MID TERM EVALUATION REPORT

Sustainable Luangwa

Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management

NOVEMBER 2025

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GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title	Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management
GEF Project ID Number	10412
GEF Agency	WWF-US
GEF Agency Project ID	G0022
Country	Republic of Zambia
Project Duration	60 months
Project Type	Full-sized Project
GEF Operational Focal Area / Strategic Program	Biodiversity Land Degradation
GEF Focal Area Objectives	BD-1-1: Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes through biodiversity mainstreaming in priority sectors BD-2-7: Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate LD-1-4: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses and increase resilience in the wider landscape
Executing Agency / Implementing Partners	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment – Environmental Management Department
Mid-term Evaluation Team	Learning for Change (Pty) Ltd. Dr Glenda Raven, Lead Consultant Ms Ruth Beukman, Associate Consultant

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Chief MwenaChifungwe and the Chiefdom of His Royal Highness
Chief Mweniwisi and the Chiefdom of His Royal Highness
Chipungu Community Forest Management Group
Chipungu Honorary Forest Rangers
Communities from the wards of Mafinga, Musipizi, Ntonga and Senje
Community Markets for Conservation
District Technical Team
Global environment facility
Kaswa Village Farmers
Lighton Community Forest Management Group
Lighton Honorary Forest Rangers
Mafinga District Administration
Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, particularly Environmental Management, Forestry and Planning and Policy Directorates
Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation
Muchinga Provincial Forestry Office
Muchinga Province Office of the Permanent Secretary
Muleya Village Farmers
National Steering Committee
Project Technical Committee
Water Management Resources Authority
Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society of Zambia
World Wide Fund for Nature, Zambia Country Office
World Wildlife Fund, United States as the Implementing Agency for the Global Environment Facility

A special thank you to the Project Management Unit for supporting this mid-term evaluation, especially catering to all our needs during the field visit, answering all our many questions, and especially for driving us safely, and mostly comfortably, over the rough terrain of Mafinga District to where we needed and wanted to be.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWPB	Annual Work Plan Budget
CAC	Camp Agricultural Committee
CFA	Community Forestry Area
CFMG	Community Forest Management Group
C I	Core Indicator
COMACO	Community Markets for Conservation
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
DDCC	District Development Co-ordinating Committee
DTT	District Technical Team
FPIC	Free and Prior Informed Consent
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF IA	Global Environment Facility Implementing Agency
GEF – IEO	Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office
GIS	Geographic Information System
GRM	Grievance Resolution Mechanism
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HFO	Honorary Forestry Officers
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LRP	Livelihood Restoration Plan
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MGEE	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment
MGEE: EMD	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment: Environmental Management Directorate
MPFD	Provincial Forestry Office
MWDSEP	Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection
MHNFR	Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
NSC	National Steering Committee

PC	Personal Communication
PDCC	Provincial Development Co-ordinating Committee
PFO	Provincial Forestry Office
PFP	Project Focal Point
PMU	Project Management Unit
PTC	Project Technical Committee
OC I	Outcome Indicator
SCRALA	Strengthening Climate Resilience for Agricultural Livelihoods in Agroecological Regions I & II
SI	Statutory Instrument
SLF	Senior Lead Farmer
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WARMA	Water Resource Management Authority
WDC	Ward Development Committees
WECSZ	Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society of Zambia
WRMA	Water Resource Management Act
WRPA	Water Resource Protection Area
WUA	Water User Association
WWF-US	World Wildlife Fund – United States
WWF ZCO	World Wide Fund for Nature, Zambia Country Office
ZMK	Zambian Kwacha

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executing Agency / Implementing Partners	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment – Environmental Management Department
MTR Team	Learning for Change (Pty) Ltd Dr Glenda Raven, Lead Evaluation Consultant Ms Ruth Beukman, Associate Consultant

Project Description

The Sustainable Luangwa project aims to secure the water resources of the Luangwa River for shared socio-economic and environmental benefits, through integrated catchment management. Originating in the Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve (MHNFR), the Luangwa River is one of Southern Africa's last long free flowing rivers. It is known for its unaltered state and rich biodiversity, supporting ecosystem functioning, the provisioning of ecosystem services and supporting livelihoods of local communities. Executed in the northeastern Muchinga Province of Zambia, the project's goal is to reduce forest and land degradation in the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa Catchment, for improved protection of biodiversity, water resources and dependent community livelihoods. It has been executed since May 2022, across four wards of the Mafinga District. Towards its overall goal, key components of the Project are to expand and strengthen protected area management, particularly around the headwaters of the Luangwa River, through improved management effectiveness of the MHNFR and establishing Zambia's first water resource protection area (WRPA – defined by the Water Resources Management Act, as an area requiring special measures for protecting catchments, sub-catchments or geographic area, for example river sources or headwaters, groundwater recharge zones and areas that store water, such as wetlands, marshes and dambos). It also seeks to improve land use practices in the buffer zone around the forest reserve, through strengthening community-based land use and natural resource management. As a pioneering project to implement Zambia's vision for community-based natural resource management, as inscribed in its forest and water legislation, a third key component of the project is knowledge management. This aims to facilitate replication and scalability of project approaches, outputs and outcomes into other national catchments and the region. At its mid-point, an evaluation was commissioned for this full-sized project, as required by the funding framework for the Global Environment Facility (GEF - a multilateral funding partnership, providing funds for addressing environmental issues and risks in developing countries) . The evaluation sought to gain insight into project relevance, effectiveness, potential for, and risks to sustainability, the efficacy of monitoring and evaluation design and implementation, knowledge management and its facilitation of replication and enabling catalytic impact, the application of necessary policies on gender equity, social inclusion and safeguards, project efficiency, and implementation and execution. Insights into these aspects of the project enabled the generation of key recommendations to strengthen its execution to the end of its funded period in December 2026.

Project Progress Summary

The project was slow out of the starting blocks due to several challenges, including recruiting staff for the remote and rural setting of the Mafinga District, establishing the necessary governance structures and processes, settling into the required project processes and accessibility to project participants due to poor infrastructure, particularly during high rainfall periods. After an initial slow start during the first 18 months, the pace of activities picks up significantly. Some progress towards outputs and outcomes has been made in effective two years of the Project, since activities began in earnest in 2023. Progress has been made towards improving the management effectiveness of MHNFR. This includes the demarcation of the reserve boundary, identifying 37 honorary forestry officers (HFOs) to complement management capacity in the reserve and completing a biodiversity and forestry assessment to inform management planning and implementation. To date, Aa draft forestry management plan has been developed for the Mafinga District which will be devolved into one specifically for Mafinga Hills, in year four of the Project. At this project mid-point, these outputs are unlikely to reflect an improvement in management effectiveness, based on the baseline management effectiveness undertaken. Progress towards proposing the WRPA for the upper sub-catchment has been particularly slow. A technical assessment of water quality and stream flow of the Luangwa River and its tributaries and streams

have been undertaken to date. It assisted in the identification of localities for establishing five hydrometric stations to inform water resource management. Stakeholder engagement, a key part of this component, has been undertaken with community leadership and must be rolled out to the broader community. Towards improved land management practices in the buffer zone surrounding the MHNFR, 2,640 farmers have been trained in conservation agriculture and are implementing these practices in growing beans, cowpeas and ground nuts. A drought during the first planting season, however, impacted the yield of these crops. 91 farmers were able to sell 10% of the expected yield into the take-off market of Community Markets for Conservation. At this mid-term of the project, progress in establishing household-based woodlots as an alternative to using timber from forests has been limited to growing Gliricidia alongside crops, as a natural pest control, amongst other uses. The scope appears limited in relation to its intended purpose. Good progress has been made in the establishment of four community forest management groups (CFMG), with identified and approved community forestry areas (CFA) of 3,589.6 ha. These community groups are poised to start developing forestry management plans contributing to improved land use practices in the buffer zone of the forest reserve and headwaters of the Luangwa River. Little progress has been made towards the project intentions of facilitating knowledge management for replication and scalability of integrated catchment management and informing project adaptive management through monitoring and evaluation. Some key insights emerged through the mid-term evaluation leading to recommendations for supporting project execution to the end.

MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

1.	Overall project outcome	Moderately unsatisfactory
	Outcome 1.1	Moderately unsatisfactory
	Outcome 1.2	Unsatisfactory
	Outcome 2.1	Moderately satisfactory
	Outcome 3.1	Highly unsatisfactory
	Outcome 3.2	Unsatisfactory
2.	Sustainability	Moderately likely
	Financial sustainability	Likely
	Institutional sustainability	Moderately likely
	Sociopolitical sustainability	Likely
	Environmental sustainability	Moderately unlikely
3.	Monitoring and evaluation design	Moderately satisfactory
4.	Monitoring and evaluation implementation	Moderately unsatisfactory
5.	Project implementation	Satisfactory
6.	Project execution	Moderately satisfactory

Evaluation Findings

The mid-term evaluation findings are structured around,

Relevance, coherence and design. The project was found to be highly relevant to the political, institutional and socio-ecological context and coheres well with existing mandates and practices. Relevance can be strengthened in relation to Zambia's Water Resource Management Act (2011), in terms of community-based water resource management, as well as the development agenda of the Mafinga District. The results framework can be strengthened to articulate more clearly the participatory intention of the Project to engage local communities in forest, land and water resource management.

Effectiveness. Progress is evident towards some of the Project outcomes, which include management effectiveness of the MHNFR to some extent, and improved land management practices in the buffer zone surrounding it. Some activities and outputs need to be strengthened, and some reconceptualized in relation and in contribution to the particularly proposing the WRPA, diverting use of timber from the MHNFR, initiating knowledge management processes and generating associated products to increase effectiveness in Project execution. Monitoring and evaluation must be strengthened to better support adaptive management of the Project.

Sustainability. Opportunities are evident for both financial and institutional sustainability for project activities and outcomes. These are, however, also coupled with some key risks. Some socio-political and environmental risks to sustaining the project activities and outcomes are emerging, for example, in sandmining, changing climate, amongst others.

Monitoring and evaluation design and implementation. The design of a robust monitoring and evaluation system is necessary to guide adaptive management of the project. A clear, operational plan, must accompany such a system to support the full system of monitoring and evaluation towards improved adaptive management.

Policy application. Some social risks are emerging which require an update to the environment and social management framework. Approaches to gender inclusion and stakeholder engagement can be strengthened to achieve the objectives of the project.

Efficiency. No inefficiencies were identified in financial processes, apart from initial challenges in funding flows, which appear to now be resolved. A significant number of human resources surround and support the team directly executing the Project in the field. Some inefficiencies, though not insurmountable, have been identified in communications and duplicate efforts in stakeholder engagement, for example, communication across the broad stakeholder group, ensuring rescheduling of meetings when these clash with infield activities, and reaching agreement on specific means of communication.

Implementation and execution. Project execution, particularly in relation to the proposal of the WRPA, diverting use of timber from the MHNFR, knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation must be strengthened to ensure effective progress towards the expected outcomes of the Project. Recommendations emerging from the evaluation seek to support this process of strengthened and increased project execution.

Summary of Recommendations

Drawing on these findings, recommendations are made in relation to,

The results framework, to expand some specific outcomes and indicators to include an integration of alternative management effectiveness measures, participatory community-based water resource management institutions and the community forestry areas under improved management.

Delivery of outcomes, recommendations are made for urgent engagement with the district administration to ensure potential conflicts and risks are addressed, for example in mining. Recommendations are made to strengthen community engagement across the various project activities, through strategic coordination. Recommendations are also made to strengthen the climate-smart aspects of conservation agriculture. A focus is required on building the governance capacity of the community forestry management groups and clarifying the approach to establishing woodlots as alternatives to the use of timber from forests. Without taking it for granted, a recommendation is made to draw heavily on the biodiversity and forestry assessment in developing the management plan for the MHNFR. These can also serve the development of forest management plans for community forest areas. Significant recommendations are made for conceptualizing and strategically approaching knowledge management, that supports replication and scalability, as well as training. Recommendations are made separately for strengthening project monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation must be strengthened, and extensive recommendations are made to guide the collaborative development of a comprehensive plan that supports its implementation. Recommendations are made to draw on the findings from monitoring and evaluation, to inform reporting as well as reflections for adaptive and strengthened project execution and management.

Policy application revisions are recommended as some expected and unexpected risks emerge. These include expanding the environmental and social management framework, innovating around gender inclusion in leadership and addressing grievances more effectively. Recommendations are made to critically review stakeholder engagement processes, particularly with respect to training.

Project management recommendations to complement existing human resource capacity in the project, strengthen communications and improve process flows are made.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Luangwa project (herein the Project) aims to secure the headwaters of one of southern Africa's longest remaining free flowing rivers for shared socio-ecological benefit, through integrated catchment management. Executed in the northeastern Muchinga Province of Zambia in the Mafinga District, it works towards this aim through strengthened protection and management of the Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve (MHNFR) and pioneering the establishment of Zambia's first Water Resource Protection Area (WRPA**)** surrounding the forest. While securing and restoring forest cover in the reserve, improved and community-based land management practices are intended to secure the water resources and its ecosystem in the WRPA. This is being supported through conservation agriculture and community forestry management. As a pioneering project, it also seeks to develop and share strategic knowledge management products that might inform the establishment of other WRPAs in Zambia, and other regional and global initiatives for community-led natural resource governance and management."

Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a mid-term evaluation is required for the Project, following its inception in May 2022. The mid-term evaluation was undertaken between April and August 2025 to strengthen the further roll out of the Project to December 2026. This report is a culmination of this mid-term evaluation. In section one it provides an overview of the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as its methodology and provides an overview of the structure of the report. Section two maps out the socio-political and ecological context within which the Project was implemented and section three shares the findings of the mid-term evaluation. These findings are synthesized, leading to key recommendations to inform and strengthen execution of the Project in its second half.

1.1 Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Mid-term Evaluation

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation was to assess the Project progress, and its effectiveness in implementation. This assessment is intended to inform adjustments and improvements needed to ensure achievement of its stated goal, outcomes and outputs, by the end of the funded period.

1.1.1 Objectives of the mid-term evaluation

In addition to assessing progress and effectiveness, its objectives were also to assess the Project's potential for sustainability and impact, and risks to sustaining its activities and outcomes. The evaluation provided an opportunity for reflecting on the Project design, identifying strengths and challenges that enable or inhibit progress towards the goal, outcomes and outputs, so that these can be timeously addressed to improve and strengthen execution. Importantly the evaluation sought to draw out key lessons from the first half of the Project to generate clear and practical recommendations that will improve and strengthen the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of activities and outcomes.

1.1.2 Scope of the mid-term evaluation

The evaluation was guided by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF-IEO, 2023[1]) guidelines for conducting terminal evaluations of full-sized projects and those from WWF (WWF, 2020[2]). These guidelines, together with the mid-term evaluation requirements in the terms of reference (annexure A) defined the scope of the evaluation. It focused on, (i) the relevance and coherence of the Project in its socio-ecological and political context, and in its design to address the Project theory of change and enable progress towards its objective, outcomes and outputs, (ii) the effectiveness of project activities and strategies in progressing towards its objective and related

[1] Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office (GEF-IEO), (2023). *Guidelines for conducting terminal evaluation of full-sized projects.* Washington.

[2] WWF (2020). *Evaluation guidelines (with TOR outline)*. Gland.

outcomes and outputs, including a reflection on the enablers, constraints and challenges to progress and how these can be mitigated in the remaining time frame, (iii) the potential for and risks to sustaining project activities, its gains and benefits, (iv) the design and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system and plan, and how it is used to inform the adaptive management, (v) the knowledge management strategy, approaches and products to capture key developments and lessons, (vi) the potential for replication and catalytic impact for scaling activities and outcomes into expanded contexts, geographically, thematically and conceptually, (vii) the extent to which the Project integrates and complies with the GEF and WWF policies on stakeholder engagement, gender equity and inclusion and environmental and social risk management, including a review to the risk classification and proposed mitigation measures, (viii) efficiency in implementing and executing the Project with a focus on financial prudence, effective and efficient human resource deployment, governance, communications and co-financing, and (ix) overall implementation and execution. The mid-term evaluation matrix, structured around these criteria, is attached as annexure B.

1.2 The Mid-term Evaluation Methodology

A utilization focused approach was used for the mid-term evaluation to respond to the needs and interests of all stakeholders and provide insights for improving and strengthening the Project. To ensure this response to the needs and interests of all stakeholders, an inclusive and participatory approach was used to elicit diversity in perspectives from across all Project participants, especially those voices often silenced through socio-political histories and processes. This inclusive and participatory approach focused particularly on gender inclusion (3.7.2), as a key objective of the Project and to bring women's voices to the fore in a strongly patriarchal context.

1.2.1 Execution of the mid-term evaluation

The mid-term evaluation was initiated in April 2025 through a process of document analysis. Various documents were made available to explore the Project context, its goal and anticipated outcomes, its stakeholders and their respective roles. This document analysis (annexure C) informed the development of the mid-term evaluation matrix (annexure B) and associated plan, reported and presented in an inception report. Guided by this matrix and plan, data was collected primarily through stakeholder engagement in July 2025, which included a field visit to the Mafinga District (see 1.2.2; annexure E).

Data was analyzed and synthesized around the key criteria, using analytic memos. It is reported around this framework in section 3. Preliminary findings (annexure D) were shared for comment with the GEF Implementing Agency (GEF IA) and the Project Management Unit (PMU) in mid-August, culminating in this final mid-term evaluation report. The report was circulated amongst stakeholders, as a member-checking process, to ensure accuracy of interpretations and presentations of data in the evaluation findings.

1.2.2 Data collection

A mixed methods approach was used in the evaluation to triangulate data across source and method. This was done to ensure quality, rigor and validity in the evaluation. Data was collected through:

a) Document analysis

Documents analyzed to inform the development of the evaluation plan (1.2.1 and annexure C) also provided key data. Through stakeholder engagements (1.2.2 (b) and (c)), additional documents were identified for analysis. These are listed, separately in annexure C as additional documents accessed for analysis.

b) Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement included individual and group interviews, groups discussions and focus group discussions, both online and in-person. These were complemented in-field by courtesy visits to key stakeholders within the Project. The full scope of stakeholder engagement is attached as annexure E.

Photograph 1: Muleya Village farmers meet with the evaluators to discuss conservation agriculture

These stakeholder engagements were guided by a range of data collection tools developed for specific stakeholders. These are shared in annexure F.

c) Site visits and observations

In-person group discussions, particularly with community participants provided opportunities for observing individuals and interactions within groups, amongst men and women and with project staff. It also allowed insight into physical processes of conservation agriculture, for example, and gauge reading. Some of the key site visits were to the conservation agriculture demonstration sites in Muleya Village, an individual farmer's crop field in Kaswa Village, one of the beacons that demarcates the boundary of the (MHNFR) and the Kampumba gauge station. These observations also inform the findings discussed in section 3.

1.2.3 Limitations to the MTR

The mid-term evaluation process, in its entirety, was well supported, both in terms of online and in person engagements. No material limitations were experienced. However, two less critical limitations might have added a bit more value to the evaluation. Firstly, given the significance of management effectiveness of forestry management and the sizeable MHNFR in the Project site, it would have been useful to meet with the Director of Forestry at the Ministry of Green Economy

and Environment (MGEE). This meeting would also have added great value to understanding the forestry department's role and view on the potential safeguards risk emerging from the boundary demarcation cutting through a previously approved Community Forestry Area (CFA, 3.7.3). Availability did, however, not allow for this meeting. A second less critical issue was language accessibility. Evaluators had to access community perspectives through different interpreters, which is time consuming, sometimes void of nuances and does not necessarily capture all details. This did not, however, impact the evaluation findings in any material way.

1.3 Structure of the MTR Report

The mid-term evaluation report is structured around four parts. Following this introduction in part one, that outlines the purpose, objectives, scope and methodology of the evaluation, part two introduces the project context. It maps out the socio-political and ecological context and motivates for the goals and expected results before briefly introducing the project implementation architecture. Part three, which forms the main body of the report, shares the findings of the mid-term evaluation and is structured around the nine key evaluation criteria (1.1.2; annexure B). The report concludes with Part 4 offering concluding remarks and recommendations to strengthen project implementation and execution towards its end in October 2027.

2. THE SUSTAINABLE LUANGWA PROJECT CONTEXT

The Luangwa River is one of Southern Africa's major remaining free-flowing rivers. This iconic river is known for its rich biodiversity and unaltered state, vital for effective ecosystem functioning, conserving biological species and securing community livelihoods. It originates in the Mafinga Hills of the northeastern Muchinga Province of Zambia. The Sustainable Luangwa project aims to secure these water resources for socio-economic and ecological benefit, through integrated catchment management. Drawing on the Zambian legislative framework for forest and water management, the Project includes community engagement in forest, land and water governance and management. The Project area is focused in the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa Catchment, Zambia's third largest of six catchments. Working within the legislative framework of the Water Resource Management Act (WRMA), Number 21 of 2011[3], the Project seeks to pioneer the establishment of Zambia's first water resource protection area (WRPA).

2.1 A Broader Context of the Luangwa Catchment

The WRMA of 2011 facilitated the delineation of six catchments across Zambia, including the Luangwa Catchment. Approximately 50% of this catchment is covered by protected areas, including the globally significant Luangwa Floodplains Ramsar Site, six national parks, eight game management areas and national forest reserves. Large areas of miombo woodland are found in this catchment and the MHNFR, rich in biodiversity, forms part of the Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot. The rich variety of endemic flora and fauna in this forest reserve designates it as a Key Biodiversity Area. Close to two million people across 25 chiefdoms live in the Luangwa Catchment. The primarily agro-pastoralist communities rely heavily on the Luangwa River as an important source of water for irrigated agriculture and domestic use, water and food security. More broadly, the Luangwa Catchment is in the middle of the Zambezi region and one of 13 major sub-basins of the transboundary Zambezi River Basin (Beilfuss, 2012[4]). The condition of the upper Luangwa Catchment and its flows are significant for the international watercourse and its transboundary, shared management through the eight-country member Zambezi Watercourse

[3] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2011). *The Water Resources Management Act, number 21 of 2011*. Government of Zambia, Lusaka.

[4] Beilfuss, R. (2012). *A risky climate for southern African hydro: Assessing hydrological risks and consequences for Zambezi River Basin Dams*. Technical Report, International Rivers, California.

Commission. To ensure the long-term security of water flow and quality and downstream ecosystems and services, wildlife and the livelihoods that this supports, the Project focuses on the protection of the headwaters within the MHNFR.

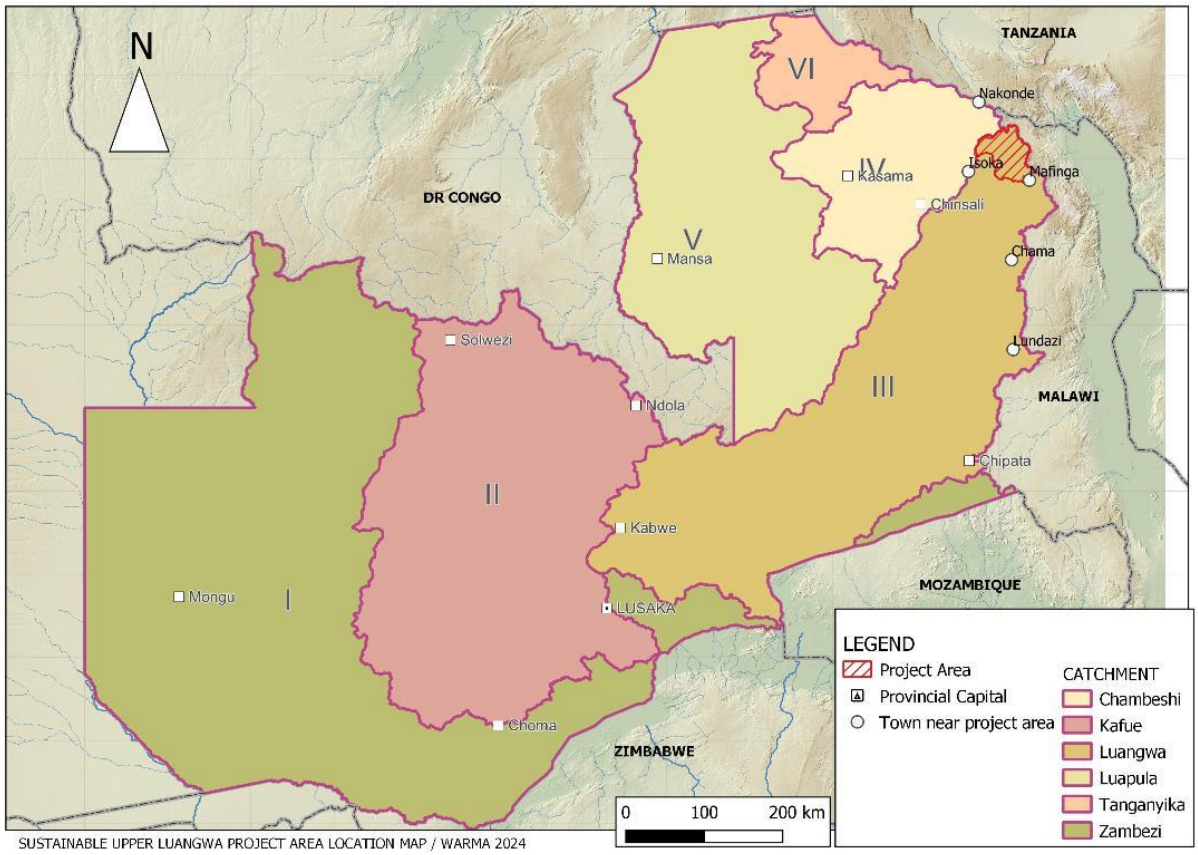


Figure 1: Luangwa, the third largest catchment in Zambia

2.2 The Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve

The upper sub-catchment of Luangwa stretches across the Mafinga, Isoka, Nakonde and Chama Districts of Muchinga Province. In this upper sub-catchment, the source of the Luangwa River is in the MHNFR, established through a statutory instrument (SI) in 1972. The reserve is found in the Mafinga District of Zambia on the border with the Republic of Malawi and is home to just over 100,000 inhabitants. The rich forest habitats of the reserve provide rural communities with critical ecosystem goods and services, including wood, fuel and non-timber forest products for livelihoods. In this district, socio-economic development is low, and poverty is rife. Employment and livelihoods are primarily dependent on agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Rain-fed agriculture, the rural infrastructure and natural resource systems supporting these activities are understood to be amongst the most vulnerable to climate change. This high vulnerability is primarily driven by significant rainfall variability, prevalent drought conditions, high flood risks, low soil moisture, steep slopes, low levels of access to safe water, poor infrastructure and low surface water availability. While the region is well endowed with forests, woodlands, natural lakes, rivers, waterfalls, swamps and wetlands, most people are highly dependent on ecosystem services provided by the natural landscape, challenging the balance between socio-economic development and livelihood security and sustainable natural resource management.

2.3 Securing the headwaters of the Luangwa River

Securing the headwaters in the MHNFR forest reserve is crucial for replenishing water levels and maintaining the long-term flow and quality of the Luangwa River and associated downstream

ecosystems and services of the river. It is equally important to sustain the water and food security and livelihoods of the many Zambians that depend on the river, its associated and surrounding natural resources and ecosystem services.

In this context, the higher-level goal of the Project is to strengthen the protection of the headwaters and downstream flow of the river, biodiversity and forest ecosystems and the livelihoods of mostly vulnerable adjacent communities. It works towards this goal through three key components, (i) improved and expanded protected area management around the Luangwa headwaters, (ii) improved land management around these critical protected areas, and (iii) learning from this pioneering project of sustainable catchment management. An important principle underpinning implementation of the Project is community inclusion and participation in protected area and natural resource governance and management.

2.3.1 The geography of the Sustainable Luangwa project

The Project centers around the MHNFR within which the Luangwa River has its source. Its focus in the reserve is strengthening management effectiveness, to secure the headwaters, reduce forest loss and increase forest cover. It focuses also on the delineated WRPA that surrounds the reserve, identified nationally as a high priority based on the combined criteria of water provisioning, aquatic ecological importance and sensitivity. The MHNFR is wrapped around by the Mafinga, Musipizi, Nsenje and Ntonga wards (Figure 2) within the Mwenechifungwe and Mweniwisi Chiefdoms. Approximately 23,848 (Zambia Statistical Agency, 2022)[5] people inhabit these wards, and the Project seeks to build the community institutions and practices for improved land and forest management for sustainable livelihoods.

2.3.2 The enabling institutional and policy environment

The WWF Zambia Country Office (WWF ZCO) initiated the Project together with the former Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection (MWDSEP)[6]. It has a long history of working with government in natural resource protection broadly, and water resource management specifically. Its Freshwater Program, for example, focuses on the tributaries to and from the Zambezi Basin, and it worked closely with the Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA) to strategically guide and map out the proposed WRPAs, nationally.

When initiated, the Project was supported by the legislative framework for forestry, land and water management. The Forests Act of 2015 makes provision for the establishment and effective management of protected national forest reserves and supports the first objective of the project to expand and improve the management effectiveness of protected areas. It also provides the mechanisms that enable the establishment of Community Forest Management Groups (CFMG) to manage CFAs through agreement with the Forestry Department. The Project is facilitating the establishment of four CFMGs, adding to three others in the district and contributing to the almost 40 in the province. The WRMA of 2011, makes similar provisions for the delineation and effective management of WRPAs, aligned with the Project objectives. It also promotes community management of water resources through proposed catchment and sub-catchment councils and water user associations (WUA). However, these local institutions for decentralizing water resource management have not yet been initiated in this area, providing a valuable opportunity to pioneer this approach to water resource management in this sub-catchment.

[5] Zambia Statistical Agency. (2022). *2022 Census*, Zambia Statistical Agency, Lusaka.

[6] The project partnership shifted from MWDSEP to the Ministry of the Green Economy and Environment, as Environmental Management shifted from one to the other.

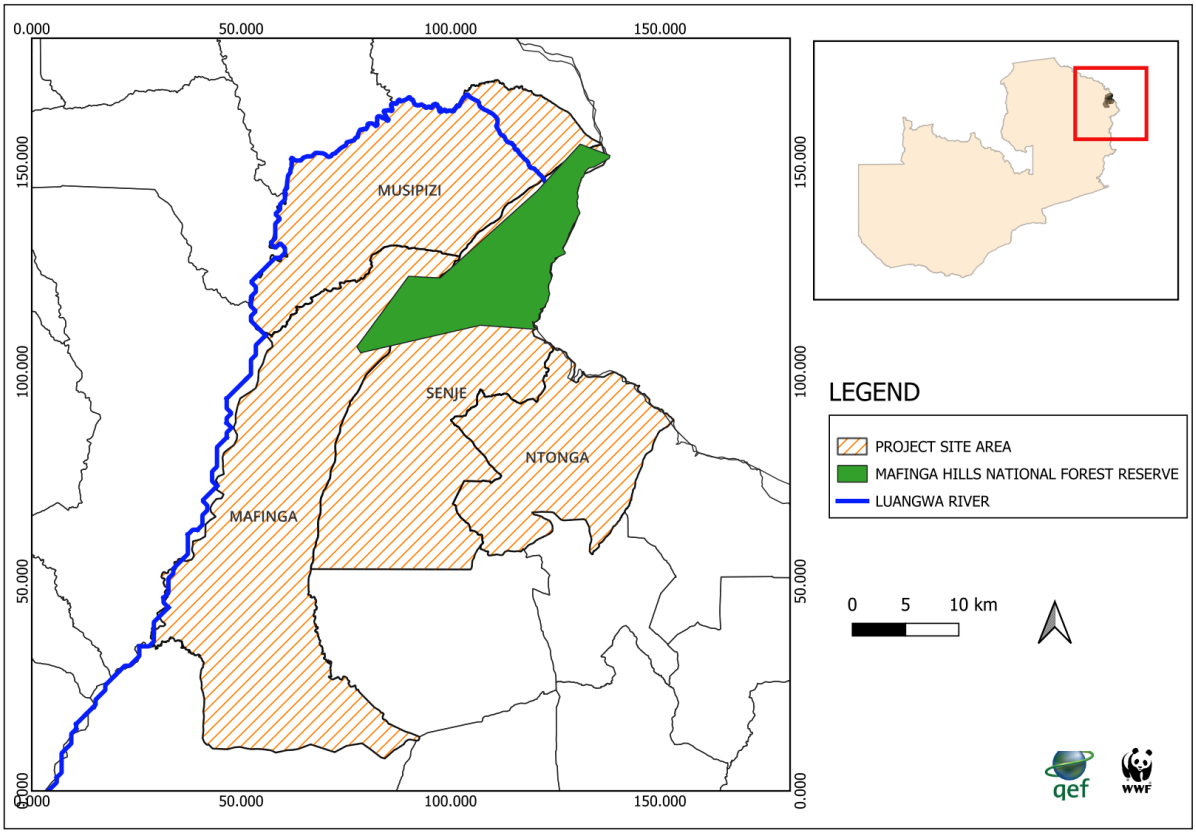


Figure 2: The Sustainable Luangwa project site in northeastern Zambia

2.4 The Sustainable Luangwa Project

The Project theory of change advocates for participatory community-based water resource management in the proposed WRPA, coupled with improved and effective management of the MHNFR and sustainable land use practices in the buffer zone around the reserve, to reduce forest and land degradation for better protection of water resources, biodiversity and livelihoods.

2.4.1 The outcomes and expected results of the Sustainable Luangwa project

Towards this broad goal (above), the Project works within three components toward five outcomes. The first outcome seeks to address various aspects of effective management of the MHNFR. These include clear boundary demarcation, complementing management capacity through the appointment and training of one technical and 20 Honorary Foresty Officer staff (HFOs), and a comprehensive biodiversity and forestry assessment to inform the development of an effective management plan. Towards this outcome the Project engages local communities and seeks to formalize a stakeholder engagement mechanism to guide ongoing and effective community engagement. The second outcome of component one seeks to improve water quantity and quality through establishing a WRPA. This is intended through stakeholder engagement and developing and documenting a process of free and prior informed consent, defining the boundaries and zonation of the area for sustainable forest, land and water resource use, and the development of an informed WRPA management plan to facilitate its proposal and ultimate declaration. Component two aims to promote and support conservation agricultural practices amongst households in the wards adjacent to the forest reserve (2.3.1; Figure 2). It also seeks to decrease the annual rate of miombo woodland loss, through the establishment of household-based woodlots that provide wood for productive and domestic purposes. Given the pioneering approach of the Project, the third knowledge management component seeks to capture and document lessons and good practice for integrated catchment management to facilitate uptake

into other WRPA contexts. Supporting all components and outcomes of the Project, this component also seeks to support adaptative project management through strengthened monitoring and evaluation processes.

1. Protected area management and establishment in the Luangwa headwaters	1.1 Improved management effectiveness of the MHNFR. 1.2 Enhanced protective status of the Luangwa River source.
2. Community management of the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa Catchment	2.1 Buffer zone and community lands under improved management for forest cover, biodiversity and land protection in the Luangwa headwaters.
3. Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation	3.1 Increased knowledge of sustainable catchment management to support upscaling in other headwater areas. 3.2 Informed and adaptative project management.

Table 1: The Sustainable Luangwa components and expected outcomes

2.4.2 Project stakeholders

As before, the Project was initiated through interactions between WWF ZCO and MWDSEP, shifting to MGEE as the mandate for environmental protection moved from one to the other (2.3.2). Departments in MGEE working with the Project include Environmental Management, which hosts the GEF Operational Focal Point and Forestry, supporting the Project at national, provincial and district level Through the evaluation field trip, the department of Planning and Policy was also identified as a key stakeholder in the Project, with an interest in monitoring, evaluating and reporting the contribution made to national priorities and feeding its outcomes into policy development and revision processes (3.1.2). With a mandate for water resource protection, WARMA is a key stakeholder. The Ministry of Agriculture is a member of the Project Technical Committee (PTC, 2.4.3) and is more active in the Project at a local, district level through interactions with project execution.

In Zambia, functional mandates in agricultural, forestry and land management are devolved from national ministries, through provincial and district administrations to local government. In this context, the provincial administration of Muchinga Province, the district administration of the Mafinga District and local government represented through Chief Mwenechifungwe and Mweniwisi, are also identified as key and enabling stakeholders (3.1.2). Following this devolution to local level, critical stakeholders in the Project are the village communities of these two chiefdoms and more specifically from the four operational wards of the Project (see 2.3.1; figure 2). These community stakeholders are critical in this Project that seeks to facilitate local, community-based natural resource management and support the legislative frameworks of the Forests Act and the WRMA (2011; 2.3.2).

Supported by the GEF IA, the Project is being executed by WWF ZCO on behalf of government, in partnership with Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), WARMA and the Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society of Zambia (WECSZ). Both were identified and consulted during project development as key private sector and civil society partners in the landscape and approved by the National Steering Committee in execution. WECSZ had a former presence in the area to support community-based natural resource management and the Project facilitated COMACO's expansion of its work into this area.

The Provincial Forestry Office (PFO) of MGEE is leading the first outcome of component one, to strengthen the management effectiveness of the MHNFR, supported by WECSZ facilitating the establishment of CFMGs (2.4.1; table 1). WARMA leads on planning for and developing a proposal, through community engagement, for establishing the WRPA. In component two, WECSZ's support for establishing CFMGs also contributes to the establishment and management of CFAs in the buffer lands around the forest reserve and in the upper sub-catchment and COMACO supports conservation agriculture amongst village farmers. All work in the Project is supported by the PMU, who also carries the responsibility for executing component three, and working together with the partners, also executes activities in the other two components, for example the development and of management plans for the MHNFR and implementing the management plan for the WRPA.

This suite of stakeholders includes all stakeholder groups, from government, at national, provincial and local levels, through to private sector and civil society, including communities designated to locally manage natural resources.

2.4.3 Project execution and governance

The Project is being executed by WWF ZCO in collaboration with the Zambian government through MGEE. Its execution is through a PMU supported by WWF ZCO administratively, for example, grant management and monitoring and evaluation, and technically by the Conservation Director, Luangwa Landscape Manager and Freshwater Specialist. It draws on technical expertise from WWF ZCO as needed in the execution of the Project, for example from the Water Resource Specialist and GIS Technician. Its execution is also supported by the GEF IA, with a specific focus on project management, gender inclusion, stakeholder engagement, social and environmental safeguards, and monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.

Project execution is supported in country by a National Steering Committee (NSC) and the PTC. The PTC is made up of representatives from MGEE in its Environmental Management and Forestry Departments, the Principal Agricultural Officer from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Luangwa Catchment Manager, from WARMA and the Luangwa Landscape Manager from WWF ZCO. The functioning of the PTC is governed by terms of reference that defines its role as providing technical expertise and implementation oversight. Importantly it works to ensure Project cohesion with national priorities. It further provides input into annual work plans and budgets (AWPB) and budgets and reviews quarterly reports and approves these for submission to the NSC. The NSC is the highest tier of governance in the Project and convenes representation at the highest level of supporting organizations. The NSC makes decisions on project planning and development, approves and makes recommendations for AWPBs and budgets and provides strategic advice for adaptive management. Importantly, it has the role of ensuring project compliance. The NSC is made up of principals from key institutions including MGEE, provincial and district administration, WARMA and WWF ZCO. It also includes the Vice Chancellor of Kapasa Makasa University. The governance structures remain the same as initially defined in the project document and annexure G provides a list of the representatives in these two governing forums.

Project execution is undertaken 'on the ground' in the local Mafinga District by the PMU and the three executing partners, COMACO, WECSZ and WARMA (2.4.2). It is further supported by a District Technical Team (DTT) made up of national ministries with mandates devolved to district level. It includes six members for forestry, livestock and fisheries, agriculture, community development and social welfare and the District Social Planner and provides technical guidance on project deliverables including reports and annual workplans, amongst others.

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS	PROVINCIAL STAKEHOLDERS	DISTRICT STAKEHOLDERS
MGEE: Permanent Secretary · Chair of the NSC *MGEE: Environmental Management* · Hosts the GEF Operational Focal Point, also a member of the NSC · Senior Ecosystem Analyst - member of the PTC *MGEE: Forestry* · Director – member of NSC · Conservator of Forests – member of PTC *MGEE: Planning and Policy* · Director – support to monitoring, evaluation and reporting · Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer – support to monitoring, evaluation and reporting *Ministry of Agriculture* · Principal Agriculture Specialist – member of the PTC *WARMA: Luangwa Catchment Office* · Catchment Manager – member of the PTC *Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare*	· Principal Forestry Officer · Forestry Conservator · GIS Specialist *Provincial Permanent Secretary* Vice Chairperson of the NSC	· District Forestry Officer, member of the DTT District Agricultural Officer, member of the DTT · District Community Development and Social Welfare Officer, member of DTT *Mafinga District Administration* · District Administrator – member of NSC · Social Planner, member if DTT

Table 2: Project governance and technical support at national, provincial and district level

COMPONENT	OUTCOME	EXECUTING PARTNER
1. Protected area management and establishment in the Luangwa headwaters	1.1 Improved management effectiveness of the Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve in the Luangwa headwaters (Mafinga District)	MGEE: Provincial and District Forestry Offices
	1.2 Enhanced protective status of the source of the Luangwa River	WARMA
2. Community management of the upper Luangwa Sub-Catchment (Mafinga District)	2.1 Buffer zone and community lands under improved management to benefit forest cover, biodiversity and land protection in the Luangwa headwaters	COMACO WECSZ

Table 3: Executing partners per component and outcome

Section 2 provides the overall context within which the project is being implemented, was evaluated at its mid-term and within which findings and recommendations have been formulated. Section 3 and 4 provide references back to section 2 for clarifying the context.

3. FINDINGS OF THE MID TERM REVIEW

The mid-term evaluation of the Project focused on its relevance, coherence and design, its effectiveness, potential for and risks to sustainability, its monitoring and evaluation design and implementation, knowledge management, replication and catalytic impact, the application of GEF and WWF policies and project efficiency, broadly and in implementation and execution (1.1.2; annexure B). The findings for the relevance, coherence, and efficiency of the overall outcome of the project are shared together with an indicative rating for each as an introduction to these sections (3.1). These indicative ratings inform the overall assessment of the Project and the rating offered in 3.2.2. Progress for each individual outcome is assessed and rated in 3.2.2, and these similarly inform the assessment of the overall project outcome. Ratings are further offered for the design and implementation of the project monitoring and evaluation and its implementation and execution. Ratings for the project performance are based on a six-point scale from highly satisfactory to satisfactory, moderately satisfactory, moderately unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory and highly unsatisfactory. Sustainability is similarly rated on a six-point scale from highly likely to likely, moderately likely, moderately unlikely, unlikely and highly unlikely, detailed with the relevant descriptors in annexure G.

3.1 Relevance, Coherence and Project Design

Relevance in the mid-term evaluation was explored within the national context of Zambia, the province of Muchinga and the Mafinga District and its people. Discussed together with coherence and project design, it also explored its alignment with and contribution to WWF, GEF and national priorities, as well as its design to address the project goal and objectives.

Project relevance emerges as particularly satisfactory within the local, national and global conservation context. By design, it aligns strongly with the national policy framework for Zambia,

and particularly the national development plan, land, forestry and water resource management. Supporting its relevance, the Project works closely with the relevant mandated agencies in its execution, supporting the priorities of these agencies and facilitating sustainability of project activities and outcomes beyond the Project. Responsiveness to the socio-ecological needs of local communities is also evident in the Project, in its focus on conservation agriculture amongst these predominantly subsistent farmers, its intended provision for alternative timber sources and strengthened forestry management to ensure sustainable access to non-timber forestry products that support livelihoods and wellbeing. In addition, similarly by design, the Project aligns with and contributes to the strategic goals of WWF and GEF. Pursuing stronger alignment with district and provincial development plans will strengthen the relevance of the Project further.

Evidence of project coherence within the policy and institutional context of Zambia is evident in the close working relationship between the Project and agencies for land, forestry and water resource management, as above, contributing to these mandates. Supporting coherence, the Project enjoys significant support from these agencies at their highest level of governance. Coherence could be further strengthened through closer engagement with the Ministry of Agriculture at a higher level of governance, and engagement with some of its key programs, for example the Strengthening Climate Resilience for Agricultural Livelihoods in Agroecological Regions I & II (SCRALA) project, a key co-financier of the Project (3.8.5).

One key area for strengthening the Project design in relation to its theory of change includes specific consideration for community water resource management institutions, such as WUAs proposed through the WRMA. In addition to the CFMGs, these institutions could strengthen the participatory intention for community engagement in natural resource management.

This overall assessment, motivated further by the findings in this section, offers a rating of these three aspects of the Project as,

Relevance	Satisfactory
Coherence	Satisfactory
Design	Moderately satisfactory

3.1.1 Policy and strategic relevance and coherence

The Project is described by one of the respondents as reflecting 'perfect alignment' between GEF and WWF strategies and the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ, personal communication – pc, 23.07.25).

In development and design the Project aligns directly with three objectives of the GEF-7 Biodiversity Strategy (2018)[7]. These include (i) mainstreaming biodiversity in landscapes, (ii) addressing direct drivers to protect habitats and improve effective management and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate and (iii) reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses and increase resilience in the wider landscape. The Project objectives of expanding and strengthening protection and improving the management effectiveness of the MHNFR, the wider WRPA of the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa, and the buffer zones around these through community-based forestry management and conservation respond directly to these objectives. WWFs strategy focuses on conserving biodiversity, reducing humanity's footprint

[7] Global Environment Facility. (2018). *GEF-7 Biodiversity Strategy*, Washington.

and tackling threats to biodiversity and its drivers (WWF, 2008)[8]. Recognized by WWF as one of the global 200 ecoregions (Olson and Dinerstein, 2002, cited in the GEF-7 CEO request for endorsement/approval, Republic of Zambia, 2021)[9], the Project seeks to conserve the globally significant miombo woodlands found in the Project area and directly addresses the ecological footprint areas of forests and water and threat of land clearing for agriculture, defined in the WWF roadmap (WWF, 2008)[10]. The Project further responds directly to various targets within goals one and two of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (United Nations Environment Programme - UNEP, 2022)[11]. These include planning and managing all areas to reduce biodiversity loss such as proposed through the WRPA in the Luangwa sub-catchment, restoring degraded ecosystems, such as the miombo woodland, and conserving land and water, through conservation agriculture, community forestry management and improved water resource management, for example, to reduce threats to biodiversity. It responds also to 'meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing', for example, through enhancing biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture and forestry and restoring, maintaining and enhancing nature's contribution to people, amongst others. The Project responds also to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets aimed at avoiding land degradation, maintaining healthy land, reducing degradation, adopting sustainable land use practices and restore and return degraded land to a natural and productive state. The more specific objectives that the Project responds to include improving the sustainable delivery of ecosystem services through land and forest restoration, improving land productivity and increasing the resilience of land, and in turn people depending on the land for livelihoods, through conservation agriculture, and reinforcing and promoting sustainable and inclusive land governance, through the establishment of CFMGs and CFAs.

At a national level, the Project was designed to respond to the priorities defined in the seventh National Development Plan (7NDP). The 7NDP emphasizes 'an integrated development approach … driven by' agriculture and natural resource management, amongst others (Republic of Zambia, 2021)[12]. This prioritization supports Zambia's transformation agenda that aligns with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. One of its development outcomes seeks to improve water resource development and management through enhancing catchment protection. The environmental sustainability pillar of the eighth iteration of the NDP (8NDP) advances this prioritization through integrated environmental management and enhancing the protection of natural resources. The Project speaks directly to four of six priority programs defined in the plan to achieve the latter. These include lands and forests, wildlife and fish, community-based natural resource management and water resource management. At a more granular level, alignment is evident in the Project at a national policy and institutional level, as well as within the context of the local district and its people. Like the global strategies, in development and design, the Project aligns with national policies of Zambia and the institutions mandated with their implementation. The second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP2) for 2015 to 2025 includes reducing the rate of deforestation, sustainable management of areas under agriculture and forestry, and promoting deliberate actions to protect critical

[8] WWF. (2008). *A roadmap for a living planet*, Gland.

[9] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). GEF-7 *Request for project endorsement/approval*, to GEF Trust Fund, Zambia.

[10] WWF. (2008). *A roadmap for a living planet*, Gland.

[11] United National Environment Programme. (2022). Decision adopted by the conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. UNEP, Nairobi.

[12] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). GEF-7 *Request for project endorsement/approval*, to GEF Trust Fund, Zambia.

ecosystems like the Luangwa watersheds, amongst others (Republic of Zambia, 2021)[13]. The Forests Act (GRZ, Act 4 of 2015)[14] makes explicit provision for participatory conservation and management of forest resources. Mechanisms for community participation are provided for in the act through CFMGs (2.3.2). Project alignment is evident in its focus on improving management effectiveness of the MHNFR and supporting the establishment of CFMGs. The WRMA (GRZ, 2011)[15] provides the legislative framework for the establishment of delineated WRPAs in sub-catchments. At the development and design stage of the Project, its intention was to pioneer and support the development of Zambia's first prioritized WRPA in the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa Catchment. Zambia's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2016 to 2025 (Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2015)[16] emphasizes a 25% reduction in deforestation, the sustainable management of areas under agriculture and forestry, the rationalization of its protected area network and representivity and ecological connectivity at landscape level. It also emphasizes deliberate actions to protect the critical ecosystems of, amongst others, the Luangwa watershed, all directly aligned with the Project intentions (2.4; table 1). Zambia's updated commitment to the Paris Agreement (Republic of Zambia, 2021)[17] recognizes the threat of deforestation to its targets for reduction in, and removal of emissions. It also identifies climate smart agriculture and sustainable forest management as key mitigation and adaptation measures. It further defines capacity building in climate smart agriculture and sustainable forest management as key programs supporting its commitments, aligning with the objectives of the Project (2.4; table 1). Through its UNCCD LDN targets for 2030, the GRZ commits to halving deforestation, supporting good and sustainable agricultural practices on 50% of arable land to decrease the loss of forests and increase forest cover by 5% compared with baselines in 2015. It further commits to catchment management plans that mitigate against or prevent land degradation. With its overall goal of enhancing the protection and sustainable use of land, forests and water resources, the Project contributes to the national UNCCD LDN targets.

3.1.2 Institutional relevance and coherence

Institutionally, the Project objectives and activities are aligned with the key mandated institutions of forestry and water, namely, MGEE through its PFO and WARMA. Through observations during the field visit, institutional collaboration and/or co-operation appears strong between the Project and MGEE's environmental management department (MGEE: EMD) within which the GEF Operational Focal Point is based. This collaboration and/or co-operation with environmental management also appeared stronger with the representative on the PTC, who seemed to have her finger on the pulse of the Project, citing 'day by day, I know everything that they do' (pc, 10.07.25).

The Project interacts with WARMA at a catchment level, at the highest level of the Catchment Manager. Though recently appointed at the time of the field visit, he, together with his predecessor in an Acting capacity, indicated support for picking up the pace for proposing the WRPA. They indicated a change in the guard at head office who they believe has prioritized the Luangwa upper sub-catchment and achieving the declaration of it as the first WRPA (pc, 14.07.25). The Catchment Manager also suggested prioritizing a timed workplan to develop the proposal for a WRPA (pc,

[13] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). GEF-7 *Request for project endorsement/approval*, to GEF Trust Fund, Zambia.

[14] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2015). *The Forests Act, number 4 of 2015*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

[15] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2011). *The Water Resources Management Act, number 21of 2011*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

[16] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2015). *Zambia's Second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2015 – 2025*. Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

[17] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). *Final Zambia Revised and Updated NDC*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka

14.07.25). The statutory declaration of such a WRPA, however, falls outside of their mandate and control and is dependent on the enactment of a statutory instrument (SI), within the judicial system.

An area of institutional alignment and coherence emerging through the mid-term evaluation is with the Planning and Policy Directorate of MGEE. The Director and a senior monitoring and evaluation officer, both relatively new to the directorate, joined the mid-term review mission. For the entire week they joined engagements with WARMA through to engagements at provincial level and on to the Mafinga District. They have a mandate of feeding project and program insights into policy development and revision and budget integration (pc, 16.07.25). They monitor project and program progress and contribution to national indicators aligned with the environmental sustainability of the 8NDP (see above) and manage the platform for quarterly reporting into a ministerial report submitted to cabinet. This indicates relevance and coherence in both process and thematically.

At the level of execution, the Project works closely with devolved national functions of agriculture, livestock and fisheries, forestry, community development and social welfare (2.4.2; 2.4.3) whose mandates overlap with the strategic intention of the Project. An example is working with the Community Development and Social Welfare Officer and District Social Planner, to gain access to communities through existing social structures like Ward Development Committees (WDC), apart from the more obvious example of aligning conservation agriculture with the district mandate of agriculture and forestry.

Relevance and coherence are also evident by design and in development, through the selection of private sector and civil society executing partners, in COMACO and WECSZ, respectively. COMACO describes its core mandate as 'protection of natural resources and securing livelihoods' (pc, 03.97.25). COMACO supports village farmers with farming inputs, including seeds, implements and training in conservation agriculture. Farmers commit, through a signed pledge, to conservation agricultural practices, incentivized through the COMACO market that buys surplus crops for its production processes. With a 23-year national history of working across 99 chiefdoms, the Project offered opportunity for COMACOs expansion into the Mafinga District, aligning with its strategic vision. WECSZ has a strong presence across Zambia and is described as 'having a heart for what they do' (pc, 09.07.25). Their strategic plan includes a focus on forestry management and a strong focus on environmental education, raising awareness and community engagement. They have a longstanding presence also in the Mafinga District and working for effective forestry management and restoration of the MHNFR. The focus group discussions convened with these partners (1.2.2: annexure E), in both cases included senior organizational professionals, finance and administration staff, and some beyond the immediate scope of the Project (annexure E). The scope of engagement of these individuals, for example the Finance and Administration Manager and Grants Administrator indicated a deep interest and knowledge of the Project. It also indicated a deep knowledge of the Project context, for example, details of the Forest Act and its implications for the Project (pc, 22.07.25). The coherence with the goals and objectives of the Project (see 2.4.1; table1), and partner commitment, and support for the Project are evident in these few examples.

3.1.3 Relevance within the local socio-ecological context

The Mafinga District falls within one of three agroecological zones of Zambia with the highest rainfall of between 800mm to 1000mm rainfall per annum (World Bank, 2007)[18]. Small scale agriculture is a common livelihood activity in the district. Climate smart agriculture emerges

[18] The World Bank. (2007). *An empirical economic Assessment of impacts of climate change on agriculture in Zambia*. Paper prepared by the Sustainable Rural and Urban Development Team, Development Research Group, The World Bank, Washington DC.

strongly in the policies of the Ministry of Agriculture and related policies. Small scale agriculture is also supported by the Food Reserve Agency, providing farming inputs primarily for maize production and a take-off market for surplus yield. A common practice in Zambia's crop cultivation is the traditional *chitemene* system of shifting or swidden agriculture, through land clearance and burning of biomass to release nutrients from the ash of burnt wood into the soil. This practice is typically used for growing finger millet. What used to be a sustainable practice is now becoming excessive as the demand for food and livelihoods expands. Within this context of traditional crop-based agriculture, the Project supports the development and implementation of alternative agricultural practices, supporting livelihoods while promoting conservation of natural resources.

Agriculture, albeit small scale, is concentrated around the headwaters and tributaries of the Luangwa River. Another common agricultural practice is crop cultivation on the banks of these tributaries and streams, often within the 50-meter buffer zone defined in the WRMA (2011)[19]. Enough quality water, in addition to being a basic need, is also needed to sustain agriculture and livelihoods. With increasing climate change and consequent droughts experienced in the district, the Project intends to support sustainable livelihoods through continued access to sufficient quality water for household consumption and sustainable food production.

Local communities are highly dependent on forest resources, both timber as well as non-timber products. Timber is typically used for construction and fuel for heating and cooking. The establishment of household-based woodlots, through the Project, are aimed at shifting the harvesting of timber from the indigenous forests to secure and expand forest cover in the district. Non-timber food products used from the forest include wild fruits, caterpillars, mushrooms, flying termites and African polony – traditionally known as *chikanda* and made from boiled root tubers harvested from forests. Grasses for thatching and brooms are also accessed from the forest, and the forest ecosystem is critical for honey production, a traditional livelihood activity. Through improved management effectiveness of the MHNFR and sustainable management of CFAs, these non-timber forest products and ecosystem services that provide them contribute to sustainable livelihoods.

Photograph 2: A traditional beehive in the forest close to a home

[19] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2011). *The Water Resources Management Act, number 21of 2011*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

Community engagement in the Project is being facilitated through existing community structures, such as the Camp Agriculture Committees (CAC) and Ward Development Committee (WDC). The social development objectives of the Project, through conservation agriculture for sustainable livelihoods and its support for local governance and management of forests, land and water align well with the decentralization of governance role of the WDCs.

3.1.4 Project design

The Project document (GRZ, 2021)[20] articulates the Project theory of change as,

> If a participatory process … results in a WRPA under community-based natural resource management; and if improved management of Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve reduces threats of unsustainable wood and wildlife offtake and forest fires; and if sustainable, climate resilient and productive conservation agriculture and community forestry practices with relevant market linkages can be successfully demonstrated; then this will reduce agricultural land expansion … and the headwaters of the Luangwa Upper Sub-Catchment will be better managed and protected.

It (*ibid*) further extracts the key considerations from this theory of change as,

> · Improving the management effectiveness of the MHNFR in the Luangwa headwaters through participatory planning and capacity development
> · … improved protection to a wider area of headwaters around the MHNFR through the participatory development and community-based management of a WRPA
> · … community-based management of the Upper Luangwa sub-catchment … through … participatory landscape management planning

These key aspects of the theory of change articulate clearly with two of the defined project components in,

> 1. Protected area management and establishment in the Luangwa headwaters.
> 2. Community management of the upper Luangwa sub-catchment.

The Project goal to 'reduce forest and land degradation to protect water, biodiversity and community livelihoods', aligns well to its theory of change, key considerations and two natural resource management specific components. As the design of the Project moves into the results framework, however, the focus on community participation fades somewhat into the indicators and activities (3.1.5).

3.1.5 Areas for strengthening relevance, coherence and design

A few aspects of Project relevance, coherence and design that can be strengthened, include,

[20] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). GEF-7 *Request for project endorsement/approval*, to GEF Trust Fund, Zambia.

- The Project theory of change (3.1.4) leads with 'a *participatory* process' and specifies 'community engagement' and 'community-based natural resource management'. Aligned to this project intention, WRMA (2011, p. 293)[21] intends to 'promote the participation of the community in water resource management', emphasizing also 'ensuring gender mainstreaming in decision-making', through 'catchment councils, sub-catchment councils and water user associations' (*ibid*, p. 289). Similar provisions are made in the Forest Act (see 3.1.1). These intentions could be strengthened in the results framework. Community engagement in outcome 1.1 can be strengthened, linking it back to the role of CFMGs in the management of the MHNFR (3.1.4). Similarly, outcome 1.2 can be strengthened with a more explicit integration of community engagement in the planning for and management of the WRPA, and the institutions – catchment councils, sub-catchment councils and water resource management, through which these are envisaged in the WRMA (2011)[22] .
- The NSC appears to function at a higher political level for supporting the Project (2.4.3). The absence of agriculture at this level is evident, as a key component of the Project. Even though represented on the Project Technical Committee and making inputs into the NSC from this level, the conservation agriculture component can be strengthened through representation from the *Ministry of Agriculture* on the NSC. Through one of its Projects, this ministry also makes a key co-financing contribution to the Project (3.8.5), the alignment and application of which could be strengthened through this level of representation.
- Project alignment and coherence with Muchinga Province and the Mafinga District Administration emerged *slimmer* than at national and local level. The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Mafinga District (Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2023)[23] emphasizes agriculture as one of the prioritized economic sectors. It makes no mention of conservation agriculture, climate change or climate smart agriculture and is silent on climate risks and issues. Water is integrated with sanitation and solid waste management as a priority social sector. Emphasis is placed on water infrastructure and provisioning, with no mention of water resource protection and management. Forestry is noted as the only environmental sector activity, noting deforestation as a key issue. It talks of the establishment of CFAs (2.3.2; 2.4.2; 3.1.3) in response to 'pressures on forests due to inadequate diversification of economic activities' (*ibid*, p. 39). And 'promote[s] value addition to non-timber products such as mushrooms, herbs, edible insects, fruits and wild vegetables' suggesting also promoting honey production through the establishment of 'honey processing plants' (*ibid*, p. 39). Despite the potential for relevance and alignment with some of these intentions, it is not clear of the extent to which the Project engages with these intentions. Interactions with both the province and district administration during the mid-term evaluation site visits were preceded by detailed briefings for these offices. There was little indication of recognizing the alignment and/or of the extent to which the Project contributes to (or threatens, as below) these district priorities. The provincial development plan is a collation of the various district plans, with nothing additional. No further alignment could be explored beyond the district level.
- Worth a separate mention, *mining* gold, diamonds and coal deposits is identified as investment opportunities in the district IDP (*ibid*, p.5), with 'this potential remain[ing] largely unexplored'. Investment in mining could significantly impact the WRPA and water

[21] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2011). *The Water Resources Management Act, number 21of 2011*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

[22] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2011). *The Water Resources Management Act, number 21of 2011*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

[23] Government of the Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. (2023). Mafinga District Integrated Development Plan 2023 – 2033. Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Government of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka.

resources, and potentially undermine any gains made by the Project. It is critical that the Project strengthens its engagement at a district *administration* level, as well as at the district implementation level, more evident in the Project (2.4.3; 3.1.2; 3.1.3).

3.2 Project Effectiveness

Project effectiveness was assessed in this mid-term evaluation relative to its progress, with some comment on strategies and approaches used towards the outputs, and reflection on the enablers, constraints and challenges in progress and implementation.

3.2.1 Delay in project execution

The Project grant agreement was signed in May 2022, followed by the recruitment of staff and set up of the office infrastructure by March 2023. Some challenges resulting in initial implementation delays appear to have been resolved and/or accommodated, summarized as,

- Project set up was delayed by repeat processes of staff recruitment to the PMU. The Mafinga District and particularly the Project site is very rural and remote and does not easily attract professionals (pc, 09.07.25). Recruitment for all positions, including the Project Manager, Community Engagement and Gender Officer and Safeguards and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer were run multiple times. These appointments took seven months to conclude (*ibid*). This is however reported as not unusual in GEF projects (pc, 09.07.25; pc, 23.07.25).
- Governance processes require sign-off of project AWPBs and associated budgets by the NSC (2.4.3). Convening of the NSC was delayed, with a knock-on effect to project execution. Two Permanent Secretaries sit on the NSC (2.4.3), one from MGEE and one at provincial level. Constitutionally, one Permanent Secretary cannot appoint another. This was resolved through escalating the matter to the Secretary to Cabinet in the Office of the President, who is the appointing authority. This was given effect on 6th February 2024.
- The PMU requested an interim sign-off authority for the PTC which initiated execution of activities. The NSC is now in place, with the first meeting convened in September 2024. This period of delay was used to engage communities on various aspects of the Project (pc, 09.07.25)
- The rainy season in the Mafinga District, lasting from November to sometimes May of the following year, significantly impacts project activities. An already poor road infrastructure is heavily impacted by seasonal rains, affecting accessibility to communities as key project partners. In planning, activities are now scaled back during this period to indicate more realistic plans (pc, 09.07.25).
- What appears to have been a teething problem, resulted in multiple revisions to financial reports from WWF ZCO to GEF IA, to release project funding. This trickled down to the executing agencies, unable to execute their respective activities in the absence of adequate funding (pc, 03.07.25; pc, 09.07.25; pc, 23.07.25pc, 28.07.25). Through further engagement and guidance from the GEF IA Grant Manager during one of its mission field visits, this has now been clarified and resolved across the partnership of executants.

3.2.2 Project progress

Project progress is indicated below in relation to its three components and associated outcomes, indicators and mid-term targets.

1. Protected area management and establishment in the Luangwa headwaters			
REF	OUTCOME	MID TERM TARGET	PROGRESS
1.1	Improved management effectiveness of the MHNFR	METT Score – 39	The mid-term METT assessment was said to be scheduled for August 2025. This score was not accessed during the evaluation.
		150 ha of restored forest	The mid-term evaluation was unable to assess the extent of increase in forest restoration from the draft biodiversity and forestry assessment report of August 2025. This report provided the baseline for future assessments
		Demarcation of the MHNFR boundary, awareness raising of 25 adjacent communities	53 kms or 75% of the 71km boundary of the MHNFR has been cleared and beaconed. The remaining 25% lies on the international boundary with Malawi and requires bilateral engagement.
		Appointment of 1 technical and 20 honorary forest officer staff from communities for MHNFR	The DFO assumed the duties of the technical forest officer in the Project. This is a district level position with the overall focus of forestry management in the district. In addition to supporting forestry management in the MHNFR, the DFO also supports four other projects being executed in the district. This technical forestry management capacity is not dedicated to the Project and is described as particularly constrained. 37 Honorary Forest Officers (HFOs), 24 men and 13 women, were nominated by associated communities for these positions. They are linked to four CFMGs (2.1, below). Police clearance for these HFOs are currently underway. They have a primary duty for ensuring compliance of forestry management in the CFA. Secondary or 'other' duties are defined by the District Forestry Officer (DFO), with no defined time allocation.
		All personnel supporting management of NFR receive training in patrolling, monitoring and assessment, etc	Training is planned to follow on from police clearance and appointment of the HFOs.
		Forest resource/biodiversity inventory assessment conducted	A biodiversity and forestry assessment has been concluded and is available in draft.

1.2	Enhanced protective status of the Luangwa River source	Biodiversity assessment complete	A rapid assessment was undertaken of surface and ground water quality, land cover and land use surveys, ecological and socio-economic assessments in the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa Catchment.
		Free and prior informed process completed and documented	The process of free and prior consent still needs to be documented.
		Stakeholder consultations completed and documented	Community leadership have been engaged on the proposed WRPA. Further community consultations are required to develop the proposal for the WRPA, including the zonation and categorization of areas.
		No adverse change in water quality parameters	10 water quality monitoring sites have been set up, five on the Luangwa River, two on the Ntonga River, and one in each of Musipizi, Inzinza and Kaunga Rivers. Two gauge stations have been set up, one on the Luangwa River at the Kampumbu Bridge and the other on the lower Ntonga River at Mweniwisi Bridge. Three community members monitor water levels and record these for submission to WARMA.
2. Community management of the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa Catchment			
REF	OUTCOME	MID TERM TARGET	PROGRESS
2.1	Buffer zone and community lands under improved management for forest cover, biodiversity and land protection in the Luangwa headwaters.	20% reduction in rate of loss of miombo woodland	The baseline was established through a biodiversity and forestry assessment, which will guide the measure of reduction towards the end of the Project.
		50 households practicing conservation agriculture	2,640 community members from four wards, including 1,912, women, 1,472 youth[24] of which 576 are women, participated in training towards conservation agriculture, using demonstration plots. Crops have been planted at the household level for the first planting season.
		50 households establishing woodlots	Village farmers are growing Gliricidia as a natural pest repellent, amongst other uses. This is described as one of the approaches to establishing woodlots.

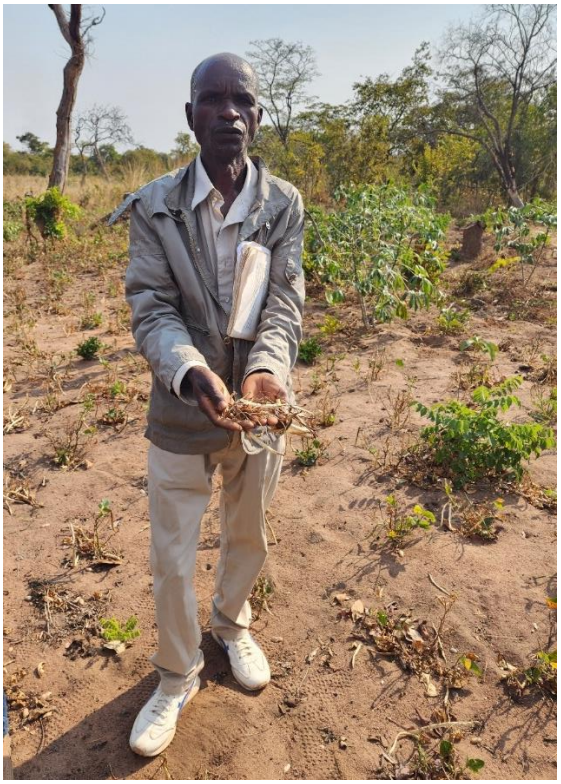
[24] The international definition of youth is used, between ages 15 to 35.

		200 community members trained in community forestry management	147 community members were trained in participatory forest management. Four CFMGs have been established, through proposals to manage a cumulative area of 3,589.6 ha as CFAs. These are made up of two larger CFAs of 2,066.9ha and 1,003.7ha. Two smaller CFAs are made up of two sites each. One includes two sites of 140ha and 160, making up 300 ha managed by one CFMG, and another of 219ha, split into two parcels of 167ha and 52ha, is managed by another. 39 members of the four CFMGs, 10 in three and nine in one, made up of 21 men and 18 women participated in training in community forestry management, as part of establishing the CFMG.
3. Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation			
REF	OUTCOME	MID TERM TARGET	PROGRESS
3.1	Increased knowledge of sustainable catchment management to support upscaling in other headwater areas	2 knowledge products on best practice	No knowledge products have yet been developed to document best practice.
3.2	Informed and adaptative project management	1 annual reflection workshop linked to annual stakeholder forum	· Annual reflection meetings linked to broader stakeholders are still to be convened.

Table 4: Outcome linked outputs

Drawing on the Project progress towards the targets defined for mid-term, an assessment and rating (annexure G) for each outcome is offered below. The assessment of these individual outcomes are considered in assessing the overall project outcome, together with the indicative ratings for relevance, coherence and project design (3.1). In addition, the overall project outcome is also informed by the cost efficiency of delivering the intended results.

Photograph 3: Gauge plates at Kampumbu Bridge on the Luangwa River



Photograph 4: A Kaswa village farmer shows off his cowpeas

OUTCOME	RATING	JUSTIFICATION
Outcome 1.1	Moderately unsatisfactory	Progress towards the management effectiveness of the MHNFR includes boundary demarcation and biodiversity and forestry assessment. The DFO, as the technical forestry officer, has duties that expand well beyond the scope of the Project. Insufficient capacity is described in this area of the Project (3.8.2). The selected HFOs are in process of being cleared for appointment. Their contributions to the management of the MHNFR is defined as other duties. These other duties are defined at the discretion of the DFO. Training for staff associated with the management of the MHNFR has not yet been initiated. Apart from the reserve boundary demarcation and forestry and biodiversity assessment, the requisite capacity for improving the management effectiveness of the reserve has not yet been secured. Without the updated METT score and improvement in management effectiveness can't be determined at this mid-term of the project. In addition, the draft biodiversity and forestry assessment of August 2025 provides no indication of increased forest cover in the MHNFR. Though some outcomes were achieved as intended, some require key actions to progress towards the intended results.
Outcome 1.2	Unsatisfactory	To date, a rapid assessment of water quality and quantity was undertaken to inform the proposal for a WRPA. In addition, 10 water quality monitoring stations have been set up and two gauge stations, involving communities in monitoring water quality and quantity. Community consultations, a substantial target that has implications for further progress in negotiating the terms of the proposed WRPA, has been limited to the community leadership. Achievement is deemed to be substantially lower than expected at this mid-term of the Project.
Outcome 2.1	Moderately satisfactory	Good progress has been made towards community management of buffer lands around the MHNFR. This includes the introduction of conservation agriculture, to 2640households. In terms of scope, this far exceeds the target of 50 households by mid-term. Four CFMGs have been convened, proposing the improved management of just over 3,500 ha of CFAs. Management plans, still to be developed, will provide further indication of the management effectiveness of these CFAs. One critical outcome, aimed at diverting timber use from the MHNFR and strengthening the management effectiveness of this reserve, is lagging.

OUTCOME	RATING	JUSTIFICATION
Outcome 3.1	Highly unsatisfactory	None of the expected knowledge products to support replication and scalability for integrated catchment management was realized during the first half of the Project.
Outcome 3.2	Unsatisfactory	Whereas various engagements are convened with project partners to reflect on progress, the intended annual reflection workshop that monitors progress in relation to the Project theory of change, drawing on monitoring and evaluation insights and integrates this into future planning was not evident.
Overall outcome	Moderately unsatisfactory	As before, the Project is assessed as highly relevant in context and coherent with institutional mandates and strategies. The Project has made some progress towards the expected results, and some areas require further attention. Cost efficiency, however, emerges as a concern to be watched through the Project end. Some cumulative component expenditure appear to be relatively higher in relation to achievement. For example, securing and deploying the necessary capacity, in addition to developing, resourcing and implementing the management plan for improving the management effectiveness of the MHNFR appears to be a substantial component towards this first outcome. Its remaining budget of 62%, to cover also the extensive stakeholder engagement process for developing the WRPA, indicates less cost efficiency. The 37% budget spend for component 3 also appears less cost effective in terms of the minimal deliverables towards the targets defined for this component.

3.2.3 Priorities for project delivery

Several activities were undertaken in 2024, following the initial delay in start-up activities of the Project (3.2.1). Some observations are made regarding these activities in relation to the outcomes to which they are intended to contribute.

- There appears to be significant focus on discrete project activities reflected in AWPBs. These activities must however be considered in relation to the outputs and outcomes to which they are intended to contribute. Failing which, the activities might remain fragmented and not build up to the intended goal of the Project, reflected in its theory of change (2.4; 3.1.4; 3.1.5). Some indications of this potential risk are evident in the following examples.

  From the APWB, the causal link from activity, to output to outcome, is indicated as[25],

[25] The linear linkages is used only for descriptive purposes, in this example and does not necessarily suggest this linearity in relationships between activities, outputs and outcomes.

Given its positioning in the theory of change and the results framework, the needs assessment is interpreted as focused on the forest conservation management skills of the Technical Forestry Officer and the 20 HFOs (or 37 as identified, 1.1 in table 2, above). The training needs assessment (WWF, date unknown)[26] covered the full spectrum of training needs across the Project, including staff and executants and participating communities. It makes no reference to HFOs or field staff and might have been undertaken prior to their identification. This runs the risk of not responding adequately to the resourcing capacity needs for strengthening management effectiveness of the MHNFR.

This training needs assessment, with this broad scope, also integrates a wide range of different kinds of training needs. These include training for conservation practices, such as conservation agriculture, establishing woodlots and participating in community forestry management. These needs would have been known at project inception, since these activities are explicit in the project document and associated results framework. A training needs assessment could have been done as these activities unfolded and need not have been included in this training needs assessment. It includes also training for project staff and executants around what are largely operational aspects, such as policy application, report writing, monitoring and evaluation, amongst others. Executant partners and staff orientation to the Project appear to be conflated with training needs that are intended to give effect to project outcomes. This risks detracting, for example, from critical training needs required to achieve the Project outcomes, such as training CFMGs for sustainable natural resource governance and management, institutional development to strengthen these and support the establishment of the water resource management related institutions, important aspects for management effectiveness to facilitate the development of conservation management plans, as some examples.

- A draft forest management plan has been developed for the Mafinga District, in its entirety. This requires a devolution into the MHNFR, responding to the specific areas for strengthening identified in the baseline management effectiveness tracking tool (METT). This plan has to integrate aspects of the biodiversity and forestry assessment to link this discrete activity to a defined output and ultimate outcome.
- GEF uses the METT for tracking the improvement of management effectiveness and is used as an indicator in the results framework for the Project. It was used for the baseline assessment and related targets are included in the results framework to the Project end. There, however, appears to be different understandings of the framework to be used for measuring management effectiveness in the Project. The Foresty Department uses a management plan for assessing management effectiveness and during evaluation discussions appeared unsure about the METT as the management effectiveness methodology in the Project (pc, 15.07.25). To ensure fair measurement of the management effectiveness of the MHNFR, the two methodologies must be reconciled. It need not be one or the other. A recommendation follows for reconciling the two (4.2.9).
- Progress towards the WRPA is slow. A substantial focus of this outcome is the *participatory* development of the proposal for the WRPA. This requires agreement on boundaries,

[26] WWF. Date unknown. *GEF 7 Sustainable Luangwa training needs assessment and capacity building plan*. Report prepared by Beehive Associates Limited, for WWF, Sustainable Luangwa Project, Mafinga.

zonation, land and water use, for example. Some of these engagements could be anticipated to be more contentious than others, for example in the common practice of growing crops within the 50m buffer zone from rivers (3.1.3). WARMA was frank in their request for added capacity to assist this aspect of the Project. They describe their current capacity as technical water professionals, needing support for stakeholder engagement. This added capacity would be critical for developing and documenting stakeholder engagement for expansion and replication into other proposed WRPAs.

- Emphasis has been placed on the appointment of HFOs linked to the CFMGs. The results framework makes provision for the appointment of a technical staff member for the MHNFR. Significant human resource constraints have been highlighted in the evaluation (below, 3.8.2). Forestry management capacity is currently being complemented by the Community Engagement and Gender Officer, a function already over-stretched in carrying two portfolios. Given the critical component of strengthening management effectiveness of the MHNFR coupled with the community engagement capacity needed by WARMA and in other aspects of the Project, this appointment is critical.
- 2,640 village farmers participated in conservation agricultural training and are implementing these practices at household level. The Project document (GRZ, 2021)[27] proposes conservation agriculture as a response to land and forest degradation, aligned, together with agroforestry, to Zambia's National Agriculture Policy (GRZ, 2016)[28]. One Project Implementation Report (PIR, WWF, 2023)[29] uses conservation agriculture as a reference, whereas the next uses climate smart agriculture (PIR, WWF, 2024)[30]. Conservation agriculture and climate smart agriculture appears to be used interchangeably (pc, 09.07.25). Conservation agriculture is understood by the evaluators, as broader than, and inclusive of climate smart agriculture. Conservation agriculture techniques are described, for example, as basins or holes with mulching that retains moisture, organic fertilizers and natural pest control, in growing the Gliricidia alongside crops (pc, 16.07.25). During the first planting season in the Project, the Mafinga District experienced a drought, impacting the crop yields. Only 91 of the 2,640 farmers, 59 females and 32 males, were able to sell 7,641kg of excess soybeans to the COMACO take-off market. The conservation agricultural techniques during this drought season, typical of changing climate, yielded 10% of the expected 75,000kg yield. The Project therefore must explore techniques more responsive to climate variability to ensure sufficient yields that support livelihoods, as intended.
- Crops grown by participating farmers are rainfed, including soybeans, groundnuts and cow peas. Rainfall in the Mafinga District is restricted to the months of November to May, compromising livelihoods from these crops for the balance of the year. Exploring stronger climate smart agriculture practices might address also water availability in the dry months, for example, through water harvesting.
- There appears to be different views on the establishment of woodlots to divert the need for and use of timber from the forests in component two of the Project. These woodlots are intended to contribute to improved management of the MHNFR buffer zone and

[27] WWF. (2021). *GEF Project Document, Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management*. Project document submitted by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Environmental Management Department, Lusaka.

[28] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2016). *National Agriculture Policy*. Government of the Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Agriculture, Lusaka.

[29] WWF. (2023). Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management (10412). *Project Implementation Report*, WWF ZCO, Lusaka.

[30] WWF. (2024). Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management (10412). *Project Implementation Report*, WWF ZCO, Lusaka.

community lands, explicitly indicating its purpose 'to benefit forest cover' (GRZ, 2021)[31]. One view believes this activity is planned for within the MHNFR. Another respondent talks of this as part of the forest management plans of the CFMGs. One other notes, it is being planned for degraded areas identified outside of the forest reserve. Another believes the growth of the Gliricidia as part of the conservation agriculture approach contributes to these woodlots, and still another talks about setting up 26 school clubs across the four wards to establish nurseries for tree planting and reforestation. The project document is explicit about 'establish[ing] native woodlots in natural regeneration areas on degraded land *outside* the MHNFR to reduce offtake' from the reserve (*ibid*, p. 46)[32]. Those italicized above are closest to the intention expressed in the project document. There does, however, need to be a clear, commonly agreed strategy for diverting timber use from the MHNFR and enabling sustainable use, a key part of reducing forest degradation as the ultimate goal of the Project. This strategy could potentially draw on some of these ideas cited.

- Through evaluative discussions, knowledge products are being equated with communication products. This is also evident in reporting the development of a communications strategy under component three (WWF, 2025)[33]. Given the intention of this project to pioneer the establishment of WRPA, it is imperative that a clear strategy is developed for achieving the outcome of 'increased knowledge of sustainable catchment management supports upscaling of approach in other headwater areas' (GRZ, 2021, p. 40)[34].
- The results framework defines 'annual reflection workshops' (*ibid*, p. 101)[35] to inform decision-making and adaptive management. These annual reflection workshops are described as the annual work planning sessions, such as the PTC annual review meetings, partner bi-monthly coordination and review meetings (email, 13.08.25). They are also described as including stakeholder visits, like those of the NSC and the GEF IA visits to the project site. From the results framework the annual reflection workshops are interpreted as annual, collective stakeholder meetings to reflect on project progress relative to the theory of change to inform future planning. It therefore requires considered reflection on progress towards project outcomes, focused also on how and the extent to which these are enabled (or constrained). It must also be closely linked with the monitoring and evaluation plan and reports and is discussed further in section 3.4.

3.3 Sustainability

Sustainability in the mid-term evaluation focused on the risks to project activities and benefits being sustained and impact being achieved, reflecting also on the probability and potential magnitude of these risks. It also includes a comment on the resilience of project activities and outcomes and potential impact of these risks. It further includes some reflection on opportunities and current strategies for sustainability.

[31] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). *GEF Project Document, Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management*. Project document submitted by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Environmental Management Department, Lusaka.

[32] *ibid*

[33] WWF GEF Agency. (2025). *Annual project progress report*. Annual progress report on the Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management, WWF ZCO, Lusaka.

[34] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). *GEF Project Document, Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management*. Project document submitted by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Environmental Management Department, Lusaka.

[35] *ibid*

Efforts towards sustainability include collaboration with government agencies mandated with land, forestry and water resource management. For example, working with the district officials in agriculture, forestry and community development, integrating project activities and its respective benefits into the work of these district functions. Sustainability is further supported by the presence and experience of the executing partners in the context of project implementation. For example, mechanisms for financial sustainability have been developed and tried in other contexts of COMACOs work and informs measures for sustainability of project activities and benefits. Coupled with these opportunities and potential for sustainability, some risks emerge which could compromise the functionality of local community-based institutions. CFMGs are new institutions, often requiring considered support for effective functioning. Potentially beyond the four years of project implementation, or six years, if through a two year no cost extension. Their resilience to the risk of, for example, decreased support or relying on voluntary participation of communities, compromises their potential sustainability beyond the Project time frame. Further, environmental risks, like climate change, coupled with social risks such as poverty, food insecurity and limited livelihood options, pose additional material risks to these institutions and the ecological intentions of the Project to secure and support the sustainable use of land, forests and water resources. Considering the likelihood of risks to sustainability, further expanded below, overall sustainability is rated as,

Sustainability	Moderately likely

3.3.1 Financial sustainability

Village farmers, by signing a conservation pledge with COMACO, are assured of its market through which to sell surplus crops, which could sustain beyond the Project. Equal to this opportunity, however, is the risk of dependence on this singular market, which might similarly threaten long-term sustainability of livelihood benefits from the Project.

To support the sustainability of these agriculture-based livelihood activities, COMACO's model includes building producer leadership, through Senior Lead Farmers (SLF) who support other village farmers. Their approach similarly involves the building of capacity for seed generation to secure future farming inputs, which could also be sold within the community.

A private company is exploring engagement with communities for potential carbon projects in the rich forests of the Mafinga District. This establishes an opportunity through which to explore effective forestry management for livelihood benefits, through selling carbon credits as one for example. This opportunity must be approached with caution to avoid commercializing the forests to its detriment, and the livelihoods supported in this environment.

Financial sustainability	Likely	Certain measures are built into COMACOs approach to facilitate financial sustainability. For example, access to its markets, strengthening capacity to sustain agricultural activities, for example, through support from SLFs and the generation of seeds to secure future agricultural inputs. This is offset against the risks of dependence of village farmers on the COMACO market. Financial sustainability of project activities and its outcomes are deemed likely. This assessment is also supported by the institutionalization of other project aspects as below.

3.3.2 Institutional sustainability

Sustainability is well supported in the Project through collaborations with mandated and aligned institutions to sustain its activities and outcomes (3.1.2), including government – at all levels. An example is working with and through the DTT (2.4.3). The Project document indicates a role for the NSC to 'provide advice on appropriate strategies for sustainability' (GRZ, 2021, p. 56)[36], which could potentially be explored in expanding its terms of reference.

It works also with existing and potential private sector partners, such as COMACO and the new entrant into this context, exploring carbon projects (3.3.1) and non-government organizations, like WECSZ. WECSZ is described by project partners as being 'rooted in the community' (pc, 16.07.25) which bodes well for sustainability. These are described as opportunities to build and strengthen the capacity of these institutions (pc, 10.07.25) that might sustain project activities and benefits beyond the funded period.

The potential for sustainability is also initiated through building community-based institutions like the CFMGs. Two risks emerge, however, in the space of community-based institutions. Firstly, there is the risk of passing over the opportunity to build water resource management institutions, like WUAs (2.3.2), not currently integrated into the results framework (3.1.5). The WUAs must be explored in relation to the CFMGs already in process of being established. Setting up parallel natural resource management institutions in the same geographic and social environment could duplicate natural resource management efforts, introduce inefficiencies, and potentially create disparate approaches to community governance.

One of the two Chiefs in the Project site presents himself as a key sustainability champion. He reflects complete clarity on the intentions of the Project, and its processes. He further talks of having established four committees in his Chiefdom into which various projects, including the Sustainable Luangwa, are integrated. He presents some ideas on how Project activities might be sustained, which might be worth exploring, by the PMU, in greater detail.

MGEE believes that a clear documentation of successes attracts investment. Articulated as a request of the Project, this can be clearly linked to a clear knowledge management strategy that enables and supports replication and scalability of sustainable catchment, water, land and forest management.

Institutional sustainability	Moderately likely	Moderately likely balances the likelihood of institutional sustainability with some associated risks, particularly in relation to community-based institutions. Project activities, outputs and intentions are strongly linked with mandated and associated institutions. Its execution is undertaken in close collaboration with these institutions, indicating a relatively high level of sustainability. In the same context, community-based institutions are just being formed, and require considered attention to build and strengthen their capacity for governance and management. This is a critical aspect of sustaining the effective land, forest and water management outcomes of the Project.

[36] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). *GEF Project Document, Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management*. Project document submitted by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Environmental Management Department, Lusaka.

3.3.3 Socio-political risk

Socio-political dynamics pose the greater risk in this project context and include:

- The process of building institutional capacity, particularly amongst vulnerable, marginalized and remote, rural communities, is highly intensive. The process of developing conservation management plans, implementing and monitoring these are equally intensive. Add to this the role envisaged for CFMGs of natural resource governance, decision-making and management. What could become an overwhelming task might develop dependence on the Project executant partner, with whom they work closely through this longer-term journey of institutional building. The risk could be exacerbated by the operational needs of the CFMG, some of which might be financial and time-intensive, detracting from other livelihood activities.
- Linked to this longer-term journey of establishing and operationalizing the CFMG, an added risk could emerge in relation to the definitive management tenure. CFMG members decide on the management tenure to be specified in its constitution. These could range from two to three years, with members allowed to serve a maximum of two terms. There is a risk that the management tenure expires prior to the necessary capacity being established to sustain these institutions.
- Project executants report suspicions of mistrust of communities towards them in interactions, attitudes of communities and expectations of remuneration for their role in the CFMGs. All of which poses a risk to project activities and outcomes.
- The strong patriarchal nature of society is also a risk to achieving the objectives of women inclusion and participation.
- 2026 is an election year in Zambia, which might present as an opportunity and a risk. This might be an opportunity for government officials to put their best foot forward for communities, for example in resolving the boundary contestation of the MHNFR (3.7.2). It might also be a risk in a change of the guard and the continued support for the Project.

Photograph 5: Agriculture on the banks of the river, within the 50m buffer zone

Socio-political risk	Likely	Community-based natural resource management, generally and in the Project context is new. The WRPA is just being pursued in the upper sub-catchment, as well as the CFMGs. The high dependence of these institutions on support for establishment and functioning, coupled with the threats of community mistrust of intentions of both policies and associated institutions, expectations, often of remunerated leadership positions, as some examples. These risks coupled with new pathways of community-based management indicate a significant risk to compromising the continued and required activities and expected outcomes of the Project.

3.3.4 Environmental sustainability

Some environmental risks to sustaining the Project activities and outcomes and potential impact, include,

- A common agricultural practice in the district is growing crops within the 50m buffer zone of the rivers (3.1.3). Establishing the WRPA will require negotiating with communities to move back from this zone, likely to be a protracted process. And if achieved, it would require providing an alternative, like irrigation, requiring a significant capital outlay.
- Sand mining is a lucrative activity around the bridges of the many tributaries and streams of the Luangwa River. Sand is piled up from the riverbed to dry and carried in plastic containers to the roads where companies and individual builders buy loads for construction at just under 25 ZMK for 20kgs. It attracts many young boys who carry bucket loads of sand from the river banks up to the road for compensation. Sand is mined under bridges, potentially compromising the stability of the physical structure (pc, 19.07.25). These risks indicate more than an environmental risk, extending to social risks from employing underaged youth.
- Changing climate remains a challenge to the natural environment and the livelihoods it supports.

Photograph 5: Sand mining mounds under the Kampumbu Bridge over the Luangwa River

Environmental sustainability	Moderately unlikely	Risks to livelihoods associated with climate change is already evident in the project site. Climate change predictions indicate these will worsen with time. Poverty remains a key risk in the district and project site, making opportunities like sand mining lucrative. Couple with compromised food security, easy access to water on the river banks to grow food for subsistence and market would be difficult to challenge with communities. Shifting these activities out of the 50m buffer zone, albeit with the promise of irrigation, is unlikely to be a process without resistance. In addition, mechanized agriculture requires a significant capital investment across a fairly vast scope of these practices along the riverbank and its tributaries.

3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Design and Implementation

Internal systems and processes of monitoring and evaluation in the Project were assessed for its design and implementation, the alignment between the two and its links to overall monitoring and reporting processes.

The core frameworks for monitoring project implementation and its outcomes are the results framework and the AWPB. On the ground, a monitoring and evaluation plan and various tools have been developed to facilitate data collection and reporting into these frameworks.

3.4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Design

A high-level results framework, structured around the Project objective, components and outcomes guides monitoring and evaluation. It includes indicators for the Project objective and for each of the Project's outcomes. The results framework provides a definition for each indicator, method and/or sources of evidence of achievement or progress towards the outcome, the frequency of data collection, the person responsible for monitoring and evaluating each element of the outcome. It further provides guidance on the disaggregation of data, baseline measures and provides for the recording of annual targets. The results framework, as the guide to monitoring and evaluation, was assessed for its,

a) *Alignment to the theory of change*

The key considerations of improved management effectiveness and protection of the headwaters around the MHNFR are well captured in the results framework in component one and outcomes one and two (3.1.4). The participatory planning and management intention of the Project, articulated in this theory of change (3.1.4), however, does not carry through to the outcomes and indicators. Outcome one, improved management effectiveness of the MHNFR in the Luangwa headwaters does not reflect this intention of participatory planning enabled through capacity development. Similarly, enhanced protective status of the source of the Luangwa River, is not explicit in the Project's intention to improve protection of the headwaters through participatory development and community-based management. Though both outcomes suggest processes of free prior and informed consent and stakeholder consultations, the role of communities in planning and proposed management processes are unlikely to be captured in the absence of explicit and clear indicators and descriptors. Section 3.1.5 also discusses the absence of the formation of WUAs, that facilitates community participation in the planning for and ongoing management of local water resources in the results framework. This important

aspect for participatory planning and management of water resource management, provided for through the WRMA (2011) is similarly not captured in the overall results framework and through its indicators (below).

b) *The baseline measures*

Baseline measures are typically and mostly zero at the start of most projects. Some baseline measures existed and have been established at the start of the Project, such as the hectarage of the MHNFR and its METT score. Some others have been established in the first half of the project. The status of the completeness of baselines is reflected in table 3. Baselines in 2023 indicate those established at the start of the Project, and baseline by 2025 indicate those developed during the first half of the project. A comment is offered on the completeness of baselines where relevant.

REF	INDICATOR	BASELINE AT 2023	BASELINE BY 2025	COMMENT
CI 1	Terrestrial protected areas (in ha) created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use	Sub-indicator 1.1 - N/A		This baseline might be set at '0' rather than 'N/A, in anticipation of the proclamation of the WRPA.
CI 4	Area of landscape under improved practices	Smallholder agriculture, expanding shifting agriculture, local crops (maize, casava, soya beans, groundnuts, sorghum, sweet potatoes), not considerate of climate resilience or watershed protection.		Given the emphasis on 'improved' land use, current agricultural practices might be established, retrospectively, amongst village farmers currently engaged in the Project. The baseline is otherwise largely generic in context.
		Forest produce collected, including fuelwood and charcoal		The scope of fuelwood and charcoal harvested, within the Project, based on observation, might provide a more robust baseline.
		Fires commonly set		As above, the scope of fires, based on observation, might also provide a more robust baseline.

OCI 1.1.1	· Demarcation and awareness-raising · Staff appointments · Training · Inventory assessment · Management plan · Stakeholder engagement mechanism	· Partially demarcated · 1 DFO, 5 volunteers · No inventory · Outdated plan, not in use, inadequate budget · Community engagement in CEPF project, no formal mechanism in place		The inadequacy of the budget might be made more explicit, in terms of line items, to ensure adequate budgeting for the management plan to be developed to ensure effective management
OC 1.1.3	Increase in the extent of forest cover in MHNFR		Degradation in the MHNFR – 574 ha Regeneration – 1,097 ha Degradation in buffer zone – 18,785 ha Regeneration in buffer zone 63,690 ha Undisturbed (assumed in buffer zone) – 75,032 ha	The figures outside of the MHNFR, though not required in the current indicator, are disaggregated per ward and a useful baseline against which to measure improved forestry management
OC I 1.2.1	· Biodiversity surveys · FPIC process documented · Stakeholder consultations · Boundary identification · Categorization · WRPA proposal submitted · WRPA management	0		Community engagement in CEPF project, as defined as a baseline for OC I 1.1.1, could similarly serve as a baseline on which to build the approach for FPIC
OC I 1.2.2	Water quality status indicated by nitrates, phosphates and turbidity		Parameters established at 6 of the 10 hydrometric station sites	Intended baseline to be established for 'selected sampling sites'

OC I 2.1.1	Change in rate of loss of miombo woodland	Muchinga Province 2,175 ha per annum	The baselines established for OC 1.1.3, disaggregated per ward, could be useful for measuring changes in the more specific project sites
OC I 2.1.2	Households practicing conservation agriculture	0	As in CI 4, the nature of agriculture might offer a more robust baseline against which to measure changed land use practices

Table 5: Assessment of monitoring and evaluation baseline measures

c) Indicators

These were assessed relative to the appropriateness and relevance to the Project theory of change.

CI 11 The disaggregation guideline could be expanded to capture the different types of beneficiation, for example, disaggregated across the different training types.

OC I 1.1.1 The descriptor could be expanded to indicate also the role of the HFOs in improving management effectiveness of the reserve, in time and function. This will provide key insights into this one opportunity for community engagement in managing the MHNFR.

OC I 1.2.2 The indicator could be expanded to include water quantity and flows, as indicators of catchment health and impacts of variable climate.

OC I 2.1.2 The disaggregation guideline could expand to indicate also the type of farming practices adopted, crops grown and yields. The mid-term review reflects a very low yield of 10% of a single crop compared to what was expected. Such insights could provide insight into the type of practices resulting in specific crop yields and could be invaluable in directing future investments in conservation agriculture.

As above and in 3.1.5, additional indicators related specifically to the scope of community participation in forestry and water resource planning and management is suggested to explicate the participatory intention of the Project. This will require the determination of baselines of such institutions, already established in the Project area. For example, some CFAs are approved for management by CFMGs in the Project area, such as the Mwita CFMG.

d) Arrangements for implementation

Monitoring and evaluation implementation is supported in the Project through dedicated capacity. This dedicated capacity is, however, coupled with the portfolio for environmental and social safeguards, merging two portfolios for one person's management. This is effectively and crudely half a dedicated resource for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation might have been better coupled with gender inclusion, as a key result area of the Project. Otherwise, with a clear monitoring and evaluation plan (3.4.2), to give effect to the design as in the results framework, this capacity ought to suffice.

5% of the total project budget has been allocated to monitoring and evaluation, facilitating its implementation. This amounts to a total budget of $145,117. This includes personnel costs, financing joint biannual field visits for safeguards compliance and monitoring and evaluation and training sub-grant staff on project monitoring and evaluation. Over five years, with these line items and a central function for informing adaptive management, this budget could be considered limited.

Methods/sources, frequency, responsible person and data disaggregation are part of the results framework and so part of the design for monitoring and evaluation. It does however suggest guidelines for implementing monitoring and evaluation processes. Methods and sources should ideally be separated, as two distinct elements of monitoring and evaluation. Both methods and sources can be more explicit in reference to the means for generating evidence that indicates progress and achievement. Field reports, annual reporting, quarterly project reports, oversight visits, as some examples, reflect the 'space', whether written or verbal, within which results are reported, ideally backed by evidence. Sources are better described as the primary documents, place, or person from which data is elicited. The results framework provides some examples of such primary sources, such as the METT scorecard. Some other examples could be GIS maps, the product of the GIS analysis and remote sensing, cited as the method or source providing evidence of an 'increase in the extent of forest cover in MHNFR'. The GIS analysis and remote sensing is interpreted as more of the method of data collection, culminating in related maps, which provide the evidence for indicating progress or achievement. To keep the results framework streamlined, methods might be better included and expanded in a monitoring and evaluation plan (below). Frequency can similarly be more clearly defined in such a plan (below).

Discussions and indications suggest that the results framework is seen as and referred to interchangeably as the monitoring and evaluation plan. An example is evident in the replication of the results framework in the Project monitoring and evaluation plan (WWF, 2022 below)[37], as well as reference to the results framework in discussions about monitoring and evaluation. The results framework is best used to inform the development of a practical plan to operationalize a process of data collection to provide insight and evidence of progress towards and achievement of project results.

3.4.2 Monitoring and evaluation implementation

At the level of project execution, a monitoring and evaluation plan has been developed. Following a definition of its purpose to 'provide … evidence-based data and … information and knowledge products … main reference point for tracking overall implementation progression of the Sustainable Luangwa project' (WWF, 2022)[38], it presents the goal, components, outcomes and indicators as in the results framework. Its 'means of verification' for each indicator, mirrors the method/source from the results framework. The plan outlines roles and responsibilities in relation to monitoring and evaluation, data and reporting flows and guidance for data management. To

[37] WWF. (2022). *GEF Sustainable Luangwa Project monitoring and evaluation plan*. WWF ZCO, Lusaka.

[38] WWF. (2022). *GEF Sustainable Luangwa Project monitoring and evaluation plan*. WWF ZCO, Lusaka.

guide primary data collection for monitoring and evaluation, the plan might include, for each outcome and indicator, (i) specific disaggregated data required, for example, how many households, how many women, how many men, how many youth participated in which training, and how many households are growing which crops and using which conservation management practices as some examples of specificity, (ii) the primary data source, for example, training attendance register as evidence of participation in training, village farmers inputs providing details of practices they apply, what they grow and what does well, or farms, for observing and verifying practices that reflect improved land management, (iii) methods of data collection, for example data analysis of training records which could provide insights into the scope of participation in each ward, in each chiefdom, and trends and patterns across gender and youth participation across these wards and chiefdoms, observations during site visits to verify improved land management practices, as some examples, (iv) and more specific time frames, for example, attendance registers as the training takes place, site visits to different village farmers perhaps rotating biannually from one ward to another, as some examples.

Various tools are used in-field to aggregate data into the results framework. These include a biannual partner reporting tool, which appears to elicit information on activities undertaken and quantitative elements, referred to as performance indicators of related. Some examples include number of participants at community meetings, number of new farmers recruited, number of books distributed, number of producer groups formed, as some examples of the 12 indicators linked to the activity of 'conduct awareness and sensitization of targeted communities on CA practices'. With five activities and 40 indicators, as well as a brief narration of activities, change stories, lessons learnt, challenges and recommendations, this could make for fairly onerous reporting processes by executing partners. Some of these data fields can be aligned with more definitive, online monitoring and evaluation tools, lessening the scope of detail required. Change stories can be linked to monitoring and evaluation methodologies, such as outcomes harvesting and most significant change stories, generated less frequently to maintain rigor and essence. Themes for these can be guided by the results framework or identified from trends and patterns emerging from the monitoring and evaluation data analysis. Challenges and recommendations can be integrated into annual reflective workshops. This will significantly streamline this executing partner reporting framework to descriptions on activities, with emerging lessons.

An excel file, named as a 'database' was shared as part of the monitoring and evaluation system. The file holds an indicator tracking table for each of the three Project components, focused on the outcomes and related outputs related to each. This is followed by a tab referred to as an indicator tracking table and headed 'quarterly monitoring and evaluation progress reporting indicator tracking table. Data sheets on different tabs include the list of village farmers involved in training for conservation agriculture, lists the four CFMGs, lists project training interventions and a list of stakeholders engaged with through the Project. For greater efficiency, outcome and output tracking could be integrated into the high-level results framework tracking tool and the workplan tracking tool (as below). Similarly, what is referred to as the quarterly monitoring and evaluation progress reporting indicator tracking can also be integrated into these higher-level project tracking frameworks. Otherwise, these efforts are duplicated. The database is best reconfigured as an online data file, accessible to all partners and relevant stakeholders, and aligned to the proposed monitoring and evaluation plan, reflecting evidence of project progress and achievement.

The AWPB tracking tool provides for reporting of activities undertaken within a year and disaggregated per quarter. In some cases, it includes the need for data, ideally collected through monitoring and evaluation processes, for example, the number of local community members trained. Efforts in monitoring and evaluation are best applied to collecting and managing data as evidence to feed into the two reporting streams. These include, into the high-level results

framework and the APWB. This will enable stronger alignment and greater efficiency in the monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes in the Project.

A monitoring report was shared, based on a field visit to a COMACO project execution site (WWF, 2025)[39]. It presents the Project context and outlines the purpose, objectives and methodology for the visit. The findings and observations include expressions of communities' needs and challenges and risks identified in project implementation. It outlines recommendations and an action plan, not necessarily linked to the challenges identified. Three lessons learnt are documented, as well as good practices, similarly not linked to the findings in the report. The alignment between the field visit and monitoring and evaluation reporting requirements is not clearly evident. For efficiency, site visits should be more closely aligned with eliciting data and evidence that informs monitoring and evaluation, guided by the proposed plan (3.4.1).

The cumulative budget for monitoring and evaluation includes training for the monitoring implementation of the ESMF and GAP and reporting monitoring and evaluation findings. However, the framing of the activity in the AWPB for year 2 and year 3 seems to separate training for monitoring the implementation of the ESMF and GAP and reporting from participatory monitoring and evaluation and reporting. This is further evident in the reporting on the related stakeholder workshop as 'topics covered included community forestry management, monitoring and evaluation and reporting, and safeguards, gender mainstreaming, finance and grant management and reporting The centrality of monitoring and evaluation, indicated in component three and outcome 3.2 (2.4.1) could be lost in the budgetary detail, not facilitating a clear focus on monitoring and evaluation.

In summary, project monitoring and evaluation can benefit from a more detailed plan, aligned with the results framework, with aligned and streamlined tools and processes to generate, manage and access the necessary evidential data.

Monitoring and evaluation design	Moderately satisfactory	The Project theory of change, supported by the WRMA (2011)[40] is explicit about community participation in planning and management of land, forests and water resources. An expansion of some outcomes and indicators could strengthen the participatory intention of the Project outlined in its theory of change. Most baselines have been established with some recommendations for expanding some of them. A few indicators, its descriptors and / disaggregation guidelines can be expanded. The budget allocation for monitoring and evaluation is stretched, given its significance in the project and a stronger plan for operationalizing monitoring and evaluation and its requisite data collection can be strengthened.

[39] WWF. (2025). *GEF Sustainable Luangwa Project field monitoring report, February 2025*. WWF ZCO, Lusaka.

[40] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2011). *The Water Resources Management Act, number 21 of 2011*. Government of Zambia, Lusaka.

Monitoring and evaluation implementation	Moderately unsatisfactory	The plan to guide monitoring and evaluation can be strengthened, with greater and more specific operationalization detail. According to a practical plan for implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities should be more clearly planned, and better aligned with reporting frameworks. Improved structure in data collection, organization, analysis and reporting could strengthen its use in adaptive management. Strengthened, relevant and appropriate data collection methods needs to be more clearly developed relative to reporting requirements into the results framework.

3.5 Knowledge Management

In this mid-term evaluation, knowledge management is understood by the evaluators to integrate stakeholder engagement in learning processes to develop knowledge products based on practice, best, good and challenging, that could inform replication, scaling and catalytic impact in the same, similar or diverse contexts.

As before, knowledge management is equated to communications (3.2.3). Various communications products have been developed and offered as part of knowledge management. These include a project flyer and various radio clips. The Better Life booklet is said to have been revised, with input from the Project. To assess this as a knowledge management product would require a more detailed analysis of the content, process and context. Similar to knowledge management, reflection sessions have been equated to convening different stakeholders around work planning on the one hand and project site visits on the other (3.2.3). The intention of both processes requires revisiting the intention thereof, with strategic planning to meet these objectives of the project, both as critical outcomes of the Project, as well as processes to inform and strengthen adaptive management.

3.6 Replication and Catalytic Impact

Given the Project's mid-point, no replication or catalytic impact is evident in the Project at this time. Although significant potential exists for it to be a key catalyst in supporting the implementation of the WRMA (2011). The intention for this project to pioneer the establishment of the first WRPA in Zambia, promoting community participation in water resource management is clearly articulated in the project document (3.1.4; GRZ, 2021)[41]. Knowledge management is foreground as one of the three components of the Project, with its intention articulated as 'increased knowledge of sustainable catchment management supports upscaling of approach into other headwater areas. Considered together, the Project intention appear to support learning from processes of establishing the WRPA, through community participation and management, for replication into other catchments in Zambia. Therein lies the catalytic potential of the Project.

Various conversations during the evaluation indicated frustration about the centralized decision-making processes of WARMA. This is similarly described as impacting the execution of activities towards the establishment of the WRPA. The WRMA describes the catchment councils, sub-catchment councils and WUAs as the mechanisms for decentralizing water resource management

[41] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). GEF-7 *Request for project endorsement/approval*, to GEF Trust Fund, Zambia.

(2.3.2). This legislative framework provides another valuable opportunity to support processes of decentralization, as a catalyst for replication and uptake into other catchments.

These are two examples of opportunities in the Project to pioneer decentralized, locally and community-based water resource management at a sub-catchment level. To support uptake, scaling and replication into other catchments, processes, outcomes and, most importantly, lessons learned must be captured along the way and document as knowledge products. To meet this clearly articulated intention of the Project, a purposefully planned knowledge management strategy, is required. It should be structured around key stakeholders and processes that enable the implementation of the WRMA (2011), to facilitate learning for scaling, uptake and replication.

3.7 Policy Application

The implementation of gender inclusion, stakeholder engagement and environmental and social safeguards policies are required across all GEF projects. The mid-term evaluation focused on the nature and scope of application of these policies.

3.7.1 Gender inclusion

The inception of the Project was supported by the required gender analysis and the development of a gender action plan. Some key challenges recognized with respect to limited gender inclusion in this traditional, patriarchy is the lack of women representation in decision making structures at local level, leading to an inability of women to shape processes, programs and projects that have an impact on, and might generate benefits for them. It also recognizes variability in women's ability to shape decisions in their respective households.

Strategies defined in the gender action plan (GAP; GRZ, 2021, appendix 7B)[42] to foster gender inclusion, is a 50:50 men to women participation target, ensure inclusion of married women, avoiding unachievable targets for activities considered to be more the domain of men, ensuring a gender responsive budget, ensuring basic training and awareness raising amongst key stakeholders including the traditional leadership in communities. It further specifies ensuring equal access to information for men and women, accessibility to project activities for women, take account of factors that might hinder the participation of women, target women in leadership and ensure gender disaggregated data.

Gender specific actions are defined relative to specific outputs towards outcomes, including amongst others, gender awareness and sensitivity, representation of women and men, and incorporating gender considerations across project processes. The number of community participants mostly reflects the 50:50 participation guide. Balanced participation amongst men and women is evident amongst village farmers. Participation of women village farmers in conservation agriculture (2.4.2; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.1.5; 3.2.3; table 2) reflects more than 50% representation of women. This is perhaps indicative of the gender policies defined by COMACO, aiming for higher than 52% participation of women (pc, 030.7.25).

Participants are nominated by communities for participation in CFMGs (2.3.2; 2.4.2; 3.1.1; 3.1.5; 3.2.3; table 2), as HFOs (2.4.1; 3.2.3; table 2) and SLFs (3.3.1). Women's participation in the CFMGs are mostly balanced in a ratio of 50:50 and is slightly lower in the two cases that were able to be confirmed during the site visit. Apart from women in leadership in the CFMGs, their representation as SLFs is particularly low. Of 20 SLFs only two are women (table 3). Various reasons are cited for this lower participation of women. Women express a lack of confidence in leading men (pc,

[42] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). *GEF Project Document, Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management*. Project document submitted by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Environmental Management Department, Lusaka.

16.07.25). Male SLFs believe that the physical demands of the role and women's domestic responsibilities do not allow easy participation. Women participation as HFOs is generally lower than the 50:50 ratio suggested in the GAP. 50 people from each of the four wards participated in the boundary demarcation of the MHNFR. Only three women, together with 197 males were involved. The women, one of whom is the wife of a Headsman, are all from one of the wards in the Chiefdom described earlier as a 'sustainability champion' (3.3.2). Reasons cited for the lower participation of women are the physical demands of the exercise. This lower rate of participation, however, also means that women did not directly benefit from the 200 ZMK compensation per day.

#	PROJECT ACTIVITY	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	RATIO
1.	Village farmers in Mafinga	310	515	825	38:62
	Village farmers in Musipizi	332	501	833	40:60
	Village farmers in Ntonga	328	405	733	45:55
	Village farmers in Senje	98	134	232	42:58
2.	Senior Lead Farmers	18	2	20	90:10
3.	Chipungu CFMG[43]	5	4	9	55:45
	Lighton CFMG	6	4	10	60:40
	Lua CFMG	5	5	10	50:50
	Makombe CFMG	5	5	10	50:50
4.	Honorary Forest Officers, Chipungu	7	2	9	78:22
	Honorary Forest Officers, Lighton	5	3	8	63:37
	Honorary Forest Officers, Lua	5	5	10	50:50
	Honorary Forest Officers, Makombe	7	3	10	70:30
5.	Boundary demarcation	197	3	200	99:1

Table 6 Gender participation across the Project

Though lacking in concrete evidence, an increase in the incidence of gender base violence (GBV) is suspected (pc, 17.07.25). The suspicion emerges from overheard conversations amongst women village farmers. It is suspected to be linked to women's increased earning power, with violence perpetrated either physically or financially. This issue needs consideration in the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF, 3.7.2).

An observation during the evaluation site visit is the dominance of men in the institutional representation of the Project. 13 people from MGEE and PFO accompanied the evaluators on the site visit, including only one woman. The PMU working on the ground in Mafinga are all men, as

[43] The gender split was verified during the evaluation field visit for the Lighton and Chipungu CFMGs. Details for the other two were taken from the Project monitoring and evaluation database.

are the field staff of all executant partners. It is unfortunate that institutional gender trends do not reflect the transformation intended for the community in this project site.

3.7.2 Environmental and social safeguards

As required, a high-level screening of environmental and social safeguards was undertaken during the development of the Project, informing risk categorization and the development of the ESMF. WWF safeguards standards triggered during this screening process include natural habitats, indigenous people and involuntary settlement. The first two were not identified as significant risks. The risk of involuntary settlement has emerged in the Project execution as significant and though not initially triggered, community health and safety is emerging as a risk as well.

a) *Safeguards standard on involuntary settlement*
Two aspects are emerging regarding this risk. Firstly, the demarcation of the MHNFR boundary resulted in a contestation with a community settled on the boundary and partly within the boundary of the reserve. Despite the original SI of 1972 (2.2), the initial boundary demarcation was done by a local NGO. These boundaries, demarcated differently from the SI, were used to approve the application of the CFMG for the management of a CFA in two plots. In error the CFA was approved, partly within the SI defined boundary, and therefore partly within the MHNFR (pc, 17.07.25). The new demarcation, undertaken through the Project, cuts through this approved CFA and understandably triggered the ire of the associated community (pc, 09.07.25). In exploring a resolve, the PFO will initiate an assessment of the contested area to better understand the scope of 'encroachment'[44], the number of people living in the reserve and the activities being undertaken. With this assessment it will engage the community to find a resolve (pc, 15.07.25). Forest encroachment in Zambia is not considered unusual (pc, 10.07.25; pc, 15.07.25), and the PFO at provincial level, supported by MGEE nationally is confident that a resolve will be found. This might be a negotiated voluntary move by the community, or a concession made for the area of land being contested. Given the process mapped out by the PFO, it is not yet necessary for the development of a Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP, WWF, 2021, p. 2)[45]. Secondly, , the WRPA would require communities to shift their agricultural activities back from within the 50m buffer zone of the riverbanks (3.1.3; 3.2.3; 3.3.4). This shift is likely to impact access to water resources and nutrient rich soil, which would require a Livelihood Restoration Plan. WWF, through interactions with the Ministry of Agriculture, is exploring irrigation to support this shift (3.3.4).

b) *Safeguards standard on community health and safety*
As in 3.7.1, there are suspicions of increased GBV due to women's increased earning power from conservation agriculture. The risk categorization must be expanded to include the standard on community health and safety and its inclusion in the ESMF.

c) *Grievance resolution mechanism (GRM)*
The GRM has been set up, with communities introduced to the process. 12 grievance boxes have been distributed to different public sites at schools and clinics. Community awareness is evident in the three grievances raised through the system. Two more grievances have emerged through the evaluation process. To retain anonymity, details cannot be disclosed

[44] Inverted commas are used, because technically this does not constitute encroachment as the CFA was approved by the Forestry Department.

[45] WWF. (2021). Environmental and social management framework and process framework. Prepared for the Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management GEF project, WWF, Lusaka.

in this evaluation report. It has, however, been reported to the Safeguards Lead at the GEF IA. These grievances have been processed through the agreed channels, the first step being to raise the issue with the project executant field staff. Unfortunately, between four and six months have elapsed with no feedback to the two community members who have raised the grievance. This indicates less effective engagement with the GRM which poses a potential risk to the project.

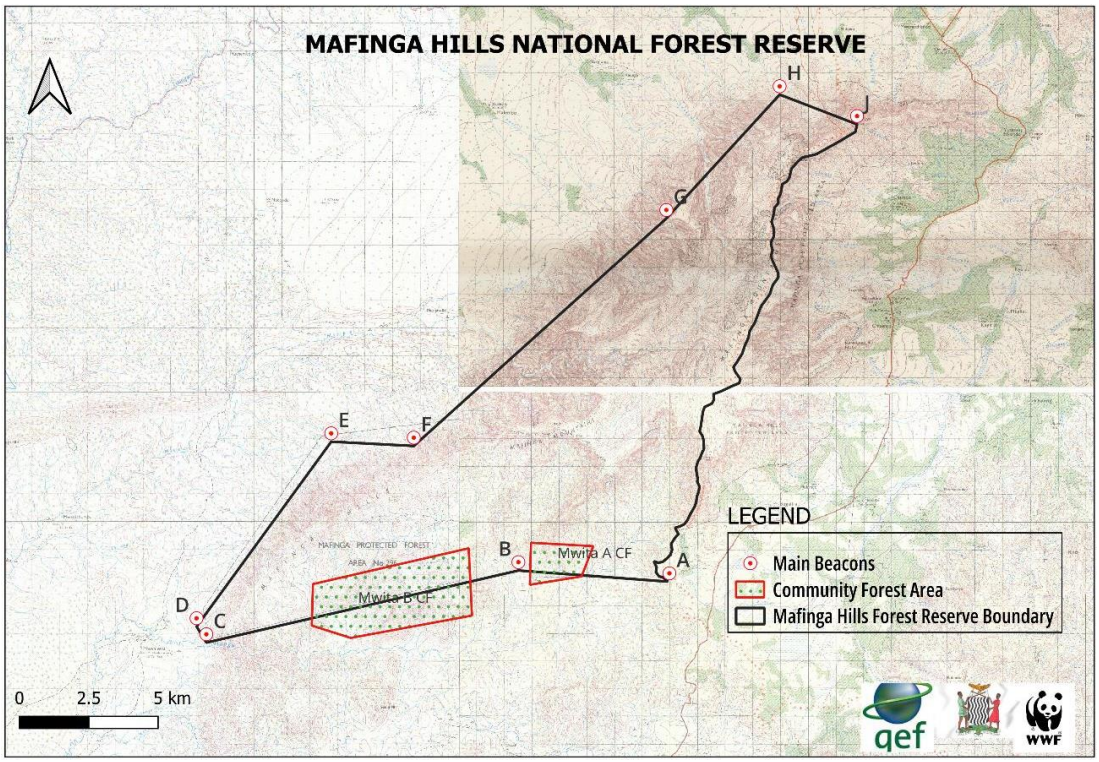


Figure 3: The approved CFAs of the Mwita CFMG

3.7.3 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken in the development of the Project through a project development team (PDT), and consultations with potential executant partners and communities, through their leadership. Stakeholder engagement seems to be typically approached through existing and related community structures, such as CACs and WDCs (see 3.1.3). Communities have selected specific members for participation in certain activities, such as CFMGs, HFOs for example, based on literacy levels and positioning in the community.

Typical approaches to stakeholder engagement, guided by the results framework, are 'sensitization and awareness raising'. Whereas these might suffice for introductions to various aspects of the Project, they might be more limited in strengthening capacity, for example in building functional institutions such as the CFMGs (2.3.2; 2.4.2; 3.1.1; 3.1.5; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 3.3.2). Other approaches appear to be through demonstration, for example, conservation of agriculture techniques and water monitoring processes. This might require an exploration of more engaging learning methodologies, for example social learning, active and transformational learning, learning informed by constructivist and adult learning principles as some examples, to build the necessary governance and management, and sustainable capacities.

Good stakeholder relations were observed between communities and the executing agencies during the evaluation field visit. Several stakeholders also availed themselves for discussions during this site visit. Community discussions included 107 people, over two days with village

farmers, CFMGs, HFOs and other community members. This included 51 women, with some strong voices evident amongst both men and women. A strong collaborative spirit was observed amongst project executants and institutional supporters. This is evident in the number of participants in the various online and in-person engagements (annexure E) and those who joined the mid-term evaluation field visit to Mafinga. 44 people from 11 organizations participated in 21 engagements, including six individual interviews, eight group interviews, three focus group discussions and five courtesy interactions (1.2.2; annexure E). Further, five members from the PFO and the two from MGEEs Planning and Policy Directorate joined all engagements during the field visit at catchment, provincial and district level. At least one person, sometimes two people from COMACO and WECSZ, joined community engagements. Whether the engagement was with the CFMGs (WECSZ's business) or village farmers (COMACOs business), they participated fully across these discussions.

3.8 Efficiency

Project efficiency focused on financial efficiencies, the deployment of, and complementing human resource capacities, governance and communication across the Project and co-financing.

3.8.1 Financial efficiencies

Apart from the delays experienced during the first quarter of 2025 (3.2.1) related to financial reporting, no other financial inefficiencies are reported in processes (pc, 28.07.25). Some duplication in effort is suspected in stakeholder engagement towards the various component outcomes. Grant managers in two of the executant partners fear that this might also result in community fatigue, around different aspects of the Project. This could be easily remedied through improved coordination of all stakeholder engagements across the Project. It might also build a more cohesive whole for the Project amongst community members, while addressing both financial and human resource efficiencies (3.8.2).

Total expenditure[46], to date on the three components are,

COMPONENT 1	COMPONENT 2	COMPONENT 3
38.8%	22.3%	37.2%

Expenditure to date on components one and three is considered high in relation to the outcome achievements, and the activities that are still required to achieve the expected results (3.2.2). Though not a significant risk at this mid-term, a caution is offered in terms of the allocation of the remaining budgets to activities that directly contribute to the outcomes in these components.

3.8.2 Human resources

In field project execution is supported by a few full-time resources across the PMU, WECSZ and COMACO, as below. It is also supported by the PFO and the DTT (2.4.3; 3.3.2).

[46] This is a fairly crude overview analysis, excluding costs for operations and project management.

#	ORGANIZATION	DEDICATED INFIELD STAFF	ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT STAFF	ADDITIONAL CAPACITY SUGGESTED[47]
1.	COMACO	· Area Manager · Project Manager · Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	· COO and Head of Extension · Extension Zonal Coordinator · Grants Administrator · Monitoring and Evaluation Manager · Project Accountant	
2.	MGEE: FD		· District Forestry Officer · Forestry Conservator · GIS Specialist · Provincial Principal Forestry Officer	Technical Forestry Officer
3.	WECSZ	Project Manager	· Community and Youth Engagement Officer · Environmental Education Officer · Finance and Administration Manager National Environmental Education Officer	
4.	WARMA		· Catchment Manager · Hydrologist · 6 support water related professionals	Stakeholder engagement specialist
5.	WWF ZCO	· Project Manager · Community Engagement and Gender Officer · Safeguards and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	· Chief External Engagement and Program Quality Officer, support for monitoring and evaluation · Citizen Science Project Officer · Communications · Freshwater Resources Specialist, approximately 20% GEF project funded) · GIS Officer · Grants Administration (50% GEF project funded) · Procurement Officer · Grants and administration officer · Luangwa Landscape Manager30% GEF project funded)	
6.	WWF GEF Agency	·	· Project Manager · Lead Specialist – Results-based Management · Safeguards Specialist · Gender Inclusion Specialist	

Table 7: Human resource deployed and convened around the Project

Table 4 indicates a relatively wide scope of complementary support, to the six full time human resources and one for 75%. The full-time functions are described as being 'stretched thin'. Two

[47] These are suggestions for complementing current capacity in the Project to enable steady progress towards completion. No additional budget is, however, available for such positions and would have to be alternately funded.

portfolios combine two functions each, in the Community Engagement and Gender Officer and Safeguards and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. In field staff are supported by the five-person DTT (2.4.3) with devolved national functions. This includes the DFO, not listed in the table above in relation to MGEE: FD. The DFO supports four projects being executed in the district, including this one, and has an overall mandate of district forestry management. With strengthening forestry management as a key component of the Project, one of the PMU with an already dual function, supports the forestry management component of the Project, stretching the capacity even thinner. Despite significant support from executant partners, the staff complement on the ground remains very thin. Added capacity must be considered, to ensure delivery of the project results (3.2.3).

The administration of the managing office in Mafinga appears to be an added responsibility to a PMU where two members already carry dual functions. This might detract from and/or decrease the amount of time required for quality engagement with specialized functions. Administrative support could well support the office and project monitoring and evaluation as well.

3.8.3 Communication

Communication in the project is described as 'not great' (pc, 01.07.25; pc, 03.07.25; pc, 11.07.25). These data references indicate that the issue of communication has come up more than once during the evaluation. The inefficient communication manifests across different levels. It has come up in relation to the monthly co-ordinating calls between the GEF IA and the PMU. Whereas there is understanding for heavy workloads that often clash with these meetings, lack of availability can be better communicated for rescheduling. It emerged also in the context of delays in funding disbursements, leaving executant partners unable to plan for project activities due to uncertainty about funding flows. These delays, however, were experienced around a particular issue, which appears to have been resolved (3.2.1) and will ideally not recur. In the project context, where field-based work is common, whatsapp communication is used to overcome issues of availability. It also enables communication with groups, to 'keep everyone on the same page' (pc, 09.07.25). whatsapp, however, does not appear to be the preferred means of communication, by all stakeholders, in the professional setting of the Project. An explicit request has been made to minimize the use of whatsapp, particularly for official communication.

A request has been made by MGEE that executant partners, in externally facing communications, use the project identity, together with their organizational logos. As the Project is otherwise identified by the identity of the executing partner.

3.8.4 Co-financing

Co-financing, in kind and through grant financing has been secured from various executing and associate partners, as indicated in table 5.

A total of $21,888,276 was committed in co-financing to the Project. This includes in-kind provisions of office space, staff time, operational budgets and resources, such as crops through COMACO. Grant financing has also been committed, totalling $13,547,970, including a substantial grant from the Ministry of Agriculture, through the Strengthening climate resilience for agricultural livelihoods in agroecological regions I & II (SCRALA), contributing 56% to the total co-financing of the Project. To date 22% of this funding has been reported as realized.

# CO-FINANCIER	COMMITTED AT CEO ENDORSEMENT			REPORTED BY 30 SEPTEMBER 2025		
	IN-KIND RECURRENT	GRANT INVESTMENT MOBILIZED	TOTAL	IN-KIND RECURRENT	GRANT INVESTMENT MOBILIZED	TOTAL
1. GEF Agency, WWF US	$346,699	$0	$346,699	$142,195	$0	$142,195
2. WWF ZCO	$600,000	$480,100	$1,080,100	$340,105	$0	$340,105
3. GRZ - MWDSEP	$225,000	$0	$225,000	$0	$0	$0
4. COMACO	$2,250,000	$3,500,000	$5,750,000	$213,588	$0	$213,588
5. WECSZ	$1,359,431	$702,000	$2,061,431	$153,360	$381,056	$534,416
6. GRZ - Forestry	$40,000	$0	$40,000	$0	$0	$0
7. GRZ - GCF	$0	$12,345,970	$12,345,970	$0	$2,469,194	$2,469,194
ADDITIONAL CO-FINANCIERS POST CEO ENDORSEMENT						
8. Mafinga District Administration				$128,000	$0	$128,000
TOTAL	$4,821,130	$17,028,070	$21,849,200	$977,248	$2,850,250	$3,827,498
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COMMITMENT REPORTED				20%	17%	18%

Table 8: Cofinancing commitments reported

3.9 Project Implementation and Execution

Project implementation and execution focused on the efficacy of the GEF IA and the PMU in implementing and executing their respective functions. Exemplary performance of the GEF A total of $21,888,276 was committed in co-financing to the Project. This includes in-kind provisions of office space, staff time, operational budgets and resources, such as crops through COMACO. Grant financing has also been committed, totalling $13,547,970, including a substantial grant from the Ministry of Agriculture, through the Strengthening climate resilience for agricultural livelihoods in agroecological regions I & II (SCRALA), contributing 56% to the total co-financing of the Project. To date 22% of this funding has been reported as realized.

is described as robust project preparation and implementation, ensuring application of policies in preparation, strong project supervision, addressing challenges effectively as they emerged and in a timely manner. The Agency is also charged with ensuring that project activities stayed on track and were completed on time. Executing agencies are tasked with high quality and timeous project execution, adhering to policies. Their role is also defined as following the guidance from the GEF IA in resolving challenges, mitigating risks and supporting any follow up actions agreed (GEF-IEO, 2023[48]). Within this framework, project implementation was evaluated according to project development and support. Project execution was evaluated focused on work planning and

[48] Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office (GEF-IEO), (2023). *Guidelines for conducting terminal evaluation of full-sized projects.* Washington.

reporting. Other areas of focus in evaluating project execution included governance and communication, previously discussed (3.8.3 and 3.8.4, respectively).

3.9.1 Project development

The Project was initiated by the former MWDSEP and WWF ZCO (2.2.3), supported by seed funding from the latter. MWDSEP, within which the GEF country focal point sat (now in MGEE: EMD) and GEF have a long-standing relationship. Funding has been secured from GEF for implementing the environmental mandate of the country since the first funding iteration. MGEE: EMD describes this long-standing relationship as one through which useful and valuable lessons have been learnt, to bring into the development and implementation of this project. During these early project development stages, Mafinga was identified as the preferred project site, because of its significance for the headwaters of one of the last free flowing rivers in Southern Africa and because much investment had already been made in other catchments. Recognizing the aligned priorities from these initial engagements (3.1.1), a PDT was convened, bringing together additional key stakeholders. This facilitated the development and submission of the Project Identification Form. Once approved in 2019, the further development of the project concept and implementation framework was developed through extensive stakeholder engagement. This included engagement with government, potential executant partners and communities through their leadership. All necessary policies were adhered to during development, including planning for gender inclusion and mitigation of environmental and social risks.

3.9.2 Project support

Regular monthly engagements between the PMU and GEF IA are intended to support project execution. These monthly engagements provide the opportunity for providing updates, highlighting challenges and working collectively towards resolutions. They are complemented by annual infield missions. This suggests considered supervision and support for project execution. Support for execution is evident, for example in the grant manager joining the 2025 GEF IA mission to resolve the financial reporting challenges (3.2.1). Other evidence is suggested in the recruitment and execution challenges identified by the PMU and raised with GEF IA to collectively explore resolutions (3.2.1; pc, 09.07.25). Engagement with the GEF IA around the mid-term evaluation similarly suggests a supportive orientation, aimed at supporting the development and implementation of resolutions for any tensions, struggles and challenges.

Some support processes were not possible at the time that the Project was initiated due to travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, training is done in the field for gender inclusion and safeguards. These two half-day sessions with project stakeholders, one for each policy focus, was not possible due to travel restrictions and not feasible through online engagements for that length of time. An online inception training session was held with the PMU in March 2023, which included a focus on gender and safeguards policies and reporting requirements. Communication challenges (3.8.4) require resolution to ensure tensions, issues and challenges are timeously and comprehensively dealt with, particularly around sensitive issues like the safeguards risks emerging from the boundary demarcation (3.7.2).

Executant partners were supported through an orientation workshop in June 2025. 35 government officials and six people from executing partners participated in this eight-day workshop. It covered various aspects of the Project, including community forestry management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, environmental and social safeguards, gender mainstreaming, finance and grant management and financial reporting. Two people from executant partner organization commented on the value of this interaction, as an orientation. They felt that it assisted in their overall understanding of the Project and requested more, and

regular engagements around the details of the Project to ensure cohesion across the three components.

3.9.3 Project governance

The original model of governance proposed for the Project remains (GRZ, 2021, p. 55; 2.4.3)[49]. The PMU, through the Project Focal Point (PFP) with MGEE: EMD (3.1.2) reports to the PTC who in turn reports to the NSC. It has an equal reporting line through WW ZCO into the PTC and onward to the NSC and into the GEF IA. GEF IA in turn reports into GEF. Community engagement is drawn from the field into reporting by the PMU and through executant partners who work on the ground with communities.

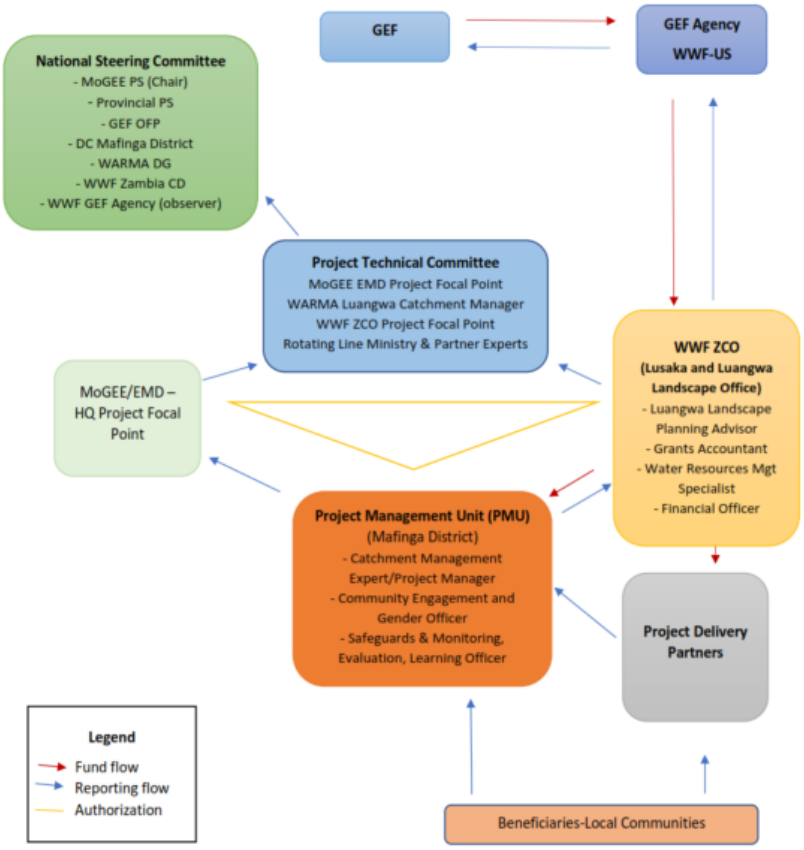


Figure 4: Project execution and governance structure

3.9.4 Work planning

Work planning is done annually for the period of 01 July to 30 June. It starts at least two months prior to the start of the financial year and is initiated by the PMU. An initial AWPB is drafted by the PMU and shared with executant partners, who devolve these plans into their respective organizations. Organization-specific AWPBs are submitted to the PMU for approval. The draft AWPBs are reviewed by the DTT, relative to their own mandated functions, for feasibility and cost effectiveness of activities. A meeting is then convened with the PTC to review the workplan for technical inputs and shared with the GEF IA, for review and no-objection. With agency no-objection, it is proposed by the PTC for approval by the NSC, and once approved, it is submitted

[49] Government of the Republic of Zambia. (2021). *GEF Project Document, Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management*. Project document submitted by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Environmental Management Department, Lusaka.

to the GEF IA. These annual workplans are also submitted to WWF ZCO to ensure strategic alignment.

The PMU sits in the same office block as two of the executing partners and the DTT. This enables easy discussions around AWPBs. Weekly meetings are convened between the PMU and DTT. These serve to reflect on activities of the previous week and plan for the upcoming week. Meetings are convened bi-weekly between government, WWF ZCO and the PMU on work completed and planned.

There is no evidence of the AWPB process being informed by annual reflective workshops, integrating monitoring and evaluation insights, as suggested in the results framework (3.4). A further challenge is the strong emphasis in the work planning process on discrete activities, with less evidence of these being crafted and brought together in relation to the project outcomes (3.2.3). This poses a significant risk of under delivery on the outcomes and the intended goal. The risk of fragmentation (3.2.3) could also be achieved through these reflective workshops, as part of outcome two of component three, and add significant value to the executing partnership.

3.9.5 Reporting

Reports from executant partners are submitted quarterly, on the 25th of the third month using a standard reporting template. These technical or narrative reports accompany financial reports and funding requests. These reports are used by the PMU to collate the bi-annual and annual project reports.

The Project also reports into WWF ZCO, via the Landscape Manager, the Freshwater program and the Chief Conservation Officer. It has a third reporting line into the national cluster for environmental sustainability convened by MGEE. These reports move through the District Development Co-ordinating Committee (DDCC), to the Provincial Development Co-ordinating Committee (PDCC) and into the national cluster.

Like the emphasis on discrete activities in AWPBs, without circling back to the outcomes (3.9.3), this challenge emerges in reporting as well. As in 3.8.4, a communications strategy is reported in component 3, together with site visits, training, reporting and documentaries produced. Without closer reference to the Project outcomes, these products are unlikely to facilitate the knowledge management and adaptive management outcomes of this component. Accuracy, as well as evidence-based reporting, is also strongly encouraged.

Based on the findings discussed above, the ratings for project implementation and execution is assessed as,

Project implementation	Satisfactory	The evaluation reflects a collaborative approach to project development, including consultations across all stakeholders. Structured support processes are implemented, and execution is supported by GEF IA field missions to, for example, understand contestations emerging from the boundary demarcation and financial reporting challenges.

Project execution	Moderately satisfactory	This rating is perhaps aligned with the rating for project progress and outcome, and monitoring and evaluation. Some activity has been undertaken in the project. These, however, must be more strongly directed towards achieving project outcomes. To support this, a robust system of monitoring and evaluation must support project execution to ensure efficacy in approaches, progress and achievement.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from this mid-term evaluation are expansive and have generated a wide range of recommendations. For ease of reference, these are organized around key themes, including strengthening the results framework, delivery of project outcomes, project monitoring and evaluation and policy execution. Some recommendations are made for strengthening management processes. The recommendations that follow are cross referenced back to the findings in section 3, indicated in the right column.

4.1 The results framework

The project document is explicit in its intention for 'participatory community-based management of the upper Luangwa sub-catchment'. This intention has fallen somewhat silent into the results framework (3.4.1). A recommendation is made to strengthen this aspect in the results framework as well as integrate the results of improved land management through CFAs and conservation agriculture. A third aspect to be addressed in the results framework is the METT framework for measuring management effectiveness of the MHNFR, not used by the PFO (3.2.3). More specifically it is recommended that,

4.1.1	Outcome 1.2 is expanded to include an outcome level indicator for *the establishment of at least one catchment council, one sub-catchment council and/or at least two water user associations, aligned to the formation of any of the four CFMGs.*	3.1.5
4.1.2	Outcome 2.1 is expanded to include an indicator for integrating *a number of ha of community forestry areas under improved management in the buffer zone of the Luangwa headwaters.*	
4.1.3	Outcome 2.1 be expanded to include an outcome indicator of *the number of CFMGs governing and managing community forestry areas*, as a separate indicator from the one above, lest one aspect overshadows the other. This will also seek to foreground the participatory land management intended through the Project, currently not very explicit in the results framework.	3.2.3
4.1.4	Recommendations are made for the expansion of outcome indicators 1.1.1 and 1.1.3, the former to include a focus on community contribution to effective management of the MHNFR and the latter to include also the monitoring of water quantity. Disaggregation guidelines in the results framework for core indicator 11 and outcome indicator 2.1.2 is also recommended for expansion to capture the nature of beneficiation and conservation agriculture practices, respectively.	3.4.1

4.1.5	The development of the MHNFR management plan be informed by the baseline METT score, to align the two management effectiveness measures.	3.2.3
4.1.6	Re-evaluate, refine and/or reframe activities in relation to the intended outputs and, most importantly, outcomes of the Project. For example, whether and how does the communications strategy developed support the knowledge management outcome. In another example, how does the biodiversity and forestry assessment inform the development of the management plan for the MHNFR to ensure improved management effectiveness. And in another example, how does the training needs analysis support strengthening the capacity necessary to strengthen the management effectiveness of the MHNFR.	3.2.3

4.2 Delivery of project outcomes

A primary recommendation to strengthen delivery of project outcomes is to consider the activities and outputs in relation to the Project outcomes. There is otherwise the risk of achieving little socio-ecological impact. Some specific recommendations are made below to strengthen progress towards the outcomes. These recommendations also address some of the risks to project activities and outcomes, and include,

4.2.1	With urgency, engage the district administration of Mafinga to strengthen land, forest and water resource management. And more importantly, to address the risk of mining development in the WRPA of the upper sub-catchment of the Luangwa River. Equally important, the development of the WRPA proposal and the MHNFR management plan must take account of this risk.	3.1.5
4.2.2	Prioritize the appointment of additional capacity in the role of Technical Forest Officer as proposed in the results framework. Prioritize also the appointment of added stakeholder engagement capacity, to assist WARMA in establishing its water resource management institution through wider stakeholder engagement.	3.2.3
4.2.3	Though relevant to policy application (4.4), this recommendation for stakeholder engagement has significant implications for project delivery. Time should be set aside to develop a considered strategy for engaging stakeholders, particularly for developing the WRPA proposal and establishing the water resource management institutions and importantly aligned with the development of the CFMGs. This will also serve to better co-ordinate processes of stakeholder engagement across the various aspects of the Project.	3.2.3 3.7.3 3.8.1
4.2.4	The climate-smart aspect of conservation agriculture must be emphasized and strengthened to ensure adaptation to already changing climate. This might include some innovative approaches, aligned with those of the Ministry of Agriculture and related projects such as SCRALA. It would also be critical to draw on insights from these projects, a practice that did not appear as evident during the evaluation.	3.2.3 3.8.5

4.2.5	Linked to conservation agricultural practices, consider developing mechanisms for benefit sharing in preparation for increased production within producer groups.	3.2.3
4.2.6	Strengthen the focus on natural resource governance and management to build up independent, sustainable community-based institutions. Given the challenge of longer-term capacity development with the shorter management tenure, an innovative leadership development program can be explored for piloting in the second half of the Project, for example through a structured mentoring and coaching approach.	3.2.3 3.3.2 3.3.3
4.2.7	The establishment of woodlots to mitigate deforestation must be clarified across the Project and its executants, with a clear approach developed and agreed, even if this consists of multiple facets.	3.1.3 3.2.3
4.2.8	The biodiversity and forestry assessments must be integrated into the development of the MHNFR management plan. These should also be made available to the CFMGs to guide the development of their own CFA management plans. For efficiency, engage CFMGs in the development of the MHNFR management plan to build capacity that can be transferred into their own processes of developing management plans.	3.2.3 3.3.3
4.2.9	Importantly, and worth a separate recommendation, the MHNFR management plan must attempt to address the areas for improvement identified in the baseline METT. In addition, considered attention needs to be given to reconcile the management plan as a management effectiveness tool used by the Forestry Department, with the METT used as the measure by GEF.	3.2.3
4.2.10	Knowledge management, as a key component and outcome of the Project, requires specific attention. Recommendations include, · Prioritize the development of a knowledge management strategy with clear goals and objectives, processes, including participating partners in its development and implementation, and products. This will enable a knowledge management focus on key project processes as they unfold, instead of developing products based on these processes, in retrospect. · Convene a collaborative process, extending across the project partnership, to develop the strategy, and ensure conceptual clarity on knowledge management and its distinction from communication products. · A number of knowledge management products emerged through the evaluation as possibilities including (i) community engagement towards developing a WRPA, (ii) reconciling the statutory and natural boundaries in a project context, (iii) climate smart agriculture in a WRPA, s, (iv) institutional strengthening for community forestry management, (v) reconciling multiple policy provisions for natural resource management with a focus on water resource user associations and CFMGs, amongst others.	3.2.3 3.3.2 3.5

4.2.11	The scope of training across the Project poses the risk of detracting from its central goal and objectives, to reduce forest and land degradation for improved protection of water, biodiversity and livelihoods. It is recommended that the training needs analysis be reviewed to separate out training towards project outcomes, for example, training technical forestry staff and HFOs, for conservation agriculture and establishing woodlots from other requirements that support project execution. These include those aspects that appear to be more information sharing, for example around gender and safeguards policy application, reporting processes and monitoring and evaluation as some examples. These are better done in a singular workshop setting, supported by an operational guide, for better coordinating these operational aspects of the Project. A further recommendation is to consider the purpose of the 'training' and consider appropriate teaching and learning methodologies, more responsive to the purpose. Building capacity for monitoring and evaluating can be achieved through engaging executant partners in developing the monitoring and evaluation plan, and associated tools and analytic processes (4.3.5).	3.2.3
4.2.12	To facilitate the delivery of project outcomes, a requested no cost time extension is supported by this mid-term evaluation.	

4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation needs considered attention to inform the adaptive management of the Project. It requires the development of a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan, that facilitates evidential data collection to inform reporting into the results framework, at a high-level and workplan level. Through engaging executant partners in its development, capacity can be strengthened to implement the plan collectively. And the annual reflective workshops recommended below serve as a space for reflecting on, and refining its implementation. Specific recommendations for strengthening monitoring and evaluation, include,

4.3.1	A detailed monitoring and evaluation plan must be designed. Some detailed recommendations are made in 3.4.1. This plan must take account of and align with the various reporting processes in the Project, for example, the reporting requirements of executant partners and the PMU, including reporting into the indicator tracking tool and workplan tracking.	3.2.3 3.4.1
4.3.2	This monitoring and evaluation plan must clearly reflect a measurement of progress towards and achievement of Project outcomes. Outputs and activities in this plan are a focus only in as far as it supports this progress and achievement and are sufficiently reported in progress and implementation reports.	3.2.3 3.4.1
4.3.3	It must include clear evaluation questions based on all elements of the outcome indicators. It must also include a plan for data collection, including who will collect what, from whom and when, in clearer detail. As well as how this data is relevant and will be used in reporting processes.	3.2.3 3.4.1

4.3.4	All baseline measures generated through the first half of the project should be documented for a clear assessment towards the conclusion of the Project.	3.4.1
4.3.5	Associated streamlined monitoring and evaluation tools must be developed to assist the collection and collation of data across the executant partners and management of a quality and cohesive data set.	3.2.3 3.4.2
4.3.6	The plan should be developed through a facilitated process, including and drawing on the extensive expertise of partners in its development, which will ensure the necessary understanding to implement the plan.	3.2.3 3.4
4.3.7	Data collection and collective analysis should be planned and aligned with an annual reflection workshop, that precedes and informs annual work planning for each remaining year. These annual reflection workshops should be extended to all Project executing partners but should also be contained to a manageable group, of approximately 20 people.	3.2.3 3.4.2
4.3.8	The budget for project monitoring and evaluation must be clarified in relation to its plan, to avoid it being linked to various other aspects of reporting and compliance.	3.4.2
4.3.9	Monitoring and evaluation findings must be integrated into existing reporting frameworks and be part of the plan.	3.2.3 3.4.2

4.4 Policy implementation

Some recommendations are made for strengthening gender inclusion in leadership, strengthening the ESMF and stakeholder engagement processes. Suggestions are also made to ensure that the Project is fair in its execution.

4.4.1	Innovative approaches are needed to expand the scope of women in leadership. Women express a lack of confidence in leading men, for example in conservation agriculture as SLFs. The project document suggests that this component works into existing women's groups. This could be a way of building the confidence of women, initially in a safe space of women only before transferring into an SLF role in a mixed group. A recommendation is made to set up a few exclusively women's groups to facilitate this strengthening of capacity and confidence and expanded women leadership in the remaining time of the Project.	3.7.1
4.4.2	In as much as awareness raising of inclusion is proposed in the Project site, it is equally critical to consider institutional non-inclusion, particularly in patriarchal societies with whom gender transformation is being promoted. This will require more consideration of employment practices in for example the Project and its executing partners, in relation to the Project. To support this, if not already included, it is recommended that the GAP include a specific action for consideration of gender equity in project related recruitment processes. I further recommendation is for consideration of gender equity in institutional engagements, as far as is possible, for example as in the evaluation site visit, dominated by males.	3.7.1

4.4.3 Given the suspected increase in GBV, an update is recommended for the ESMF and Process Framework that includes mitigation measures for this risk to women. Related to this, an update to the risk profile is also recommended to include community health and safety. 3.7.2

4.4.4 A recommendation is made to explore a variety of stakeholder engagement methodologies, for different purposes in the Project. For example, demonstrations work well for training participants in conservation agriculture or woodlot establishment. An adult learning workshop approach, where participants work in a supported environment, is useful when seeking to build capacity for continued application, for example, in establishing CFMGs and supporting their development of forest management plans. Information sessions work well to share information or practices required through the Project, as some examples for consideration. 37.3

4.4.5 Grievances must be attended to with urgency. This will assist in building trust within the community. 3.7.4

4.4.6 An example was cited of work being done towards the Project objectives without remuneration. The individual fortunately raised his displeasure with the respective institution, and this was addressed. In this project context of dire poverty, where livelihood options are very scarce, it is critical that people are compensated for effort, particularly when it feeds into the function of a mandated institution.

4.5 Project execution

Some operational aspects of project execution require attention, and recommendations are made to,

4.5.1 Complement capacity, in the form of administrative support, in addition to the Technical Forestry Officer and additional stakeholder engagement (4.2.3). Stakeholder engagement is extensive in the Project and often involves intense processes. With added support for forestry management through the Technical Forestry Officer, the Community Engagement and Gender Officer might have more time, with the added capacity, to focus on supporting stakeholder engagement, particularly for developing the WRPA proposal. 2.2.3 3.1.5

4.5.2 Executant partners have explicitly requested more regular communication around project progress and activities. The recommended annual reflective workshop is one way to facilitate this request (4.3.6). Recommendations are also made for a quarterly briefing on project progress, which should ideally be linked to quarterly reporting processes for executant partners. These quarterly sharing sessions could be online. The annual reflective session should ideally be in person, to facilitate considered interactions with project progress and planning. 3.8.4

4.5.3 The PMU is encouraged to optimize the support from the GEF IA. The emergence of safeguard risks, particularly regarding GBV, community health and safety and the contested boundary of the MHNFR raises the importance of 3.7.2 3.8.4

	these engagements. Any scheduling clashes should be timeously communicated to facilitate rescheduling, rather than cancellation in its entirety.	
4.5.4	The contestation around the MHNFR boundary is a critical issue and brings both financial and reputational risks. Monthly updates are recommended from the PFO, in the monthly meetings, until the issue is resolved. A representative needs to attend the meeting only for this agenda item.	3.7.2
4.5.5	Process flows can be significantly streamlined in the Project. There are several engagements, in the form of weekly, bi-weekly, fortnightly, monthly and quarterly meetings, across different forums, and dealing with different administrative aspects like work planning and reporting. These processes and their respective flows need to be considered in entirety and in relation to the purpose of these various processes, to facilitate greater efficiency.	3.9.3 3.9.4

4.6 Concluding Remarks

Based on the findings of the mid-term evaluation, 38 recommendations are made to strengthen the Project to deliver on its intended goal and objectives. The bulk of these recommendations apply to the PMU, and some are applicable to executing partners. A further overall recommendation is made for a mid-term strategy planning session to work through the details of the evaluation findings and the associated recommendations. This will ensure clarity on the recommendations made and enable a collective and strategic approach to addressing them.

In conclusion, the Project holds much potential for achieving its outcomes and contributing to its intended impact. It also holds much potential for generating key insights to inform additionality, replication and scalability of initiatives in community-based forest, land and water resource management. The insights and recommendations emerging from this mid-term evaluation could play a key role in facilitating this contribution.

The Consultancy for Evaluation of WWF GEF Project in Zambia
Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared Socioeconomic and Environmental Benefits through Integrated Catchment Management

World Wildlife Fund, Inc. (WWF) policies and procedures for all GEF financed full-sized projects require a midterm evaluation (MTR). The following terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for the MTR for the project: Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared Socioeconomic and Environmental Benefits through Integrated Catchment Management hereafter referred to as the "Project." The technical consultant selected to conduct this evaluation will hereafter be referred to as "evaluator."

The project seeks to reduce forest and land degradation of the Luangwa Upper Sub-Catchment for enhanced protection of water resources, biodiversity and associated community livelihoods. The overall vision of the project is to reduce the key threats to the Luangwa upper sub-catchment for the purpose of preserving the ecological condition of the free-flowing Luangwa River, and the biodiversity and ecosystem services values of the upper sub-catchment.

The project was organized into the following components

- Component 1 - To reduce forest and land degradation of the Luangwa Upper Sub-Catchment for enhanced protection of water resources, biodiversity and associated community livelihoods. Component 1 will lead to improved participatory management of the key protected area within the headwaters, Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve (MHNFR) and the surrounding areas, which is the source of the Luangwa river and its tributaries. It will also support the development and designation of a Water Resource Protection Area (WRPA) that will provide a model for improved protection and community-based management of the upper sub-catchment.
- Component 2 - Community management of the upper Luangwa Sub-Catchment (Mafinga District). Component 2 will establish sustainable community environmental management and climate resilient livelihoods through prioritized interventions focused on the headwaters to reduce land and forest degradation that contribute towards the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Component 3 - Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Component 3 will ensure that the increased knowledge of sustainable catchment management from lessons learned and best practices supports replication of the approach in other headwater areas at local and national levels, as well as being disseminated at Zambezi River Basin level and globally. M&E will be carried out to inform project decision-making and adaptive management.

Scope and objectives

WWF-US is seeking an independent consultant to undertake a Midterm Review of the Project.
The scope of the MTR will cover the WWF GEF financed components.

The objectives of this evaluation are to

- Assess progress towards project goal, outputs and outcomes;
- Examine the extent, magnitude, sustainability and potential for project impacts to date;
- Identify any project design problems and challenges

- Draw lessons learned that can improve the project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project benefits.

Based on this assessment, it is expected that the evaluator will provide feasible recommendations that could be applied for the remaining duration of the project.

Consultancy Details

- Location of Consultant: Flexible, but must do site visits in Zambia
- Reporting To: Amelia Kissick, Technical Director for Consultancy
- Preferred Timeframe of Consultancy: April – June 2025
- Period To Be Evaluated: November 22, 2021 to time of evaluation (3 years, 4mnths)
- Maximum Budget Available: $32,000
- Potential Site Visits: Mafinga district in Muchinga Province. 1) Mulekatembo and Muleya villages including beneficiary farmer fields and demo plots, 2) Mweniwisi Community Forest Management Group (CFMG), 3) Kampumbu gauge station

Project Data

Project/Program Title: Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared Socioeconomic and Environmental Benefits through Integrated Catchment Management

- GEF Project ID: 10412
- Implementing Agency: WWF-GEF
- Executing Agency: Zambian Ministry of Green Economy and Environment
- Executing Partner: WWF Zambia (Subgrantees; WARMA, COMACO, WECSZ)
- Countries: Global
- Focal Area: Biodiversity, Land Degradation
- GEF Operational Program: GEF 7
- Total GEF Approved Budget: $2,889,155
- Total Co-financing Committed: $21,849,200

Relevant Dates

- CEO Endorsement/Approval: November 22, 2021
- Agency Approval Date: April 26, 2022
- Implementation Start: May 9, 2022
- Midterm Evaluation Completion Date: 12/19/2023
- Review period: November 22, 2021 to time of evaluation

Responsibilities

Evaluation approach

The evaluation will adhere to the relevant guidance, rules and procedures established by WWF [1] and align with guidance from the GEF Terminal Evaluation [2] and Ethical Guidelines. [3] The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is independent, participatory, transparent, and ethical. The evaluator must be unbiased and free of any conflicts of interest with the project. The evaluator is expected to reflect all stakeholder views and follow a participatory and consultative approach. There should be close engagement with government stakeholders at all levels, WWF Zambia Country Office, the GEF operational focal point for

Zambia y, the project management unit (PMU), partners and key stakeholders whose contact information will be provided.

The Evaluation process will include the following, with deliverables marked by "*":

- Desk review consisting of, but not limited to:
  - Project Document and CEO Endorsement Letter;
  - Relevant safeguards documents, including Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Screening Tool, Categorization Memo, Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Process Framework (PF), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and Gender action P lan (GAP);
  - Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve METT tool;
  - Annual Work Plans (AWPB) and Budgets;
  - Project Progress Reports (PPR) including Results Framework and AWPB Tracking reports;
  - GEF Agency reports, including Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and Supervision Mission Reports (PrISM);
  - Relevant financial documents, including financial progress reports, co-financing monitoring tables and co-financing letters;
  - Meeting minutes for the Project National Steering Committee (NSC) and relevant virtual meetings with the WWF- GEF Agency and support team; and
  - Other relevant documents provided by the Executing Agency and partners.
- Inception report that outlines evaluation methodology;*
- Field visits with PMU and project partners, as necessary and feasible;
- Interviews, discussions and consultations at local levels, national and international levels, including implementing (Sub-grantee) partners; Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia (WECSZ), Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), project df (WARMA), GEF Operational Focal Points (OFP), National Steering Committee (NSC) members, Project Technical Committee (PTC) members, and beneficiaries, government coordinating structures at both provincial (PDCC) and district (DDCC),levels, primarily conducted either physically virtually;
- Post-field visit debrief and presentation* of initial findings to project management team and other partners as feasible;
- Draft report* not to exceed 40 pages (excluding annexes) shared with GEF AMU and PMU for review and feedback. A sample outline will be provided; and
- Final MTR report* that has incorporated feedback and comments.

Expected content of report

The midterm evaluation report will include

- Information on the evaluation process, including when the evaluation took place, sites visited, participants, key questions, summary of methodology and rating rubric, and feedback log showing how comments on draft were incorporated;
- Relevance (project design , theory of change);
- Effectiveness and rating of project objective and outcomes (individual and overall);
- Assessment and rating of risks to the sustainability of project outcomes;
- Assessment and rating of monitoring and evaluation design and implementation;
- Assessment of knowledge management approach, including activities and products;

- Assessment of replication and catalytic effects of the project;
- Relevance of the project (e.g. with Government, WWF and GEF priorities) and coherence; (relevance to context of communities)
- Assessment of stakeholder engagement and gender-responsive measures;
- Assessment of any environmental and social impacts and safeguards used for the project. A review of risk category classification and mitigation measures;
- Efficiency, financial management and summary of co-financing delivered;
- Assessment and ratings of implementation and execution;
- Summary table of key findings by core criteria [4] and GEF ratings, including justification and/or indicators for their determination;
- Key lessons tied to identified strengths or issues;
- Recommendations that include: practical and short-term corrective actions by evaluation criteria to address issues and findings; and best practices towards achieving project outcomes, and knowledge sharing / replication for other projects of similar scope.

[1] For additional information on evaluation methods adopted by WWF, see the WWF Evaluation Guidelines , published on our WWF Program Standards public website.
[2] For additional information on the GEF Terminal Evaluation Guidelines, see the GEF Terminal Evaluation Guidelines , published on the GEF Independent Evaluation Office website.
[3] Please see the GEF Ethical Guidelines as published on GEF website.
[4] See annex A

Qualifications
Required qualifications and experience

- Have 10+ years relevant professional experience (e.g. leading evaluations, designing monitoring and evaluation plans, etc);
- Previous experience with diverse evaluation methodologies (e.g. social surveys, outcome harvesting, etc);
- Excellent written and oral communication in English.

Preferred Qualifications And Experience

- Masters Degree in relevant field, such as Monitoring and Evaluation,, International Development, in Forestry, Agriculture, Ecology, Wildlife Biology, Environmental and Natural Resources Management;
- Recent experience conducting evaluations (for GEF financed projects is an advantage) ;
- Technical knowledge in the targeted GEF Operational Focal Area(s) - Biodiversity, Land Degradation, plus Natural Resource Management, Forestry, Wildlife Biology, multilateral environmental agreements etc.
- Knowledge of GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- Experience with WWF Project and Program Management Standards or Conservation Standards;
- Experience with social assessments, participatory techniques, and gender mainstreaming;
- Knowledge and experience in implementing or reviewing application of social and environmental safeguards policies in GEF (or similar) projects;

- Basic understanding of any of the local languages namely; Bemba, Fungwe, Nyika, Lambya and Tumbuka will be an added advantage. Translation services as an alternative;
- National and regional experience an asset.

Proposal process

Interested consultants are invited to submit a technical and financial proposal with their curriculum vitae, a relevant writing sample and three professional references . Only complete proposals will be accepted. The financial proposal should include fee and reimbursable expenses, if applicable. The total budget shall not exceed USD $32,000. Individual, team or consulting firm proposals are welcome. Women and members of social minorities are encouraged to apply.

Interested consultants are requested to send their proposals to EvaluationsWWFGEF@wwfus.org by **February 7 th , 2025** . All questions about the requirements or process should be submitted to this e-mail address by January 31, 2025. Responses to frequent and submitted questions will be available until the proposal deadline to all interested consultants in the final annex of this live document: https://docs.google.com/document/d/19bNjJBTSVdjOHuF9V8DRnB7Jri-5zeNs/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=101431196757707270045&rtpof=true&sd=true
The technical proposal and qualifications/experience of the individual or team will account for 90% of the weighted score of the proposal. The technical score will be based on how the proposal reflects an understanding of the work and adherence to the TOR and quality of the proposal (readability, depth/breadth and suitability of the methodology), as well as the degree to which the candidate meets desired and required qualifications/experience mentioned in the terms of reference above. The financial elements of the proposal will account for 10% of the weighted score of the application.

Once all proposals have been scored by the review committee, a shortlist of proposals will be determined, and the candidates notified. Shortlisted candidates will have their references contacted, proposal reviewed by project stakeholders and will participate in an interview. Shortlisted candidates who are not selected will be provided with information on relative strengths and weaknesses of their proposal, but specific scores and the identity of other candidates will not be shared.

The selection process will be in compliance with WWF and GEF requirements. Any questions or concerns about non-compliance or irregularities in the process can be raised through WWF's mechanism for reporting concerns available here: https://wwfus.ethicspoint.com.

#	CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR	CONTEXT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	SOURCE AND METHOD		
					Document Analysis	Observation	Stakeholder Engagement
1	Relevance and coherence (project design, theory of change)	1.1 How responsive are the project objectives and design to the: a. environment and development objectives of the Mafinga District, Muchinga Province and Zambia	1. Project alignment and relevance to environment and development objectives of district, province and national 2. Participation by local (district, province, national) entities in governance and implementation 3. Collaboration between project and local government (district, province, national) entities around project activities	***X Reference to F8 and 32*** **1. What is the mandate, priorities, strategy, plans and/or initiatives of the public entity/executing agency/partners?** **2. What aspect(s) of the project aligns to this mandate?** **3. What are the barriers, challenges, delays experienced in implementing policies, strategies, plans related to mandates?** **4. Does and how does/can the project assist in overcoming these?**	1. Project Document **2. Mafinga District IDP** **3. EoIs of executing partners**		**Face-to-face Interview** 1. MGEE - Permanent Sec. 2. MGEE: EMD - GEF Focal Point 3. MGEE - Director of Forestry 4. Provincial Permanent Sec 5. Mafinga District Commissioner 6. Chief MweneChifungwe 7. Chief Mweniwisi 8. District Technical Committee **Online Interview** 9. COMACO 10. WECSZ **Infield Workshop** 11. WARMA
				3. What role does the public entity /executing agency/partners and/or representative play in project governance/ management/implementation?			**Face-to-face Interview** 1. MGEE - Permanent Sec. 2. MGEE: EMD - GEF Focal Point 3. MGEE - Director of Forestry 4. Provincial Permanent Sec 5. Mafinga District Commissioner 6. Chief MweneChifungwe 7. Chief Mweniwisi 8. District Technical Committee **Online Interview** 9. COMACO 10. WECSZ **Infield Workshop** 11. WARMA

Relevance and coherence cont.	b. the needs of natural resource dependent communities in the Mafinga District?	Project facilitates sustainable access to natural resources for livelihoods	1. What natural resources do communities need, use and how?2. How does the project enable and/or propose sustainable access to these resources?3. Are there any restrictions in access to natural resources used?4. Have you experienced any challenges / unhappiness related to the project?5. Did you communicate this to anyone, to whom and what was resolved?	1. Project Document 2. Socio-economic baseline report	**Site visit** to1. Muleya / Mulekatembo Village Farmers2. Kaswa Village Farmers	**Infield Community Focus Group**1. Mweniwisi CFMG2. MweneChifungwe CFMG3. Muleya Village Farmers4. Kaswa Village Farmers 5. Community engaged with beaconing
	1.2 How is the project design, through its ToC, components and activities aligned with the project objectives?	1. Alignment between and across project ToC, components, activities and project objective 2. Practical approach to addressing the environmental challenge	**1. What are the key elements of the ToC?** **2. How does it support the project objective** **3. Does the project components cover all aspects of the ToC?** **4. Do activities cumulatively align with the components, the elements of the ToC and the project objective?** **5. Does the project design provide practical approaches for addressing the environmental concern?**	1. Project Document 2. Results framework		

Relevance and coherence cont. (2)	1.3 Is the project aligned, compatible with and contributing to WWF, GEF and national priorities?	Project outputs and outcomes contribute to WWF, GEF and national priorities	**1. What are the WWF, GEF and national priorities?** **2. Does and how does the project align with these priorities?** **3. What does the project contribute to these priorities?**	1. GEF-7 Biodiversity Strategy 2. WWF Roadmap for a living planet - a conservation strategy 3. Project Document		**Face-to-face Interview** 1. MGEE - Permanent Sec. 2. MGEE: EMD - GEF Focal Point 3. MGEE - Director of Forestry 4. Provincial Permanent Sec 5. Mafinga District Commissioner 6. Chief MweneChifungwe 7. Chief Mweniwisi 8. District Technical Committee **Online Interview** 9. COMACO 10. WECSZ **Infield Workshop** 11. WARMA
	X Reference to D33 *1.4 What past lessons and good practices been incorporated into the project design from other GEF and non-GEF interventions?*	Collaboration and sharing of lessons learnt with compatible, supporting or supported projects	***X Reference to F8*** ***1. With which projects does the project collaborate and how/around what?*** ***2. What has been shared between these projects?*** ***3. What has been integrated into the project and how does it add value?***	1. Project Document 2. Project Progress Reports		**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU

2	**Effectiveness (ToC)**	2.1 What and how has progress been made towards the project goal, outcomes and outputs ? 2.2 What strategies and approaches have been used to achieve project outputs and outcomes? 2.3 Have there been any changes in design and expected results after the project start up? 2.4 What are the enablers / constraints / challenges (project processes, activities, contextual factors) to progress? 2.5 How can the constraints and challenges be overcome? 2.6 What transformational changes have taken place and how? *2.7 Has there been any scaling up of project activities and benefits and how was this achieved? (X Reference to D36)*	1. Improving overall and disaggregated METT score of MHNFR (CI - 1.2)	**1. Has the score for MHFNR increased from 26 to 39?** **2. What specific elements have improved?** **3. What is lacking / shows no improvement and why?**	1. Baseline METT 2. Mid term METT	

Effectiveness (ToC) cont.		**4. How have the improvements come about?** **5. What is holding improvement in specific areas back?** **6. What is needed to strengthen these areas lacking?**			**Online interview** **1. MHNFR Conservator**
		7. What project processes facilitated the demarcation / beaconing of the protected area? **8. What is the mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and has it been formalised?** **9. What is needed for its formalisation and implementation?** **10. Who was involved in the demarcation of the boundaries of the protected area?** **11. How were they selected for participation?** **12. What role did they play?** **13. How were they prepared for this role?** **14. Was there any compensation for the role played?** **15. What more needs to be done to complete the demarcation of protected areas?** **16. Within what time frame is this expected to be completed?** **17. Are there any challenges to the demarcation?** **18. What is needed to facilitate its completion ?**	1. GIS Maps - outcome of ROAM 2. Activity report - awareness raising and demarcation	**Site visit to MHNFR**, to site(s) of demarcation	**Online interview** 1. MHNFR Conservator

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (1)		**17. Has the 1 technical and 20 honorary forest officers from communities been appointed?** **18. Through what process were they appointed?** **19. What in the project assisted this process of appointing community members to these roles?** **20. Who are they, disaggregated per chiefdom and gender?** **21. What training have they participated in?** **22. What is needed to complete this action?**	1. Project Progress Reports 2. Project Implementation Reports	**Online interview** **1. MHNFR Conservator**
		1. How many ha of forest and land have been identified for restoration in the MHNFR? **2. How and why have these areas been identified?** **3. What are the plans for restoration?**		**Online interview** **1. MHNFR Conservator**

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (2)	2. Forest and land restoration in the MHNRF (CI - 3.2)	**1. What is your role in forest restoration?** **2. How is it done?** **3. What role do communities play?** **4. What benefits do individual or collective communities derive from participation in this activity and the restored forests?** **5. Do communities access wood from the forest and regenerated areas, and what is it used for?** **5. What is the plan for sustaining restoration efforts?** **6. How will community benefit be sustained?** **7. What are the challenges to forest and land restoration?** **8. How can these be overcome?** **9. Have any woodlots been established, how many and where are they?** **10. Who and how many people are involved in establishing and maintaining these woodlots?**	1. GIS Map - MHNFR demarcation and restoration sites 2. Project Progress Reports 3. Project Implementation Reports 4. Forestry Management Plan	**Site visit to MHNFR**, regeneration site	**Online interview** 1. WECSZ

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (3)	3. Increased area protected in a WRPA (CI - 1.1)	**1. How many ha are currently protected?** **2. How many additional ha have been identified for protection?** **2. What is the significance of these additional ha?** **3. What form of protection is proposed?** **4. Do communities typically use this area and what for?** **5. What does the WRPA mean for community access, use and benefit?** **6. What stakeholder consultations have been undertaken?** **7. What is the community response to a WRPA?** **8. What steps have been completed towards submission for the WRPA?** **9. What are the challenges to expanding the protected areas and establishing the WRPA?** **10. How can these challenges be best supported?** **11.How does the citizen's water monitoring tie into / support the water management plan?** **12. How is this citizen's water monitoring sustained after the project?**	1. GIS Maps for the WRPA proposed 2. Project Progress Reports 3. Project Implementation Reports	**Site visit to MHNFR** - area for expansion	**Infield Workshop** 1. WARMA

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (4)		**1. What role did and do you play in the installation of the gauge station and water monitoring?** **2. What is the purpose of the gauge station and ongoing water monitoring?** **3. How did you become involved?** **4. How do you benefit from this participation?** **5. What happens after the project?**		**Site visit** to Kampumba Gauge Station	**Infield Community Engagement** 1. Water monitors at the Kampumba gauge station
	5. Expanded area with improved land use practices (CI - 4.3)	**1. How many and which farmers are involved in this improved practices?** **2. How were they selected for participation?** **3. What is the size of land on which they farm and how is this determined?** **4. Where is this land in the landscape?** **5. What aspects of sustainable and climate smart agriculture do they implement- soil, air, water?** **6. How were they supported in implementing these improved practices?** **7.How are these support activities sustained?** **8. How are the benefits from these improved practices sustained?** **9. What challenges are experience by farmers?** **10. How are these overcome?**	1. Project Progress Reports 2. Project Implementation Reports 3. Farmers Register	**Site visit to** 1. Muleya / Mulekatembo Village Farmers 2. Kaswa Village Farmers	**Online interview** COMACO

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (5)		**1. What is the size of your land being farmed?** **2. How long have you been farming?** **3. What crops do you typically grow?** **4. How and why did you become involved in sustainable agriculture?** **5. What practices do you apply?** **6. How did you do this before?** **7. How much do you sell and how much do you use at home?** **8. Where do you sell the goods?** **9. For how much?** **10. What are your future plans for farming?** **11. What do you need to achieve these future plans?**	1. Farmers Register	**Site visit to** 1. Muleya / Mulekatembo Village Farmers 2. Kaswa Village Farmers	**Infield community engagements:** 1. Muleya / Mulekatembo Village Farmers 2. Kaswa Village Farmers
	7. Improved capacity for community forest management	**1. How many CFMGs are registered or formed?** **2. What is the prerequisite for establishing a CFMG?** **3. How is their formation and functioning supported in the District?** **4. How is the management area of each CFMG defined?** **5. What are they required to do?** **6. Are there any constraints to their formation, registration and functioning?** **7. How can these be overcome?**			**Online interview** 1. MHNFR Conservator

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (6)		**1. How many CFMGs do you work with in the project?** **2. How do you support the formation, registration and/or functioning of CFMGs?** **3. Who are represented in these CFMGs?** **4. How are management structures elected, and provisions made for gender equity?** **5. How do they engage in the development of management plans and how are communities supported?**			**Online interview** 1. WECSZ
		1. How did you become involved with the CFMG? **2. Why did you become involved?** **3. What do you do within the CFMG?** **4. How do you plan to be involved in future?** **5. What do you need to participate effectively in the CFMG?**		Site visit with 1. Mweniwisi CFMG 2. MweneChifungwe CFMG	**Infield Community Focus Group** 1. Mweniwisi CFMG 2. MweneChifungwe CFMG
	Development and dissemination of knowledge products	***X Reference to F35*** ***1. Which knowledge products and/or concept notes have been developed?*** ***2. How were they developed?*** ***3. To whom and how were they disseminated?*** ***4. What key lessons were captured?*** ***5. What is the scope of its relevance?***	1. Project Progress Reports 2. Project Implementation Reports		**Infield Workshop** 1. PMU

Effectiveness (ToC) cont. (7)	Integrating lessons from annual reflections into planning and adaptive management	***6. How many annual learning and reflection meetings have been facilitated?*** ***7. From each, what key lessons were extracted?*** ***8. How did this shape project implementation?***	1. Project Progress Reports 2. Project Implementation Reports		**Infield Workshop** **1. PMU**
	Number of community members supported by the project	***1. How many people benefit from the project and how?*** ***2. How can this be expanded / sustained?***			**Infield Workshop** **1. PMU**
	Number of government officials supported by the project	***3. Which and how many officials have been trained and in what?*** ***4. How does this training relate to their mandate?*** ***5. How does this training support the project?*** ***6. How does this training support sustainability post the project?***			**Infield Workshop** **1. PMU**

3	**Sustainability**	3.1 What are the risks (including its probability and magnitude) to the project benefits being sustained and impact being achieved? 3.2 How likely are these to impact the long-term objectives of the project? 3.3 How resilient are these project benefits and long term impacts?	1. Risks to sustainability identified and understood 2. 2. Building resilience to the risks	**1. What are the key elements of the sustainability strategy?**	1. Project Document		
				2. Have there been any resources, income generation capability, budget allocations, strategic integration or similar financial resources/flows been identified and secured to sustain the activities and outcomes of the project? **3. What are the key risks to financial sustainability?** **4. How resilient are project activities, outcomes and potential long-term impact to these risks and how can they be mitigated?**			**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU

Sustainability cont.		**5. Are there any current or imminent policy development, revision, reversal processes that could threaten project activities and outcomes?** **6. What are the implications for the project outcomes and intended impact?** **7. Could and how could the project outcomes and anticipated impact withstand these socio-political risks?**	2. Project Progress Reports 3. Project Implementation Reports		**Online Interview** **1. GEF Agency** **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU
		8. Is there adequate institutional capacity to integrate these activities into existing organisations with the appropriate skills and what institutional factors - legal frameworks, policies, governing systems and structures, systems of accountability and transparency, technical and institutional capacity, etc) are emerging in these that could likely sustain or threaten project activities and outcomes and potential for impact? **9. How resilient are the project activities and outcomes to these risks and how can they be mitigated?**			**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU

Sustainability cont. (2)		**10. What environmental factors could undermine or reverse project outcomes and results?** **11. How can these be mitigated?**		**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU
		X Reference to F1 **12. Is and how is the project aligned with stakeholder interests legal frameworks, policies and governing structures?** **13. Does the scope of stakeholder involvement and engagement reflect ownership?**	Project Document Stakeholder interviews	

4	**Monitoring and evaluation design and implementation**	4.1 Has a clear, well thought through monitoring and evaluation plan with clear, measurable indicators, and aligned to the ToC and GEF requirements been developed? 4.2 Is a practical monitoring and evaluation plan being implemented, according to plan and informing adaptive management?	1. Clear, well thought through framework and plan aligned to ToC and GEF requirements, with core and clear indicators, with adequate costing for activities	**1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the monitoring and evaluation plan and its implementation?** **2. Is the project monitoring and evaluation framework practical and well thought through, relative to the proposal in the CEO Endorsement ?** **3. Does the monitoring and evaluation framework address the project ToC and the GEF requirements, incorporating applicable core indicators?** **4. Does the monitoring and evaluation framework provide baseline information?** **5. Are the indicators that track environmental, gender, socio-economic and other results appropriate?** **6. Does the monitoring and evaluation plan specify planned activities, responsibilities and timelines?**	**1. Monitoring and evaluation framework, plan and reports** 2. CEO Endorsement Request	

Monitoring and evaluation design and implementation cont.	Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system according to plan	**7. Are the monitoring and evaluation activities supported by an adequate budget, are the resources sufficient and used prudently?** **8. Are the monitoring and evaluation plans being implemented as planned?** **9. Have any changes been made to the monitoring and evaluation system, when, what are they and why were they necessary?** **10. How and when is data collected and how is it managed?** **11. How is monitoring and evaluation data used?**	1. Project financial plans and reports		**In field Interview** 1. Safeguards and M&E Officer

5	Knowledge Management	*X Reference to D8* *5.1 What lessons and good practices have been informed the design of the project?*	Key lessons from associated projects integrated into design and implementation?	***X Reference to F8*** ***1. With which projects does the project collaborate and how/around what?*** ***2. What has been shared between these projects?*** ***3. What has been integrated into the project and how does it add value?***		**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU
		5.2 What strategies have been developed to capture, manage, use and share information and lessons generated through the project?	Practical, collaborative knowledge management strategy for capturing, generating, collating and distributing key and strategic lessons	**1. Is there a knowledge management strategy?** **2. What are the key elements - generation, development, distribution, etc?** **3. How does it involve stakeholders?**		**Infield Workshop** 1. PMU
		5.3 What knowledge products have been planned and developed and how are these contributing to learning?		***X Reference to F22*** ***4. Which knowledge products and/or concept notes have been developed?*** ***5. How were they developed?*** ***6. To whom and how were they disseminated?*** ***7. What key lessons were captured?*** ***8. What is the scope of its relevance?***		**Infield Workshop** 1. PMU

6	Replication and Catalytic Impact	1. Has the project contributed additional results beyond what has been planned? 2. Which elements have been adopted beyond GEF support and how has this been achieved?	Additional, scaled, replicated, catalysed activities and benefits	**1. What additional outcomes or impacts are evident from the project?** **2. How has this come about?** **3. Has any elements of the project being taken up elsewhere and how has this come about?** **4. Have / will any aspects of the project be integrated into institutions beyond the project, what and how has this come about?**	1. Project Progress Reports 2. Project Implementation Reports		**Infield Workshop** 1. PMU

7	Policy application	7.1 Does the project align with GEF policies?	Alignment with principles and practices of stakeholder engagement, gender equity and environmental and social safeguards	**1. Does the project have a stakeholder engagement plan, gender action plan and environmental and social environmental management plan?** **2. Are these aligned with GEF policies and processes?**	1. Gender analysis and action plan 2. ESSF screening, categorisation and plan 3. Stakeholder engagement plan	
		7.2 To what extent was the GEF and WWF policy and project ESMF on environmental and social safeguards applied during preparation and implementation?	Risk identified through screening, categorised and mitigation planned	**1. What social and environmental risks have been identified?** **2. What is the mitigation plan for these?** **3. What other social and environmental risks are emerging?** **4. How do these relate to the ESMF?** **4. How are these being responded to?** **5. What grievances have emerged?** **6. How have they been resolved?**	1. ESSF screening, 2. Risk categorisation 3. Risk Management Plan 4. Grievance Register 5. Project Progress Reports 6. Project Implementation Report	

Policy application cont.	7.3 Are gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project and in relation to the gender analysis and action plan developed for the project?	Gender action plan, informed by an analysis, is integrated into the development and implementation of the project	**1. Was a gender analysis conducted?** **2. What are the key strategies for gender equity and inclusion?** **3. Is gender disaggregated in data collection and reporting?** **4. How were gender considerations integrated into the design of the project?**	1. Gender Analysis Report 2. Gender Action Plan 3. Project Progress Reports 4. Project Implementation Reports 5. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan 6. Project Document		
			1. How is gender equity and inclusion provided for in project activities? **2. Are any project activities likely to disadvantage women, how and why?**		Site visit with 1. Mweniwisi CFMG 2. MweneChifungwe CFMG 3. Kampumba Gauge Station Water Monitors 4. Muleya / Mulekatembo Village Farmers 5. Kaswa Village Farmers	**Infield Workshop** 1. WARMA 2. PMU **Online Interviews** 3. COMACO 4. WECSZ
			1. Are and how are gender equity concerns tracked through the monitoring and evaluation process?			**In field Interview** 1. Safeguards and M&E Officer

Policy application cont. (2)	7.4 Who are the key stakeholders, what role do they play and how do they support project implementation and sustainability?	Key and strategic stakeholder engagement in planning and development	**1. Who are the key stakeholders?** **2. Why and how were they selected?** **3. How has the project built strategic partnerships to ensure ownership and take up after GEF funding?** **4. How does/has stakeholder engagement:** **- complemented expertise and capacities** **- supported implementation and project results** **- fostered project ownership** **- enabled sustainability?**		**Infield Workshop** 1. PMU

8	Efficiency (project implementation and execution, financial management, co-financing	8.1 Is the project financially efficient?	1. Appropriate cost saving approaches 2. Limited inefficiencies in spending 3. No duplicate spending or effort	**1. What are the unit output costs?** **2. What % of workplans are completed at what cost in contribution to the results framework** **3. What cost saving approaches are being used?** **4. Are there any areas of financial inefficiencies?** **5. Are there any areas of duplicate effort or spending?** **6. Are financial control processes adequate to ensure timeous funding flows for project implementation? Where are the challenges?**	Financial plans and reports		**Online interview** 1. Grant Managers
		8.2 Are human resources adequate, appropriate and complemented to deliver to project needs?	1. Adequate staff, capacity and support responding to needs of the project	**1. How many people are allocated in what percentage and in what role to the project, per participating institution?** **2. How do these positions interact with and support each other?**			**Infield Workshop** 1. WARMA 2. PMU **Online Interviews** 3. COMACO 4. WECSZ
				3. How does work planning happen in the project across the multiple tiers of executant, implementing and governing structures?			**Infield Workshop** 1. WARMA 2. PMU **Online Interviews** 3. COMACO 4. WECSZ
				4. Do workplans reflect alignment with results framework?	Workplans and results framework		

Efficiency (project implementation and execution, cont.	8.3 What are the governance structures supporting the project, what role do they play and how effective have they been in fulfilling the role?		**1. What was the original governance model?** **2. Has this changed, when and why?** **3. Who is involved and in which role?** **4. What is the role of each tier of governance?** **5. Are there clear terms of reference that guide governance processes?** **6. How are these roles understood and executed by roleplayers?** **7. What value is added to the project, by individuals and governing structures?**	Project Document		**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU
	8.4 What communication and information sharing approaches were used to ensure effective flow or project progress, challenges and ways of addressing these and how effective were these approaches?		**1. About what, how regularly and how does the PMU communicate and share information with stakeholder?** **2. Could you benefit from any additional information, in terms of your execution of the project or other work with which you are involved?** **3. What form of communication would work best?**			**Face-to-face Interview** 1. MGEE - Permanent Sec. 2. MGEE: EMD - GEF Focal Point 3. MGEE - Director of Forestry 4. Provincial Permanent Sec 5. Mafinga District Commissioner 6. Chief MweneChifungwe 7. Chief Mweniwisi 8. District Technical Committee **Online Interview** 9. COMACO 10. WECSZ **Infield Workshop** 11. WARMA 12 PMU

Efficiency (project implementation and execution, cont. (2)	8.2 What co-financing (value, type, source) has been secured, for what and how long?	% commitment in total, kind and grant, specified for specific purposes	**1. Who has committed how much to what in the project for what period?** **2. What project activities and/or outcome is this co-financing facilitating?** **3. Is there a likelihood of any additional commitments of co-financing? From whom, how much, and what type?** **4. Have there been any deviations from or delays in commitments and what are the reasons for this?** **3. Are any parts of the project lacking/delayed due to a lack of commitment or delivery of co-financing?** **4. How are the co-financiers involved in the project?** **5. How is feedback provided to the co-financiers?**	Co-financing register		**Infield Workshop** 1. PMU

9	Implementation and execution	1. How effective was the GEF agency in discharging its responsibilities?	Robust preparation and implementation of project - project identification, concept development, proposal preparation, project approval and start up, oversight and supervision, completion, evaluation	**1. What was the process of project identification, concept and proposal development, approval and start up?** **2. What was the timeline and who was involved at what stage?** **3. What are the structured processes of oversight and support for adhering to policy and procedures, managing and responding to challenges, adaptive management?** **4. To what extent did you engage with the governing structures and were these roles fulfilled as intended?** **5. How efficient were processes of project execution, workplanning, budgeting, reporting?**	1. Project Identification Document 2. CEO Endorsement Request 3. Project Document		**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency
		2. How effective was the executing agency in its role and responsibilities?	Effective and timeous execution of the project, adapted through monitoring and evaluation insights?	**1. What were the key challenges and/or enablers in executing the project?** **2. How were these addressed?** **3. What role did each of the implementing and executing agency play in developing the response and resolving the challenges?** **4. How effective and efficient were stakeholder engagements across all involved in the project?**			**Online Interview** 1. GEF Agency **Infield Workshop** 2. PMU

1	PROJECT DOCUMENTS	
1.1	Project Identification Form	PIF
1.2	Project Document	PRODOC
1.3	CEO Endorsement	CEO ER
2	GRANT AGREEMENTS	
2.1	Grant Agreement	
2.2	Grant Agreement Amendment	
2.3	WWF GEF Project Agency Approval	
3	TECHNICAL REPORTS	
3.1	Baseline Assessment Report - May 2024	
3.2	Luangwa Catchment Technical Assessment Report - Feb 2025	
3.3	Training Needs Assessment Report - Date Unknown	
4	PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS REPORTS	
4.1	GEF Project Implementation Report FY 23- 15 Sep 2023	GEF PIR 1 FY23
4.2	GEF Project Implementation Report 15 Sep 2024	GEF PIR 2 FY24
4.3	Project Progress Report 01 Jul - 31 Dec 23	PPR Jul - Dec 23
4.4	Project Progress Report 01 Jul - 31 Dec 24	PPR Jul - Dec 24
5	ACTIVITY REPORTS	
5.1	Boundary marking and beaconing report - Nov 2024	
5.2	ESMF Community Orientations - Apr 2024	
6	FINANCIAL REPORTS	
6.1	Funding Agreement's Income and Expenditure Report FY 2022/2023	
6.2	Quarterly Report - Jul - Sep 2022	
6.3	Quarterly Report - Oct - Dec 2022	
6.4	Quarterly Report - Jan - Mar 2023	
6.5	Quarterly Report - Apr - Jun 2023	
6.6	Quarterly Report - Jul - Sep 2023	
6.7	Quarterly Report - Oct - Dec 2023	
6.8	Quarterly Report - Jan - Mar 2024	
6.9	Quarterly Report - Apr - Jun 2024	
7	CO-FINANCING COMMITMENTS	
7.1	Ministry of Water and Sanitation - Co-financing Commitment	
7.2	Mafinga District Administration - Co-financing Commitment	
7.3	COMACO - Co-Financing Commitment	
7.4	WECSZ - Co-Financing Commitment	
7.5	WWF ZCO - Co-Financial Commitment	
7.6	WWF GEF - Co-Financial Commitment	
7.7	Mafinga Agriculture - SCRALA	

8	ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS
8.1	Luangwa Screening Tool - April
8.2	Safeguards Compliance Memo
8.3	Environmental and Social Management Framework and Process Framework
8.4	Environmental and Social Safeguards Categorization Memo
8.5	Grievance Register
9	GENDER EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
9.1	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
9.2	Gender Analysis Report
9.3	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan
9.4	Farmer Participation Register
10	MEETING MINUTES
10.1	Monthly Luangwa Landscape Co-ordination Meeting - 6 Oct 2023
10.2	Project Technical Committee Orientation - 10 - 12 Sep 2023
10.3	Consultant Shortlisting and Selection Process - 23 Jan 2024
10.4	Operationalizing Mafinga Office - Not dated
10.5	Citizen Science Training Preparatory Meeting - 25 Jul 2024
11	COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS AND SCHEDULES
11.1	In Studio Programme 1 - 3
11.2	Outside Broadcast - Musipizi and Mafinga
11.3	Outside Broadcast - Ntonga and Nsenje
11.4	Radio Interview Schedules 1 - 4
11.5	Video 1 and 2
11.6	ISO FM Community Radio Profile
12	COMMUNITY FOREST AREAS EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
12.1	Chanzi CFA - Mweniwisi
12.2	Damasca CFA - Mweniwisi
12.3	Makombe - Mweniwisi
12.4	Mwenipenza CFA - Mweniwisi
12.5	Lightone EoI – Chief MweniChifungwe
13	ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS ACCESSED AND ANALYZED
13.1	Project workplans
13.2	Mafinga District Integrated Development Plan (IDP)
13.3	Executant Terms of Reference
13.4	EoI/Contracts of Executing Agencies
13.5	Baseline METT
13.6	GIS Maps of MHNFR
13.7	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
13.8	Monitoring and Evaluation Data Set - Sample
13.9	Monitoring and Evaluation Report

ONLINE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS (4)			
1.	GEF Agency Gender Lead	30 Jun 2025	90 mins
2.	GEF Agency Safeguards Lead	01 Jul 2025	90 mins
3.	Safeguards and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	28 Jul 2025	90 mins
4.	Project Manager	20 Aug 2025	30 mins
ONLINE GROUP INTERVIEWS (2)			
5.	GEF Agency (2) · Project Manager · Technical Lead	23 Jul 2025	90 mins
6.	Grant Managers (5) · COMACO Grants Administrator · COMACO Finance and Grants Manager · COMACO Project Accountant · WECSZ Finance and Administration Manager · WWF ZCO Grant Administrator	28 Jul 2025	90 mins
ONLINE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (2)			
7.	COMACO (8) · Chief Operations Officer and Head: Extension Services · Extension Zonal Co-ordinator · Field Staff: Mwenechifungwe · Field Staff: Mweniwisi · Grants Administrator · Monitoring and Evaluation Officer: Head Office · Monitoring and Evaluation Officer: Infield · Project Accountant	03 Jul 2025	180 mins
8.	WECSZ (7) · Communications and Youth Engagement Officer · Environmental Education Officer · Finance and Administration Manager · National Co-ordinator · National Projects Officer · National Environmental Education Officer · Project Manager	22 Jul 2025	210 Mins
IN FIELD COURTESY VISITS (5)			
9.	MGEE Permanent Secretary	10 Jul 2025	10 mins
10.	Muchinga Province Permanent Secretary (3) · Deputy Secretary · Assistant Secretary · Planner	15 Jul 2025	30 mins
11.	District Commissioner	16 Jul 2025	30 mins
12.	Chief MwenaChifungwe	17 Jul 2025	30 mins
13.	Chief Mweniwisi	17 Jul 2025	30 mins

IN PERSON INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS (2)			
14.	MGEE Environmental Management Proxy for GEF Focal Point	10 Jul 2025	90 mins
15.	WWF ZCO Conservation Director	10 Jul 2025	60 mins

IN PERSON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (1)			
16.	Project Management Unit (5) · Chief External Engagement and Program Quality Officer · Community Engagement and Gender Officer · Luangwa Landscape Manager · Project Manager · Safeguards and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	10 Jul 2025	Full day
IN PERSON GROUP DISCUSSIONS (10)			
17.	WECSZ (6) · Communications and Youth Engagement Officer · 2 x Education Officers · National Administrator · National Projects Officer · Team Leader	11 Jul 2025	80 mins
18.	MGEE: Planning and Policy (2) · Director · Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	16 Jul 2025	60 mins
19.	WARMA (2) · Catchment Manager · Catchment Hydrologist (Former Acting Catchment Manager)	14 Jul 2025	120 mins
20.	Provincial Forestry Office (3) · Principal Forestry Officer · GIS Specialist · Forest Conservator	15 Jul 2025	120 mins
21.	District Technical Team (3) · District Forestry Officer · District Agriculture Officer · District Livestock and Fisheries Officer	18 Jul 2025	60 mins
22.	Muleya Village Farmers (32) 12 men and 20 women from 4 producer groups	16 Jul 2025	150 mins
23.	Lighton Community Forest Management Group (19) · 6 men and 4 women of the CFMG (women hold positions of Treasurer, Vice Secretary) · 5 men and 4 women Honorary Forestry Officers · 3 additional men from the community and 7 women	16 Jul 2025	90 mins
24.	Kaswa Village Farmers (14) · 7 men and 7 women farmers, including 1 women Senior Lead Farmer	17 Jul 2025	90 mins
25.	Chipungu Community Forest Management Group (17) · 5 men and 4 women of the CFMG (1 women holds the position of Vice Secretary) · 6 men and 2 women Honorary Forestry Officers · 6 additional men from the community and 3 women	17 Jul 2025	60 mins
26.	Kampumbu Gauge Readers and Water Monitors (6) · 4 men and 2 women	19 Jul 2025	60 mins

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS OF EXECUTING AGENCY

INTERVIEWEE DETAILS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

1.	What is your mandate, strategy, plans of your institution or organization?
2.	What aspects of the project aligns with this mandate, strategy and/or plan?
3.	What role do you play in the governance and/or management of the project? *use annexure A to indicate this role*
4.	What are the barriers, challenges, delays experienced in implementing policies, strategies, plans related to mandates that relate to the project?
5.	Does and how does/can the project assist in overcoming these barriers, challenges, delays?

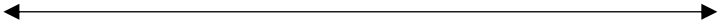
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DISTRICT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

INTERVIEWEE DETAILS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

1.	What is the scope of your work?
2.	What aspects of the project aligns with this scope?
3.	How does the project support your work and how do you support the work of the project?
4.	What are some of the challenges that you experience in your work related to the project and can the project assist in overcoming these?
5.	Would you be able to sustain this work after the project ends and what will you need?

INTERVIEW GUIDE - MAFINGA HILLS NATIONAL FOREST RESERVE FORESTER

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

MANAGEMENT OF THE MAFINGA HILLS NATIONAL FOREST RESERVE		
1.	What is the METT score for the MHNFR?	 26 39
2.	What has improved, stayed the same or declined in score?	Indicate on annexure A, what has: + = improved * = stayed the same - = declined
3.	How have improvements come about?	
4.	What is needed to maintain the improvement, improve the stagnation and turn the decline around?	+ * -
5.	Describe the beaconing process and related stakeholder engagement: · who was involved and how · how were they selected · what benefit do they derive?	
6.	What more is needed to completed the demarcation process and how long will this take?	
7.	What challenges are experienced in the management of the MHNFR and how can these be addressed?	
8.	How many ha of forest has been restored and how was this done?	ha

9.	What role did communities play in its restoration and how do they benefit?
10.	How will the restoration efforts be sustained?
11.	How many CFMGs have been established in the Mafinga District and which are they?
12.	What are the prerequisites and process for their establishment?
13.	How is their management area defined and what are they required to do?
14.	What are the constraints / challenges to the formation and functioning of the CFMGs and how can these be overcome?
15.	What progress has been made with the appointment of staff (Technical Officer and Honorary Officers) to the MHNFR, and how was this faciltated? · who are they, disaggregated by chiefdom and gender

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF ZAMBIA

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

PROJECT PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS		
COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT GROUPS		
1.	How many CFMGs do you support generally, and in the project?	*Overall* *Sustainable Luangwa Project*
2.	Are they formally/officially established and what is the process?	
3.	How long does the establishment of these CFMGs take generally?	
4.	How does WECSZ support their formation, generally and in the project?	*Overall* *Sustainable Luangwa Project*
5.	Who are the people from the community who make up the CFMG and/or the management structure, disaggregated per village, zone, gender?	
6.	What is the process of developing forestry management plans and who is involved and how is the process supported?	
7.	How will CFMGs be supported to govern and manage forests?	
8.	What are the key challenges in the formation and functioning of CFMGs and what is needed to address these?	
9.	How does WECSZ provide for gender equity and inclusion in these CFMGs and why?	
10.	Are any activities of the CFMG likely to disadvantage women in any way, what and how and how can this be mitigated?	

REFORESTATION	
11.	Are there any activities in forest restoration supported by WECSZ and the project? Describe these.
12.	Who and how many people/households are involved (disaggregated by village, zone, gender, association, etc), how and what benefit is derived?
13.	Are and how are benefits shared within communities?
14.	How will CFMGs be supported to undertake governing and management, including developing a forestry management plan?
15.	What are the challenges to establishing these and how can they be overcome?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
COMMUNITY MARKETS FOR CONSERVATION

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

PROJECT PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS		
CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE		
1.	How many farmers are involved in these improved agricultural practices, disaggregated for chiefdoms, villages, zones and gender?	
2.	How are/were they selected for participation?	
3.	What is the size of land on which they farm and how is this determined?	
4.	Where are these farms in the landscape?	*Indicate the approximate location on the map in Annexure A*
5.	What are the specific aspects or practices that these farmers use?	
6.	What project activities supported these improved practices?	
7.	How are these activities and the benefits likely to be sustained?	
8.	What challenges do farmers experience around this activity and how can these be overcome?	
9.	What provisions are made for gender equity and social inclusion, including excluded and vulnerable groups?	
10.	Are any activities likely to disadvantage women, what, why, how and how can this be mitigated?	

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GEF AGENCY AND EXTENDED TEAM

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

1.	Describe the process of **project identification, concept and proposal development, approval** and start up. Who was involved at what stage, how and what was the timeline for development? *Use timeline in Annexure A, to list activities and participants, identifying also challenges along the way.*	
2.	Which other **projects informed project developmen**t, what specific aspects were integrated and what value has it added?	
3.	What are the **key enablers and/or impediments** of the project? How are these being addressed? Who plays what role in this process? *Use Aha Slides – see Annexure B for screenshot example*	
4.	How does the **GEF Agency** engage with project governance, management, implementation?	*Governance* *Management* *Implementation*
5.	What structured **processes of support** is being implemented in the project? How well is this working?	
6.	Where are your **key concerns** in the project? How are these addressed?	

	Use Aha Slides – see Annexure B for screenshot example	
7.	What do you think indicates that the project is **country driven**?	
8.	**Rate the following aspects** of the project on a scale of 1 – 6 and explain this. Work planning Reporting Delivery Adaptive Management Stakeholder Engagement	

INTERVIEW GUIDE – PROJECT GRANT MANAGERS

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

1.	Do the financial controls enable progress and allow for timely funding flows? *use the chat function*
2.	Where are the challenges in funding flows for project implementation? *use the chat function to fully describe the challenges*
3.	Where do you see the key variances between planned and actual expenditure and why?
4.	What material changes have been made to the budgets, why and how relevant or appropriate are these?
5.	What cost saving approaches are used and are these effective?
6.	Where do you find the financial inefficiencies and how are these best addressed?
7.	Do you see any areas of duplicate effort or spending?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

SESSION 1: PROJECT EXECUTION TOWARDS RESULTS (9:00 am – 01:00 pm)

CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTIONS	ACTIVITY
1. Progress towards results	a) What progress has been made towards: · Newly created protected areas · Improved management effectiveness · Forest land restored and forest cover expanded · Improved and sustainable land management practices · Community members supported · Government officials supported, who they are and how does the training relate to their mandate and sustainability · Improved water quality · Change in annual rate of loss of miombo woodland · Knowledge management strategy, products developed and disseminated · Concept notes developed and shared b) How many and who are the people that participate, disaggregate by chiefdom, zone, gender, age c) Which officials have been trained, for what? d) Where are the delays and what is the catch-up plan? e) Where and what are the challenges and how will they be addressed (what, with whom, when)? f) What additional outcomes have been achieved?	Using the timeline · Map out the outputs and activities, with start-up date · Add details on participants, challenges, delays, additional outcomes

2.	Stakeholder engagement	a) Who are the stakeholders involved in what and how? b) How were they identified / did they become involved? c) How many staff members work on and support the project in what %? d) How and about what do you communicate to stakeholders?	· Indicate this on the map relative to the different project activities
3.	Policy application	e) How do you ensure gender equity, social inclusion and no disadvantage? f) What in the GAP do you struggle with, and why? g) How do you ensure compliance with the ESMF? h) What are the emerging ES risks? i) How will they be managed? j) What in the ESMF helps?	Open discussion and indicate any challenges relevant to activities mapped out.
4.	Adaptive management	k) With which other projects do you collaborate? l) What has been shared and integrated either way, when and how? m) What learning sessions were held, when and with whom? n) Where and how are lessons documented and shared – including with governance structures? o) How are lessons learnt taken up? p) Are there any examples of replication and scalability?	· Map out the collaboration linked to specific project activities · Align those not to the side of the map · Along the timeline, indicate learning sessions, exchanges with details of when and who · Indicated the key lessons and how they were integrated into planning · Map parts of the project seeding elsewhere ·

SESSION 2, CO-FINANCING AND SUSTAINABILITY (01:30 pm – 03:00 pm)

CRITERIA		GUIDING QUESTIONS	ACTIVITY
5.	Co-financing	q) Where is co-financing used / applied, in what type and amount? r) Are there any additional co-financing opportunities (how much, for what, from whom and when? s) Has there been any deviations or delays in co-financing, why?	Use the map of activities to indicate the points of co-financing
6.	Sustainability	t) Where and who are the sustainability champions? u) What are the opportunities / mechanisms / instruments for financial sustainability?	Answer these questions in relation to the map of activities developed.

	v) Which institutions have what capacity to absorb project activities for its outcomes? w) What is the plan to secure this? x) What are the institutional risks to sustainability? y) Are there any socio-political risks to sustainability? z) What are the financial risks to sustainability? aa) Are there any environmental risks to sustainability? bb) How can any of these be mitigated?	

SESSION 3: PROJECT MANAGEMENT (03:15 pm – 5:00 pm)

CRITERIA	GUIDING QUESTIONS	ACTIVITY
7. Project implementation and execution	cc) How many people are allocated to the project (immediate staff, WWF ZCO, GEF Agency, in what role and %?	
	dd) Knowledge management · What is the strategy? · What are the key elements of the strategy? · How are stakeholder involved?	Open discussion (15 mins)
	ee) Governance What has changed? When and how? Is there clarity on roles? What value is added	Open discussion (15 mins)
	ff) Work planning · How does it happen? · How are you supported? · How do you support executants? gg) Reporting · How does it happen? · How are you supported? · How do you support executants? hh) Communication What is communicated? To whom? How? When?	Rate this aspect of project management, using green (good), yellow (okay), orange (can be better), red (poor) In groups, complete the form in response to the three questions
	ii) Country ownership	Use the Aha slide, and motivate for your response

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAFEGUARDS AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION OFFICER

1.	How was the monitoring and evaluation plan developed for the project? What informed its development?
2.	How and when is data collected and how is it managed? Were baseline data sets collected and what do they include?
3.	How are gender equity considerations and concerns tracked through monitoring and evaluation?
4.	How is monitoring and evaluation data used?
5.	What budget do you have for monitoring and evaluation, and how / for what is it used? Is it sufficient? What more is needed?
6.	Is the plan being implemented as intended? Where are there deviations? What are the challenges? How are you addressing these?
7.	Have any changes been made to the monitoring and evaluation plan, when and why?

INTERVIEW AND INFIELD DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR WARMA

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Organisation	Organisational Role	Project Role
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

1.	Briefly describe the policy provisions for water resource management as it relates to the project
2.	What is WARMAs role in the project?
3.	How many ha in the proposed WRPA is currently protected and how many more are proposed for the WRPA and why? *Refer to GIS map*
4.	What form of protection is proposed and what role do communities play in its management?
5.	Do communities typically use these areas proposed for protection and what does the WRPA mean for their access, use and benefit?
6.	What processes of stakeholder consultation has been undertaken and how do communities respond to the WRPA?
7.	What steps have been completed towards the submission for the WRPA, where are the challenges and delays and how can these be overcome?
8.	What are the obstacles to management effectiveness?
9.	What steps have been taken towards effective management of the WRPA? How will these ensure management effectiveness?

10. How is gender equity and social inclusion provided for in these project activities?	
11. Are any project activities linked to WARMA's work likely to disadvantage women, how and what is being done to mitigate this?	
12. How can these activities and outcomes be sustained after the project has ended?	

QUESTIONS GUIDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

KAMPUMBA GAUGE STATION

1. What natural resources do communities need and use, for what?
2. Are there any restrictions of access to resources?
3. What role did you play in the installation of the gauge station and what role do you play in water monitoring?
4. How did you become involved?
5. How do you benefit from this participation?
6. What happens after the project?

VILLAGE FARMERS AT MULEKATEMBO AND MULEYA VILLAGE

1. What natural resources do communities need and use, for what?
2. Are there any restrictions of access to resources?
3. What is the size of land being farmed?
4. How long have you been farming?
5. What crops do you typically grow?
6. How and why did you become involved in sustainable agriculture?
7. What practices do you apply?
8. How did you do this before?
9. How much do you sell and how much do you use at home?
10. Where do you sell the goods?
11. For how much?
12. What are your future plans for farming?
13. How has adopting CA contributed to you and your family? (Impact on livelihood)

COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT GROUP

1. What natural resources do communities need and use, for what?
2. Are there any restrictions of access to resources?
3. *How did you become involved with the CFMG?*
4. *Why did you become involved?*
5. *What does the CFMG do?*
6. *How do you plan to be involved in future?*
7. How is the CFMG formed?
8. How do you develop conservation management plans? Who supports you? What is included?
9. What do you need to participate effectively in the CFMG?
10. How does the CFMG involve the rest of the community in its activities?

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

1. MGEE: Permanent Secretary (Chairperson)
2. Muchinga Provincial Permanent Secretary (Co-Chair)
3. MGEE: Environmental Management, GEF Operational Focal Point
4. Mafinga District Commissioner
5. WARMA: Director General
6. MGEE: Director Forestry Department
7. WWF ZCO, Chief Executive Officer
8. Kapasa Makasa University, Vice Chancellor
9. WWF GEF Agency (Observer)

PROJECT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

1. MGEE, Senior Ecosystem Analyst
2. MGEE, Conservator of Forests
3. Ministry of Agriculture, Principal Agriculture Specialist
4. WARMA, Catchment Manager
5. WWF ZCO, Luangwa Landscape Manager

The project performance is rated on outcomes, sustainability, implementation, execution, monitoring and evaluation design and monitoring and evaluation implementation

1. Outcome ratings

The overall rating of the project outcomes is based on:

a) Relevance and the extent to which the project outcomes align with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, country priorities, beneficiary needs, and the mandates of the GEF Agency and its executing partners. It also assesses if the the project is well targeted and the extent to which the project design is appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes.
b) Coherence and the extent to which the the project is compatible with other relevant projects and programs in the recipient country, whether it was supported by and supported other other relevant activities in the project context. It also assesses internal coherence and alignment between the Project's theory of change, governance, structures activities and monitoring and evaluation system. Coherence also assesses alignment with GEF policies and guidelines and the integration of lessons from similar projects.
c) Effectiveness considers the extent to which the project outcome achievements were commensurate with the ex ante targets. It also assesses whether the Project made the expected level of contributions to global environmental benefits. It further considers the overall progress of the Project in achieving its long-term objectives and include also an assessment of any unintended consequences of the project and the extent to which these add to, or negate project benefits.
d) Efficiency assesses whether the project was cost -effective in delivering its intended results and considers the cost/time versus outputs/outcome equation and where feasible compares the projects costs and benefits to alternatives. It further considers whether project activities were completed in a timely manner.

The project outcome rating is based on the extent to which the expected outcomes were achieved (effectiveness) and the extent to which the Project was relevant, coherent and efficient.

A six point rating scale is used to assess outcomes. The top three ratings comprise the satisfactory rating and bottom three (excluding unable to assess) the unsatisfactory rating.

i.	Highly satisfactory	Targets are exceeded and are highly relevant, coherent and cost effective.
ii.	Satisfactory	Outcomes achieved meets targets and are highly relevant, coherent and cost effective.
iii.	Moderately satisfactory	Outcomes achieved are generally close to the targets. The majority are met or almost met, but some were not. The outcomes are generally relevant, coherent and cost effective.
iv.	Moderately unsatisfactory	The outcomes achived is lower than the targets, although some outcomes were substantially achieved. The outcomes are generally relevant but not sufficient given the costs, or are generally cost effective but not adequately relevant and coherent.
v	Unsatisfactory	The expected outcomes were not achieved, or achievement was substantially lower than expected and/or the achieved outcomes are

		not relevant or coherent. Alternately the outcomes were cost ineffective compared with alternatives.
vi	Highly unsatisfactory	A negligible level of outcomes was achieved, and/or the project had substantial negative consequences that outweigh it benefits.
-	Unable to assess	The available information does not allow assessment of the level of outcome achievement.

2. Sustainability ratings

The rating for likelihood of sustainability is based on the probability of occurrence of a risk and the magnitude/severity of its effective on the continuation of net benefits and achievement of long term project objectives should it materialize. It considers the resilience of the project benefit stream to the likely risks. It assesses the likelihood of continuation over a time frame reasonable for the given project. The assessment should be based on the evidence of risks available at the time of the evaluation. Risks are categorized as financial, sociopolitical, institutional, or environmental.

a) Financial risks include an assessment of the likelihood that financial resources will be available to continue the activities that sustain project benefits and the risks associated with their availability. This includes a consideration for example, on income generating activities that promote environmentally friendly behavior, regular government budget allocations, trends suggesting the future adequacy of financial resources for sustaining project outcomes. Where the project supported a business model, the risks that potentially undermine the financial viability of the model must be considered.
b) Socio-political risks need to be assessed and the extent to which these might undermine the longevity of project outcomes. It assesses stakeholder ownership to enable sustainability of project outcomes/benefits, as well as the alignment of key stakeholder interests to support the continuation of project benefits flow. Sociopolitical risk will also be assessed against sufficient knowledge and stakeholder awareness of the project's long objectives and progress made towards these.
c) Institutional framework and governance risks assess legal frameworks, policies, governance structures, and processes that might pose a threat to the continuation of project benefits. It considers whether the the requisite systems for accountability and transparency and the necessary technical and institutional know how are in place.
d) Environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project benefits are considered and pose a threat to the sustainability of project outcomes.
e) Additional risks that fall outside of these categories must also be considered in determining the overall sustainability rating.

The probability of incidence of all relevant risks and the magnitude of their effect/severity is taken into account to determing the overall likelihood of sustainability on the following six point scale.

i.	Highly likely	The risk is negligible to the continued benefits and based on progress to date, long term objectives are expected to be achieved.
ii.	Likely	There is negligible risk to continuation of benefits, or the magnitude of their effect is too small and/or the probability that they will materialize are too small. It is likely that the net benefits of the project will continue

iii.	Moderately likely	There are some risks to sustainability and they may have some effect on continuation of benefits if they do materialize. Probability of these risks materializing is low and net benefits are likely to continue.
iv.	Moderately unlikely	There is significant risks to sustainability. The effect on the continuation of benefits would be substantial if these risks materialize and the probability of materialization are significant. The net benefits of the project are likely to be impacted.
v.	Unlikely	The risks are high, and it is unlikely that the net benefits of the project will continue to accrue and progress to date might be lost. It is unlikely that the project will achieve its long term benefits.
vi.	Highly unlikely	The project will not achieve its long term objective. Major risks have already materialized and halted accrual of net benefits or have a high probability of materializing soon and will halt accrual of net benefits when they do.
-	Unable to assess	The expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability can't be determined.

3. Implementation and execution ratings

The performance of the GEF agency and the executing agency are assessed separately.

a) The GEF Agency is responsible for project identification, concept preparation, preoaration of a detailed proposal, project approval and start up, oversight and supervision, completion and evaluation. The Agency is also responsible for efficient utilization of project inputs and delivery of project outcomes. Quality of project implementation is based on the GEF Agency's performance in carrying out its responsibilities.
b) Execution agencies are involved in the management and administration of the project's day to day activities under the oversight and supervision of a GEF agency. They are responsible for the appropriate use of funds, procurement and the contracting of goods and services in line with the regulations of the GEF Agency. Quality in executing is rated on the performance fo the executing entity in carrying out its responsibilities.

#	RATING	IMPLEMENTATION - GEF AGENCY	EXECUTING ENTITY
i.	Highly satisfactory-exemplary performance	· robust project preparation and implementation, · relevant application of GEF policies in project preparation and implementation · strong project supervision, and identifying and addressing emerging concerns in a timely manner · ensuring project implementation stayed on track and project activities were completed on time.	· timely and high quality execution of project activities · adherence to GEF policies and requirements · guidance from the GEF Agency was followed, and corrective actions taken promptly · measures to mitigate risks to sustainability were undertaken, and steps taken to support project follow-up · project activities were completed on time.
ii.	Satisfactory – expected performance met without any salient weaknesses	· robust implementation, and relevant GEF policies applied · the project was supervised	· execution of project activities was timely and of good quality · relevant GEF policies and requirements were adhered to

		· well, with emerging concerns identified and addressed in a timely manner · ensuring project implementation was on track	· guidance from the GEF Agency was followed · measures taken to mitigate risks to sustainability of project outcomes
iii.	Moderately satisfactory – overall performance as expected with a few weaknesses	· project preparation and implementation were adequate · relevant GEF policies were applied, although there are some areas of weakness · adequate project supervision with emerging concerns identified and addressed, although some may not have been adequately addressed · implementation had minor delays, and a few activities may have been dropped	· execution of project activities was generally timely, with some instances of delay · relevant GEF policies and requirements were adhered to, although some minor slip-ups may have been observed · guidance from the GEF Agency was followed, and problems were fixed · there were some areas for improvement in execution.
iv.	Moderately unsatisfactory – performance did not meet expectations, although there are some areas of solid performance	· project preparation and implementation had weaknesses, although these were not too severe · project supervision was somewhat weak, although the GEF Agency identified most emerging concerns, many remained unaddressed or inadequately addressed · project implementation was delayed, and a few activities were dropped or reduced in scale because of issues that were largely under Agency control	· execution of project activities was delayed, and executing entity capabilities observably limited project execution · several slip-ups in adherence to GEF policies and requirements were observed · guidance from the GEF Agency was generally followed and problems were fixed, but such actions usually were not timely · there are several areas for improvement in execution
v	Unsatisfactory – performance did not meet expectations	· project preparation and implementation were weak · project supervision was weak and emerging concerns were not identified in time and remained un- or inadequately addressed · activities were not implemented in time or were not undertaken · project implementation was delayed, and several activities were dropped or reduced in scale	· execution of project activities was delayed, and at least some activities were dropped due to factors largely under the control of the executing entity · many slip-ups were observed in adherence to GEF policies and requirements. · guidance from the GEF Agency was not put into practice, or was applied with considerable delay.
vi.	Highly unsatisfactory – performance has severe shortcomings	· the GEF Agency mismanaged project implementation, and its supervision was poor · emerging concerns were not identified in time, including those that should have been obvious, although instances of mismanagement were discovered, corrective actions were not undertaken	· there were several instances of mismanagement by the executing entity · emerging concerns were not addressed in time, including those that should have been obvious · most activities were very poorly executed and/or experienced delays, and some activities were dropped · GEF policies and requirements were not applied

		· project activities were poorly implemented, and several had to be dropped	
-	Unable to assess	· information was insufficient to arrive at an appropriate rating	· information was insufficient to arrive at an appropriate rating

4. Project monitoring and evaluation ratings

The quality of monitoring and evaluation is rated at a project level in terms of both design and implementation.

a) Design considers the extent to which the monitoring and evaluation plan was practical and well thought through. It assesses the extent to which the monitoring and evaluation plan addresses the project's theory of change and GEF minimum requirements, incorporates applicable core indicators/corporate results indicators and tracking tools, and provides baseline information. It determines whether indicators to track environment, gender equality, socio-economic and other results are appropriate.
b) Implementation assesses whether the monitoring and evaluation plan operates as planned. It considers whether weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation plan were addressed timeously and whether data on specified indicators were gathered systematically and as scheduled. It further assesses whether data on relevant GEF core indicators/corporate results indicators and/or tracking tools were analyzed and reported. It will consider the appropriateness of the methodological approaches.

#	RATING	THE PLAN	IMPLEMENTATION
i.	Highly satisfactory	· reflects good practice and does not have any weaknesses · aligns robustly with the theory of change · complete baseline data is provided · indicators are appropriate and arrangements for implementation are adequate · overall exceeds expectations and is exemplary	· excellent implementation · weaknesses in the plan, if present were addressed promptly · activities were conducted timeously and data was used to improve project implementation · exceeds expectations and was exemplary
ii.	Satisfactory	· is robust and has no or only minor weaknesses · alignment with the theory of change is robust · baseline data are provided or their collection is planned at the start of the project · indicators are appropriate and arrangements for implementation are adequate · it meets expectations	· generally robust · weaknesses addressed timeously · activities conducted timeously · data used to improve implementation · meets expectations

iii.	Moderately satisfactory	· solid overall · alignment to theory of change is solid · indicators are generally appropriate and arrangements for implementation are adequate · the plan can be strengthened, but overall is adequate	· generally robust with some weaknesses · weaknesses generally addressed with some remaining · some activities were delayed · data used for reporting but had little use in improving project implementation · meets expectations with some areas of low performance
iv.	Moderately unsatisfactory	· overall weak, although it has strengths in some areas · alignment with theory of change is weak · indicators are generally inappropriate and additional indicators are required to capture project results and/or arrangements to gather data on indicators are not adequate · the plan needs several improvements to meet expectations	· weak and/or did not address weaknesses in the original plan · most activities completed, with some dropped or delayed · data not reported timeously and little evidence of use to improve project implementation · does not meet expectations, although there are some areas of adequate performance
v.	Unsatisfactory	· has severe shortcomings · alignment to theory of change is weak · no baseline data are provided nor is there any indication that this was collected at project start · indicators do not adequately address project outcomes and other results and relevant indicators have not been specified for several results · there are gaps in arrangement for implementation · either no budget or an inadequate budget has been provided	· flawed and/or did no address severe weaknesses in the original plan · activities either dropped or incomplete · data collection methodology was not sound · data not reported in a timely manner and little evidence of data used to improve project implementation · implementation does not meet expectations
vi.	Highly unsatisfactory	· no plan has been prepared	· no, or neglibigle activities were implemented other than conduct of project evaluation
·	Unable to assess	· project documents are not available	· the terminal evaluation does not cover implementation adequately