitted on 10 May 2023 but not shared with the EPA at that juncture. Between mid-June and July 2023, SETIN has been heads down responding to the significant number of comments and responding to these in a 117+ page audit trail in July.

3 THEORY OF CHANGE

51. Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of the Project's design is the absence of a Theory of Change or conceptual model, in spite of these being requirements under GEF-6 funded projects.
52. The Theory of Change (ToC) analyzes the causal pathways that link project outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) to outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) and impact (long term changes). The ToC also serves to identify intermediate changes that need to take place in order to proceed from project outcomes to impact; these changes are referred to as "intermediate states". In the context of this MTE, the ToC is a window to gauge whether or not the Project is doing the right work towards meeting its stated objectives and gain a deeper insight into a wide range of evaluation criteria.
53. To identify likelihood of desired impact, the assumptions and drivers that underpin the transformation from outputs to outcomes over intermediate states to objectives, should be analyzed. Post MTE therefore, as part of the remedial actions, a workshop should take place to review the reconstructed ToC (in addition to the Results Framework), particularly to surface the assumptions and articulate the impact pathways that are missing in the Project Document.
54. In the constructed theory of change (Figure 2), effort is placed on identifying impact pathways, implying the transformation of the activities that generate outputs, to outcomes and eventual impacts (including Global Environmental Benefits). In this case, the outcomes can also themselves be considered intermediate states, which taken together, are amplified through the Project.
55. Figure 2 shows that there are four impact pathways that are supposed to transform the interlinked activities to generate outputs that contribute to the three project outcomes, and eventually, to achievement of the project objective:

Impact Pathway 1: Strengthened and committed national coordination body and framework, enabled by a broadly-owned, widely consulted and endorsed NCA Strategy and Action Plan. Upscaling and replication are contingent on laying down a strong foundation of government commitment, appropriate institutional and legislative frameworks, and sufficient technical capacity, benefits to felt at the subnational level.

Impact Pathway 2: This is perhaps the cornerstone of the Project. It is imperative to transform Liberia from a data deficient to data rich country underpinned by myriad technical studies and baselines from which to base informed decision-making for inclusion of NCA into development plans and policies. By providing decision-makers with evidence-based information on the value of coastal natural capital, the project can influence policy and regulatory frameworks to support sustainable coastal development and conservation.

Impact Pathway 3: Capacity building (including knowledge management) both at the institutional level to strengthen EPAs, LISGIS and other government entities' operations and capabilities at the national, as well as its presence in the field; together with improved capacity of being able to ensure information is transformed into knowledge. By providing decision-makers with accurate information on the value and condition of coastal natural capital, the Project can improve the management of the ecosystem. This can lead to more effective conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of coastal resources.

Impact Pathway 4: By quantifying the economic value of coastal natural capital, the project can help decision-makers recognize the importance of ecosystem services and incorporate them into economic decision-making. This can lead to increased investment in sustainable coastal development and enhanced economic benefits for local communities. By engaging with local

communities and building their awareness and appreciation of ecosystem goods and services, the project can foster a culture of sustainability and a more benign and cohesive relationship with coastal resources.

56. The realization of the three Outputs are also contingent on a number of underlying assumptions as follows:

Assumption 1: The entire Project is contingent on effective project management and careful attention to dependencies, which can have a reinforcing multiplier effect if sequenced properly (labelled as “A1” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 2: Under Outcome 1, it is assumed that existing coordination committees and platforms at national and district level are willing to support project activities, and integrate them among their existing functions and operations (labelled as “A2” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 3: Under Outcome 1, it is assumed there is clear and consistent policy direction and there is political and institutional support for mainstreaming NCA and biodiversity conservation national development plans and policies, for improving coordination, and for reducing threats to biodiversity from the impacts of unsustainable extractive practices (labelled as “A3” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 4: Also under Outcome 1, testing and validation of ecosystem accounts alongside any guidelines, standards, tools, criteria and requirements prior to their finalization and adoption into formal policy (labelled as “A4” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 5: The Project assumes sufficient locally relevant expertise in carbon-based financing mechanisms for the success of Outcome 2 (labelled as “A5” in the reconstructed ToC).

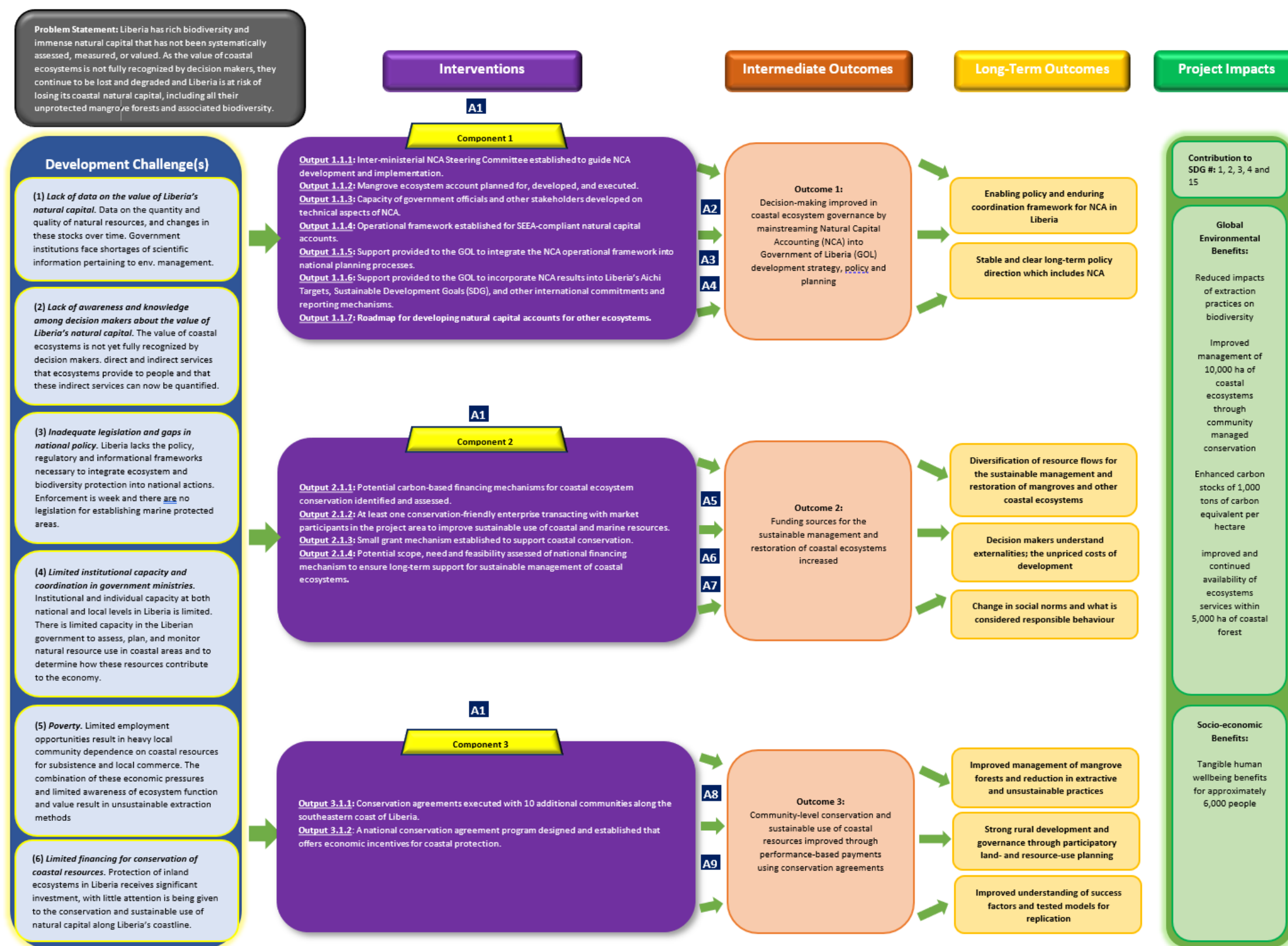
Assumption 6: Under Outcome 2, it is assumed there are robust methodologies for technical studies to ensure the results are meaningful and grounded in solid science (labelled as “A6” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 7: Also under Outcome 2, it is assumed that financing mechanisms will be enough of an incentive to curtail unsustainable behaviours and extractive enterprises (labelled as “A7” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 8: Under Outcome 3, it is assumed that early successes and generation of sufficient lessons are gleaned to strengthen conservation agreement effectiveness and enforcement (labelled as “A8” in the reconstructed ToC).

Assumption 9: Finally, also under Outcome 3 it is assumed that co-benefits are realized from the conservation agreements to give them mileage and sustainability into the future (labelled as “A9” in the reconstructed ToC).

Figure 2: Reconstructed Theory of Change



4 ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RESULTS

4.1 Overall Project Results Rating

57. The project performance was rated using a six-point scale ranging from Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory as detailed in the Annex to the TORs.

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
Outcomes		
Outcomes (Relevance)	<p>Highly Satisfactory (HS) Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings</p>	<p>Project outcomes are consistent with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming for GEF-6; • The strategic priorities of CI both at the global level and in Liberia; • The priorities of the Government of Liberia; • The needs of local communities; • Project design is overall appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes.
Outcomes (Effectiveness)	<p>Unsatisfactory (U) Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings</p>	<p>The project has experienced considerable delays and the project was able to provide progress on one outcome out of three Components based on the respective outcome-level indicators. While sufficient progress has been made in Component 1 on mainstreaming natural capital accounting into Government of Liberia development strategy, policy and planning, Component 2 on innovative financial mechanisms and Component 3 on community incentives are still at initial stages and significantly behind schedule.</p>
Outcomes (Efficiency)	<p>Unsatisfactory (U) Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings</p>	<p>The project presents significant delays and low disbursements. The implementation of the work plans have not been timely overall with activities regularly spilling into the subsequent years, mainly due to changes in the human resources of the PMU, periods without the PM and the inability of the implementing partners to temporarily take care of the tasks of the PM.</p>
Outcomes (Overall rating)	<p>Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings</p>	<p>While project design is appropriate to deliver outcomes, progress has been lower than expected due to significant delays in execution. This is due both to effectiveness and efficiency challenges and to external factors, namely COVID-19 restrictions, prolonged periods of inadequate management and disruptions to core activities due to changes in partner priorities. The Project is making efforts to catch up and, if further delays are prevented it may still be able to deliver core products and services by project completion, but likely fall short of the ambition of the original vision and design.</p>

58. The Project core objective is “To improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory”. The project is partially on track, but it is unlikely that the Project will fully meet the core objective without significant change in the management. The Project has not been managed to be completely on track at the mid-term due to these main reasons:

- The Project has financially supported the sustainable use of natural capital in the project sites, the local communities do not perceive the financial incentives as a means to shift away from conventional and unsustainable resource use practices.
- The value of coastal natural capital is not effectively mainstreamed into the national development policies and strategies, as there is no activity in place to effectively integrate the conservation and maintenance of natural capital and ecosystem services into development actions. Public officers and decision makers responsible for the design and implementation of national development policies and strategies were involved in the project activities, are aware of the importance of NCA and capacitated, but there is no concrete action (such as a road-map) in place to translate technical knowledge and awareness in policy actions.

59. The Project Document is almost totally adequate for the achievement of the expected results. Specifically, scientific references, baseline data and specific assessments were too vague and some information collected and analysed during the project preparation was outdated at the beginning of the implementation and was not updated. The Project would have benefitted if this assessment had been updated at the beginning of the operations. One of the limitation for the development of NCA in Liberia is the lack of updated and detailed data, as stated also by the ProDoc (you can also see below the considerations on Barrier #1). Regarding the outcomes:

- **Outcome 1.1** “Number of natural capital accounts established and embedded in key government policies and plans” shows a significant level of progress and the progress made **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.
- **Outcome 2.1** “Sources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased” was not achieved, and the progress made **is Unsatisfactory**.
- **Outcome 3.1** “Community-level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources improved through performance-based payments using conservation agreements” was not achieved, and the progress made **is Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

60. The factors that mostly contributed to the low rating are:

- NCA is a new paradigm in Liberia, it was unknown at the community level and public officers and decision makers were not aware of its importance at the beginning of the project. The integration of NCA into development policies and strategies might require more time in Liberia.
- Scientific references, baseline data and specific assessments were too vague, considering the project preparation and implementation.
- The project has been suffering the lack of a PMU in place during its implementation.
- Barrier #1 “Lack of data about the value of Liberia’s natural capital” was addressed, but there is no evidence that a sufficient dataset for the introduction of NCA in Liberia is in place. For instance, a geodata set, shared with the key-players, on land use/land coverage, one of the pillars for the NCA, was not organised.
- Barrier #3 “Inadequate legislation and gaps in national policy” was not addressed. The project, during its first half of implementation, focused most of its efforts on capacity

building, without specific actions, such as a road-map, to reduce the gap in the national policy.

- The lack of a common vision on conservation activities to maintain the NC of the coastal zones, shared also with the communities. Communities are not aware of the project vision and are willing to adopt sustainable approaches more for the financial support than for the importance of NC, ecosystem services and their benefits.

61. At this stage, it is still difficult and somewhat premature to verify with conviction the true impact (or, at least, some signs or perspective of impact) of the CI-GEF NCA project in the mid-term, since there are still products in the process of delivery given the delays incurred, and many others have not yet been validated, are still in draft format or have yet to be formally presented and approved by the Project's governance mechanisms (for more details, you can see chapter 8).

4.1.1 Relevance

62. The evaluation rated the project's relevance as **Highly Satisfactory**, as it is consistent with the priorities of the GEF, CI and of Liberia. NC of Liberia is very important, as the Country hosts two of West Africa's three largest remaining rainforest blocks. They are extended more in the internal areas of the Country, and touch the coastal areas in the south Liberia.

63. Relevance to Liberia's national priorities: Liberia coastal NC is very important also on the socio-economic point of view, about 58% of the country's population live along the coast and the coastline annually produces about 7 616 metric tonnes of fish and about 126 metric tonnes of molluscs and crustaceans. Moreover, Coastal ecosystems of Liberia, including mangroves, provide a range of ecological goods and services for the coastal communities, beside the provision of fisheries and aquaculture products. They are sources of timber, fuelwood and medicines and habitat for globally important biodiversity, they have ecotourism potential, compensate the carbon emission contributing to the climate change mitigation and they protect shorelines from storms and tidal surges. Mangroves provide important breeding and nursery areas for many West African marine species of fish, crab, shrimp and mollusks, that are also important livelihoods sources for coastal communities.

64. The Project is coherent with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which includes, *inter alia*, biodiversity and ecosystem services, which are quantified, monitored and mainstreamed to support national and sectoral policy-making, planning, budgeting and decision-making frameworks (target 1.2), incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use (target 1.3), minimization of loss and degradation of natural habitat (target 2.1), application of sustainable forest management (target 2.3), safeguard and restoration of ecosystems that provide significant goods and services (target 4.1), mobilization of financial resources (target 5.4).

65. Relevance to the GEF's focal areas/operational program strategies: The Project is consistent with the "Program 10: Integration of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services into Development and Finance Planning" of the GEF-6. The Program 10 underlines the mismatch between the valuation of natural capital and ecosystem services and a development policy and financing. This aspect was considered in the PPG phase, despite the Project is still unable to take action on this point.

66. Relevance to Conservation International's priorities: The project outcomes were consistent with the mandates of CI, as it is dedicated to the long-term protection of critical ecosystems, including the coastal environment.

67. The Project design is adequate for the delivering the expected outcome. Scientific references, baseline data and specific assessments in the ProDoc were too vague and some information collected and analysed during the project preparation was outdated at the beginning of the implementation and was not updated. For instance, the Financial Resources Assessment for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Capital along Liberia's Coastline, used to prepare the ProDoc, was finalized in 2018, the "current baseline" section includes generic information.

4.1.2 Effectiveness

68. Overall, the evaluation of the Project effectiveness is **Unsatisfactory**, as the project was able to provide sufficient progress on one outcome out of three, with some delays in the activities, low signs of impacts and risks for low levels of sustainability, considering the progress at the mid-term.

69. At the mid-term, the Project has not yet identified any strategy, policy, or plan to be tackled to integrate NCA into the GOL development trajectory. The only viable plan mentioned by stakeholders for this integration is the Strategic Plan of the Maritime Authority. However, when the evaluation team requested this document from CI-Liberia, they received the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, which was drafted before the implementation period. The lack of clear identification of strategies, policies, and plans poses a significant challenge to effectively achieve the project's objectives and have a lasting impact in the long-term. Without a well-defined list of development tools, and the information and data the Project needs, it will be difficult to ensure successful mainstreaming of NCA and its integration into the broader development trajectory of the GOL.

70. The details of the evaluation of the effectiveness is provided in the narrative of the assessment of outputs, in the section 6.2

4.1.3 Efficiency

71. Overall, the evaluation rated Efficiency as **Unsatisfactory**.

72. The project started on time, and was able to address the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, that affected some activities.

73. The PMU has currently no PM or project officer and CI-Liberia is recruiting them. During the first half of the project, two persons assumed the role of PM: the first, for 4 months and the second for 12 months. It means that the project had no PM for a long time and the changes implied delays in implementation and execution.

74. Internal communication and coordination with the stakeholders was moderately satisfactory, but required a relevant effort to achieve a shared and common perspective of the goals and objectives and to clarify some internal management procedures. The stakeholders perceive overlaps on the activities (for instance, under the mangrove ecosystem account and the framework for SEEA), confusion on the roles and the use of different standards and rules between CI-Liberia, CI-GEF and CI.

75. The project was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the Project was able to adapt its activities to the restrictions due to the pandemic, it accumulates some delays during the first period of implementation.

76. Regardless the issues due to the pandemic, the implementation of the work plans have not been timely overall with activities regularly slipping into the subsequent years, mainly due to changes in

the human resources of the PMU, periods without the PM and the inability of the implementing partners to temporarily take care of the tasks of the PM and quickly recruit a new one.

77. Total project costs were US\$ 1,116,979 (28% of the total), with delay in the implementation, mostly on components 2 and 3. The project was able to spend more on personnel salaries and benefits and equipment than other categories.

4.2 Assessment of Progress towards the project's objective

78. The MTE consulting team is tasked to provide ratings on the project's progress towards its objective and each outcome. The assessment of progress is based on data provided in the PIRs, supplemented by data provided in the GEF Core Indicator worksheet, updates in the Quarterly reports where available, data gleaned from the online questionnaire and supplemented by the results of interviews with the project stakeholders during the fact-finding stage.
79. As mentioned elsewhere, some important outcomes do not have corresponding baselines and/or mid-term targets indicators and therefore, progress against these outputs are reported in a qualitative manner where output-level indicators cannot be used as a gauge for progress at mid-term. Apart from limitations in the quality of some indicators, baselines and mid-term targets, assessment of progress was also sometimes hampered by shortcomings in project M&E data and availability of quarterly reports which did not materialize during the engagement in spite of repeated requests made by the MTE consulting team.
80. To facilitate this assessment, and following GEF guidance, the MTE consulting team has prepared an analytical matrix to assess progress made by the project towards achieving the intended results in table below. The matrix summarizes the progress made at mid-term towards the realization of end-of-project targets for the project objective, and for each of the corresponding three outcomes by Component. The information which has been entered into the matrix enables an assessment of the level of achievement, at the midterm, for each indicator that applies to the project objective and the project outcomes. Based on the assessment of the level of achievement, a rating has been assigned for each indicator. The ratings use a color-coded "traffic light" system to highlight the relevant cells of the matrix. The system is structured as follows:
 - a. **GREEN**: target has already been met;
 - b. **YELLOW**: target is partially achieved or on-track to be achieved by the end of the project; or
 - c. **RED**: target is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the project and needs attention.

Table 5: Progress and rating of the project’s overall objective at MTE

Indicator met	Indicator partially met	Indicator Not Met														
Objective/Component	Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term												
<p>Objective: To improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory.</p> <p>MTE consulting team’s justification for rating: While the Project has consistently given itself a “Highly Satisfactory” in both the FY21 and FY22 PIRs, any rating is subjective (i) in the absence of a baseline description and clearly delineated end-of-project targets; and (ii) an agreed definition of what would constitutes a national development policy instrument for the project and how NCA is intended to strengthen it. Per the FY22 PIR, the Project has also justified that overall implementation towards the achievement of the core objective is also “Highly Satisfactory” because “100% of the target outcome indicators are under implementation/on track” and it was able to implement activities in 2022 despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Project takes credit for integrating NCA-type activities into Liberia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for coastal, forest and agriculture sector, it is more of a passive win since the work plan did not explicitly contemplate contribute to the NDC at the outset and was only added in FY23 to respond to target 1.1.2 and core deliverables and its own accounts are still forthcoming. The work plan does envision the development of a Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development as a policy instrument but thus far, an ecosystem extent and land-use map has been developed through a NASA-CI-GoL partnership.</p> <p>Another gauge of the overall progress of the Project is the incremental achievement of the GEF Core Indicators and reassuringly, the table below illustrates upward momentum.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #d9e1f2;">Core Indicator</th> <th style="background-color: #d9e1f2;">At Endorsement</th> <th style="background-color: #d9e1f2;">FY21 PIR</th> <th style="background-color: #d9e1f2;">FY22 PIR</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Core Indicator 4.1</td> <td>16,135</td> <td>0</td> <td>6,609.41 ha (41%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Core Indicator 1.1</td> <td>6,050 (3,146 male/ 2,904 female)</td> <td>260 (197 male / 63 female)</td> <td>931 (526 male / 405 female)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Priority actions: Following the MTE, the Project is encouraged to (i) define the threshold for contributing to this indicator; (ii) set realistic end-of-project target that is attributable to its work; and (iii) prioritize the project scope by contributing to the development and government approval of the development of a Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development policy.</p>	Core Indicator	At Endorsement	FY21 PIR	FY22 PIR	Core Indicator 4.1	16,135	0	6,609.41 ha (41%)	Core Indicator 1.1	6,050 (3,146 male/ 2,904 female)	260 (197 male / 63 female)	931 (526 male / 405 female)	<p>Indicator a: National development policy instruments explicitly incorporating Natural Capital Accounting</p>	<p>No objective-level target defined in either the Project Document or during the Inception phase</p>	<p>None per Project Document / Project Results Monitoring Plan</p>	<p>Partially met and on track to being achieved by the end of the project</p>
Core Indicator	At Endorsement	FY21 PIR	FY22 PIR													
Core Indicator 4.1	16,135	0	6,609.41 ha (41%)													
Core Indicator 1.1	6,050 (3,146 male/ 2,904 female)	260 (197 male / 63 female)	931 (526 male / 405 female)													

4.3 Detailed assessment of progress towards outcomes (per component)

81. The key factors that affected the delivery of outcomes are outlined per outcome discussed and tabulated under each component below.

COMPONENT 1

Outcome 1.1: Decision-making improved in coastal ecosystem governance by mainstreaming Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) into Government of Liberia (GOL) development strategy, policy and planning.

82. Outcome 1.1 shows significant level of progress towards formally realizing the target. The outcome indicators progressed from FY21 from 13% of output indicators under outcome 1.1 completion rate reported to registering in FY22 a completion rate of 87% as an improvement in the output indicators are delayed/overdue whereas in FY21, 13% of output indicators were reported delayed/overdue, noted by the project Implementation Report. Unfortunately, the progress made is **moderately unsatisfactory**, as there is no action in place and concrete results to mainstream NCA into GOL development strategies, policies and plans.
83. A “Joint analysis of existing and proposed sectors for updating the Liberia’s NDC” was prepared in 2020. This document includes key-elements and suggestions to integrate the NCA into the NDC. In 2021, Liberia submitted to the UNFCCC the updated NDC; this document includes the establishment of a NCA system for coastal zones and forests, without clearly mentioning actions or measures for the NDC/NCA integration at policy level. the NCA has been integrated into the National Determined Contributions (NDC) Implementation Plan (Coastal, Forest, and Agriculture sectors). The five project prioritized areas included: Ecosystem Extent, Ecosystem Condition, Ecosystem Services Flow (crop provisioning, wood provisioning, fisheries resources, climate regulation, soil erosion control, and coastal protection), Monetary Assets, and Thematic Accounts/focusing on biodiversity and species accounts. It’s important to underline that the NDC cannot be considered a development policy or strategy, but a key-document to inform policies and strategies. No evidence of integration of NCA into other policies and strategies has been found. In FY22 the project made progress towards completing the technical development of a coastal natural capital account.
84. 25 government officials (18 men and 7 women) were trained on the technical aspects of NCA:58 decision makers (47 men and 11 women) were trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity.
85. The achievement of this outcome was partially affected by the pandemic restrictions. However, the project was able to adapt to the new situation. Additionally, limitations arose due to the lack of a common vision on NCA and its integration in policies and plans, as well as the absence of strong and continuous guidance from the project side.
86. More details on the outputs can be found in section 6.3. Reference is also made to Table 6.4.1 highlighting the whether outcomes have been met or are at risk of not being met using a traffic light system.

Table 6: Progress and achievement rating of outcomes under Component 1 at MTE

Indicator met	Indicator partially met	Indicator Not Met		
Objective/Component	Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term
<p>Component 1: Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) in Coastal Ecosystems</p> <p>Outcome 1.1: Decision-making improved in coastal ecosystem governance by mainstreaming natural capital accounting (NCA) into Government of Liberia (GOL) development strategy, policy and planning</p> <p>MTE consulting team’s justification for rating: Cumulatively, the Project has given itself a “Highly Satisfactory” rating under Component 1 based on the fact that all target indicators are under implementation rather than the results achieved therein. As noted elsewhere this is a flawed methodology for the determination of progress and justification of overall results-based achievement.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, and recognizing the heavy lifting is yet to come, Outcome 1.1 (as a whole) has made a satisfactory level of progress to date as quarterly reports indicate that corresponding output-level indicators increased their completion rate between FY21 and FY22. While in FY21 13% of output indicators were reported as either delayed or overdue, no output indicators were delayed or overdue in FY22. This achievement is impressive when contextualized against the backdrop of turnover of 2 Project Managers.</p> <p>While it is difficult to gauge whether the Project is primed to realize the end-of-project targets without mid-term targets, important strides forward on Indicator 1.1.a as it prioritized 5 focal areas, including Ecosystem Extent, Ecosystem Condition, Ecosystem Services Flow (crop provisioning, wood provisioning, fisheries resources, climate regulation, soil erosion control, and coastal protection), Monetary Assets, and Thematic Accounts/focusing on biodiversity and species accounts. Moreover, in FY22 the project made progress towards completing the technical development of a coastal natural capital account. Still, the MTE consulting team believes this is at high risk of not being embedded in 5 key government policies and plans. The main conduit for achieving this target is Output 1.1.2 where only 2 of the corresponding sub-activities are completed in full. With little more than only two years remaining, the Project will have to accelerate delivery of not only the mangrove account but ensuring it is mainstreamed in 5 key policies and plans. Based on the breakdown of training conducted it can be assumed through extrapolation that Indicator 1.1.b will reach its end-of-project target of 50 government officials being trained on technical aspects of NCA, especially since the capacity development</p>	<p>Indicator 1.1.a: Number of natural capital accounts established and embedded in key government policies and plans</p>	<p>Target 1.1.a: At least one natural capital account (mangroves) established and embedded in at least 5 key government policies and plans</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 1.1.a: No natural capital accounts established and embedded in key government policies and plans</p>	<p>Indicator at high risk of not being achieved and needs attention</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.1.b: Number of government officials and other relevant stakeholders trained on the technical aspects of NCA</p>	<p>Target 1.1.b: At least 50 government officials and other relevant stakeholders trained on the technical aspects of NCA</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 1.1.b: No government officials or other relevant stakeholders trained on the technical aspects of NCA</p>	<p>Partially met and on track to being achieved by the end of the project</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.1.c: Number of decision-makers trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity</p>	<p>Target 1.1.c: At least 50 decision makers trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 1.1.c: No decision-makers trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity</p>	<p>Partially met – Indicator at high risk of not being achieved and needs attention</p>

Objective/Component	Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term
<p>programme created by IDEEA Group has yet to be rolled out. Without a mid-term target however, the MTE consulting team can only give a “partially met” since it is on track to being achieved by operational closure. For Indicator 1.1.c, while training was provided to Agencies Knowledge Brokers on how to collect and catalogue NCA data using international standards, there is an implicit dependency with the NCA accounts being developed under the Project and using this to inform development policies and plans. The primary drivers for the realization of this indicator are Outputs 1.1.4 to 1.1.6 and implies a certain level of “learning by doing”. Therefore, in the absence of a mid-term target, this indicator is at a high risk of not being achieved due to delays in delivering the mangrove account. There are notable bright spots however, as the Liberian Maritime Authority indicated that key personnel now have key underpinning not otherwise possible in the absence of the Project.</p> <p>Priority actions: For Indicator 1.1a, the Project should undertake a workback schedule recognizing and reflecting internal government approvals to ensure the mangrove accounts are mainstreamed, likely resulting in the realization of unrealistic runway for completion. For Indicator(s) 1.1b and 1.1c, the Project should revisit the baseline as this does not align with Table 6 (Project Links to Other Initiatives) of the Project Document, also considering activities supported by the Gaborone Declaration Secretariat.</p>				

COMPONENT 2

Outcome 2.1: Funding sources for sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased. Outcome 2.1 is not on track, and the progress made is Moderately Unsatisfactory.

87. Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and Turing Foundation committed to provide 600,000 USD (24% of the financial objective, that is: “financial resources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased by 50% = USD 2.5 million over the lifetime of the project”). To date, beyond these funds, the only sources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems are those provided by this GEF Project. There are no results in terms of potential additional mechanisms that reward good stewardship of natural resources and provide long-term, sustainable financing for coastal conservation, as proposed in the ProDoc.
88. The only sustainable mechanism potentially capable to attract significant funds is the blue carbon; the other are too dependant on direct donations (small grants, conservation agreements, conservation fund); the financial strategy does not consider the opportunity to diversify the sources more, by including more self-generating mechanisms and other climate-finance sources.
89. An assessment of financial resources available for coastal conservation and sustainable resource management in Liberia was conducted in preparation for this project (Ecoadvisors, 2018). It suggests a baseline amount averaging about US\$ 1 million per year over the 5 years. This assessment was mostly based on a desk review relied principally on publicly available online sources, collected in a series of thematically focused searches. The analysis of the financial situation brings to uncertain results, where some of the possible sources were not considered. The prospects were very briefly assessed and the potential mechanisms briefly described, with few elements on revenue opportunity and risk analysis regarding the project sites and the Liberian coastal area. The proposed action plan is very resumed.
90. The Small grant mechanism called the Liberia Conservation Action Fund (LCAF) has been established to support small-scale interventions that promote good stewardship of natural resources (output 2.1.3). This output is on track and more details are included in the line 138 and following.
91. Outcome 2.1, for the first half of the project, was mostly based on studies, assessments and analyses, provided through consultancies (also because of the pandemic restrictions), that should inform and orient future activities. The main general evidences on these consultancies are:
 - Delays in the conclusion of the activities.
 - Securing up to date and current data and studies for the project sites was difficult as results are not documented, not widely available and disseminated; moreover, the consultancies appear more focused on the desk analysis than on field data collection, that should be useful in a context where baseline data is often not sufficient for credible analyses and assessments.
 - The outputs of the consultancy do not always include the expected results, as expressed in the respective ToRs.
 - The approaches adopted do not sufficiently consider NCA questions, the project’s strategy and objectives.
 - The linkages between the different consultancies and the other project activities are often poor, when not existing.

- There are no evidences of validations of the consultancies' results from the project side (for instance, through validation meetings with relevant stakeholders or steering committee meetings specifically dedicated to validate the consultancies' results).

92. The development of sustainable and innovative mechanisms could contribute to financial sustainability. They can include, *inter alia* and in the respect of the ProDoc, mechanisms other than LCF, such as the offsets from Liberia's growing mining and energy sector, payments for ecosystem services, REDD+ transactions, and earmarked government revenues, such as conservation fees levied on the timber sector. The revenues from these mechanisms could directly finance conservation initiatives or feed a specific fund. This opportunity should have been already analysed during the first half of the project, to enable the conditions to develop the activities needed to design and operationalize these mechanisms (under output 2.1.4). To date, no progress has been made.

93. The factors that mostly contributed to the low rating of this outcome are:

- The financial objective (increasing by 2.5 USD million over the lifetime of the project) was set without clearly explaining the criteria, constraints and context at the basis of this choice; this financial objective, set on the basis of estimations for the period 2019-2023, made in 2018, was not updated during the implementation.
- Studies, assessments and analyses, provided throughout consultancies, that should inform and orient future activities, were performed, in general, without significant results, useful for this outcome and the project objectives.
- Regardless of the issues related to implementation, this puts at high risk the financial sustainability of the conservation of natural capital in the project sites.

Table 7: Progress and achievement rating of outcomes under Component 2 at MTE

Indicator met	Indicator partially met	Indicator Not Met		
Objective/Component	Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term
<p>Component 2: Innovative Financing Schemes for Conserving Coastal Natural Capital</p> <p>Outcome 2.1: Funding sources for sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased</p> <p>MTE consulting team’s justification for rating: As a whole, the Project has given itself a rating of “Highly Satisfactory” in each of the PIRs for Component 2 based on the fact that all target indicators are under implementation and the progress made towards securing one revenue stream and the setting up and operationalization of the LCAF.</p> <p>Upon closer scrutiny however, the MTE consulting team has concluded that Outcome 2.1 has not been achieved at the ambition needed to achieve the end-of-project target. The first half of the Project has been largely characterized by a number of studies, assessments and analyses, delivered through consultancies, that were to inform the scope of and orient future activities. In general, a number of these were without significant results, useful for the outcome and the project objectives and focused on the desk analysis rather than on field data collection to fill dearth national data such that future baselines are robust and credible. A case in point is the value chain analysis where the consultants could not articulate how their study ought to be leveraged to contribute to the Project’s overall objective. To be clear, Indicator 2.1.a calls for financial resources earmarked for the restoration of coastal ecosystems and the only source for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems are funds provided by the GEF Trust Fund through the NCA project. While Component 1 is intended to help decision-makers understand the consequences and unpriced costs of development, Component 2 is to ensure a steady flow of financial resources to offset unpriced costs to coastal natural capital. Per the Project Document (page 34, para 101), success on this indicator would involve piloting different mechanisms through which the beneficiaries of ecosystem services such as the private sector can compensate those who help maintain the provision of ecosystem services. To date, there are no results in terms of potential additional mechanisms that reward good stewardship. The scope underpinning the realization of Indicator 2.1.b is the nurturing and pursuit of two new revenue streams, including carbon finance and conservation-friendly enterprise. As elaborated in the narrative section above, the site level blue carbon feasibility assessment, which is one of the foundational deliverables for the development of a blue carbon prospectus, was not fit-for-purpose, has not been adequately peer</p>	<p>Outcome indicator 2.1.a: Financial resources (USD) available for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems</p>	<p>Target 2.1.a: Financial resources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased by 50% (USD 2.5 million over the lifetime of the project)</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 2.1.a: Average of USD 1 million per year available for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems over 2019-2023 period</p>	<p>Indicator at high risk of not being achieved and needs attention</p>
	<p>Indicator 2.1.b: Number of revenue streams to support long term sustainability of coastal ecosystems</p>	<p>Target 2.1.b: At least 2 new revenue streams to support the long-term sustainability developed</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 2.1.b: No revenue streams available to support long term sustainability of coastal ecosystems</p>	<p>Indicator at high risk of not being achieved and needs attention</p>
	<p>Indicator 2.1.c: Number of local organizations receiving small grants for coastal conservation</p>	<p>Target 2.1.c: Small grants provided to at least three local organizations</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 2.1.c: No organizations receiving small grants for coastal conservation</p>	<p>Partially met and on track to being achieved by the end of the project</p>

Objective/Component	Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term
<p>reviewed or finalized with consensus. This is indicative of poor knowledge and appreciation of this component in the overall vision and roadmap of mainstreaming NCA into national strategies and policies. A significant driver of this indicator is Output 2.1.2 and specifically activities 1, 2 and 3. With the exception of a marginally relevant report on value chain assessment no partnerships have been forged with any of the enterprises listed in the Project Document (J-Palm, Organic Matters and Universal Outreach), let alone contracting any private sector entities as part of the benefit package under the 6 Conservation Agreements, all of which were targeted in Q3 FY21. With respect to Indicator 2.1.c, while the bulk of the effort has been establishing and operationalizing the SGAC, the target is not ambitious enough to warrant concern and therefore deemed still on track in the absence of any mid-term targets.</p> <p>Priority actions: The PMU is encouraged to ensure that progress reporting is consistent with the corresponding indicator and to strengthen overall quality control. For example, the PIR provides updates on blue carbon feasibility under Indicator 2.1.a whereas this is applicable in the context of Indicator 2.1.b on new revenue streams to support the long-term sustainability of coastal ecosystems. The PMU is also encouraged to ensure that consultants have a solid underpinning of the core objectives of the Project and specifically how their deliverables will be leveraged towards the achievement of any Outcomes and/or corresponding Outputs. The baseline for Indicator 2.1.a should be revisited based on the observations of the underlying methodology in the narrative section above. The SGAC is developing a roadmap for integrating LCAF into the Liberia Conservation Fund Inc. which should be cognizant of ESMF and gender considerations therein since the roadmap has yet to materialize and will not be reviewed by the MTE consulting team.</p>				

COMPONENT 3

Outcome 3.1: Community-level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources improved through performance-based payments using conservation agreements.

94. Outcome 3.1 is not on track, and the progress made is **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

- Six conservation agreements were signed with the communities of Grand Cape Mount (Falie, Bendu, Mandoe) and Grand Bassa (Nyangba, Sarwein, and Bleewein). The agreements were expired (you can also see the table paragraph 9.3). The agreements are being implemented, but the results and impacts are not clear.
- The Project has rated itself as “Highly Satisfactory” on the basis that 2,449.67 ha of mangrove ecosystems are under protection. There is also no monitoring system in place to measure progress against consistent indicators, no framework for data collection or rigorous methodology applied across all mangrove forests. More details in the next table.
- To date, payments for ecosystem services and other sustainable mechanisms to finance preservation, restoration and sustainable management have not yet been designed, tested and implemented. Current payments to local communities are non-performance based, and they represent just compensations against the adoption of sustainable practices.

95. Communities’ members are actively involved in the community-level conservation activities and benefit from the project funds.

“Before the coming of CI into this community, I was involved in catching crabs in the Mangroves and in the Lake and I could take them for sale in Robert sport to get food for my children and myself but since I have become part of this project, I have been able to procure food from my business and even help my husband pay for my children’s school fees” A Member of the Village Savings and Loans Association in Bendu Community, Grand Cape Mount County.

“The CI project is good and I thank God for its arrival to this community, through this project the loan I received, I have been able to open a small business that can now help me and my family to eat and get basic household materials without going to the swamps to catch crab for sale” A Member of the VSLA in Bendu Community, Grand Cape Mount County.

“Before this project, I was involved in cutting wood and burning coals to get money but when CI came and told us of the importance of our forest and mangroves and employed me to work as an FC member and they are giving me a salary every month, I have been able to use the salary to learn construction skills and further provide food for my home without harming the forest again”. A FC Member in Bendu Community, Grand Cape Mount County.

“From the salary I received from CI as an FC member, I have been able to buy zincs and cements to modernize my house and make my family happy”. A FC Member in Bendu Community, Grand Cape Mount County.

96. The factors that mostly contributed to the low rating of this outcome are:

- The lack of a common vision on conservation activities to maintain the NC of the coastal zones, shared also with the communities.
- Some of the communities members do not perceive the incentives as a means to shift away from conventional and unsustainable resource use practices, but more as financial compensation limited to the implementation period of the project.
- The lack of an effectively implemented and efficient monitoring system, based on SMART indicators, that can measure the results and impacts of the conservation agreements.
- There is no evidence of progress on the design and establishment of a national conservation agreement program that offers economic incentives for coastal protection.
- The low level of knowledge and awareness of Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP), which should represent a pillar for the long-term conservation of NCA and an important tool to shift away, in the long term, from conventional and unsustainable resource use practices. In fact, no one in the consulted communities was aware on PLUP.
- The delay of some activities under this outcome, also due to the pandemic restrictions.

Table 8: Progress and achievement rating of outcomes under Component 3 at MTE

Indicator met	Indicator partially met	Indicator Not Met																										
Objective/Component	Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term																								
<p>Component 3: Community Incentives to Conserve and Sustainably Manage Natural Capital in Coastal Ecosystems</p> <p>Outcome 3.1: Community level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources improved through performance-based payments using conservation agreements</p> <p>MTE consulting team’s justification for rating: The Project has rated itself as “Highly Satisfactory” on the basis that 2,449.67 ha of mangrove ecosystems are under protection and 4,159.74 ha of terrestrial forest ecosystems in coastal areas being placed under sustainable management, via 6 conservation agreements in six coastal communities. There is also no monitoring system in place to measure progress against consistent indicators, no framework for data collection or rigorous methodology applied across all mangrove forests.</p> <p>Having reviewed the conservation agreements, the MTE consulting team notes that the total hectares covered under the six agreements is 7,349 ha. Per the table below however, all six agreements have expired with no supporting evidence made available that they have been renewed by both Parties. The results and impacts of the conservation agreements are not clear, nor have they been well-documented in either the PIR or Quarterly Reports. The FY23 Q2 report covering the period between October to December 2022 notes that “<i>conservation agreement design and negotiations were completed in 7 communities in the southeast and two communities in Margibi County. Four CAs will be signed in FY23 Q2</i>” and “<i>The signing of the four remaining CAs will be done after NCA technical staff (Project Manager and Project Officer) has been concluded</i>”.</p>	<p>Indicator 3.1.a: Area (hectares) of mangrove ecosystems under protection across Liberia</p>	<p>Target 3.1.a: 11,975 additional hectares of mangrove ecosystems under protection across Liberia</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 3.1.a: 10,257 hectares of mangrove ecosystems under protection across Liberia</p>	<p>Partially met but at high risk of not achieving the end-of-project target</p>																								
	<p>Indicator 3.1.b: Area (hectares) of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas</p>	<p>Target 3.1.b: 5,000 additional hectares of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 3.1.b: 11,034 hectares of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas</p>	<p>Partially met but at high risk of not achieving the end-of-project target</p>																								
	<p>Indicator 3.1.c: Income (USD) within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project</p>	<p>Target 3.1.c: Income within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project improved by 50%</p>	<p>Baseline Indicator 3.1.c: Estimated monthly household income of \$65 USD within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project</p>	<p>Indicator at high risk of not being achieved and needs attention</p>																								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #e6f2ff;">Community</th> <th style="background-color: #e6f2ff;">Hectares</th> <th style="background-color: #e6f2ff;">Duration</th> <th style="background-color: #e6f2ff;">Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Bendu Community Mangrove Forest</td> <td>2,400</td> <td>10 months from 23 Feb 2022</td> <td>Expired</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bleewein Community Mangrove Forest</td> <td>3,573 (Barcoline)</td> <td>10 months from 18 Feb 2022</td> <td>Expired</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Falie Community Mangrove Forest</td> <td>1,295</td> <td>10 months from 23 Feb 2022</td> <td>Expired</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mandoe Community Mangrove Forest</td> <td>81</td> <td>10 months from 23 Feb 2022</td> <td>Expired</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nyangba Community Mangrove Forest</td> <td>3,573 (Barcoline)</td> <td>10 months from 18 Feb 2022</td> <td>Expired</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Community	Hectares	Duration	Status	Bendu Community Mangrove Forest	2,400	10 months from 23 Feb 2022	Expired	Bleewein Community Mangrove Forest	3,573 (Barcoline)	10 months from 18 Feb 2022	Expired	Falie Community Mangrove Forest	1,295	10 months from 23 Feb 2022	Expired	Mandoe Community Mangrove Forest	81	10 months from 23 Feb 2022	Expired	Nyangba Community Mangrove Forest	3,573 (Barcoline)	10 months from 18 Feb 2022	Expired
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Objective/Component				Indicators	Target	Baseline	Achievement Rating at Mid-Term
Sarwein Community Mangrove Forest	3,573 (Barcoline)	10 months from 18 Feb 2022	Expired				
<p>To date, payments for ecosystem services and other sustainable mechanisms to finance preservation, restoration and sustainable management have not yet been designed, tested and implemented. Current payments to local communities are non-performance based, and they represent just compensations against the adoption of sustainable practices. Seeing that conservation agreements are time bound and wholly-dependent on Project resources, there is a high risk that any protection status will wane if these are not quickly replaced by alternative sustainable financing mechanisms. ArcGIS Survey123 is currently being used to collect information on the compliance of communities to Conservation Agreements in the six communities with 19 violations reported suggesting that current financial remuneration is not enough of an incentive to shift communities towards more sustainable behaviours. Therefore, while Indicator 3.1.a and Indicator 3.1.b are partially met, they remain at high risk of not meeting the minimum standards of what constitutes protection under the current model.</p> <p>Per the FY23 Q2 report, the socio-economic survey to assess the impact of the project will be conducted in FY24 Q2. Therefore, without a mid-term target, in the absence of innovative mechanisms to contribute towards greater financial sustainability and finally, considering participatory land-use planning has yet to commence, Indicator 3.1.c is at a high risk of not being met.</p>							

4.4 Assessment of progress towards outputs (per component)

97. The assessment of the achievement of the outputs is at the mid-term and also considers the planned and realized activities per each output.

COMPONENT 1

Output 1.1.1: Inter-ministerial NCA Steering Committee established to guide NCA development and implementation.

Target 1.1.1: One NCA Steering Committee

98. Output 1.1.1 was **partially achieved** and the project established an Inter-ministerial Committee called NCA Project Steering Committee which is comprised of Agencies/Ministries of the Government of Liberia and national institutions/other national partners as members of the committee. The name of stakeholders of the Inter-ministerial Committee/NCA Project Steering Committee are namely, Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Forestry Development Authority, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National WASH Commission, Liberia Land Authority, National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Sustainable Development Initiative, University of Liberia, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL), Conservation International, just to name a few.

99. Output 1.1.1 is considered partially achieved due to these reason(s): The committee lacks the authority to participate in the hiring of staff and ensure due diligence of the project manager and other staff recruitment process. The committee is also reduced to an Armed Chair Committee or committee to just review report and do not participate in major decision making as noted. The committee is established to meet the project deliverable reporting but not to impact the project as evidenced by the little knowledge demonstrated by most committee members during the MTR field assessment.

"We are only call to steering committee meeting at time to review project report/other, we did not participate in the hiring of the project manager or any of the project staff and we hardly meet as a committee in fact" A Key Informant Interview with one NCA Project Steering Committee Member.

100. Activity 1, was completed, develop ToRs for the formation and operationalization of the NCA Steering Committee.

101. Activity 2, was completed, establish the NCA Steering Committee including selecting the chairperson/entity and the required legal framework/basis for its operation.

102. Activity 3 was not fully conducted, Hold quarterly Steering committee deliberative meetings to discuss and agree on priorities, focus, and applications. The meeting is not always on schedule and most of the time, the people that attend the PSC meetings are proxies. While there were 3 PSC meetings in FY21 and one jointly held with another GEF project in FY22, notwithstanding the day-to-day communication (for the recurrent activities of the project) should be improved and overall

frequency of governance. Moreover, the lack of a PMU in place limited the “attention” to the stakeholders. The previous detailed quarter reports are not usually submitted to the committee members. It’d important to consider also that movement restrictions due to the pandemic limited in-person PSC meetings, with some challenges for the organization of virtual meetings.

Output 1.1.2: Mangrove ecosystem account planned for, developed, and executed and NCA embedded in key Government policies and plans

Target 1.1.2 a: 1 mangrove ecosystem account

Target 1.1.2 b: 5 key government policies and plans that include NCA results

103. Output 1.1.2 **was achieved partially**

104. The NCA project prioritized five natural capital accounts such as Ecosystem Extent, Ecosystem Condition, Ecosystem Services Flow/crop provisioning, wood provisioning, fisheries resources, climate regulation, soil erosion control, and coastal protection, a Monetary Assets, and a thematic Accounts looking at biodiversity and species accounts as reported by the PIR FY22.

105. No key government policies and plans that include NCA were developed, as this depends on the activities listed at the following point and on the National Strategy and Action Plan for National Capital Accounting in Liberia, but the (Output(s) 1.1.4 and 1.1.7). This National Strategy and Action Plan was developed in a draft version, but it’s not sufficient to implement a road-map aiming at effectively including NCA in key government policies and plans (you can also see the assessment of outputs 1.1.4 and 1.1.7). Stakeholders consider the future Maritime Strategy (under preparation) the first key policy where NCA will be mainstreamed, but no evidence was provided.

106. This is partially achieved because there exist low knowledge evidence of project stakeholders at the Government Ministries and Agencies in this regards/Agencies Knowledge Brokers/others could not articulate/demonstrate understanding therto. Although the PIR22 noted “Further extensive training is planned for FY23 through a consulting agreement”. Regarding the activities under this output:

- **Activity 1** was completed, conduct a scoping exercise and determine NCA priority accounts.
- **Activity 2** was completed, establish an analytical framework for the selected priority accounts.
- **Activity 3** was not fully completed, conduct an in-depth and more comprehensive assessment of data and gaps and identify required collection efforts. At the moment, the project only achieved one comprehensive assessment of data and gaps was conducted. However, the report from this activity is yet to be validated and a comprehensive report is not available to that effect.
- **Activity 4** is ongoing and overdue, conduct an in-depth field survey to collect primary data relevant to ecosystem services, biodiversity. As reported, a team of scientists working towards an in-depth field survey to collect primary data on ecosystems services, biodiversity, ecosystem condition. According to the project document/workplan, this activity should have ended by FY21 Q2, which means, this activity is long overdue. The in-depth field survey should have covered 3 of the 4 ecosystem services, which includes Provisioning services, Regulating services and cultural services. The progress report that CI presented is mainly based on biodiversity survey, which only falls under one of the ecosystems services and the remaining data collection process is based on using proxies’ data generated from global level.

- **Activity 5** has not yet started, conduct a comprehensive assessment of policy, including national development plans such as the PAPD, international commitments and cross-sectoral policies to identify specific priority policies to be supported by accounting data and post-accounting analysis.
- **Activity 6** is ongoing and Overdue, Integrate NCA into government policies and plans. Although, the NCA was integrated into the NDC implementation plan. However, the target for this activity is five policies and plans. As reported, the only effort made so far is the integration of the NCA into the NDC implementation plan.
- **Activity 7** is ongoing and Overdue, carry out technical development of NCA, including extent, condition, ecosystem services supply and use, asset accounts, thematic accounts as needed.

107. The first complete set of ecosystem accounts for coastal areas in Liberia have been developed and documented in a draft technical brief. Key highlights include extent, condition, ecosystems services, and thematic accounts. The project launched in 2020, an incomplete ecosystem extent maps and forwarded to the President and partners although the project is just conducting ground truthing to improve the accuracy of the maps.

108. Also, in the ecosystem's extent map, about 22 classes of ecosystems was delineated but none of the coastal ecosystem extent accounts was recorded in accordance with size and changes in size of ecosystem assets over time.

The main Factor that affected the delivery of Output 1.1.2) is an insufficient overall guidance.

Output 1.1.3: Capacity of government officials and other stakeholders developed on technical aspects of NCA.

Target 1.1.3: 50 Government people trained (10 women, 40 men)

109. Output 1.1.3 **was achieved.**

110. Activity 1 is ongoing and delayed, conduct training of key agency officials and policymakers on NCA, including i. SNA and SEEA, ii. applications of the account for policy and planning applications

111. To-date (FY21 and FY22), trainings were provided to a total of 41 personnel (31 men and 10 women) trained on how to collect NCA and catalogue data the shared data on the government.

112. Activity 2 is ongoing and delayed, conduct hands-on training of technical personnel of key agencies and researchers on (i) standardized data collection and integrated field assessment for Ecosystem Accounting; (ii) Ecosystem Accounting methods and analysis; (iii) Thematic accounts (i.e., biodiversity, carbon, and water); and (iv) Ecosystem Accounting integration into SNA. This should not be done virtually as its required hands-on training. A firm was contracted by conservation international last year to conduct these activities.

113. Activity 3 is ongoing and overdue, development of communication material to enhance awareness of the overall utility of NCA, analytical measurements, and key applications to a range of stakeholders, including practitioners, academia, and communities.

Factors that affected the delivery of Output 1.1.3) were the pandemic restrictions, which limited for a certain period the in-person training and, on the other hand, the capacity of the project to adapt to these restrictions.

Output 1.1.4: Operational framework established for SEEA-compliant natural capital accounts.

Target 1.1.4: *One operational framework*

114. Output 1.1.4 **was not met**.

115. Activity 1 status not reported by CI, develop an operational framework for SEEA-compliant natural capital accounts.

116. Activity 2 is ongoing, develop a National Strategy and Action Plan (NSAP) for a five-year implementation of SEEA accounts, including priority national accounts to be implemented, proposed institutional arrangement and/or partnerships for their compilation, data storage, and sharing arrangements/ arrangements, post-accounting analytical approaches to inform identified policy priority.

117. Activity 3 is status not reported, support and strengthen the newly created LISGIS SNA division.

118. Activity 4 is status not reported, support the institutionalization of NCA - in accordance with the Steering Committee guidance.

119. Factors that affected the delivery of Output 1.1.4 are the insufficient overall guidance and the fact the NSAP has no added value in the respect of what the Project Document already states.

Output 1.1.5: Support provided to the GOL to integrate the NCA operational framework into national planning processes

Target 1.1.5: One national planning instrument (Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development) incorporates NCA results for assessing key indicators (forests' contribution to the economy)

120. Output 1.1.5 was **not met**. The execution of activities under this output were planned for FY21 and delayed to FY24 hence they have not started on track.

Output 1.1.6: Support provided to the GOL to incorporate NCA results into Liberia's Aichi Targets, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other international commitments and reporting mechanisms

Target: 1.1.6: One monitoring mechanism (Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development) incorporates NCA results for reporting progress on targets

121. Output 1.1.6 was **not met**. The execution of activities under this output were initially planned for FY21 and were delayed to FY24 hence they have not started/on track.

Output 1.1.7: Roadmap developed for prioritizing and developing natural capital accounts for additional ecosystems, resources and sectors

122. Output 1.1.7 was **not met**. The execution of activities under this output were initially planned to start in FY21 and they were delayed to FY25.

123. Activity 1 is not started and not overdue, develop roadmap documents for additional natural capital accounts.

124. A consultancy on National Strategy and Action Plan (NSAP) - Natural Capital Accounting for Liberia is ongoing. It includes a proposed vision and goals for natural capital accounting in Liberia. The proposed vision for natural capital accounting in Liberia is that: *“NCA Vision: That Natural Capital Accounting is widely used by government, business and civil society as the agreed evidence base to support integrated planning and decision making for environmentally sustainable development in Liberia”*.
125. The proposed actions reflect the Project Document’s contents (active government, capacity building, compilation of NCA reports, etc.), but the NSAP does not add anything new and it has no added value in the respect of what the Project Document already states. Moreover, no specific insights and actions are included to effectively mainstream NCA into development policies and strategies in Liberia.
126. The lack of an overall guidance and the delay in starting the activities are the factors affecting this output.

COMPONENT 2

Output 2.1.1: Potential carbon-based financing mechanisms for coastal ecosystem conservation identified and assessed

Target 2.1.2: One prospectus for blue carbon demonstration/pilot project

127. Output 2.1.1 is **not achieved**. Factors that affected/are affecting the delivery of this outputs are described below.
128. Activity 1 (from the Annual Work Plans) is the site level blue carbon feasibility assessment, which forms the basis for the development of a blue carbon prospectus. It has been conducted by a consultant; the activity was in delay, as the draft report was finalized in 2022 and was reviewed. To date, there is no evidence that the review process has been finalized, the consultancy and its results validated, as the Report is still in track-change, with comments that have not been addressed. The ToR of this consultancy provides some deliverables, but just one Report has been shared.
129. The site level blue carbon feasibility assessment includes just part of the expected results, provided by the ToR and needed to orient the preparation of a Blue Carbon Project. The feasibility assessment cannot be considered sufficient for the development of a project, other than what was affirmed by some stakeholders during the consultation. This is a sign of low knowledge and appropriation of this component and lack of a common vision and roadmap to mainstream NCA into national strategies and policies, which should be reflected in concrete actions, such as a future blue carbon project.
130. The table below resumes the key-tasks of this consultancy.

Key-tasks (from the ToR of the consultancy)	Results
Identify potential or existing blue carbon project proponents and key partners	The report does not clearly identify potential or existing blue carbon project proponents and key partners
Determine composition of coastal ecosystem coverage in Marshall Proposed Protected Area and Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve, and develop a list of species and ecosystem characteristics, biomass estimates, and soil/sediment characteristics, and agents and drivers of ecosystem loss and degradation	The composition of the coastal ecosystem coverage was determined using only existing data, without any original analysis and field verification. The data sources used are not clearly identified. The map included in the report is not readable and the scale is not sufficient.
Analyze available spatial data to help identify potential reference sites/levels and estimate baseline rates of mangrove deforestation and emission reductions /removals and the potential of mangrove conservation and restoration activities.	Available spatial data are mentioned in the report.
Assess national and subnational policy context, governance structure, profile of communities and key stakeholders, and the expected level of project support.	A specific section of the report is dedicated to these elements, but there are no clear conclusions on the expected level of project support and eventual issues, constraints and barriers to be addressed.
Conduct field site visits with to better assess key criteria and update the desktop study with new findings, including increasing understanding regarding: [you can see the points below].	It seems like field visits have been conducted, but there is no specific description of the field mission activities, visited places, stakeholders engaged.
Agents and drivers of mangrove deforestation and degradation, additionality, leakage, non-permanence risk.	The report includes a succinct description of these aspects.
National policy and legal context to define the desired enabling conditions (social, regulatory, and political) for blue carbon projects and carbon financing in Liberia.	The report includes a succinct description of these aspects, despite the “Legal Review: Accessing the Rights to Carbon and Legal Use of Coastal Ecosystem” (40 pages), prepared in 2018 during the PPG phase, put the basis for a deep analysis of the legal context. It seems that this document has not been taken into consideration in the preparation of the feasibility assessment.
Baseline scenarios.	The report includes a section on the reference emission level baseline.
Project intervention activities, stakeholder support, partner roles, and the approximate resource and funding needs for project development and implementation.	The report does not include a specific section on these aspects.
Estimates of emissions reductions and removals.	The methodology includes the model for the estimation of emissions reductions and removals, but the report does not include a consolidated result on carbon credits.
Risk analysis.	The report does not include a specific section on risk analysis.
Broadly define the co-benefits and ecosystem services associated with the selected site(s), as well as the beneficiaries of those benefits / services.	The report does not include a specific section on these aspects.

Key-tasks (from the ToR of the consultancy)	Results
Produce estimates of the emission reduction potential of the proposed conservation activities considering likely baseline and with project scenarios and carbon stocks based on best available data.	The report estimates just the economic value of the carbon stock and it does not include a specific section on these aspects.
Develop estimates of the potential carbon project revenues and costs, and net carbon cash flows that could be generated to help fund conservation activities over a 30-year project crediting period as well as other periods for nested projects under the Liberia's national REDD+ programme.	The report does not include a specific section on these aspects.
Define the desired enabling conditions (social, regulatory, and political) for blue carbon projects and carbon financing in Liberia.	The report does not include a specific section on these aspects.
Describe the possible financing mechanisms to execute blue carbon projects in Liberia.	The report just includes a table with carbon markets and prices, most of them not relevant for the context of Liberia.
Describe required team capacities / competencies to develop and deliver blue carbon projects from design, development to execution.	The report does not include a specific section on these aspects.

131. Output 2.1.1 also includes the following activities:

- Activity 2: Conducting site-level mapping of mangrove extent.
- Activity 3: Conducting ground-trothing of mangrove density characteristics.
- Activity 4: Determining carbon stock estimates, and model mangrove rates of change.
- Activity 5: Preparing a prospectus for a blue carbon demonstration/pilot project.
- Activity 6: Making attempts to secure support from voluntary/philanthropic sources for carbon credits, with emphasis on the co-benefits of coastal carbon (i.e. benefits relating to local human wellbeing and biodiversity).

132. In principle, these activities could be included in the feasibility assessment developed under activity 1, previously discussed. The feasibility assessment partially includes these activities, but there is no evidence that they can be considered concluded, with relevant results. Besides the lack of sufficient results, output 2.1.1 could have been planned in a simpler way, by merging the different activities in one or two clusters. This choice could have simplified the processes, mostly in a situation of insufficient management for some periods, due to the absence of the project manager.

Output 2.1.2: At least one conservation-friendly enterprise transacting with market participants in the project area to improve sustainable use of coastal and marine resources

Target 2.1.2: One enterprise

133. Output 2.1.2 was **partially achieved**.

134. This output includes Activity 1: Conducting a value-chain analysis of conservation-friendly enterprises. This analysis has been conducted by a consultant; the activity was in delay, as the final report was prepared in April 2022. The ToR provides for the following tasks:

- Map and profile value chains of on and off-farm micro, small and medium conservation friendly enterprises in the target counties to identify and recommend at least three profitable, adaptable, and technically feasible and most effective value chains for the NCA project.
- Assess the supporting/enabling environment for the selected markets and value-chains (services, policies, rules and regulations and infrastructure and market constraints for the selected on and off-farm micro, small and medium conservation friendly enterprises)
- Assess the cost, profit, marketing, and supply and demand dynamics of value chains for on and off-farm micro, small and medium conservation-friendly enterprises in the target Counties.
- Analyze the supporting functions that are required to make the value chain work, including both existing and missing support functions (e.g., infrastructure, information, related services)
- Assess the training/capacity gaps for the identified on and off-farm micro, small and medium conservation friendly enterprises.

135. The Final Report includes evidence of these tasks. The whole approach is not sufficiently connected with the NCA themes and with the project objectives and it seems more an approach for a commodities' assessment; the report does not include sufficient considerations about the influence of external factors (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) on the value chains; it does not include the environmental effects/impacts of the different products (including those on climate), among the selection criteria of the three most important value chains; the three selected value chains are rice, cassava and fish; the recommendations do not include specific considerations on NCA in relation to rice and cassava; they include minor considerations on deforestation due to fish smoke practices and the need to promote practices to prevent overfishing.

136. This output also includes Activity 2: Developing partnership enterprises that can deliver alternative sources of income to communities as well as conservation outcomes and Activity 3: Contracting an enterprise to provide services to communities as part of the benefit package under Conservation Agreements, which should have started in Q3 of FY21 and was rescheduled. A delay occurred also because the consultant for the value chain analysis had a car accident. The final version of the Value chain analysis of conservation-friendly enterprises was developed.

137. The factors that affected the delivery of Output 2.1.2 are the insufficient level of overall guidance, and the low connection of the results of the consultancy with the NCA.

Output 2.1.3: Small grant mechanism established to support coastal conservation

Target 2.1.3: Three local organizations receiving small grants.

138. Output 2.1.3 was **partially achieved**.

139. The Small grant mechanism called the Liberia Conservation Action Fund (LCAF) has been established to support small-scale interventions that promote good stewardship of natural resources.

140. The Multi-Agency Steering Committee (MASC) (renamed the Small Grants Appraisal Committee - SGAC) with a Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) and ToRs was established to manage the LCAF. Nomination of SGAC members is ongoing. The SGAC will operate under the guidance of the PSC and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) which comprises of 11 members (10 men and 1 woman, previously 5 men and 2 women).

141. The SGAC is developing a roadmap for integrating LCAF into Liberia Conservation Fund Inc. There are plans to incorporate ESMF and gender considerations in this roadmap. To date, there is no evidence of a finalized roadmap and the incorporation of ESMF and gender considerations in this roadmap. There are plans to incorporate ESMF and gender considerations in the roadmap
142. The factors that affected the delivery of this Output are the absence of an overall guidance and the delay in the organization of the activities.

Output 2.1.4: Potential scope, need and feasibility assessed of national financing mechanism to ensure long-term support for sustainable management of coastal ecosystems

Target 2.1.4: One design document for national coastal conservation financing mechanism formally adopted by relevant government body/bodies.

143. Output 2.1.4 was **not achieved**.
144. The activities were planned to start in FY21 Q4, but they started in delay.
145. A Request for proposal has been developed to recruit a consultant who will conduct a feasibility analysis and stakeholder consultations on developing either a stand-alone financing mechanism for mangrove conservation or as a subsidiary mechanism housed under the LCF Inc. No evidence of the progress of this consultancy has been provided.
146. The factors that affected the delivery of this Output are the absence of an overall guidance and the delay in the organization of the activities.

COMPONENT 3

Output 3.1.1: Conservation agreements executed with 10 additional communities along the southeastern coast of Liberia

Target 3.1.1: Ten Conservation Agreements signed with communities.

147. Output 3.1.1 is **on track**. Factors that affected/are affecting the delivery of this output are described below.
148. Activity 1 is to conduct a thorough stakeholder and baseline assessment to identify key mangroves and other coastal ecosystem sites on the southeast coast of Liberia for community conservation, based on social, biological and economic values. Baseline socio-economic assessments have been conducted, and the improvements in local communities' income will be assessed in FY23.
149. Activity 2 is to conduct thorough feasibility assessments to confirm key sites on the southeast coast of Liberia for community-based conservation. The assessment was conducted in all the project sites.
150. Activity 3 is to engage communities, the private sector and government stakeholders in the negotiation and design of a conservation actions/benefit package, while Activity 4 is the design and implementation of 10 Conservation Agreements (CAs). Activity 6 was designed to implement a monitoring system to measure the impact of the project on project beneficiaries; and compliance of communities to Conservation Agreements. After a stakeholder engagement, Six conservation agreements were signed with the communities of Falie, Bendu, Mandoe, Nyangba, Sarwein, and Blewein. The agreements are being implemented, but it's not clear how and to what extent the

foreseen conservation actions are being implemented, and which are the results and the expected and achievable impacts on NCA maintenance. Beneficiaries at the local level are involved in the implementation, and satisfied about the financial support they receive from the Project. On the other side, they are not fully aware of the future actions to guarantee the sustainability of the projects' results and impacts.

151. Activity 5 is to Conduct Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) in the 10 Conservation Agreement communities. The activity has not yet started and the communities are not aware of the significance and importance of the PLUP.

Output 3.1.2: A national conservation agreement program designed and established that offers economic incentives for coastal protection.

Target 3.1.2: One national conservation agreement program

152. Activities for this output were planned for FY24 and will begin in FY24.

	Indicator 3.1.b: Area (hectares) of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas	Target 3.1.b: 5,000 additional hectares of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas	Baseline Indicator 3.1.b: 11,034 hectares of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas	Partially met but at high risk of not achieving the end-of-project target
	Indicator 3.1.c: Income (USD) within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project	Target 3.1.c: Income within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project improved by 50%	Baseline Indicator 3.1.c: Estimated monthly household income of \$65 USD within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project	Indicator at high risk of not being achieved and needs attention

5 ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 Overall analysis of sustainability

<i>Sustainability</i>	Rating
	Moderately Unlikely

153. Sustainability is considered as the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, i.e., the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one among the four assessed risk dimensions. The likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases is unpredictable at midterm but at high risk of not being sustained; additionally corroborated by key informant survey responses as presented in Figure 3.

154. The MTE consulting team believes the Project first and foremost, has a delivery problem that is in need of fixing. While at this juncture most projects ought to turn their attention to and start contemplating a transition strategy to ensure the gradual ownership of the products and services coming out of the Project, this is not the case here, until core issues have been resolved and key foundational deliverables have been developed. The MTE also observes that the PIRs for FY20 and FY22 underestimate the risks associated with sustainability, specifically:

- **Risk 3:** Investor/donor confidence insufficient for adequate contributions to sustainable financing mechanisms.
- **Risk 4:** Enterprise development fails or is not adopted by local Communities).
- **Risk 5:** Community members are not interested in behavior change through commitments in Conservation Agreements.
- **Risk 6:** Other stakeholders such as local governments are reluctant to share planning and management responsibilities with communities), especially with respect to the late delivery of key products and services.

155. The overall sustainability rating takes into account its different dimensions, as well as contextual factors including delays in the delivery of core foundational products that would be a springboard for sustainability to take root, and is also a function of the disruption to consistent project management owing to frequent turnover, poor ownership and insufficient communication that have collectively been observed by the MTE consulting team during the course of the engagement. It also reflects the lack of coherence and understanding of the dependencies between the different strands of the Project that are intended to have a multiplier effect. It considers the delays that have characterized implementation since many core deliverables are only beginning to materialize or are being planned at the later stages of implementation, which can reduce the level of ownership of project actions and therefore negatively affect their sustainability. Finally, the MTE is cognizant this Project is part and parcel of a broader national effort in the establishment of NCA for different elements of biodiversity that will endure due to institutional structures and via national policy but will require significant investments in ongoing capacity building to bring these ambitious objectives to fruition.

Factors that will ensure the sustainability of results.

156. Certain aspects of the Project’s strategy have the potential to prove out models that increase the likelihood of bringing sustainable global environment benefits after project-end but require careful attention and nurturing to fruition for them to stand a chance at becoming a legacy under the NCA project. These include (i) a well-functioning governance framework to support and guide NCA development and implementation (Output 1.1.1) and to operational and monitor critical elements of the National Strategy and Action Plan for National Capital Accounting in Liberia (Output(s) 1.1.4 and 1.1.7). It is expected that taken together these have the opportunity to integrate NCA into national planning processes; (ii) the Liberia Conservation Action Fund (Output 2.1.3) has the potential to support innovative interventions through the provision of small grants to local community but requires early wins to become a compelling sustainable model; and (iii) conservation agreements with built-in incentives to shift communities’ propensity for unsustainable activities. There are nevertheless risks to sustainability that exist, and these are significant overall.

5.2 Financial risks to sustainability

<i>Financial risk rating</i>	Moderately Unlikely
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157. Most projects and institutions in Liberia are donor dependent and have no long-term financial strategies and management capacities to sustain project impact when the donor exits. Financial risks to sustainability therefore, are significant since the prevailing financial model of remunerating local communities’ involvement in the Project is likely creating disincentives that, if not quickly replaced by sustainable financing mechanisms envisioned under Component 2 through both Outputs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, and Component 3 under Output 3.1.1, is likely to result in waning engagement and benefit realization post-project once GEF resources have been exhausted.

158. To mitigate this, the Project ought to accelerate the piloting of sustainable financing mechanisms and prioritize those revenue streams which show promise for the local and Liberian context. Since work on scoping out sustainable financing mechanisms is still in its infancy, it will take some time to prove out a viable model that will lead to sufficient diversification to change the community calculus sufficiently that will tip the scales in favour of intact coastal landscapes. Moreover, with the recent establishment of the Small Grants Appraisal Committee priority ought to be with integrating the LCAF into the Liberia Conservation Fund and ensuring there are 3 beneficiary organizations in 2023 that can actually provide added value in the context of coastal biodiversity conservation.

5.3 Institutional /Governance risks to sustainability

<i>Institutional/Governance risk rating</i>	Moderately Unlikely
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159. Efforts by the Government of Liberia in 2016 to declare NCA a priority of national importance, becoming a member country of the Gabarone Declaration and commitment to propose a country-owned strategy to incorporating the value of natural capital into decision-making can ensure medium-term benefits but must be tied to incremental advances towards these objectives.

160. While the Project has increased awareness and fostered a deeper appreciation of coastal natural capital through “one-off” trainings, these have fallen short at mid-term of the ambition and rigorous training programme articulated in the Project Document under Output 1.1.3. **There is consensus**

among the majority of those interviewed that sustained capacity at the government level is likely the strongest bellwether of ensuring early results to continue being nurtured post-project. However, the management of the NCA project succeeded in capacitating government officials in how to collect NCA and catalogue data, but the true measure of sustainability will be advancing Outcome indicator 1.1c. to ensure that NCA mainstreamed into agencies development planning processes.

- 161. Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability are also significant as existing governance mechanisms (including the Steering Committee, TAC and SGAC) have proven nominally effective to successfully de-risk the Project, overcome key challenges and give it the traction it requires to succeed. At the community level, there are insufficient structures in place to absorb and internalize project benefits with a number of project-community relationships requiring a reset.
- 162. New challenges encountered by the Project during the MTE with respect to having to replace critical partner and sub-contractor tasked with core NCA deliverables has resulted in unnecessary disruption relatively late in the Project’s lifecycle. While the MTE consultant team has not been privy to or seen options being contemplated to mitigate this risk, it does not bode well for the Project’s sustainability, especially as it is grappling with delays and repeated turnover in its management.

5.4 Socio-Political risks to sustainability

Socio-Political risk rating	Moderately Likely
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163. The Government of Liberia’s commitment to NCA and to restore coastal and mangrove landscapes remains a clearly expressed and highly publicized priority, as unanimously confirmed by several interview partners. The NCA project has a unique opportunity to upscale the principles and approaches of sustainable financing using the Liberian Conservation Fund as a vehicle for integrating NCA considerations within higher-order development objectives.

164. Socio-political risks to sustainability are minimal in terms of strong and continued political support towards project objectives and achievements. On the other hand, they are substantial due to insufficient mainstreaming of broader development objectives, such as gender and community development. Another risk is that the local communities that have been assisted with establishing the beginnings of sustainable income-generating schemes will be unable to obtain the funds necessary to maintain and expand their activities.

165. The risk of diminishing political commitment is thus minimal. Similarly, local communities retain a high level of interest in the Project’s benefits as indicated through the 6 conservation agreements signed to date.



“NCA IS COMPLEX AND THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT WELL-EQUIPPED. UNTIL THERE IS A ROBUST AND INTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME IN PLACE, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT PIECEMEAL EFFORTS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE LONG-TERM”

- INTERVIEWEE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY

166. Local communities are key stakeholders in biodiversity conservation projects. If the local community is not involved or consulted, it can lead to conflicts, lack of support, and ultimately, project failure. While not uniform, there have been challenges with engaging with communities and creating the socio-economic conditions which incentivize mangrove and coastal conservation. These issues should be guarded with special attention in the remaining project duration. Weak institutional capacity in Liberia

can create a challenge for the sustainable management of biodiversity conservation, resulting in poor governance, corruption, and lack of enforcement of regulations. The Project therefore, should be cognizant of the multitude benefits and essential role of its forthcoming capacity building programme and accelerate it.

5.5 Environmental risks to sustainability

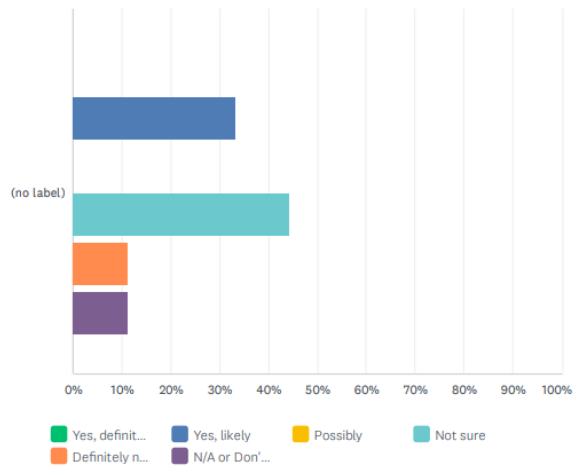
Environmental risks rating	Moderately Unlikely
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167. Environmental risks to sustainability are concerning since the Project is putting insufficient emphasis on environmental sustainability through conservation agreements. There is an opportunity for course correction on these parameters once a compelling narrative for sustainable mangrove use is made through a combination of mangrove accounts, sustainable financing mechanisms and the pioneering of blue carbon centering around mangrove protection.

168. In view of the above-mentioned observations, the risks are significant and therefore sustainability is Moderately Unlikely. In the data collected via the online survey where 11% of respondents were not positive on the chances of Project sustainability beyond its current lifecycle, with 33% confident that benefits would accrue post-project.

Figure 3: Questionnaire Feedback on Likelihood of Sustainability

Q6 1- Do you think the Project’s achievements can be sustained after project closure?



	YES, DEFINITELY	YES, LIKELY	POSSIBLY	NOT SURE	DEFINITELY NOT	N/A OR DONT KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no ...	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	44.44%	11.11%	11.11%	-	-

6 PROGRESS TO IMPACT

6.1 Overall analysis of progress to impact

169. It is still difficult and somewhat premature to verify with conviction the true impact of the CI-GEF NCA project at mid-term, since there are still products in the process of delivery given the delays incurred, and many others have not been validated, are still in draft format or have yet to be formally presented and approved by the Project's governance mechanisms. While short-term outcomes are likely to be achieved by the project end date, more time is likely to be needed to achieve intermediate outcomes and impacts. Given delays in implementation, it is still early to observe intermediate outcomes and impacts on the ground, and it seems unlikely that these will be fully achieved by the project's end date. However, there is evidence that the project has advanced towards some short-term outcomes and is slowly laying the basis for others.
170. Although incomplete, one of the legacies emerging from the Project however, as corroborated through the majority of stakeholder consultations, is the creation of foundational data sources for Natural Capital Accounting since Liberia is a data deficient country and NCA, if done properly should be underpinned by robust data and methodologies. The Project is making an effort to making recent studies available on its website as highlighted in the figure below. However, if the Project is committed to transforming Liberia into a data rich country, that has access to and makes use of abundant, reliable, and comprehensive data for NCA, it must invest heavily and double down on knowledge management and ensuring ownership of the products and services coming out of the Project.
171. However, mainstreaming national capital accounting is a transformational process that cannot be concluded over a 5-year span, even more so given that the project is implemented over a large geographical area with field sites, with the involvement of a broad array of stakeholders at multiple scales. Similarly, achieving results from financial mechanisms, even in conditions with relatively high capacities, is usually a process that requires continued support for several years, as it can be affected by external factors and government processes.
172. The Project is also attributed with the stimulation of the community co-management and stewardship which, through the elaboration of the conservation agreements, PLUP and innovative sustainable financing mechanisms, have high potential for the expansion and creation of protected areas. The impact has yet to fully materialize since the model is wholly dependent on project funds, but through Output 3.1.2 (Activity 1) should reflect on positive elements with high-replication potential to inform the design of the national conservation agreement program, including site selection, execution capacities, governance, monitoring, and financing.
173. Implementing a solid sustainability strategy will be thus crucial in the remaining part of the project, as will be monitoring progress towards intermediate outcomes and impacts.

Figure 4: Current Knowledge Management System Primed for Strengthening

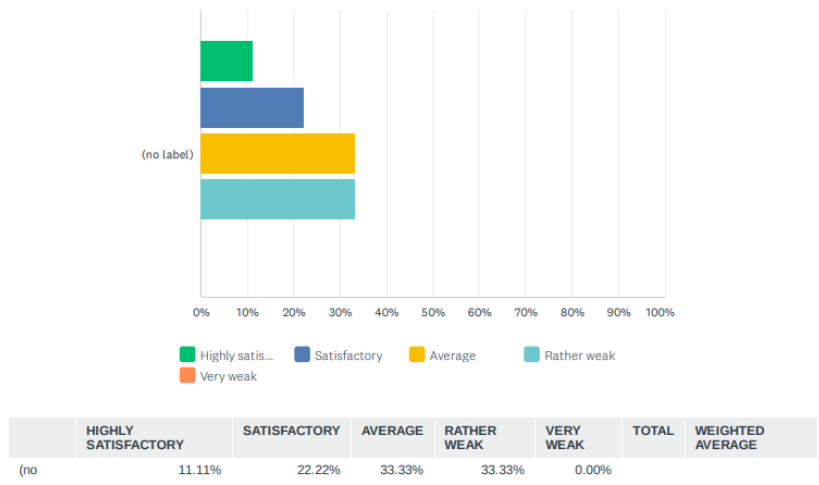


174. Due to the project, the EPA is slowly consolidating its role of coordinator and competencies in NCA for coastal, mangrove and protected areas of the country. The development of technical products has strengthened its positioning and ability to convene with the different competent authorities. The Project must however make better use of national consultants as opposed to international consulting firms to ensure that knowledge is firmly internalized. One of the solution could be to contract consultancy teams composed by national and international consultant(s).

175. The execution of the Project has generated a new level of technical capacity and awareness among key government stakeholders, including the EPA, LISGIS and FDP, towards having the necessary underpinnings and being able to mainstream NCA into national development plans and policies. This impact runs the risk of being squandered, in case the project has to end abruptly, without the possibility of implementing a formal exit strategy. Therefore, it is also fundamental to nurture new projects and initiatives that give continuity to what has been achieved once initial results have been consolidated. The Project has developed a solid foundation - through a socio-economic baseline study report undertaken in 2018 - for the assessment of any increases to income levels but it is too soon to clearly identify impact on this parameter due to insufficient data at mid-term.

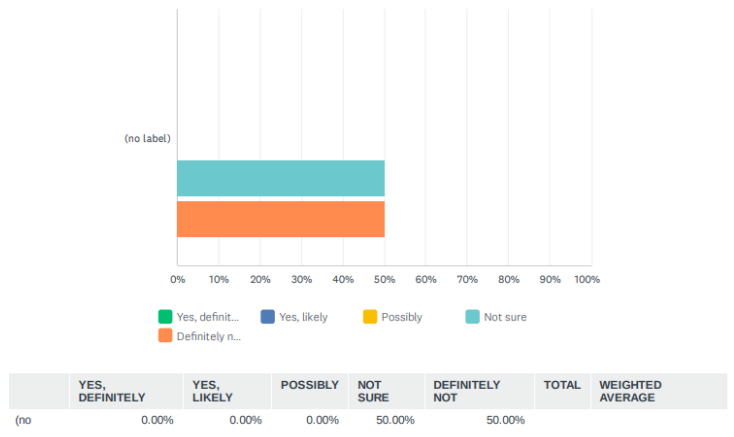
176. The result from the online questionnaire to the question on how respondents view the NCA project at mid-term corroborates the MTE consulting team's view that results at mid-term are probably insufficient to draw conclusions on impact, with over 66% responding the project is average or less, with 33% stating.

Q3 How do you consider overall Project progress at mid-term?



177. All things considered however, responses from the questionnaire were overwhelmingly united in the sentiment that whatever advances and achievements have been made, would not have otherwise occurred in the absence of GEF resources and this project and therefore, has had the desired catalytic effect of putting NCA on the map for Liberia, recognizing that it will a longer-term horizon and sustained momentum through other initiatives to raise the bar.

Q12 The project's achievements and results to date could / would have happened in the absence of a GEF-funded project within the same time period?



7 ASSESSMENT OF MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEMS

7.1 Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Project Design

“THE PROJECT MANAGER AND OTHER STAFF WILL TRAVEL FREQUENTLY TO PROJECT SITES TO MAINTAIN CLOSE AND CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS, COMMUNITIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS”

- PROJECT DOCUMENT, SECTION 5 (PAGE 68)

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
Monitoring & Evaluation (Design)	<p>Highly satisfactory (HS) There were no shortcomings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations</p>	The M&E plan included in the Project Document is sound and detailed. The budget covers key M&E activities, but does not allow for detailed monitoring of the multiple activities occurring in the field. The M&E systems of the Project were designed with standard CI-GEF components and reflected in the Project Document, consisting of the inception workshop and accompanying report, Project Results Monitoring Plan, GEF Core Indicators, Project Steering Committee, CI-GEF Project Agency Field Supervision Missions, Quarterly Progress Reporting, PIRs, MTE, as well as terminal reporting and terminal evaluation.

178. The M&E systems of the Project were designed with standard CI-GEF components and reflected in the Project Document, consisting of the below:

- Inception workshop and accompanying report.
- Project Results Monitoring Plan.
- Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings (quarterly).
- Financial and technical quarterly reports (quarterly).
- Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) (Annual).
- Mid-Term Evaluation.
- Final evaluation of the project.
- CI-GEF Project Agency Annual Field Supervision Missions.

179. The primary anchor of the Project’s M&E system is the Project Results Monitoring Plan found in Appendix III of the Project Document, consisting of 1 indicator at the objective level, 3 Outcome-level indicators under Component 1, 3 Outcome-level indicators for Component 2 and 3 indicators for Component 3. Consistent with best practice, the M&E framework consists of a total of 13 output level indicators. The M&E Plan Summary in Table 9 of the Project Document (ref. pages 74-75) has a healthy budget of USD 293,571, representing 7.44% of the GEF grant. This is well above the typical 3% usually afforded to full-sized projects below the \$10M threshold.

180. Interestingly, neither the Project Results Framework nor the Project Results Monitoring Plan contain sufficient baselines or mid-term targets. With respect to baseline establishment, the Project Document explicitly indicates however that *“in the case that all necessary baseline data has not been collected*

during the PPG phase, it will be collected and documented by the relevant project partners within the first year of project implementation". Finally, GEF corporate results are not monitored using any GEF Tracking Tools although Core Indicators 4.1 (Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity) and 11 (Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment) are to be monitored by the Project.

181. In spite of a heavy M&E administrative burden consisting of 23 indicators across the entire Project results hierarchy, the PMU is not staffed with a dedicated M&E Officer as would typically be the case in order to keep pace with the steady stream of quarterly and annual reports.

7.2 Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Implementation

Project Dimension	MTE Rating	Justification
Monitoring & Evaluation (Implementation)	<p>Moderately Satisfactory (MS) There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations</p>	Additional dedicated staff would help improve reporting, and, there is a need to further systematize project information to facilitate its use for decision-making. Decentralization of the compilation of the PIR would allow for multiple points of view from PMU and CI-GEF on the progress of the Project and restore confidence of the ratings being ascribed. Better traceability and continuity between the quarterly reports and PIRs would also improve overall cohesiveness.

182. The Project's M&E plan and budget, as provided in Section 6(B) and Appendix III of the Project Document (pp. 71-75 and 85-91 respectively) have not been given due consideration in the Inception Report. There is no description or discussion about M&E in text of the Inception Report, only a brief one paragraph description of CI-GEF monitoring and reporting simplified version (Section 6, page 5). Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities articulated in Section 5 of the Inception Report neither include nor align with the responsible party column in the Project Results Monitoring Plan. The MTE consulting team notes this is a missed opportunity and a departure from requirements in the Project Document which highlights that the Inception Workshop should be an opportunity to revisit the context of the project design and ensure ownership of the Project's objectives and outcomes, as well as to detail the roles, support services and complementary responsibilities of the Project, including the M&E plan. Thus, the MTE finds that the treatment of M&E during the inception period appears to have been 'value removed', rather than 'value added'; and there has been no thorough review of the M&E plan and budget.

183. The Project Document (page 68) highlights the important role of 7 pre-defined PMU advisors (1 from the EPA, 1 from the FDA, 1 from the Liberia Maritime Authority, 1 from the Liberia Land Authority, 1 from the Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services Statistics, 1 from the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority and 1 from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning) in ensuring country ownership and drivenness of the project, and most importantly to the core Project objective, mainstreaming NCA into government strategy and decision-making processes as well as community empowerment. This body as it relates to M&E is required to meet on a bi-monthly basis and prior to PSC meetings to review progress of the project and help develop an agenda for PSC meetings. The FY21 and FY22 PIRs note that this group has transitioned to becoming a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), constituted to facilitate synergy and coordination between the NCA project and other government initiatives. The PIR narrative does reflect the TAC's periodic engagement in more technical aspects of product delivery. However, its role in problem solving in tandem with the

PMU, as originally intended in the Project's M&E design is questionable, since it has not been involved in triaging and responding to recent issues related to changes in the involvement of the Moore Centre, based on stakeholder interviews to better understand the context and risks of this unanticipated development which has resulted in a termination of their engagement in the first quarter of 2023.

184. While it is reassuring to see that project baselines have been mostly developed for quarterly reports, it is not articulated the process by which these were developed and the methodology. More importantly, these have not been carried over to the Project Results Framework, nor adopted via the Project Steering Committee as one would expect. While the PMU should have also used the opportunity to define mid-term targets in consultation with the broader stakeholders, output-level indicators do provide a gauge of the necessary incremental progress.
185. A CI-GEF supervision mission scheduled for the Project was delayed due to covid related movement restrictions however, it finally occurred in January 2023. This visit focused heavily on the operations and financial aspects and a site visit. Another supervision visit will take place to follow up on the MTE recommendations.
186. Despite lean human resources, frequent management turnover and the absence of a designated M&E Officer, an acceptable reporting system exists, which is physically maintained by the PMU. This is not to say that processes cannot be improved going forward. As evidenced by document analysis and three key informants, there has been infrequent travel to the field to conduct field verification and monitoring visits. The Project Document unequivocally notes that (i) the PMU will be responsible for operational planning and day-to-day implementation of all project activities under the three project components, as well as for monitoring and reporting on project outputs and outcomes; and (ii) traveling frequently to project sites to maintain close and continuous contact with the project implementing partners, communities and other stakeholders. In practice however, the complex management and operational arrangements do not align with PMU accountabilities and ought to be reconsidered for the second half of implementation.
187. The COVID-19 pandemic has also made it difficult to verify results at the local level where partners implemented project activities. The project is systematically collecting gender-disaggregated data on the number of local communities where possible. Upfront investment and greater ownership from the PMU should provide clarity to stakeholders on what data needs to be monitored and for what purpose.
188. There are no detailed monitoring reports containing information on the background activities, the quantitative and qualitative progress towards Quarterly Work Plan targets, technical suggestions of the project team and conclusions. Activities are also not documented through photos. While Quarterly Reports are fairly comprehensive, these do not build up incrementally and trace to the PIRs in a meaningful way. Quarterly progress review meetings track progress against Annual Work Plans and serve the purpose to expedite the delivery of activities which are behind schedule as stated by a key informant.
189. There have been two PIRs to date which are also accompanied by an updated GEF Core Indicator worksheet showing incremental progress towards indicators 4.1 and 11. Most concerning however, is the disconnect between the ratings in the PIR which do not appear to be results-based, but rather a

"I DID NOT HAVE CONTROL OF THE BUDGET AND COULD NOT ENSURE THIS MATCHED TO THE WORK THAT WAS REQUIRED. I PUT IN REPEATED WRITTEN REQUESTS FOR AN INCREASE TO THE TRAVEL BUDGET TO SPEND MORE TIME IN THE FIELD TO BUILD RAPPORT, MONITOR PROGRESS AND ENSURE MOMENTUM"

"THE BUDGET AND OPERATING MODEL NEEDS TO CHANGE OR THE PROJECT WILL NOT BE SUCCESSFUL. THE PROJECT MANAGER NEEDS TO BE ENABLED TO SUCCEED IN THE DELIVERY OF ACTIVITIES AND THIS INCLUDES OVERSIGHT OF THE BUDGET"

- STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON BUDGET RELATED TO M&E

function of how many activities are in flight. The other concern noted by the MTE consulting team is that the PIR only provides a snapshot at a given point in time and does not factor in activities that were scheduled during the Annual Workplan but did not materialize. This perhaps accounts for the exceedingly high ratings given to the project, albeit it is not possible to note whether these ratings are shared by the GEF Agency as the files shared with the MTE consulting team did not explicitly include ratings or comments by the GEF Agency nor any signature of endorsement. Contributions to the annual PIR also appear to be reactive, not cohesive and there are examples of inconsistent understanding of why data is being collected, as noted by several interviewees during stakeholder consultations.

Review of the Indicators Within the Logical Framework

190. As part of the MTE process, the MTE consulting team undertook a review of the Project's Results Framework, which currently consists of 9 indicators at the outcome level and 11 at the output level. While the MTE team found the overall design and intent of the Project as presented in the Results Framework to be quite well thought-out and comprehensive, some weaknesses in the Framework were identified. The MTE consultants believe the Results Framework is overly cumbersome and liable to become a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) burden, and hence could benefit from some rationalization. A review of the indicators and the proposed revisions / amendments are summarized in the table below for consideration by the PMU in consultation with the Steering Committee.

Table 9: Review of the Indicators in the Logical Framework

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
Objective: To improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia's development trajectory								
Indicator a: Number of national development policy instruments explicitly incorporating Natural Capital Accounting (NCA)	None per Project Document / Project Results Monitoring Plan in ProDoc Appendix III	No objective-level target defined in either the Project Document or during the Inception phase	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Following the MTE, the Project is encouraged to (i) define the threshold for contributing to this indicator; (ii) set realistic end-of-project target that is attributable to its work; and (iii) prioritize the project scope by contributing to the development and government approval of the development of a Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development policy. <u>This should be anchored to a clear articulation of which national policy instruments are being targeted from the outset and a roadmap of how to get there.</u>
Outcome 1.1: Decision-making improved in coastal ecosystem governance by mainstreaming natural capital accounting (NCA) into Government of Liberia (GOL) development strategy, policy and planning								
Indicator 1.1.a: Number of natural capital accounts established and embedded in key government policies and plans	Baseline Indicator 1.1.a: No natural capital accounts established and embedded in key government policies and plans	Target 1.1.a: At least one natural capital account (mangroves) established and embedded in at least 5 key government policies and plans	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	As noted above, the Project should identify explicitly from the outset which key policies and plans it intends to target and develop a roadmap of how to get there. This will make a more convincing case of attribution when results are achieved. Furthermore,
Indicator 1.1.b: Number of government officials and other relevant stakeholders trained on the technical aspects of NCA	Baseline Indicator 1.1.b: No government officials or other relevant stakeholders trained on the	Target 1.1.b: At least 50 government officials and other relevant stakeholders trained on the technical aspects	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	The Project should explicitly define from the outset of what constitutes a "government official" and "other relevant stakeholder" to make the attribution

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
	technical aspects of NCA	of NCA						stronger. Furthermore, the baseline should be revisited in light of Table 6 (Project Links to Other Initiatives) of the Project Document, also considering activities supported by the Gaborone Declaration Secretariat.
Indicator 1.1.c: Number of decision-makers trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity	Baseline Indicator 1.1.c: No decision-makers trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity	Target 1.1.c: At least 50 decision makers trained on how to use NCA results for the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Similar comments to the above for the term “decision maker”.
Output 1.1.1: Inter-ministerial NCA Steering Committee established to guide NCA development and implementation.								
Indicator 1.1.1: Number of NCA Steering Committees established		Target 1.1.1: One NCA Steering Committee	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues
Output 1.1.2: Mangrove ecosystem account planned for, developed, and executed and NCA embedded in key Government policies and plans								
Indicator 1.1.2a: Number of active mangrove ecosystem accounts		Target: 1.1.2a: 1 mangrove ecosystem account	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	This target is redundant as it is already captured at the outcome level. Suggest to replace it with: An analytical framework developed, in line with UN-SEEA guidelines. (Target = 1) This was achieved in FY21.
Indicator 1.1.2b: Number of policies and plans that include NCA results		Target 1.1.2b: 5 key government policies and plans	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	This target is redundant as it is already captured at the outcome level.

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
								<p>Suggest to replace with:</p> <p>A milestone-based roadmap articulating which key policies and plans to include NCA results and how the Project plans to achieve each milestone.</p> <p><u>Note: This should be an extension to the policy assessment that was conducted under Activity 5 and answer the “how” it will target the 6 priority policies.</u></p>
Output 1.1.3: Capacity of government officials and other stakeholders developed on technical aspects of NCA								
Indicator 1.1.3: Number of government officials and stakeholders that have participated in training events		Target 1.1.3: 50 people trained (10 women, 40 men)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	<p>This is a poorly worded indicator that could use a bit more specificity around the type of training in which they will participate and a consensus-based definition of the minimum threshold of what type of government officials and stakeholders should be counted towards achievement of the indicator. Notwithstanding, this target is redundant and a repetition of target 1.1b and 1.1c. Suggest to replace with:</p> <p>A standardized modular-based NCA training programme developed, approved by the NSC and TAC, and executed.</p>

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
Output 1.1.4: Operational framework established for SEEA-compliant natural capital accounts								
Indicator 1.1.4: Number of operational frameworks		Target 1.1.4: One operational framework	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Suggest to remove as this is now captured as part of Indicator 1.1.2a
Output 1.1.5: Support provided to the GOL to integrate the NCA operational framework into national planning processes								
Indicator 1.1.5: Number of national planning instruments that incorporate NCA results		Target 1.1.5: One national planning instrument (Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development) incorporates NCA results for assessing key indicators (forests' contribution to the economy)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	In principle, this is adequate but what is a national planning instrument. At minimum this should be described in the analytical framework and/or the milestone-based roadmap.
Output 1.1.6: Support provided to the GOL to incorporate NCA results into Liberia's Aichi Targets, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and other international commitments and reporting mechanisms								
Indicator 1.1.6: Number of reporting mechanisms for international commitments that incorporate NCA results		Target: 1.1.6: One monitoring mechanism (Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development) incorporates NCA results for reporting progress on targets	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues.
Output 1.1.7: Roadmap developed for prioritizing and developing natural capital accounts for additional ecosystems, resources and sectors								
Indicator 1.1.7: Number of roadmap documents for additional natural capital accounts		Target 1.1.7: One roadmap document	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	While importance should always be placed on transition planning and replicability, the Project simply does not have the bandwidth to address this given management bottlenecks and issues with key sub-contractors of NCA. Suggest to remove this output as it is

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
								planned in FY25 and the focus ought to do the current account for mangroves and doing it right as a solid foundation.
Outcome 2.1: Funding sources for sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased								
Outcome indicator 2.1.a: Financial resources (USD) available for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems	Baseline Indicator 2.1.a: Average of USD 1 million per year available for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems over 2019-2023 period	Target 2.1.a: Financial resources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems increased by 50% (USD 2.5 million over the lifetime of the project)	N	Y	N	Y	N	The indicator should be more specific in terms of where the resources should be made available and by when given there might be a latency period. Furthermore, the baseline should be revisited based on the MTE consulting team's observations regarding the methodology (see section 6.2.2 for details).
Indicator 2.1.b: Number of revenue streams to support long term sustainability of coastal ecosystems	Baseline Indicator 2.1.b: No revenue streams available to support long term sustainability of coastal ecosystems	Target 2.1.b: At least 2 new revenue streams to support the long-term sustainability developed	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues.
Indicator 2.1.c: Number of local organizations receiving small grants for coastal conservation	Baseline Indicator 2.1.c: No organizations receiving small grants for coastal conservation	Target 2.1.c: Small grants provided to at least three local organizations	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues in principle but ideally, the target should articulate what the funds should be earmarked for
Output 2.1.1: Potential carbon-based financing mechanisms for coastal ecosystem conservation identified and assessed								
Indicator 2.1.1: Number of prospectus for Blue Carbon demonstration/pilot project		Target 2.1.2: One prospectus for blue carbon demonstration / pilot project	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Is a prospectus the same as a feasibility study? If so, the wording should be updated because quarterly reports mention a feasibility study report but no prospectus.
Output 2.1.2: At least one conservation-friendly enterprise transacting with market participants in the project								

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
area to improve sustainable use of coastal and marine resources								
Indicator 2.1.2: Number of conservation-friendly enterprises active in the project area		Target 2.1.2: One enterprise	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	The output itself reads more like a more robust and specifically-worded indicator than the indicator itself.
Output 2.1.3: Small grant mechanism established to support coastal conservation								
Indicator 2.1.3: Number of organizations receiving small grants		Target 2.1.3: Three local organizations	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Consider removing as there is no value in repeating this as it is already captured as part of Indicator 2.1.c . If anything, this indicator should capture the mechanism, guidance and governance for disbursing and monitoring funds provided to local organizations.
Output 2.1.4: Potential scope, need and feasibility assessed of national financing mechanism to ensure long-term support for sustainable management of coastal ecosystems								
Indicator 2.1.4: Number of comprehensive design documents for national coastal conservation financing mechanism formally adopted by relevant government body/bodies		Target 2.1.4: One design document	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues.
Outcome 3.1: Community level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources improved through performance-based payments using conservation agreement <i>Community level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources improved through performance-based payments using conservation agreement</i>								
Indicator 3.1.a: Area (hectares) of mangrove ecosystems under protection across Liberia	Baseline Indicator 3.1.a: 10,257 hectares of mangrove ecosystems under protection across Liberia	Target 3.1.a: 11,975 additional hectares of mangrove ecosystems under protection across Liberia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues in principle but should specify that this is outside the protected area estate, per Core Indicator 4.1.
Indicator 3.1.b: Area (hectares) of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas	Baseline Indicator 3.1.b: 11,034 hectares of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable	Target 3.1.b: 5,000 additional hectares of terrestrial forest ecosystems under sustainable management in coastal areas	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues in principle but should specify that this is outside the protected area estate, per Core Indicator 4.1.

Indicator	Baseline Level	End-of-project Target	S-M-A-R-T					Issues / proposed amendment
	management in coastal areas							
Indicator 3.1.c: Income (USD) within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project	Baseline Indicator 3.1.c: Estimated monthly household income of \$65 USD within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project	Target 3.1.c: Income within coastal and mangrove communities targeted by the project improved by 50%	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	The indicator as it stands is poorly worded and should reference an increase in income among communities targeted by the Project and by when.
Output 3.1.1: Conservation agreements executed with 10 additional communities along the southeastern coast of Liberia								
Indicator 3.1.1: Number of Conservation Agreements signed with communities		Target 3.1.1: Ten Conservation Agreements	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues.
Output 3.1.2: A national conservation agreement program designed and established that offers economic incentives for coastal protection								
Indicator 3.1.2: Number of national conservation agreement programs designed and established		Target: 3.1.2: One national conservation agreement program	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No issues.

8 ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

191. Implementation and Execution arrangements and a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the different institutions and structures engaged in the project were put in place. The figure below shows the project organizational chart.

Figure 5: Project organizational chart



8.1 Quality of implementation

Quality of Implementation: The quality of implementation rating is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

192. Despite the delays and setbacks caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, the project was able to adapt to the restrictions. However, the project was not able to achieve the planned results and to deliver the planned activities, mostly due to the lack of a common vision, and a PMU in place (for more details, you can see the chapter 4 on the assessment of project results).

193. CI-GEF Agency managed the implementation of the project well and followed-up project implementation closely. As part of its technical and financial oversight role, CI-GEF supported the project implementation start-up phase by providing technical and financial guidance that would ensure compliance with GEF guidelines, safeguards requirements, and all technical and financial commitments made at CEO Approval. At project inception, CI-GEF reviewed the Annual Workplan and budget and spearheaded the signing of the grant agreement with the Executing Agency. CI-GEF also provided technical guidance and conducted financial management.

194. CI-GEF's provided technical and financial support; review of financial and technical progress and financial reports and providing timely recommendations (including risk mitigation measures. You can also see the last point of this paragraph). Reporting is timely, but PIRs are missing traceability to original planning milestones leading to overoptimistic ratings and continuity with Quarterly reports is difficult to follow.
195. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, CI-GEF could not embark on a supervision mission to Liberia but held frequent virtual meetings with the CI Liberia team in order to track project execution.
196. In the course of project implementation, risks were identified continuously. A major unforeseen risk that was identified by CI-GEF is the Coronavirus pandemic. Like other countries, the Government of Liberia imposed measures to contain the spread of the virus including declaring a health emergency, restricting the movements of people, and social distancing. These measures retarded the implementation of field activities and undermined the timely completion of some deliverables as per the established deadlines. Consequently, activities that involved face-to-face meetings were suspended, and staff had to work from home. CI-GEF managed this risk well by encouraging the project team to adopt virtual tools to ensure the continuous implementation of project activities that could be done remotely. In addition, the work plan and budget were revised, and a no-cost extension was requested as an adaptive management measure.
197. The mitigation measures for the "Risk 1: Insufficient political will to adopt and mainstream NCA" were not sufficient, as there it is unlikely that the NCA will be mainstreamed. The "Risk 9: implementation capacity is inadequate" was underestimated. The mitigation measure related to complementarity is not sufficient to mitigate the risk, as the Project considers just the NDC. The Project would have taken advantage of more incisive activities of advise, review and correction from CI-GEF side.

8.2 Quality of execution

Quality of Execution: The quality of execution rating is **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

198. In general, there was good coordination and communication between CI Liberia and EPA. The project's focal person at the EPA provided support to other actors. CI Liberia adopted the CI-GEF guidelines suspended all in-person meetings and required staff to work from home. Restrictions on the face-to-face meeting were circumvented by the adoption of virtual tools to complete project activities. The transition was not without its fair share of difficulties, as poor internet connections and the lack of knowledge on virtual meetings and working remotely deterred some stakeholders from participating.
199. The human resources effectively assigned full-time to the project management were the Project Manager (PM) and the Project Officer (PO). The Technical Director supervises the PMU activity and the Grant Manager is an officer that also works on activities other than the project. The responsibilities of the PM include management and technical tasks, communication and stakeholder engagement.
200. The PMU recently recruited the PM. During the first half of the project, two persons assumed the role of PM: the first, for 4 months and the second for 12 months. It means that the project had no PM for a long time and the changes implied delays in implementation and execution.
201. Work plan activities are captured in AWP that are submitted on an annual basis and rolled forward each year. AWP contain annual targets, outputs, activities and budgets.
202. The project management implemented the monitoring, reporting and verification tools required by the GEF while respecting the frequency of release set up since the beginning. However, there is a strong

disconnection between the contents of the PIRs, the activities planned in the AWP and the effective results achieved by the project. The PIRs' ratings are too optimistic in the respect of the project activities done and their effective results and impacts.

203. Internal communication and coordination with the stakeholders were Moderately Satisfactory, but required a relevant effort to achieve a shared and common perspective of the goals and objectives and to clarify some internal management procedures. The stakeholders perceive overlaps on the activities, confusion on the roles and the use of different standards and rules between CI-Liberia, CI-GEF and CI.

204. The organization of the archive system did not often follow specific criteria such as, for instance, a clear separation between administrative documents, like contracts and bids, in one comprehensive folder, the collection of all deliverables in folders articulated by outcomes/outputs, the provision, for the evaluators, of a conceptual and chronological map of the released documents.

205. The implementation of the work plans have not been timely overall with activities regularly slipping into the subsequent years, mainly due to changes in the human resources of the PMU, periods without the PM and the inability of the implementing partners to temporarily take care of the tasks of the PM and quickly recruit a new one. The project though has been quite flexible, and able to adapt and manage the activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, by mitigating the risk to implementation; some field activities were delayed, and some other activities carried on in virtual modality.

206. The project subcontracted some activities, especially those related to the preparation of strategic documents to orient the project progress. The project was not always capable of orienting the consultants' works and to verify that the results were in line with the ToRs' expectations. There is no evidence of validation formal processes of the consultancies' outputs. Some consultancies were not formally finalized, and some expected outputs are missing. Moreover, there is no evidence of knowledge sharing and transfer from the consultants to the implementing partners and stakeholders. The table below includes the list of sub-contractors during the MTR period.

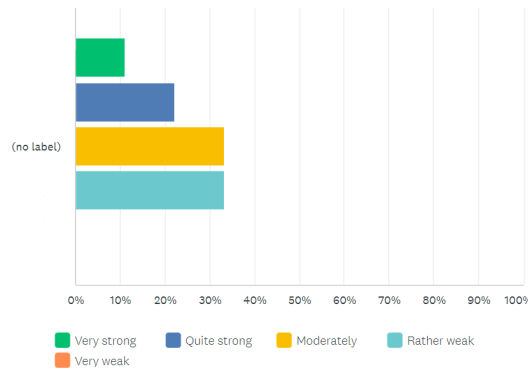
Consultancy	Consultants	Status
Market Assessment and Value Chain analysis of on and off-farm Micro, Small and Medium Conservation Friendly Enterprises in coastal counties of Liberia	ECO SPREW Consult	Finalized, not validated/ formally approved
Feasibility assessment on Blue Carbon alongside the coast of Liberia, the case of Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve and Marshal Proposed protected Area	Isaac Nyaneyon Kannah	Not finalized
Capacity building plan Natural Capital Accounting for Liberia	Ideea Group	Not finalized
National Strategy and Action Plan Natural Capital Accounting for	Ideea Group	Not finalized

Sources: documents shared by the project

- 207. The Moore Centre of Science (MCS) was involved in the project activities, to develop a monitoring mechanism (Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development) which incorporates NCA results for reporting progress on targets. During 2023 the agreement with MCS was terminated.
- 208. Quality control checks were put in place to ensure quality financial reporting. The executing agencies submitted quarterly financial reports to CI-GEF for review and approval, which in turn were reported in the PIRs that were submitted to the GEF.
- 209. As part of the grant agreement established between CI-GEF and CI-Liberia, the latter is obliged to comply with CI’s Procurement Policy for all goods, works, and/or services within the entire life of the project. There were some delays in the procurement and contracting of goods and services. The procedures applied were “open procurement procedures” with 3 to 4 weeks of advertisement to collect applications.
- 210. Based on the results of the online questionnaire, over 66% of respondents felt that the Project did not have the right management, governance and support structures in place to be successful and achieve its core objectives.

Figure 6: Perception of TE respondents on the quality of execution of the project

The project has the right project management, governance and support structures in place to achieve its objectives?



	VERY STRONG	QUITE STRONG	MODERATELY	RATHER WEAK	VERY WEAK	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	11.11% 1	22.22% 2	33.33% 3	33.33% 3	0.00% 0	9	2.78

9 ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS (ESS)

9.1 Overall Environmental and social safeguards Rating

Overall rating of Environmental and social safeguards	Rating
	Moderately Satisfactory

211. Safeguards screening was undertaken by CI-GEF during the design phase and the project fell under Category C (*minimal or no adverse environmental and social impacts*). The four safeguards outlined below were triggered. These safeguards are appropriate and ensure that the project activities have minimal or no adverse environmental and social impacts.

- **A Process Framework**, to ensure that the project meets the CI-GEF Project Agency’s “**Involuntary Resettlement Policy #3**” and following the guidance provided in Appendix IV of the CI-GEF Agency Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) Policy. In addition, the project monitoring plan was required to include tracking of and reporting on some indicators relating to the Restriction of Access to and Use of Natural Resources. In fact, although this project will not resettle individuals, it may have an effect on the use of marine and coastal resources by individuals and communities in the project areas.
- **A Stakeholder Engagement Plan**, to seek and incorporate the knowledge and contributions of partners and stakeholders to ensure that CI-GEF work and project result in lasting and fundamental improvements for nature and human well-being.
- **A Gender Mainstreaming Plan**, with the purpose of mitigating the potentially adverse effects of the project on men and women and of promoting equality in participation and decision-making in consultative processes, access to natural resources and services, and project benefits.
- **An Accountability and Grievance Mechanism**, to ensure the enforcement of CI’s ESMF policies and provide for the receipt of and timely response to the resolution of complaints from parties affected by its CI-GEF projects.

212. The ProDoc includes a set of indicators to be measured during the implementation. The set is monitored and report annually, as required by the ProDoc.

ESFM Policy	Indicator	Frequency
Process Framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources	Number of persons whose access to and use of natural resources have been voluntary restricted	Annual
	Number of persons whose access to and use of natural resources have been involuntarily restricted	Annual
	Percentage of persons who gave their consent for voluntary restrictions	Annual
	Percentage of persons who have received compensation for voluntary restrictions	Annual
	Percentage of persons who have received compensation for involuntary restrictions	Annual
Stakeholder engagement	Number of government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholder groups that have been involved in the project implementation phase on an annual basis	Annual

ESFM Policy	Indicator	Frequency
	Number of men/women demonstrating leadership in project implementation	Annual
	Number persons (sex disaggregated) that have been involved in project implementation phase (on an annual basis)	Annual
	Number of engagements (e.g. meeting, workshops, consultations) with stakeholders during the project implementation phase	Annual
Gender Mainstreaming	Number of men and women that participated in project activities (e.g. meetings, workshops, consultations)	Annual
	Number of men and women that received benefits (e.g. employment, income generating activities, training, access to natural resources, land tenure or resource rights, equipment, leadership roles) from the project	Annual
	Number of strategies, plans (e.g. management plans and land use plans) and policies derived from the project that include gender considerations (where relevant)	Annual
Grievance Mechanism	Number of conflict and complaint cases reported to the project's Accountability and Grievance Mechanism	Annual
	Percentage of conflict and complaint cases reported to the project's Accountability and Grievance Mechanism that have been addressed	Annual

Source: data from the ProDoc

213. The risks potentially affecting the project, and the mitigation measures, are identified in the ProDoc and in the safeguard risk form. The description and the mitigation measures are appropriate, also considering the potential effects and impacts on the safeguards.

214. In the Inception Workshop Report, the Process Framework for involuntary resettlement is not mentioned in the section regarding the safeguards. It is recommended that all safeguards should be disclosed during an inception meeting and captured in the inception workshop report.

9.2 Process Framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources

215. The implementation of the Process Framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources is **Satisfactory**.

216. While **the project has not and will not resettle individuals**, it may have an effect on access to marine and coastal resources by individuals and communities in the project areas. Sustainable management practices promoted by the project may include voluntary restrictions on access to resources. The Project includes the preparation and signing of 10 Conservation Agreements, to recognize that there is an opportunity cost associated with conservation. The opportunity cost of conservation reflects the value of what resource users give up by not utilizing their resources under the business-as-usual scenario. The agreements, different for each community, include a benefit package to offset the opportunity cost that resource owners believe they will incur if they choose conservation. The project compensates the communities for the loss of access to resources. To date, six conservation agreements are in place. The section on "Outcome 3.1.: Community-level conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources improved through performance-based payments using conservation agreements" includes a discussion on the results of the implementation of these agreements.

217. Despite the results of outcome 3.1 are not satisfactory, the project guarantees that the restriction of access to natural resources is properly compensated, with satisfaction for the involved local communities.

218. The table below includes the indicators for the process framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources.

Table 10: Progress towards the Process Framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources target indicators

ESS minimum indicators	End of Project target	Status at MTE: Progress towards expected targets. (As at FY23 Q3 ⁵ : Jan-March 2023)
1. Number of persons whose access to and use of natural resources have been voluntary restricted	<i>At least 1,100 (Male 700 and Female 400 (36%))</i>	2,278 people [1,062 male (47%) and 1,216 female (53%)] On track
2. Number of persons whose access to and use of natural resources have been involuntarily restricted	<i>Zero (0) men and Zero (0) women have been involuntarily restricted to access and use natural resources</i>	Total involuntary restricted persons: Zero (0) On track
3. Percentage of persons who gave their consent for voluntary restrictions	<i>100% of persons involved have given their consent for voluntary restrictions</i>	100% of persons (47% male and 53% female) gave their consent for voluntary restrictions. On track
4. Percentage of persons who have received compensation for voluntary restrictions	<i>100% of persons who voluntarily consented to restrictions to access and use of natural resources have received compensation</i>	100% (47% male and 53% female) of the town members are benefiting from the CA package delivered. On track
5. Percentage of persons who have received compensation for involuntary restrictions	<i>100% of persons who have been involuntarily restricted to access and use natural resources have received compensation</i>	No involuntary restrictions On track

Source: Progress reports (PIRs, Quarter Reports) and consultations

⁵ This Evaluation Report considers data and documents shared with the evaluation team by the beginning of May 2023. This is an exception made for the assessment of the ESS, as the Project provided specific updated data.

9.3 Stakeholder Engagement

219. The implementation of the Stakeholder engagement plan is rated **moderately satisfactory**, as the project was not able to involve all all the stakeholders.
220. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), in the annexes to the ProDoc, is sufficient and articulates the expected roles of each partner and stakeholder, as well as their respective interests in and anticipated benefits from the implementation of the Project.
221. The list of stakeholders, identified in Section 5 of the ProDoc, includes the following or groups: local communities, local county administrations, national government entities and bilateral/multilateral entities.
222. During the first half of implementation, the project was able to involve the stakeholders, also thanks to the measures adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the stakeholders listed in the ProDoc were engaged with an appropriate frequency. Some of them were not involved (among the local administrations, and bilateral/multilater entities). During the period with restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholder engagement was carried out in virtual modality, showing good capacity of adaptive management. This affected mostly the engagement of the local communities, while public entities were satisfied of their involvement in the project’s activities.
223. Communities were properly involved in the negotiation of conservation agreements and involved in sensitization and capacity-building activities. The project, as requested by the ProDoc, uses the rights-based approach (RBA) in engaging with local communities, including the discussion, negotiation and approval of conservation agreements. The project also follows the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Community members consulted, including women, were satisfied of the attention gave by the project.
224. It’s important to underline the unbalance between men and women in the engagement in the project activities, mostly during the first year. This is mostly due to the structures and human resources organization of the public administrations involved, where technicians and higher officers are mostly men.
225. The table below includes the indicators for the Stakeholder Engagement.

Table 11: Progress towards the SEP target indicators

ESMF minimum indicators	End of Project target <i>(Targets were set at the implementation phase as indicated in the FY22 PIR)</i>	Status at MTE: Progress towards expected targets. <i>(As at FY23 Q3: Jan-March 2023⁶)</i>
1.Number of government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, indigenous peoples and other stakeholder groups that have been involved in the project implementation phase on an annual basis	<i>Cumulatively, at least 50 institutions involved (with representation from Government, CSOs, local communities, Private sector, Media, and Academia.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five (5) stakeholder groups (government ministries and agencies; local communities, academic institutions; NGOs and CSO) • 45 institutions: Sixteen (16)

⁶ This Evaluation Report considers data and documents shared with the evaluation team by the beginning of May 2023. This is an exception made for the assessment of the ESS, as the Project provided specific updated data

ESMF minimum indicators	End of Project target <i>(Targets were set at the implementation phase as indicated in the FY22 PIR)</i>	Status at MTE: Progress towards expected targets. <i>(As at FY23 Q3: Jan-March 2023⁶)</i>
		Government agencies, nineteen (19) local communities, four (4) private sector institutions, three (3) Civil Society, and three (3) Academic institution) On track
2.Number persons (sex disaggregated) that have been involved in project implementation phase (on an annual basis)	<i>To avoid double-counting, the project follows the target numbers under Activity 1 in the gender mainstreaming plan</i>	1,095 (417 women and 678 men). On track
3.Number of engagements (e.g., meeting, workshops, consultations) with stakeholders during the project implementation phase	<i>At least 175 engagements held by the end of five years (35 engagements per year)</i>	86 Engagements On track

Source: Progress reports (PIRs, Quarter Reports) and consultations

9.4 Gender Mainstreaming

226. The implementation of the gender mainstreaming plan is **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

227. The gender dimension was considered in the Project Document. A part the specific section on gender mainstreaming, the ProDoc considers gender mainstreaming as an important element under the conservation agreements.

228. Strategies, plans, policies (for instance, the NDC) and other documents (feasibility study, analysis) derived by the project include gender considerations, but most of the time the gender questions are just mentioned, without identifying specific actions to address gender issues or to benefit women and disadvantaged target groups. There is no evidence of the (potential) impact on gender mainstreaming of these documents.

229. At community level, women were guaranteed to access appropriate information and were correctly involved, and they expressed satisfaction.

230. There is no sign that the project is influencing women empowerment and give them new opportunities to access economic activities. On the other hand, the project was able to provide economic compensation to women at community levels and the women consulted by the evaluation team were satisfied of the benefits provided by the project and the recognition of their role in the conservation

of coastal ecosystems. To date, no unintended outcome (positive or negative) related to gender equality has been found.

231. The project tried to ensure equitable participation, but there is an unbalance between men and women in the engagement in the project activities, mostly during the first year. The project was not able to enhance women leadership. Regardless the results of the indicators, key-people actively involved and able to influence the projects are almost all men. In general, higher officers and technicians in public administration are mostly men, and this represents a general limitation to the equitable participation. The table below includes the indicators for the gender mainstreaming plan.

Table 12: Progress towards the GMP target indicators

ESMF minimum indicators	End of Project target <i>(Targets were set at the implementation phase as indicated in the FY22 PIR)</i>	Status at MTE: Progress towards expected targets. <i>(As at FY23 Q3: Jan-March 2023⁷)</i>
Number of males and females that participated in project activities (e.g., meetings, workshops, consultations)	<i>To avoid double counting, the project follows the target numbers under Activity 2 in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).</i>	1,095 (417 women and 678 men). On track
Number of men and women that received benefits (e.g., employment, income generating activities, training, access to natural resources, land tenure or resource rights, equipment, leadership roles) from the project	<i>At least 6,050 direct beneficiaries: 2,904 (48%) Female and 3,146 Male (52%)</i>	1,037 direct beneficiaries: 412 (40%) Female 625 (60%) men On track
Number of men/women demonstrating leadership in project implementation	At least 150 people [105 Men (70%) and 45 Women (30%)] demonstrating leadership in project implementation.	80 people (54 men (67%) and 26 women (33%)) demonstrating leadership in project implementation. On track
Number of strategies, plans (e.g., management plans and land use plans) and policies derived from the project that include gender considerations (where relevant)	<i>At least five (5) strategy documents that include gender considerations (where relevant) generated: at least 1 document generated per year)</i>	Three (3) strategy documents that include gender considerations have been generated. On track

Source: Progress reports (PIRs, Quarter Reports) and consultations

⁷ This Evaluation Report considers data and documents shared with the evaluation team by the beginning of May 2023. This is an exception made for the assessment of the ESS, as the Project provided specific updated data.

9.5 Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM)

232. The implementation of the Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM) is **moderately unsatisfactory**.

233. The PPG documentation includes an “accountability and grievance compliance” document, that describes a specific process for the stakeholder complaints. It is sufficiently and clearly described. The same document states that “definition and launching of the grievance mechanism is an explicit component of the Conservation Agreement design and negotiation process”. However, consulted local communities are not aware of its existence and this makes the AGM useless.

234. The PIRs states that the mechanism was launched during the Inception Workshop, shared with the stakeholders and explained to the communities. However, this is mostly unknown by the communities consulted by the evaluation team. The table below includes the indicators for this safeguard.

Table 13: Progress towards the AGM target indicators

ESMF minimum indicators	End of Project target	Status at MTE: Progress towards expected targets. (As at FY22)
1. Number of conflict and complaint cases reported to the project’s Accountability and Grievance Mechanism	No target set	No complaint received
2. Percentage of conflict and complaint cases reported to the project’s Accountability and Grievance Mechanism that have been resolved	100% conflict and complaint cases resolved	Not applicable

Source: Progress reports (PIRs, Quarter Reports) and consultations

9.6 Key lessons learnt in the implementation of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)

235. There is no specific lesson learnt in the implementation of the Process Framework for Restriction of Access to Natural Resources and the stakeholder engagement.

9.6.1 Gender Mainstreaming

236. The key lessons learnt in the implementation of the gender mainstreaming plan are:

- a. There is objective limitation and difficulty in promoting in the Country women leadership or, at least, a strong role of women in decision making. At public organization level, this is mostly due to the structure of the administrations, where higher officers and technicians are mostly men.

- b. In order to effectively include gender consideration in NCA, strategies, plans and policies should identify specific actions to address gender issues or to benefit women and disadvantaged target groups.

9.6.2 Accountability and Grievance Mechanism

237. The key lesson learnt in the implementation of the AGM is:

- a. The functions and process of the AGM (as well as mechanisms with similar nature) should be fully disseminated to have the mechanism effectively in place.

10 OTHER ASSESSMENTS

10.1 Materialization of co-financing

238. The pledged cofinancing at CEO Endorsement is US\$ 11,194,248. The materialization of the cofinancing amount until FY22 was 5,186,196 \$ (46%), in line with the expected amount. The tables below include the materialization of cofinancing, articulated per entity and FYs.

Table 14: Planned and Actual co-financing materialized, as at 1st July 2022 (USD)

#	Type	Source	Name of Co-financier	Total proposed cofinancing USD	Amount Materialized (USD)	Total Percent Materialized
1	In-Kind	Recipient Government	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	5,000,000	2,000,000	40%
2	In-Kind	Recipient Government	Liberia Maritime Authority	2,000,000	1,000,000	50%
3	In-Kind	Recipient Government	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geoinformation Services (LISGIS)	2,000,000	1,000,000	50%
4	In-Kind	Recipient Government	Forestry Development Authority (FDA)- Liberia Forest sector Program	2,000,000	1,000,000	50%
5	Grant	GEF Implementing Agency	Conservation International	194,248	186,196	50%
Co-financing Totals:				11,194,248	5,186,196	46,32%

Table 15: Breakdown materialization of cofinancing over the fiscal years (US\$)

Source	Type	Name of Co-financier	Total proposed co-financing (ProDoc/1-Step) USD (A)	Amount Contributed during FY20	Amount Contributed FY21	Amount Contributed FY22	Amount Contributed To Date ITD
CI	Grant	Conservation International	194,248	14,699	86,178	85,319	186,196
GoL	In-kind	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	5,000,000		1,000,000	1,000,000	2,000,000
GoL	In-kind	Forestry Development Authority (FDA)	2,000,000		500,000	500,000	1,000,000
GoL	In-kind	Liberia Maritime Authority (LiMA)	2,000,000		500,000	500,000	1,000,000
GoL	In-kind	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geographical Information Services (LISGIS)	2,000,000		500,000	500,000	1,000,000
Co-financing Total:			11,194,248	14,699	2,586,178	2,585,319	5,186,196

10.2 Knowledge Management

239. Knowledge management is a core element of Component 1 and is in any case a pillar for components 2 and 3. The Knowledge management plan was not implemented in an appropriate way.
240. Data were collected, stored and analysed, but there is no system with data and associated products related to NCA available to a wide range of users. The only data available, such as the land cover map and the reports of the consultancy, were not digitally stored in a (online) database and geodatabase. GIS data are not available in the relevant formats (shapefiles, rasters)⁸, but just on images and they are not accessible on an open online platform.
241. During the evaluation period, the Project uploaded some documents on the CI GEF Project webpage⁹. The documents shared are: Conservation and Sustainable Use of Liberia's Coastal Natural Capital Engagement Meeting with UNDP Small Grant Unit, Joint Analysis of Existing and Proposed Sectors for Updating Liberia's Nationally Determined Contribution, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Liberia's Coastal Natural Capital Engagement Meeting with LISGIS, NCA Readiness: Scoping and Roadmap for Natural Capital Accounting (NCA), Land Cover and Change Map of Liberia, Knowledge Management – 2021, Project Reports (a zip folder including mostly documents already uploaded in the mentioned web page), Knowledge Management - Project Progress and Achievement, Technical Reports – 2022 Knowledge Management – 2022.
242. In any case, they are not sufficient considering the project objective, and this is a strong shortcoming of the project, GEF funds have to be used to achieve results for a large range of users and beneficiaries.
243. Capacities were built under component 1, with satisfaction of the stakeholders. More details are included in the section on Outcome 1.1.
244. Data for the design, justification and eventual gazettement of coastal protected areas in southeast Liberia were generated, but the MTE team cannot assess the quality and the usability of such data.
245. Lessons pertaining to the introduction of NCA in a capacity-constrained context can be formulated in the second half of the project, on the basis of the effective results and whether the project will be able to effectively introduce an NCA system and mainstream the NCA into development policies and strategies in Liberia.
246. Communities were aware about small grants and satisfied of the communication activities on this opportunity, but they are not aware about the Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP), which should represent a pillar for the long-term conservation of NCA (including the eventual gazettement of protected areas) and an important tool to shift away, in the long term, from conventional and unsustainable resource use practices.

⁸ The MTE team and almost all the stakeholders do not have access to the relevant formats.

⁹ <https://www.conservation.org/gef/projects-list/conservation-and-sustainable-use-of-liberia%E2%80%99s-coastal-natural-capital>

247. The process to capitalize the Blue Carbon initiative and so create investment opportunities cannot be considered finalized¹⁰. So, at this stage it is not possible to assess how and to what extent communications to market Blue Carbon investment opportunities have been implemented.

248. In order to improve the knowledge management, the project should:

- Promote data collection, storage and analysis, and pay attention to putting in place systems that enable access to data and associated products to a wide range of users.
- Introduce new tools and build capacities.
- Generate key data for the design, justification and potential gazettement of coastal protected areas in southeast Liberia.
- Generate a rich set of lessons pertaining to the introduction of NCA in a capacity-constrained context.
- Promote knowledge about the project via several communication channels.
- Raise community awareness of the importance of coastal resources, the Conservation Agreement model, and issues surrounding protected area establishment; inform communities about small grant opportunities and cultivate business relationships between communities and conservation-friendly enterprises.
- Rely on effective communications to market Blue Carbon investment opportunities to support development of new financing mechanisms for coastal conservation.

¹⁰ You can also see the section on Output 2.1.1: Potential carbon-based financing mechanisms for coastal ecosystem conservation identified and assessed.

11 LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

249. Per its original design, the Project remains highly relevant in the current socio-political context and is aligned with the priorities of Liberia, GEF, and CI. There is strong traceability and connections made towards the achievement of GEF-6 Focal Areas (Biodiversity (Program 10) and Land Degradation (Program 1), as well as key Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEAs) targets and objectives.
250. The project was well formulated. There is a good logical “chain of results” – activities, outputs, outcomes, and objective - to reach the expected results. It was a clear response to national priority needs and recognition that coastal ecosystems are critical to maintaining human well-being and global biodiversity, as well as to account for the value that mangroves provide in Liberia, and to help internalize the unpriced costs of development to improve consideration of impacts and tradeoffs of development decisions among policy-makers. No changes were made to the core design and intervention logic during the inception phase of the project, as documented in the Inception Report.
251. At the current pace of delivery and without significant adjustment to and/or acceleration of core products and services to be used as an anchor-point to enable mainstreaming to take root, it is unlikely that the Project will fully meet the core objective *“to improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory”*. Notwithstanding, the MTE has found the Project to have partially met the objective-level indicator at mid-term. It has progressively invested in improving data quality and availability (a prerequisite of quantifying the value of nature), as well as initial capacity building efforts. The Project could benefit however, from a modification to the results hierarchy and a “rethink” to prioritize core deliverables and impact pathways identified in the ToC, that will add the most value in the time remaining. This is a sentiment shared by multiple stakeholder consultations and corroborated by the results of the online questionnaire.
252. The MTE findings indicate that progress toward the Project’s Outcome is at an intermediate stage, with some potential for high levels of achievement by the end of operations. There is emerging evidence of synergies being made with national policy goals and development plans starting to be underpinned by National Capital Accounting concepts (an example being NCA project activities being integrated into the Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan for Liberia), although strategic thinking is required to clearly identify and articulate a roadmap of which policies and plans will be targeted, as well as the project's products and services – including any tools and techniques - that will be used to ensure mainstreaming. The project has sufficiently recognized that success is contingent on strengthened policy implementation capacities, improved biodiversity monitoring in targeted communities, and greater engagement of the private sector.
253. The Project has made some important strides forward and progress towards end-of-project targets for several outcome-level indicators under Outcome 1.1 with 2 of its 3 underlying indicators partially met and the remaining one at risk of not being met. However, the project continues to face challenges and significant shortcomings which limit the attainment of certain end-of-project targets and jeopardize the sustainability of some of the more complex results for Outcomes 2.1 and 3.1. For Outcome 2.1, 2 out of the 3 underlying indicators are at risk of not being met and the remaining indicator partially met. For Outcome 3.1, 1 out of the 3 underlying indicators are at risk of not being met with the remaining 2 indicators partially met at mid-term.
254. The level of progress and shortcomings can, in part, be attributed to the project facing a series of serious disruptive shocks which necessitated the regular use of adaptive management measures.

The project had to navigated COVID-19 restrictions which prevented field work and forced the use of virtual tools for much of its duration. There are been persistent changes and turnover to the project's management preventing dedicated support and requiring CI-Liberia staff to step in on multiple occasions. There was also disruption to the delivery of core products due to issues with sub-contractors, principally the Moore Centre for Science and Oceans. These have cumulatively disrupted the momentum of the project and led to protracted delays and ability to progress towards achieving a number of outcome-level indicators.

255. Even when considering the external shocks and unforeseen challenges faced by the project, there are some significant technical shortcomings which have prevented the project from reaching its full potential.
256. With the exception of the Nationally Determined Contribution, there are few conduits being explored for ensuring coastal natural capital is effectively mainstreamed into the national development policies and strategies. There are few activities in place to effectively integrate the conservation and maintenance of natural capital and ecosystem services into development actions. Public officers and decision makers responsible for the design and implementation of national development policies and strategies were involved in the project activities, are aware of the importance of NCA, and are capacitated, but there is no concrete action (such as a road-map) in place to translate technical knowledge and awareness in policy actions. This is exacerbated by the detachment observed by some government entities. The Policy Assessment Report, while a step in the right direction, falls short of defining a roadmap and articulating which national development policies, strategies and plans will be targeted for this project specifically, and how.
257. It is still difficult and somewhat premature to verify with conviction the true impact of the NCA project at mid-term, since there are still products in the process of delivery given the delays incurred thus far, which in the most extreme cases are 2 years behind schedule from the original milestone dates identified in the early Annual Work Plans before being pushed out in successive progress reports and PIRs due to delays (i.e., Output 1.1.2, Output 1.1.3, Output 1.1.4, Output 1.1.5, Output 1.1.7, Output 2.1.2, Output 2.1.3, Output 3.1.2). There are other deliverables in the early stages of validation, are still in draft format or have yet to be formally presented and approved by the Project's governance mechanisms.
258. Despite having established some foundational biodiversity baseline and thematic mapping of the target landscapes, the methodologies used in some cases could be improved on (as in the case of the site level blue carbon feasibility assessment described in Section 6.3), with more time spent in the field and interfacing with the implementation team and starting with a solid understanding of how their studies will contribute to the achievement of the Project's objectives.
259. While the MTE consulting team requested to be engaged in real-time to help triage and learn more about the circumstances resulting in the Moore Centre for Science and Oceans (MCS) no longer prioritizing NCA at the organizational level due to changes in CI's institutional priorities and the impacts on the Project and delivery, it was neither involved nor has core information (adaptive management plan with options analysis) been provided for review. Therefore, the MTE consulting team does not have sufficient data points nor the contextual background to recommend a way forward at this juncture. It is also not possible to assess what adaptive management measures were employed by the project to address this challenge.
260. Progress on community-based conservation is substantially behind schedule. Capacity building on fostering a deeper appreciation of NCA and sustainable resource use is adequate for government staff, but less so for communities. Conservation International Liberia has generated recognized contributions in capacity and policy development, partnership building, and the piloting of

innovative approaches that have the potential to inform policy and to be replicable on a wider scale. Support from the National Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee are critical in enabling the policies and developments incorporating NCA, in partnership with the EPA.

261. Enhancing carbon sequestration in and around coastal areas in target mangrove forests is progressing at the theoretical level through studies of blue carbon potential. Carbon coefficients were developed, and carbon stocks have for the most part been assessed but are not exhaustive. Financial resource targets for for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems however are not on track.
262. Community experiences in sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity monitoring offer insight and lessons that are relevant to the sustainable management of protected areas. Government partners have expanded contacts with other government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs through consultative processes and joint collaborations.
263. However, there are operational constraints and externalities that restrict opportunities for project development and resource mobilization. Project implementation and adaptive management is poor with few examples of out-of-the-box thinking when problems arise. Core project management arrangements are sub-optimal with segregation of delivery and back-office operations causing persistent problems with disbursement and not creating the atmosphere that can enable an effective PMU. While work planning appears to be ambitious, delivery is not aligned and work planning is insufficiently results-based.
264. Contracting delays and slow project start-up are the main threats to project performance and impact. Qualified environmental expertise is available in Liberia but not called upon leading to perception of an an overreliance of international consulting firms with no clear knowledge transfer. As a result, various technical deliverables face extended contracting delays that weaken implementation and lower project delivery. Project timelines are sometimes insufficient to achieve project objectives or contribute meaningfully to the outcome also given the outsourcing model.
265. The M&E plan is a satisfactory monitoring framework to measure the performance of the project with a good mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The 24 indicators are, for the most part, SMART indicators with clear targets; they have been used to report progress made in the Quarterly / PIR reports. Monitoring needs to be improved and the PMU is currently ill-equipped and does not have sufficient bandwidth (nor will it have going forward given the acceleration needed) to keep pace with the monitoring required for both outcome- and output-level indicators, which warrant a sustained field presence. It is encouraging that gender-specific data are collected to the extent possible largely due to the project being in-tune with making the project as gender-responsive as possible. Going forward however, technical documents prepared by the project, such as feasibility study and analysis, should consider more gender mainstreaming, by introducing how specific actions impact men and women differently, and to provide more concrete opportunities to women and other disadvantaged groups for sustainable (i.e., eco-friendly) economic activities, conservation activities, as well as support the development of women leadership in management and sustainable valorization of natural capital in the coastal zones. The implementation of the actions identified by these documents shall be technically and financially supported by the project.
266. Government agencies and academic, research, and technical consulting institutions were onboarded effectively, although there is a palpable atmosphere of detachment and resentment. The private sector was not engaged. Community awareness and engagement are not yet adequate. Reporting is timely, but PIRs are missing traceability to original planning milestones leading to overoptimistic ratings and continuity with Quarterly reports is difficult to follow. The documentation of risks and adaptive management responses may be improved and corresponding

mitigations included as activities in Annual Work Planning; but could be quickly resolved with a seasoned Project Manager.

267. Internal communication and external communication are satisfactory and have attracted visibility. The Project can make better use of social media and awareness events. Communication through printed brochures, briefs, etc. is strong, but a designated project website is not operational, currently leveraging CI's infrastructure. The latter could help address gaps identified in knowledge management, which is inconsistent with the vision articulated in the Project Document. Conversely, communication gaps with government partners have affected coordination. Due to workload pressures and staffing constraints, there is limited bandwidth within the CI-Liberia to follow-up on critical tasks, provide in-depth monitoring, or support knowledge management processes. The combination of factors raises the time, level of effort, and transactional costs needed to successfully at tightly integrated project.

Sustainability

268. The sustainability of project achievements is moderately unlikely. Financial risks are high. While the project is working towards operationalizing a small grants facility and there has also been moderate success in securing resources for sustainable management of mangroves and improvement of livelihoods in coastal communities, sustainable financing mechanisms have yet to take shape making the project dependent on external resources as opposed to the innovative financial schemes articulated in the Project Document under Component 2. Socio-political risks are minimal in terms of strong and continued political capital and support toward project objectives and achievements, but can quickly become compromised if mainstreaming of NCA is not integrated into broader development objectives, plans and strategies. Significant institutional risks prevail as there has not been discussion on an exit strategy and transitioning the products and services to other entities. It is unclear how the Project will replace the involvement of key institutions key to NCA accounts. This is compounded by weak coordination and communication with government and other partners. Governance risks are substantial for community agreements and community-based organizations established by the Project also bear substantial governance risks due to limited capacities and lack of political equity. Environmental risks are high and concerning since the Project is putting insufficient emphasis on environmental sustainability through conservation agreements, which have been allowed to lapse.

Most important lessons

269. **Emerging lesson 1** - more pragmatism and appreciation of systemic constraints (at national and local level) at the design of project targets during the project formulation phase, so they are not entirely out of reach from those who ultimately manage projects: While GEF projects must be ambitious to achieve global environmental benefits, they need to balance and take into consideration the sphere of influence of the management teams that implement them so as not to set them up for failure with unrealistic expectations and targets that are complex, especially those related to species. This is especially true in mainstreaming projects where there is a need to ensure that projects straddle and feed into government processes and timelines. Contexts change and projects should be afforded the flexibility to revise outcomes and outputs that clearly cannot be achieved at the end of the project period and replace them with more rational and feasible alternatives.

270. **Emerging lesson 2** - continuity in leadership and resourcing¹¹ is key to project delivery and even more so in complex ones: too many resource changes within a project, especially key decision makers, can have significant negative impacts. Team chemistry and careful selection of project management can make or break projects.
271. **Emerging lesson 3** - project teams need to be empowered to make decisions: Projects must be country-owned and country-led and delivery teams must have the latitude to make mistakes, learn from them and make firm decisions that stick. As part of the UN Secretary General's Development Reform, accountability should be concentrated on the Project Manager. The PSC or Advisory Committee(s) should be sufficiently involved in daily execution (more than twice per year) to ensure engagement and facilitate rapid decision-making when needed. Based on Project Management best practice, clear escalation channels and service levels for triaging and resolving issues should be established so projects can focus on delivery.
272. **Emerging lesson 4** - too much time focusing on procurement, contracting, and administrative modalities can derail delivery: introduction of new requirements and the reopening of administrative procedures derail projects with many stakeholder contracts and disbursements. These need to be locked from the outset.
273. **Emerging lesson 5** - Budget management should rest with the Project Manager if they are to be accountable for delivery. Projects with remote communities must be prepared financially to spend a lot of time in the field, as these are the key beneficiaries of projects in the GEF's eyes.
274. **Emerging lesson 6** - In complex projects with multiple stakeholders, there is immense value of having a dedicated Relationship Manager as an integral part of the project implementation team. The Relationship Manager plays a crucial role in fostering effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders, promoting project ownership, and ensuring the successful delivery of project outcomes. GEF projects often involve multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, local communities, private sector partners, and international organizations. Coordinating and aligning their efforts can be complex. A Relationship Manager acts as a central point of contact, building strong relationships with all stakeholders, understanding their perspectives and interests, and effectively communicating the project's objectives and progress. This fosters trust, transparency, and active engagement among all parties. Having a dedicated Relationship Manager empowers stakeholders by involving them in the decision-making process. By actively seeking their input, concerns, and feedback, the Relationship Manager helps create a sense of ownership among stakeholders. This sense of ownership encourages active participation, commitment, and a shared responsibility for project success. It can also help in abating emerging conflicts before intractable disagreements arise.

Recommendations

275. The recommendations which have evolved out of the MTE process, and which are presented in this report, are grouped into two categories: augmentative, and corrective. The **augmentative** recommendations are those which are intended to expand upon, strengthen, or replicate project actions that have shown relative success thus far in achieving project results (or leading in that direction). The **corrective** recommendations are those which are meant to provide a means for

¹¹ Resourcing means assigning actual resources (a rather cold expression in Project Management lexicon, which normally means people) to the project. There are two very different aspects to this: deciding which resources to apply to which work items in the project plan, and, actually getting the resources to work for the project.

strengthening or putting back on-track those aspects of the project which have shown deficiencies, or which have met persistent obstacles which have hampered successful implementation.

Table 16: Summary of findings and recommendations

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
<p>Undertake a comprehensive, participatory, and strategic review of the project design and Project Logical Framework. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the overall scope of work to core deliverables based on an assessment on what is realistic in the time remaining given project and government constraints; • review the financial needs assessment (the financial resources for the sustainable management and restoration of coastal ecosystems) • prioritizing interventions that are likely to have the greatest sustainable impact by the end of the project as per outcomes of the reconstructed Theory of Change; • paring down and ensuring indicators are uniquely impact-oriented; • ensuring all indicators are SMART; • apply a holistic, integrated, and participatory strategy to the planning and management of the project’s 3 Outcomes, with careful attention to dependencies, to strengthen the present ‘scattergun’ approach; • ensuring that project progress and impacts can be measured systematically and rolls up to the objective level; • taking a Theory of Change approach to the prioritization of investments; • systematically recording all major changes to the original project design described in the Project Document and seeking approval from the Project Steering Committee. 	Corrective	PMU, CI-Liberia, CI-GEF and PSC (Immediately following MTE)
<p>To meet its potential, the Project needs to accelerate delivery within the next year. Failure to achieve core deliverables will likely lead to sub-optimal results in the achievement of the core objective. As such, the Project should be on a milestone-based performance plan. Any extension request should be weighed against the achievement of clear yearly milestones. Indicative milestones are as follows:</p> <p>2023 (Calendar year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of the NCA Liberia National Strategy and Action Plan, which includes endorsement and sign-off by the TAC and NSC; • Recruitment of a dedicated Project Manager and M&E Officer; • Finalization of NCA Liberia Training Modules; • Renewal of Community Conservation Agreements based on lessons learned; • Update roadmap of policies, strategies, and development plans targeted with key milestones and how to get there. The road map shall identify at least 3 policies/strategies to be prepared with an effective mainstreaming of NCA into their objectives and concrete actions <p>2024 (Calendar year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of Mangrove Accounts; 	Corrective	CI-GEF (Immediately following MTE)

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot multiple sustainable financing mechanisms; • Engagement of at least 1 private sector partner in coastal conservation; • Delivery of training programme; • Implement financial mechanisms with the most promise to deliver sustainable benefits; • Increase Community Conservation Agreements. 2025 (Calendar year): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target policies and development plans for the incorporation of NCA, including also actions on gender mainstreaming; • Transition strategy 		
Approve a no-cost extension on the basis of the successful realization of milestone targets and if not, wind down the project gracefully.	Corrective	CI-GEF, Project Steering Committee (initiate process mid-2024 following PIR, based on achievement of and progress towards milestones)
PMU is ill-equipped to fully meet and address the monitoring requirements of the project and should engage an M&E Officer. Once onboard, a review of the Monitoring Plan should be conducted.	Corrective	CI-Liberia, CI-GEF (Immediately following MTE)
Gender and social inclusion measures should be reviewed and updated as necessary as part of the role of a newly assigned or recruited M&E Officer. Indicators should be checked and opportunities to disaggregate data maximized for gender, youth, elderly, indigenous, etc. Going forward technical documents prepared by the project, such as feasibility study and analysis, should consider more the gender mainstreaming, by introducing specific actions to provide more concrete opportunities to women and other disadvantaged groups for sustainable (eco-friendly) economic activities, conservation activities and to support the development of women leadership in management and sustainable valorization of natural capital in the coastal zones.	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Once recruitment of M&E Officer is complete and individual is onboarded)
Revisit environmental and social safeguard risks and include training to communities on grievance mechanisms and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Training should not be one-off, but an ongoing activity to ensure communities internalize concepts and recourse. As a part of the ongoing process to mainstream safeguards in project operations, the PMU should make efforts to foster broader inclusion within the communities and organizations supported by the project.	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Immediately following MTE)
The current management structure of the project needs to be realigned to empower the PMU and enable the Project Manager (PM) to be fully accountable for delivery. This includes oversight of the budget, including the travel budget.	Corrective	CI-GEF, Project Steering Committee (Immediately following MTE)
More travel to the field and a key is to rebuild trust and relationships with communities, per the stakeholder engagement model and ambition in the Project Document.	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Next Annual Work Planning cycle)
Ensure that community conservation agreements are renewed and not left to expire. Ensure to demonstrate early value so communities see the benefits of extending these agreements.	Corrective	PMU (Immediately following MTE)
Strengthen reporting, particularly the traceability between		PMU, CI-Liberia, CI-GEF

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
<p>Quarterly Reports and PIRs. It is recommended that something akin to a ‘traffic lights’ dashboard system is adopted for reporting quarterly at output level (not activity level which is likely to be too time-consuming), using self-assessed quantitative estimates of progress towards completion, supported by qualitative evidence (photos, etc.).</p>	Corrective	(Following MTE and next PIR)
<p>In the remaining part of the project, the PMU should devote more efforts to systematizing and disseminating the lessons learned from the project, especially those regarding the project’s intervention model. With the help of CI-Liberia, any barriers should be removed for communication activities to take place. This should include developing and implementing a Communications Strategy and Action Plan, as well as regular regimented updates to connect stakeholders to the broader narrative.</p> <p>The Project must invest in a robust Knowledge Management system, including a designated website/repository for technical studies long-term. The project should also establish a dataset, with a GIS component, with all the relevant data needed to implement the NCA in Liberia. The dataset shall be shared online with the relevant stakeholders, that will be able to download and use them. The Project shall also identify external stakeholders which could benefit of this dataset.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, EPA, PMU (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Improve the efficiency of decision-making and communication processes. The Executing Entities should address the challenges identified for efficient decision-making and communication by improving the project’s governance system.</p> <p>In particular, multiple layers of approval should be reserved for the most strategic issues, thus letting operational decisions be made by the PMU. As for communication, the Executing Entities should make sure that staff involved in the project in different geographical locations and organizational roles can access updated information regarding project planning, progress and upcoming activities in a timely and user-friendly manner. This might be done either by creating new communication channels, or by improving the quality of those already existing, as considered appropriate. In any case, this should not cause an additional workload to the staff.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, EPA, Project Steering Committee (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Develop an adaptation management strategy. Given the delays in implementation, CI-GEF and the Executing Entities, including the PMU, should jointly develop an adaptation management strategy to ensure the achievement of project targets.</p> <p>This strategy should draw on a realistic assessment of a) potential delays in the remaining part of the project (e.g., caused by COVID-19, disruption in management and MCS), b) available cofinancing; and c) of the scope that the project can achieve given the available human and financial resources, without sacrificing quality and depth of support.</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, PMU (Immediately following MTE)
<p>Develop a consultative transition plan / sustainability strategy. Given the importance of linking the project with other initiatives to ensure continued work in the priority landscapes and sustained outcomes, the Executing Entities, with the support of the PMU,</p>	Corrective	CI-Liberia, EPA, PMU (Immediately following MTE)

Recommendation	Corrective / Augmentative	Responsibility and Timeline
<p>should formalize and implement a systematic, updated exit strategy. This strategy should be developed by involving project partners and cofinanciers, thus providing articulating the different opportunities that have been emerging, and should consider existing risks to project sustainability, including political risks (elections) and environmental risks (climate change impacts) among others.</p>		
<p>Consider changing the format and approach to the PIR so that the narrative and ratings of the PMU, CI-Liberia and CI-GEF are treated as separate entris. This is best practice and aligned to the approach taken by other GEF Agencies. Decentralizing narrative and comments on progress would be an important check and balance, as well as improve the credibility of the project rating.</p>	Augmentative	CI-GEF (by 2024 PIR)
<p>Consider a neutral third-party entity to manage GEF-funded projects going forward.</p>	Augmentative	CI-GEF (No distinct timeline)

ANNEXES

ANNEX A: Bibliography

(This section does not include the documents prepared by the project along its cycle)

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The GEF, 2021, White paper on the COVID-19 response strategy for GEF projects and activities.

The GEF, 2022, Guidance to advance gender equality in GEF-funded projects and programs.

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ANNEX B: Evaluation Terms of Reference

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) requires Mid-Term Evaluations (TEs) for full-sized projects and encourages TEs for medium-sized projects. TEs are conducted by independent consultants and are used as an adaptive management tool by GEF Agencies and as a portfolio monitoring tool by the GEF Secretariat. TEs are primarily a monitoring tool to identify challenges and outline corrective actions to ensure that a project is on track to achieve maximum results by its completion. **All reports that are submitted must be in English.**

I. Scope of Work:

1. Kick off meeting to introduce team, and provide project related documents for evaluations, based on the submitted proposal.
2. The evaluator will conduct a desk review of project documents (i.e. PIF, Project Document, plans related to the Environmental and Social Safeguards [including Accountability and Grievance Mechanism, Gender Mainstreaming, and Stakeholder Engagement], Work plans, Budgets, Project Inception Report, Quarterly Reports, PIRs, documents with project results, Finalized GEF Focal Area Tracking Tools, policies and guidelines used by the Executing Agency, CI-GEF Evaluation Policy, GEF Evaluation Policy, Project Operational Guidelines, Manuals and Systems, etc.), and develop draft Key informant Questionnaire and draft mid-term evaluation inception report to be reviewed by CI-GEF team. The report will contain the initial information on the following:
 - a. Initial subject of the review, and relevant context.
 - b. Purpose of the evaluation: why is the evaluation being conducted at this time, who needs the information and why?
 - c. Objectives of the evaluation: What the evaluation aims to achieve (e.g. assessment of the results of the project, etc.).
 - d. Scope: What aspects of the project will be covered, and not covered, by the evaluation
 - e. Identification and description of the evaluation criteria (including relevance, effectiveness, results, efficiency, and sustainability).
 - f. Key evaluation questions.
 - g. Methodology including approach for data collection and analysis, and stakeholder engagement.
 - h. Rationale for selection of the methods, and selection of data sources (i.e. sites to be visited, stakeholders to be interviewed).
 - i. Proposal on the system for data management and maintenance of records.
 - j. Intended products and reporting procedures.
 - k. Potential limitations of the evaluation.
3. The evaluator will host a workshop (in person/virtual) with the Executing Agencies to clarify understanding of the objectives and methods of the Mid-Term Evaluation. The conclusion of the workshop will be summarized in a Mid-Term Evaluation Workshop Report with the following information:
 - a. Final subject of the review, and relevant context.
 - b. Purpose of the evaluation: why is the evaluation being conducted at this time, who needs the information and why?
 - c. Objectives of the evaluation: What the evaluation aims to achieve (e.g. assessment of the results of the project, etc.)?
 - d. Scope: What aspects of the project will be covered, and not covered, by the evaluation.
 - e. Identification and description of the evaluation criteria (including relevance, effectiveness, results, efficiency, and sustainability).
 - f. Key evaluation questions.
 - g. Methodology including approach for data collection and analysis, and stakeholder engagement.
 - h. Rationale for selection of the methods, and selection of data sources (i.e. sites to be visited, stakeholders to be interviewed).

- i. Final system for data management and maintenance of records.
 - j. Intended products and reporting procedures.
 - k. Potential limitations of the evaluation.
4. The evaluator will undertake the evaluation of the project, including any interviews and in-country site visits, based on the Guidelines for the Evaluator/s section II.
The evaluator will Present initial findings to the Executing Agency, CI's General Counsel's Office (GCO) and CI-GEF Agency at the end of MTE mission.
5. Based on the document review and the in-country interviews/site visits, the evaluator will prepare a draft evaluation report following the outline in Annex 1. The report will be shared with the Executing Agencies and the CI-GEF Agency. Each party can provide a management response, documenting questions or comments on the draft evaluation report.
6. The evaluator will incorporate comments and will prepare the final evaluation report. The evaluator will submit a final evaluation report in word and PDF and will include a separate document highlighting where/how comments were incorporated.

II. Guidelines for the Evaluator(s):

- Evaluators will be independent from project design, approval, implementation and execution. Evaluators will familiarize themselves with the GEF programs and strategies, and with relevant GEF policies such as those on project cycle, M&E, co-financing, fiduciary standards, gender, and environmental and social safeguards.
- Evaluators will take perspectives of all relevant stakeholders (including the GEF Operational Focal Point[s]) into account. They will gather information on project performance and results from multiple sources including the project M&E system, tracking tools, field visits, stakeholder interviews, project documents, and other independent sources, to facilitate triangulation. They will seek the necessary contextual information to assess the significance and relevance of observed performance and results.
- Evaluators will be impartial and will present a balanced account consistent with evidence.
- Evaluators will apply the rating scales provided in these guidelines in Annex 2.
- Evaluators will abide by the GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines.

III. Expected Outputs and Deliverables:

Number	Activity	Deliverable	Due Date
1	Introductory Call	Work plan for evaluation Summary of the introductory call to introduce team members and review evaluation timeline	29 th November 2022
2	Desk review of all relevant project documents	a. Draft Mid-Term Evaluation b. Inception Report outline c. Key Informant Questionnaires	16 th January 2023
3	Host Evaluation Inception workshop with Executing Agencies (virtual/in person)	Mid-Term Evaluation Inception Workshop Report	3 rd February 2023 (TBC)
4	Evaluation of the project via interviews and site visits (virtual and in person)	Mid-Term Evaluation Report (Draft)	12 th May 2023

5	Present Mid Term Evaluation findings during a virtual stakeholder validation meeting	Draft Final Report (with comments from the virtual stakeholder validation meeting addressed)	12 th August 2023 (TBC)
6	Revised report incorporating any additional comments from CI and stakeholders	Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report (word and PDF), including document showing how comments/questions were incorporated	12 th September 2023

Outline for Draft and Mid-Term Evaluation Report

The draft and final evaluation reports should at the minimum contain the information below:

General Information

The Mid-Term Evaluation report will provide general information on the project and conduct of the Mid-Term Evaluation. This includes information such as:

- GEF Project ID
- Project name
- GEF financing
- Planned and materialized co-financing.
- Key objectives
- GEF Agency
- Project countries
- Key dates
- Name of the Project Executing Agency(ies)

The Mid-Term Evaluation report will also provide information on when the evaluation took place, places visited, who was involved, the methodology, and the limitations of the evaluation. The report will also include, as annexes to the main report, the evaluation team's terms of reference, its composition and expertise.

Where feasible and appropriate, the Mid-Term Evaluation reports should include georeferenced maps and/or coordinates that demarcate the planned and actual area covered by the project. To facilitate tracking and verification, where feasible, the Mid-Term Evaluations should include geo-referenced pictures of the sites where GEF supported interventions were undertaken.

Project Theory of Change

The Mid-Term Evaluation report will include a description of the project's theory of change including description of: the outputs, outcomes, intermediate states, and intended long-term environmental impacts of the project; the causal pathways for the long-term impacts; and, implicit and explicit assumptions. The project's objective(s) should also be included within the theory of change.

Some of the projects may already have an explicit theory of change. Where appropriate, after consultations with the project stakeholders, the evaluators may refine this theory of change. Where an explicit theory of change is not provided in the project documents, the evaluators should develop it based on information provided in the project documents and through consultations with the project stakeholders. The report should provide an explicit (or implicit) statement on project's theory of change - i.e., how through a causal chain project activities would lead to project outcomes and long-term impact. It should describe how causal links among the outputs, outcomes and long-term impacts are supposed to work. The report should also include the assumptions made in the project's theory of change.

Assessment of Project Results

The MTE must assess achievement of project outputs and outcomes, and report on these. While assessing a project's results, evaluators will determine and rate the extent to which the project objectives – as stated in the documents submitted at the CEO Endorsement stage – have been achieved. The evaluator(s) should also indicate if there were any changes in project design and/or expected results after start of implementation. If the project did not establish a baseline (initial conditions), where feasible, the evaluator should estimate the baseline conditions so that results can be determined. Where applicable, the Mid-Term Evaluation report will include an assessment of the level of achievement of the GEF corporate results targets/core indicators to which the project contributes and will also incorporate data from the focal area tracking tool and/or core indicator worksheet.

Outputs

The evaluator should rate the extent to which the expected outputs were actually delivered. An identification and assessment of the factors that affected delivery of outputs should also be included.

Outcomes

The evaluator should rate the extent to which the expected outcomes were achieved and the extent to which its achievement was dependent on delivery of project outputs. They should also assess the factors that affected outcome achievement, e.g. project design, project's linkages with other activities, extent and materialization of co-financing, stakeholder involvement, etc. Where the project was developed within the framework of a program, the assessment should also report on the extent the project contributed to the program outcomes.

Criteria for Outcome Ratings

Outcome ratings will take into account the outcome achievements of the projects against its expected targets.

Project outcomes will be rated on three dimensions: a. Relevance: Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, country priorities, and mandates of the Agencies? Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? b. Effectiveness: Were the project's actual outcomes commensurate with the expected outcomes? c. Efficiency: Was the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects? Rating Scale for Outcomes: An overall outcome rating will be provided on a six-point scale (highly satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory) after taking into account outcome relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency (See Annex 2).

Sustainability

The assessment of sustainability will weigh risks to continuation of benefits from the project. The assessment should identify key risks and explain how these risks may affect continuation of benefits after the GEF project ends. The analysis should cover key risks, including financial, socio-political, institutional, and environmental risks. The overall sustainability of project outcomes will be rated on a four-point scale (Likely to Unlikely) based on an assessment of the likelihood and magnitude of the risks to sustainability. Higher levels of risks and magnitudes of effect, imply lower likelihood of sustainability. Annex 2 describes the rating scale for sustainability.

Progress to Impact

It is often too early to assess the long-term impacts of the project at the point of project completion. This said, some evidence on progress towards long-term impacts, and the extent to which the key assumptions of the project's theory of change hold, may be available and it may be feasible to assess and report on the progress. The evaluators should also assess the extent to which the progress towards long-term impact may be attributed to the project.

The evaluators should report the available qualitative and quantitative evidence on environmental stress reduction (e.g. GHG emission reduction, reduction of waste discharge, etc.) and environmental status change (e.g. change in population of endangered species, forest stock, water retention in degraded lands, etc.). When reporting such evidence, the evaluator should note the information source and clarify the scale/s at which the described environmental stress reduction is being achieved.

The evaluators should cover the project's contributions to changes in policy/ legal/regulatory frameworks. This would include observed changes in capacities (awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, monitoring systems, etc.) and governance architecture, including access to and use of information (laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc.). Contribution to change in socioeconomic status (income, health, well-being, etc.) should also be documented.

Where the environmental and social changes are being achieved at scales beyond the immediate area of intervention, the evaluators should provide an account of the processes such as sustaining, mainstreaming, replication, scaling up and market change, through which these changes have taken place. The evaluators should discuss whether there are arrangements in the project design to facilitate follow-up actions, and should document instances where the GEF promoted approaches, technologies, financing instruments, legal frameworks, information systems, etc., were adopted/implemented without direct support from, or involvement of, the project. Evidence on incidence of these processes should be discussed to assess progress towards impact.

When assessing contributions of GEF project to the observed change, the evaluators should also assess the contributions of other actors and factors. The evaluators should assess merits of rival explanations for the observed impact and give reasons for accepting or rejecting them. Where applicable, the evaluators are encouraged to identify and describe the barriers and other risks that may prevent further progress towards long-term impacts.

The evaluators should document the unintended impacts – both positive and negative impacts – of the project and assess the overall scope and implications of these impacts. Where these impacts are undesirable from environmental and socio-economic perspectives, the evaluation should suggest corrective actions.

Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

The evaluators will include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the project M&E plan and its implementation.

M&E Design. To assess the quality of the M&E plan, the evaluators will assess:

- a. Was the M&E plan at the point of CEO Endorsement practical and sufficient?
- b. Did it include baseline data?
- c. Did it: specify clear targets and appropriate (SMART) indicators to track environmental, gender, and socio-economic results; a proper methodological approach; specify practical organization and logistics of the M&E activities including schedule and responsibilities for data collection; and, budget adequate funds for M&E activities?

M&E Implementation. The evaluators should assess:

- a. Whether the M&E system operated as per the M&E plan?
- b. Where necessary, whether the M&E plan was revised in a timely manner?
- c. Was information on specified indicators and relevant GEF focal area tracking tools gathered in a systematic manner?
- d. Whether appropriate methodological approaches have been used to analyze data?
- e. Were resources for M&E sufficient? How was the information from the M&E system used during the project implementation?

Project M&E systems will be rated on the quality of M&E design and quality of M&E implementation using a six-point scale (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory). Annex 2 provides more details on the scale.

Assessment of Implementation and Execution

The assessment of the implementation and execution of GEF projects will take into account the performance of the GEF Implementing Agencies and project Executing Agency(ies) (EAs) in discharging their expected roles and responsibilities. The performance of these agencies will be rated using a six-point scale (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory). See Annex 2 for more information on the scale.

Quality of Implementation: Within the GEF partnership, GEF Implementing Agencies are involved in activities related to a project's identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion, and evaluation. To assess performance of the GEF Agencies, the evaluators will assess the extent to which the agency delivered effectively on these counts, with focus on elements that were controllable from the given GEF Agency's perspective. The evaluator will assess how well risks were identified and managed by the GEF Agency.

Quality of Execution: Within the GEF partnership, the EAs are involved in the management and administration of the project's day-to-day activities under the overall oversight and supervision of the GEF Agencies. The EAs are responsible for the appropriate use of funds, and procurement and contracting of goods and services to the GEF Agency. To assess EA performance, the evaluators will assess the extent to which it effectively discharged its role and responsibilities.

Assessment of the Environmental and Social Safeguards

The evaluator will assess whether appropriate environmental and social safeguards were addressed in the project's design and implementation (See Annex 2 for more details on the rating scale). It is expected that a GEF project will not cause any harm to environment or to any stakeholder and, where applicable, it will take measures to prevent and/or mitigate adverse effects. It is also expected that projects actively seek to do good, by identifying opportunities to advance gender equality, social inclusion and meaningful participation of stakeholders in project implementation. The evaluator should assess the screening/ risk categorization of the project along with the implementation of the safeguard plans that were approved by the GEF Agency. There should be an analysis of the implementation of management measures, as outlined at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including findings on the effectiveness of management measures and lessons learned.

In projects that include local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should guarantee that their voices are adequately heard and represented in the evaluation, through primary data collection.

Gender: The evaluator will determine the extent to which the gender considerations were taken into account in designing and implementing the project. The evaluator should report whether a gender analysis was conducted, the extent to which the project was implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits, and whether gender disaggregated data was gathered and reported on beneficiaries. In case the given GEF project disadvantages or may disadvantage women or men, then this should be documented and reported. The evaluator should also determine the extent to which relevant gender related concerns were tracked through project M&E, and if possible, addressing whether gender considerations contributed to the success of the project.

At the minimum, the evaluator should assess the progress towards achieving gender sensitive measures and/or targets as documented at CEO endorsement/approval in the Gender Mainstreaming Plan or equivalent. The evaluator should at least attempt to address the following questions:

- a) How effective has the project being in reaching women and men, and integrating gender mainstreaming throughout its activities? were all activities planned in the GMP implemented?
Yes/No Why?

- b) Did the project face any challenges to implementing the GMP as initially proposed? Which challenges? How were the challenges overcome?
- c) Compared to the original GMP, did the project have to implement any adaptations to promote meaningful participation of women and advance towards other gender sensitive targets?
- d) Did the project team/stakeholders/beneficiaries observe any qualitative outcomes (either positive or negative) related to gender equality, that are difficult to capture in a quantitative project target?
- e) Considering all the above, what are the recommendations for the remaining of project implementation to continue advancing towards gender sensitive targets?
- f) Were there any key lessons learned and/or good practices identified in the project's efforts to implement gender sensitive measures?

In projects that include local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator could also explore:

- To what extent did the project enhance women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making spaces and processes?
- To what extent did the project facilitate and enhance the capacity of women and men to change negative gender norms, that could potentially prevent women from fully benefiting from project's Outputs and Outcomes?
- Are there any indications of the project influencing or enabling women's agency, access and control over assets, access to new economic opportunities or productive or conservation activities?
- Were there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative) related to gender equality at the community level?

Stakeholder Engagement: The evaluator should, where applicable, review and assess the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and project specific aspects such as involvement of civil society, indigenous population, private sector, etc. The evaluator should also indicate the percentage of stakeholders who rate as satisfactory, the level at which their views and concerns are considered by the project.

At the minimum, the evaluator should explore the progress, challenges, the strategies advanced to overcome them, and outcomes on stakeholder engagement (based on the description of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan included at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

In projects that include local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should also give an account on the efforts made by the project to enhance their meaningful participation in project implementation. It should also explore if there were any additional efforts implemented to promote the participation of vulnerable or marginalized groups present in the prioritized communities.

Accountability and Grievance Mechanism: The evaluator should review and assess the project's Grievance Mechanism. The evaluator should analyze and assess whether project stakeholders were aware of the grievance mechanism and whether the mechanism was effective in addressing grievances.

In projects that include local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should review and assess if established channels and procedures, were accessible and responded to their specific context and needs.

The evaluator should also review and assess any other safeguard plans that were triggered.

Overall, the evaluator should identify key lessons learned in the implementation of the ESMF (ESS, gender, stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanism), including what worked well and what needs to be improved. The evaluator should also provide recommendations to guide upcoming project implementation.

Other Assessments

The Mid-Term Evaluations should assess the following topics, for which ratings are not required:

- a. Need for follow-up: Where applicable, the evaluators will indicate if there is any need to follow up on the evaluation findings, e.g. instances financial mismanagement, unintended negative impacts or risks, etc.
- b. Materialization of co-financing: the evaluators will provide information on the extent to which expected co-financing materialized, whether co-financing is cash or in-kind, whether it is in form of grant or loan or equity, whether co-financing was administered by the project management or by some other organization, how shortfall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results, etc.
- c. Knowledge Management: the evaluators should provide an assessment of whether the Knowledge Management Plan as included in the Project Document was implemented. If possible, the evaluators should also include the list of knowledge products developed throughout project implementation, including internet references if available.
- d. Lessons and Recommendations: Evaluators should provide a few well-formulated lessons that are based on the project experience and applicable to the type of project at hand, to the GEF's overall portfolio, and/or to GEF systems and processes. Wherever possible, Mid-Term Evaluation reports should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation that have led to effective stakeholder engagement, successful broader adoption of GEF initiatives by stakeholders, and large-scale environmental impacts. The evaluators should describe aspects of the project performance that worked well along with reasons for it. They should discuss where these good practices may or may not be replicated. Recommendations should be well formulated and targeted. The recommendations should discuss the need for action, the recommended action along with its likely consequences vis-à-vis status quo and other courses of action, the specific actor/actors that need to take the action, and time frame for it.

ANNEX C: Standard GEF Rating Scale

Outcome	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings
Satisfactory (S):	Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings
Unsatisfactory (U):	Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements
Sustainability Ratings	
Likely (L):	There is little or no risk to sustainability
Moderately Likely (ML):	There are moderate risks to sustainability
Moderately Unlikely (MU):	There are significant risks to sustainability
Unlikely (U):	There are severe risks to sustainability
Unable to Assess (UA):	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability
Project M&E Ratings	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations
Satisfactory (S):	There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations
Moderately Satisfactory (MS):	There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design/implementation somewhat lower than expected
Unsatisfactory (U):	There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design/implementation.
Implementation and Execution Rating	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	There were no short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S):	There were no or minor short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/execution met expectations
Moderately Satisfactory (MS):	There were some short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation more or less met expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	There were significant shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U):	There were major short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	There were severe short comings in quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation
Environmental and Social Safeguards	

Highly satisfactory (HS):	There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations
Satisfactory (S):	There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS):	There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected
Unsatisfactory (U):	There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution.

ANNEX D: Evaluation Team Composition

Giacomo Cozzolino, Project Leader, International Consultant and Environmental Accounting and Sustainable Financing Specialist, holds a Master degree in Physiography of Territory and Landscape Ecology (Environmental Science), is an associate of SETIN, an international consultant with 17 years' experience in biodiversity conservation, PAs (including MPAs) management and planning and international project preparation.

He has previous experience in projects evaluation in Africa and other contexts, including a CI/GEF final external evaluation, and extensive experience in natural resources management and International Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, three past experiences in the preparation of GEF projects. He also has great experience in environmental accounting, including a GEF project in West Africa (Guinea-Bissau) and in biodiversity and climate finance also in sub-Saharan Africa. He has a significant track record of publications and reports and full professional knowledge of English.

Camilo Ponziani, Assistant Project Leader, Project Evaluation Specialist, Master of Economics in Environment & Development, is an international consultant who has worked with and consulted with various United Nations agencies, including the Fund for the Global Environment, UNEP, UNDP, UNDP Drylands Development Centre, UNOCHA and UNOPS, as well as various MEA Secretariats, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Afro-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

He is an executive project and program management professional with deep experience in overseeing end-to-end (design, planning and management) of complex business transformation and biodiversity initiatives, as well as both mid-term and terminal evaluations for myriad clients and within the United Nations system (seven mid-term and four terminal). He's English mother tongue.

John Solunta Smith, Jr, Coordinator/Writer, Development Economics Specialist, Liberian, Ph.D. Economics, John Solunta Smith, Jr., (Ph.D.) is a Liberian with strong expertise in Development Economics, Knowledge Management, Cost-effectiveness Analysis, Health Financing and Health Economic issues in Liberia. He worked as a Technical Specialist, Policy Seminar Lecturer for USAID/Social Impact on the Liberia Strategic Analysis Project (LSA) through which he lectures on Development Policy Studies in a seminar series for mid and senior-level career officials of the Government of Liberia.

He has extensive experience in consulting services in the areas of Technical Training, Data Collection and Analysis, Baseline Evaluation, Interim Evaluation, Terminal Evaluation, Impact Evaluation, Political Economy Analysis, Costing of Health Interventions, Cost-Effectiveness Analysis and Small Business Development and Growth. In addition, he actively participated in Management by Results and Monitoring and Evaluation by Results processes in different sectors. He has worked for UNDP, the Liberia Environmental Protection Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture, DAI as a National Consultant and has also worked for Concern Worldwide, Winrock International and UNAIDS as a lead consultant on various policy assessments and reviews. He was lead consultant for the Irish Aid Program Grant (IAPG) Final Assessment in Liberia - Accelerating Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture and Resource Management' and was Consultant – UNDP /EPA on the final reports of Liberia National Capacity Self-assessment (NCSA). He's English mother tongue.

Daniel Bazzucchi, Data Specialist, Environmental accounting specialist, Master Engineering for the environment and protection of natural resources, is a senior consultant with vast experience in natural resources management, including environmental accounting. He has carried out several projects with analysis of data on natural capital, ecosystem services, payments for ecosystem services, including a GEF

project on environmental accounting in West Africa (Guinea-Bissau). He cooperated in a CI/GEF final external evaluation. He has a full professional knowledge of English and he's French mother-tongue.

ANNEX E: Stakeholders consulted

Including participants in the virtual workshops, face-to-face and via remote consultations.

Person	Entity
Elijah Whapoe	EPA
Jefferson Nyandibo	EPA
Stephen Lavalah/LMA	Liberian Maritime Authority
Uriah Garsinii	Land Authority
Saliho A. Donzo	MFDP
Francis Mwah	Ministry of Agriculture
Eugene Caine	WASH Commission
Peter Mulbah	CI Liberia
Emmanuel T. Olatunji	Former Project Manager
Benedict Kolubah	Ministry of Finance
Charity Nalyanya	CI-GEF Agency, Director, Project Management and Technical Oversight, Africa
Juliana Rios	CIGEF Agency, Environmental and Social Management Framework
George Ilebo	CI Liberia
Shem Mecheo	ECO Sprew Consult
Carl Obst	Institute for Development of Environmental-Economic Accounting (IDEEA) group
Harenton Cashier Chea ()	CI Liberia, Finance and Administration
Mahbubul Alam	CI Moore Center, Economics and Planning
Community members (about 15 persons)	Mandoe Community
Community members (about 20 persons)	Bendu Community

ANNEX F: Research Tools

Interview guide and additional interview topics and themes

Introduction and Background

My name is, a member of the team hired by Conversation International (CI) to conduct a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) for the "Conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital" supported-GEF financed Project executed by the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia. In this evaluation, we will focus on the three key components of the project (namely: **Component 1: Natural Capital Accounting in coastal ecosystems**; **Component 2- Innovative financing Schemes for conserving coastal natural capital**; **Component 3- Community incentives to conserve and sustainably Manage Natural capital Ecosystems**).

We will try to quantify or document the progress made, and what you have put in placed in sustaining the successes while noting the Risks and challenges faced and mitigation strategies for learning purposes. Throughout this interview, please feel free to share your thoughts and experience with us and ask for clarification if the questions are not clear to you.

I would like to start by asking you about some General Information:

General Information

1. Can you please introduce yourself, stating your name, position and tell me little about your role and how long you have been in this role?
2. Based on your work and background, what is your understanding about the Conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital Project in Liberia?

Probing: How involved are you or your department? - your specific role?

Topic - A1 : Project Design and Relevance

1. From your involvement with this project, how important can you say the project is relative to improving conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital? (Probe for theory of change.)
2. What key policy changes can you say the project is currently bringing? Can you name some policy changes so far achieved?
3. To what extent can you say the project is aligned with closing the gaps identified in the conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital?
4. In what way (s) do you think the project is addressing the conservation and sustainable use of Liberia's coastal natural capital?
5. How does the project relate to the main objective of the GEF focused areas, and to the environment and sustainable development priorities at local, regional, and national levels?

Probe for

- Is the project relevant to the needs of the targeted beneficiaries?
- How are they being consulted in the project implementation?
- To what extend the project is in line with the Country strategic plan and the SDGs?

Topic - A2 : Project Implementation – Effectiveness

6. Do you think the project activities are roll out in accordance with the planned timeframe? If yes, how; if no, why?
7. What do you know this project is particularly intended to achieve?
8. What progress has this project made so far in achieving the planned outcomes?
9. You as a stakeholder to this project, how satisfied are you with the project results? (Probing: What factors contributed to achieving or not achieving the intended outcomes? Did the assumption and theory of change hold true? If not, why?)

Topic - A3 : Project Implementation – Efficiency

10. Looking at the methodology (ies) introduced by the project, do you think it is easily adoptable to the local Liberian context?
11. What can you say about the overall quality of management of the project? Do you think it is in line with best practices?
12. To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost effective?

Probe: To that extent is the project fund being delivered in a timely manner? Have the project management body and partners been sufficiently active in guiding and responding to issues? Were the targeted activities and interventions implemented in a timely manner?) How is fund disbursed during activities implementation?

13. Is there appropriate and timely monitoring and evaluation mechanism put in place? Were there joint monitoring and evaluation of planned results?

Topic - A4 : Sustainability

14. What two/three mechanisms that the project is putting into place for its impact to continuously be felt in the Liberian environmental sector?
15. Which particular local or national structure (s) are being empowered to continue engagements and coordination of sector stakeholders and institutions?
16. What footprint is this project leaving behind that will continue to live with the Liberian environmental programs?
17. What are the financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of the project outputs?

Probe: To what extent will financial and economic resources be used to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?

Topic -A5 : Impact, gender and cross-cutting issues

18. How have women/men, girls/boys as well as vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities benefiting from the project activities at the moment?
19. To what extent is the project benefiting women, enhanced their participation?

Topic - A7 : MTR - Lessons Learned

20. What lessons and good/worst practices are learned/achieved from the project design, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms that can be considered in the design and implementation of similar projects?
21. What are some environmental issues that you think the project is not addressing? Why?

Topic - A8 : Challenges and Constraints Faced

22. What three challenges you are experiencing in the executing this project?

Probing: How are you addressing these identified challenges?

23. What measure do you recommend addressing such challenges in future project design and implementation process?

Topic - A9: Closing Questions

24. What innovations have the project developed?
25. Overall, what is your impression of the management of the project?
26. What are the strengths of the project? What are the weaknesses?
27. What are the clear external threats to the project and What strong project opportunities lie ahead for such projects in Liberia in future?
28. What have been achieved so far under each of the project components: **Component 1-** Natural Capital Accounting in coastal ecosystems; **Component 2-** Innovative financing Schemes for conserving coastal natural capital; **Component 3-** Community incentives to conserve and sustainably Manage Natural capital Ecosystems.

Probe: what is yet to be achieved under each component and why?

Thank you, for your participation.

Online Survey Questionnaire

sent electronically through Survey Monkey

Date: _____ Position: _____ Organisation: _____

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

PLEASE TICK THE APPLICABLE BOX FOR EACH QUESTION

1- How well does the project address the natural resource and biodiversity priorities of Liberia and at the County-level?

Very well	Quite well	Moderately	Weakly	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2- Were you or your organization involved in designing project implementation?

Yes, actively	Yes, through consultation	Yes, by providing information	I was informed but not consulted	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3- How do you consider overall Project progress at mid-term?

Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Average	Rather weak	Very weak
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4- How strong do you consider the engagement of various stakeholders in project implementation?

Very strong	Quite strong	Moderately	Rather weak	Very weak
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5- Do you think that the Project will be able to achieve its core objective “to improve conservation and sustainable use of Liberia’s coastal natural capital by mainstreaming the value of nature into Liberia’s development trajectory”?

Yes, all of them	Yes, most of them	Some of them	A few of them	Hardly any
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6- Do you think the Project’s achievements can be sustained after project closure?

Yes, definitely	Yes, likely	Possibly	Not sure	Definitely not
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7- Do you receive regular information about the progress of project implementation?

Yes, every time	Quite often	Sometimes	Hardly	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8- Are project reports made readily available?

Yes, all of them	Yes, mostly on request	Sometimes	Hardly	Very difficult to access
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9- The project has the right project management, governance and support structures in place to achieve its objectives?

Very strong	Quite strong	Moderately	Rather weak	Very weak

10- Authority and accountability have been well-defined in the project.

Very strong	Quite strong	Moderately	Rather weak	Very weak

11- The project design and strategy prioritizes the needs and involvement of women?

Very strong	Quite strong	Moderately	Rather weak	Very weak

12- The project's achievements and results to date could / would have happened in the absence of a GEF-funded project within the same time period?

Yes, definitely	Yes, likely	Possibly	Not sure	Definitely not

13- What are the main challenges the Project faces in your opinion?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

14- Do you have any suggestions to be considered for the second half of the Project?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Community Survey Questionnaire

(To be undertaken either face-to-face or virtually by phone)

Date: _____ Village _____ Ethnic Group _____ County _____

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Profession:

Farmer	Fishing	Labourer	Govt. Service	Priv. Service	Business	Householder	Other

PLEASE TICK THE APPLICABLE BOX FOR EACH QUESTION

1- How well does the Project address your village's most urgent of natural resource and/or biodiversity priorities?

Very strongly	Quite strongly	Medium	Low	Not at all

2- What were the main activities implemented by the Project in your village, if any?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3- Was your opinion asked while designing project activities in your village?

Yes, very much	Yes, to some extent	Not sure	Not much	Not at all

4- Are you satisfied with the project's progress in your community so far?

Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Average	Rather unhappy	Very unhappy

5- Have you been made aware of a Grievance Mechanism in the event issues need to be escalated?

Yes	No

6- Any impact of project activities (positive or negative) that needs to be addressed during remaining project period.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____