

MID-TERM REVIEW

Project ID:	10412
Project Name:	Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management
Countr(ies):	Zambia
Implementing Agency:	WWF-US

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

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

Country

Zambia

GEF ID
10412

Implementing Agency
WWF-US

Executing Entity

Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MoGEE);
WWF Zambia

Trust Fund
GET

Project Type
FSP

Objective

To reduce forest and land degradation of the Luangwa Upper Sub-Catchment for enhanced protection of water resources, biodiversity and associated community livelihoods

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval
11/22/2021

Agency Approval
4/26/2022

Implementation Start
5/9/2022

First Disbursement
6/22/2022

Expected MTR
4/30/2025

MTR Submission
4/28/2026

Actual MTR
11/10/2025

Expected Completion
6/30/2026

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main MTR 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 re-conceptualized 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.

B. 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 MGEs 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 (COMACO's business), they participated fully across these discussions.

C. Gender Equality

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)^[1] 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, 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[2]	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 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.

[1] 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.

[2] 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.

D. 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.

III. Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
40500	40500	15500	

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
25000	25000		

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
Luangwa WRPA		Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	25,000.00	25,000.00	0.00	

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
15500	15500	15500	

Name of the Protected Area	WDP A ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Mafinga Hills National Forest Reserve	27023	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	15,500.00	15,500.00	15,500.00			65.00	

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
300	900		

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
300.00	900.00	0.00	

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
40000	40000	512	

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
40,000.00	40,000.00	512.00	

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	1,060	1,290	1,381	
Male	985	1,310	1,300	
Total	2,045	2,600	2,681	0

IV: Co Financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO(\$)	Materialized at MTR(\$)
GEF Agency	WWF US	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	346,699.00	142,195.00
Civil Society Organization	WWF Zambia Country Office	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	600,000.00	340,105.00
Civil Society Organization	WWF Zambia Country Office	Grant	Investment mobilized	480,100.00	
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environment Protection	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	225,000.00	
Civil Society Organization	COMACO	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,250,000.00	213,588.00
Civil Society Organization	COMACO	Grant	Investment mobilized	3,500,000.00	

Civil Society Organization	WECSZ	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,359,431.00	153,360.00
Civil Society Organization	WECSZ	Grant	Investment mobilized	702,000.00	381,056.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources Forestry Department	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	40,000.00	
Donor Agency	Green Climate Fund	Grant	Investment mobilized	12,345,970.00	2,469,194.00
Recipient Country Government	Mafinga District Administration	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures		128,000.00
Total Co-financing				21,849,200.00	2,597,194.00

Comments

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
	Medium/Moderate	Medium/Moderate	

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

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'^[1], 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)^[2]. 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.

^[1] Inverted commas are used, because technically this does not constitute encroachment as the CFA was approved by the Forestry Department.

^[2] 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.

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Prefix	Title
M and E Document	Tracking Tool	METT for MHNFR Midterm
M and E Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	Midterm Evaluation Report Sustainable Luangwa
K and L Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	Visibility on project -- radio and TV
K and L Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	4. Official Handover of farming inputs and tools
K and L Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	WARMA stakeholder engagement activities
Project Supporting Document	ESS Supporting Document	10412_WWF GEF_Appendix 16 - Climate Change Risk Screen

Project Supporting Document	ESS Supporting Document	10412_WWF GEF_ESS Screen
Project Supporting Document	ESS Supporting Document	10412_WWF GEF_ESS Categorization Memo