Midterm review (MTR) for Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula

(PIMS+ ID: 5542, GEF ID: 9903)

MTR Report

Prepared by:

Kevin Enongene

International Consultant

June 2026

Basic Project Information

Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project:	Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula
UNDP PIMS#:	5542
GEF project ID#:	9903
MTR time frame:	March – June 2026
Date of MTR report:	June 23, 2026
Country:	Sierra Leone
Region:	Africa
GEF Focal Area/Strategic Program:	Land Degradation
GEF Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Implementing Partner/Executing Agency:	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
Other Project Partners:	Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Ministry of Lands National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) Tacugama Wildlife Sanctuary Women Network for Environmental Sustainability (WoNES)
Primary Beneficiary:	Communities around in the Western Peninsula Area
Evaluation Team	
Name:	Kevin Enongene
Role:	International Consultant
Email:	kenongene@fokabs.com
Address:	Ottawa, Canada

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluator wishes to express his sincere gratitude to all project participants and stakeholders, for their time and effort during the mid-term review (MTR) interviews. Your valuable insights, candid perspectives, and constructive contributions significantly informed the MTR findings.

Immense thanks go to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change – His Excellency Mr. **Jiwoh Emmanuel Abdulai** for making out time to participate in the MTR interviews and for sharing his perspectives relating to the project. The evaluator extends sincere gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sierra Leone Country Office notably **Mr. Fredrick Ampiah, Mr. Kevin Petrini, Mrs. Tanzila Sankoh**, **Mr. Amara Kanu** and **Mr. Birendra Dash**, and the Project Management Unit at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) – **Mrs. Bintu Moseray, Mr. Andrew Katta, Mr. Conteh and Mr Osman Dainkeh** for their support and guidance, which played a vital role in successfully completing this evaluation. Sincere thanks go to all the responsible parties (National Protected Area Authority – NPAA; Women Network for Environmental Sustainability – WoNES; Tacugama Wildlife Sanctuary; Environmental Foundation for Africa; and the Environmental Protection Agency – EPA) and members of local communities in the project sites who participated in interviews and group discussions for their valuable insights and assistance. Your openness in sharing experiences and key information was instrumental in building a strong evidence base for this evaluation. Special thanks to the UNDP Regional Technical Adviser (**Dr. Madeleine Nyiratuza**) for her orientation and constructive feedback provided during the MTR process.

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations presented in this report will improve the delivery of the second half of the project.

DISCLAIMER

This report has been prepared by an independent consultant evaluator and is a product of the evaluator. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the UNDP Country Office or the Partners.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... *ii*

DISCLAIMER ..... *iii*

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... *iv*

LIST OF TABLES ..... *vi*

LIST OF FIGURES ..... *vi*

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS ..... *vii*

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... *ix*

2. INTRODUCTION *1*

2.1. Purpose and objective of the Mid-term Review **1**

2.2. Scope and Methodology **1**

2.2.1. Scope of the MTR 1

2.2.2. Methodology 1

2.3. Ethics **3**

2.4. Limitations to the Evaluation **4**

2.5. Structure of the Evaluation Report **4**

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND *5*

3.1. Project start and duration, including milestones **5**

3.2. Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objectives and scope **5**

3.2.1. Environment, and Socio-Economic Context 5

3.2.2. Institutions and Policy Factors 6

3.3. Problems that the Project Sought to Address **7**

3.4. Project Description and Strategy **10**

3.4.1. Project Objective, outcome and expected results 10

3.4.2. Project area and key sites 12

3.5. Project Implementation Arrangements **14**

3.6. Total resources for the project **15**

3.7. Main Stakeholders involved in implementation and their roles **15**

4. FINDINGS *17*

4.1. Project Strategy **17**

4.1.1. Project Design 17

4.1.2. Results Framework 23

4.2. Progress towards Results **27**

4.2.1. GEF Tracking Tool 27

4.2.2. Progress towards outcome analysis 27

4.2.3. Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective 35

4.3. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management 37
4.3.1. Management Arrangements 37
Focus on Results 37
4.3.2. Work Planning 42
4.3.3. Finance and Co-finance 44
4.3.4. Project level monitoring and evaluation systems 47
4.3.5. Stakeholder engagement 51
4.3.6. Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards) 53
4.3.7. Reporting 55
4.3.8. Communications and Knowledge Management 56
4.4. Sustainability 57
4.4.1. Financial risks to sustainability 57
4.4.2. Socio-economic risks to sustainability 58
4.4.3. Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability 58
4.4.4. Environmental risks to sustainability 59
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 60
5.1. Conclusions 60
5.2. Recommendations 61
ANNEXES 65
Annex A: Terms of Reference of the MTR 65
1. INTRODUCTION 65
2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION 65
3. MTR PURPOSE 67
4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY 67
5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR 68
ii. Progress Towards Results 69
iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management 75
iv. Sustainability 78
Conclusions & Recommendations 78
Ratings 79
Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula 79
6. TIMEFRAME 79
7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES 80
8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS 81
9. TEAM COMPOSITION 81
10. ETHICS 82
Annex B: Evaluation Question Matrix 83
Annex C: List of Documents Reviewed 89
Annex D: Stakeholders Consulted 90
Annex E: Interview and FGD guides used for Data Collection 91
Annex F: MTR Mission Itinerary 102
Annex G: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Form 104

Annex H: GEF Core Indicators **105**
Annex I: MTR Rating Scales **107**
Annex J: Signed MTR Clearance Form **109**
Annex K: Audit Trail of Comments (Attached as a separate file) **110**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Project timeline and key milestones 5
Table 2: Barriers that the project sought to address 8
Table 3: Location of project sites and interventions 12
Table 4: Implementing partners of the WAP project 14
Table 5: Resources for the WAP project 15
Table 6: Stakeholders and their responsibilities in project implementation 15
Table 7: SMART analysis of project indicators 23
Table 8: Progress towards results matrix (Achievement of outcomes against end-of-project targets) 29
Table 9: Assessment of UNDP Support to the project 39
Table 10: Assessment of the quality of execution by the Executing Agency 39
Table 11: Materialization of co-financing for the WAP Project 46
Table 12: Assessment of the WAP project's compliance with its M&E plan 47
Table 13: Analysis of the extent to which recommendations made in the PIRs were addressed 49
Table 14: Assessment of the implementation of SES measures and plans of the WAP project at mid-term review 54
Table 15: Overall sustainability rating for the WAP project 59

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: WAP National Park and its edge communities 13

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASL	Annual Spending Limit
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CO	Country Office
CPP	Conflict Prevention Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DS-SLM	Decision Support for Mainstreaming and Scaling Out Sustainable Land Management
EA	Executing Agency
EFA	Environmental Foundation for Africa
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
ERC	Evaluation Resource Center
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
EU	European Union
FACE	Funding Authorization and Certification of Expenditures
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLR	Forest Landscape Restoration
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
FY	Financial Year
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GL	General Ledger
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ICE	Itemized Cost Estimate
IGA	Income Generating Activity
ILM	Integrated Landscape Management
IP	Implementing Partner
IPE	Individual Protective Equipment
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IPP	Indigenous Peoples Plan
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Knowledge Management
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAP	Livelihood Action Plan
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MLHCP	Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning
MLHE	Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment
MOECC	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
MSP	Medium-Sized Project
MTCA	Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

MTNDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan
Napa	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan
NCE	Nature, Climate and Energy
NCTF	National Conservation Trust Fund
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPAA	National Protected Area Authority
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NWRMA	National Water Resources Management Authority
OFP	Operational Focal Point
PA	Protected Area
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
ProDoC	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RBM	Results-Based Management
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RFP	Request for Proposal
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SALWACO	Sierra Leone Water Company
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SES	Social and Environmental Standards
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SLRE	Sierra Leone River Estuary
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound
TA	Technical Advisor
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSA	Targeted Scenario Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure
VSLA	Village Savings and Land Association
WAP	Western Area Peninsula
WAPNP	Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park
WCFF	Working Capital Finance Facility
WoNES	Women Network for Environmental Sustainability
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies
WRI	World Resources Institute

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Information Table

Project Details		**Project Milestones**	
Project Title	Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula	PIF Approval Date:	November 30, 2017
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5542	CEO Approval date (MSP):	April 27, 2022
GEF Project ID:	9903	ProDoc Signature Date:	June 13, 2023
Quantum Project ID:		Date Project Manager hired:	October 2, 2023
Country/Countries:	Sierra Leone	Inception Workshop Date:	December 19, 2023
Region:	Africa	Mid-Term Review Completion Date:	June 23, 2026
Focal Area:	Land Degradation	Terminal Evaluation Completion date:	March 13, 2029
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives:	Land Degradation	Original Expected Date of Operational Closure Planned end date, as per the extension approval	June 13, 2029
Trust Fund:	GEF Trust Fund		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change		
NGOs/CBOs involvement:	NA		
Private sector involvement:	NA		
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	Latitude: N 8° 21' 3" Longitude: W 13° 8' 40"		
Financial Information			
PDF/PPG	at approval (US$)	at PDF/PPG completion (US$)	
GEF PDF/PPG grants for project preparation	150,000.00	139,413.7	
Co-financing for project preparation	-	-	
Project	at CEO Endorsement (US$)	at MTR (US$)	
[1] UNDP	300,000	89,000	
[2] EPA	17,700,000	57,039.26	
[3] MoECC	0	8,453,085.75	
[4] Total co-financing [1 +2+3]:	18,000,000	8,599,125	
[5] Total GEF funding:	5,209,909	2,072,334.06	
[6] Total Project Funding [4 + 5]	23,209,909	10,671,459.07	

Project Description

The project is funded by the GEF and implemented by UNDP administering a total GEF budget of USD 5,509,909. The project has as objective to address the threats to land degradation and habitat loss in the Western Area Peninsula landscape and to safeguard its ecological functionality and biological productivity to meet multiple objectives such as biodiversity conservation, carbon storage, watershed services as well as to support resilient economic development, agricultural production, and livelihoods, and contribute to land degradation neutrality objectives. To achieve its objective, the project was designed to foster the adoption of an integrated landscape management (ILM) approach that aligns the diverse requirements and priorities of all relevant parties. This involves facilitating a collaborative and inclusive process, with a specific focus on gender equity, to establish common long term goals. By doing so, the initiative seeks to develop and execute shared methods for the sustainable use of the region. The project is composed of four technical components: (i) Systemic and Institutional Capacity for ILM, (ii) Demonstration of ILM implementation on the ground, (iii) Innovative Financing, and (iv) Gender mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E. The project is executed under a National Implementation Modality (NIM) by the Ministry Environment and Climate Change. Key project implementing partners include the Environmental Protection Agency-Sierra Leone, WONES, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, and the Environmental Foundation for Africa.

Project Progress Summary

The project's alignment with national sector development priorities and country ownership is strong and has been rated as highly satisfactory. It directly supports the objectives of Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan, the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, the Land Degradation Neutrality targets, and the updated Nationally Determined Contributions submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), all of which emphasize environmental resilience, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable livelihood creation. Government ownership is exceptionally clear through the direct leadership of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), the active involvement of senior ministry officials in oversight missions, and the cross-agency representation of entities such as the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) on the Project Steering Committee.

Initial evidence highlights important catalytic development outcomes and positive behavioral shifts. Extensive conservation education campaigns and multi-lingual audio jingles delivered in Krio, Temne, and Mende have significantly increased environmental literacy and prompted community members to abandon destructive forest activities. Grassroots co-benefits are emerging through the active establishment of Village Savings and Land Associations and the training of community members to serve as ecological planters and trackers. Although the project aims to expand biodiversity and landscape financing by at least 25% over the baseline, progress on innovative financing frameworks has not been realized on the ground. Discussions regarding the regulatory framework and resource mobilization strategy for the National Conservation Trust Fund are ongoing, but no operational mechanisms or market-based instruments—such as Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes with downstream water utilities—have been fully introduced.

At the strategic level, the project formulation phase adhered to participatory standards by hosting a multi-stakeholder design workshop in Freetown to generate early institutional buy-in. However, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan reveals clear documentation gaps, as it lacks a detailed log of the specific participant numbers, exact dates of village meetings, or comprehensive evidence of how early community feedback was incorporated into the final design. While national non-governmental organizations such as the Women's Network for Environmental Sustainability (WoNES) and Tacugama Wildlife Sanctuary were consulted early on, the formal execution and recording of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent processes were largely deferred to the implementation phase.

The project has successfully built and leveraged core partnerships with primary, high-level statutory stakeholders, but its engagement with peripheral and intermediary executing partners has been highly uneven. Excellent adaptive management was demonstrated when the project rapidly engaged specialized partners like WONES and Tacugama to resume field restoration following the formal suspension of the Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) due to procurement infractions. Nevertheless, the partnership model has struggled to bridge the gap between high-level policy commitments and field enforcement. Due to severe domestic funding shortages from the state, the NPAA lacks the operational inputs and forest guards necessary to maintain field presence, allowing rapid residential encroachment and commercial wood harvesting to ensue, which ultimately resulted in a 7% decline in the park's overall management effectiveness score.

The Gender Action Plan is technically sound and explicitly addresses the regional dual-holding land tenure system and socio-cultural barriers. The results framework incorporates gender-disaggregated targets, mandating that women comprise at least 50% of the active participants in vocational training and alternative livelihood options. At the mid-term stage, 60% of the sub-indicator targets in the Gender Action Plan have been met, surpassing the mid-term milestone and demonstrating a robust commitment to empowering local women and youth.

MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Progress towards results	Objective Achievement Rating: **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**	At midterm, the project has registered strong progress in reaching direct beneficiaries, supporting 2,372 people (1,309 women and 1,063 men), which surpasses the midterm milestone. However, the core environmental indicator targets are severely off-track. Mangrove creation stands at only 253 hectares against a midterm target of 500 hectares, and forest landscape restoration has reached 745 hectares against a 1,000-hectare midterm target. Most critically, the management effectiveness score of the Western Area Peninsula National Park (WAPNP) fell from a baseline of 46% to 39% due to rapid, real-world anthropogenic pressures outpacing institutional enforcement capacities. Severe financial depletion driven by inflationary pressures makes the original end-of-project restoration targets operationally unachievable under current financial parameters.
	Outcome 1. Achievement Rating: **Unsatisfactory (U)**	Systemic and policy-level reforms are experiencing major implementation delays. The project has failed to hit its baseline capacity targets, and an institutional capacity scorecard update was unavailable at midterm. A consultant was recently recruited to execute the sectoral policy gap analysis, but the finalized recommendations

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		have not yet been elevated to Cabinet. Most notably, the development of the foundational WAP Master Plan remains stalled due to cross-ministerial coordination failures, administrative inertia, and lack of responsiveness from the Ministry of Lands' designated focal point.
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	The project successfully completed rapid socio-economic and crop value chain assessments across eight target pilot communities. Public awareness campaigns have yielded satisfactory results, with conservation jingles translated into Krio, Temne, and Mende reaching target audiences and prompting 73% of sampled residents to report positive environmental behavioral changes. However, significant shortcomings remain, as formal evaluations to determine whether the project interventions are successfully increasing agroforestry crop yields have not yet been conducted.
	Outcome 3. Achievement Rating: **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**	At midterm, no functional financing mechanisms have been operationalized, failing to meet the target of achieving a 15% increase in domestic landscape funding. The project recently recruited a consultant to develop the basic regulatory framework and resource mobilization strategy required to activate the newly established National Conservation Trust Fund. Until this trust fund and alternative market-based mechanisms—such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes with downstream utility companies are structurally functional, the project remains completely dependent on finite donor funding, threatening post-closure sustainability.
	Outcome 4. Achievement Rating: **Highly Satisfactory (HS)**	Robust systems are operational for monitoring, knowledge management, and gender mainstreaming. The project has systematically exceeded its equity targets, achieving 60% of the sub-indicator targets established in the Gender Action Plan against a 40% midterm milestone. Multi-lingual educational materials and a mangrove restoration documentary were successfully compiled and disseminated.

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		The integration of an innovative, mobile-smartphone tracking framework directly engages trained community members to log the health and volume of individual trees in real time.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	The project is executed under a National Implementation Modality (NIM) by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), with strategic oversight provided by a transparent Project Steering Committee (PSC). Operational accountabilities and reporting lines are clear. UNDP provides strong oversight and technical support, actively deploying internal staff to assist the Project Management Unit (PMU) during administrative bottlenecks. M&E resources are sufficient and are being utilized effectively. However, severe implementation delays occurred during startup due to UNDP technical configuration errors in the Quantum ERP platform and the PMU's inexperience with full NIM procedures, leading to a major cumulative expenditure variance where general ledger delivery reached just 4.56% of expected targets in the initial phase. Serious operational risks exist regarding Social and Environmental Standards (SES); field restoration commenced without a dedicated safeguards officer or finalized risk management plans. Community members remain unaware of their right to escalate grievances past local bodies, and the PMU has failed to officially log field grievances. The project maintains rigorous financial control frameworks through multi-layered national sign-offs and compliance verification. However, these mechanisms cause severe funding disruptions and operational bottlenecks due to systemic delays in transmitting finalized annual work plans and the rigid enforcement of UNDP's 80% collective liquidation threshold across all responsible parties. The project's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is well-designed, adequately

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		budgeted at USD 146,600, and technically aligned with international standards and core conservation needs through tools like the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), gender-disaggregated scorecards, and local knowledge assessments. Key partners operate within a clearly defined institutional reporting chain, and the project has deployed an innovative, participatory framework training local trackers to log real-time ecological restoration data via a dedicated mobile smartphone application. However, the current setup exhibits significant operational gaps: it remains poorly integrated with the newly established national monitoring secretariat, excels at tracking administrative compliance rather than verifying field-level outcomes, and its innovative cloud storage platform has reached maximum capacity, temporarily freezing new data synchronization.
Sustainability	Financial Sustainability Rating: **Moderately Likely**	The baseline public funding for national institutions legally mandated to protect the landscape remains severely deficient. Consequently, the NPAA lacks the basic inputs and resources required to sustain its field ranger patrols. Post-project sustainability is heavily dependent on the capitalization of the National Conservation Trust Fund and the pilot development of an ecotourism business plan with Tacugama Wildlife Sanctuary. On the ground, the integration of high-value, fruit-bearing species like mango and avocado provides a self-sustaining economic incentive for communities to maintain and protect the forest.
	Socio-economic Sustainability Rating: **Moderately Unlikely**	Severe, active socio-economic and population pressures present a critical threat to long-term sustainability. Widespread illegal logging, commercial charcoal burning, and aggressive residential housing encroachment are driven by the surrounding population's baseline economic survival needs. While community ownership is supported by local alternative livelihood frameworks like village savings and loans associations

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		(VSLAs), the macroeconomic and societal drivers of degradation continue to outpace existing local stewardship capacities.
	Institutional Framework and Governance Sustainability Rating: **Moderately Likely**	High political ownership at the national level provides strong boardroom leadership, and the project has successfully built stable administrative coordination channels via emails, WhatsApp forums, and quarterly reviews. However, rapid personnel turnover among park rangers poses a direct risk to institutional memory; the vast majority of rangers are employed on short-term contracts, meaning that project-trained staff could continuously exit the system and are replaced by unequipped recruits. Furthermore, overlapping ministerial jurisdictions and fractured resource management mandates hinder a unified regulatory approach to intercepting landscape threats.
	Environmental Sustainability Rating: **Moderately Likely**	Shifting precipitation patterns, climate variability, and recurrent droughts pose an active threat to the survival rates of newly cultivated biomass and can heavily disrupt the productivity of community agricultural initiatives.
	Overall, likelihood of Sustainability: **Moderately Likely**	The overall sustainability rating is achieved as an approximate average of the four distinct sustainability dimensions: financial (ML), socio-economic (MU), institutional framework and governance (ML), and environmental (ML)

Concise summary of conclusions

The project has successfully established robust country ownership and high-level political commitment under the National Implementation Modality, driven by active leadership from the MoECC. At the grassroots level, the initiative has pioneered highly innovative, participatory, and gender-responsive frameworks, including self-governed Village Savings and Land Associations (VSLAs) and a mobile smartphone tracking system that empowers community members to act as ecological guardians over localized tree and mangrove restoration. Extensive public awareness campaigns delivered in local languages have successfully shifted community mindsets, steering local beneficiaries away from destructive environmental practices and toward sustainable alternatives.

Despite these foundational institutional and grassroots achievements, the project faces implementation lags, technical shortcomings, and structural resource deficiencies that severely constrain progress toward its core objective. At the institutional level, bureaucratic inertia and a breakdown in inter-ministerial coordination have completely halted key spatial planning deliverables, such as the comprehensive WAP Master Plan. On the ground, early ecosystem restoration commenced without essential social and environmental

safeguards finalized. Furthermore, data validation is actively compromised by personal smartphone tracking glitches that upload inaccurate geographical coordinates.

From a management and financial perspective, execution is challenged by cascading cash-flow shortages driven by internal Ministry delays in transmitting signed work plans to UNDP and a rigid collective liquidation policy that traps higher-performing partners in funding standstills. These administrative bottlenecks frequently cause field teams to entirely miss optimal ecological planting windows. Consequently, the project's mid-term outcomes are highly polarized. While system monitoring, gender mainstreaming, and community communications are highly satisfactory, core environmental targets are severely off-track, as evidenced by a notable 7% decline in the park's management effectiveness score driven by real-world logging, charcoal burning, and residential encroachment that outpaces the state's field enforcement capacities.

Recommendation Summary Table

Rec #	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
A	**Corrective Actions for Project Design, Implementation, and Financial Management**	
A1	Execute a formal logical framework amendment to fix indicator design errors (Indicators 1.1, 7 and 8) and downwardly revise restoration acreage targets to align with remaining budgets and post-pandemic inflationary realities.	MoECC, UNDP & Project Board
A2	Transition to a proactive monthly tracking model with responsible parties to catch liquidation delays early, deploy technical support, and institute an annual performance scorecard to rate the performance of each responsible party.	PMU and UNDP
A3	Move the Master Plan and open-access spatial planning deliverables from the Ministry of Lands to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change while onboarding the Forestry Department GIS unit.	Project Board
A4	Conclude the April 2026 field audit of the trees cultivated by the Environmental Foundation for Africa and issue a final administrative decision regarding their contract status.	UNDP
A5	Execute formal socio-economic assessments to measure and demonstrate the concrete financial returns of alternative livelihood interventions and village savings networks.	PMU
B	**Actions to Follow Up or Reinforce Initial Project Benefits**	
B1	Procure additional cloud server storage capacity to unblock the synchronization and real-time validation of local ecological tracking data.	PMU/MoECC
B2	Establish a standardized dollar-for-dollar co-financing tracking tool to gather annual verification letters and resolve reporting gaps regarding government contributions.	PMU/MoECC
C	**Future Directions: Main Objectives and Mitigating Sustainability Risks**	
C1	Pilot market-based financial instruments under component three, focusing on a Payment for Ecosystem Services framework with the Guma Valley Water Company to create a self-financing loop.	PMU/MoECC
C2	Secure national capital to establish physical boundary barriers around the national park and deploy spatial information technologies like Earth Ranger for real-time encroachment alerts.	MoECC

C3	Initiate the participatory formulation of a comprehensive exit strategy immediately after the mid-term review to secure operational transfer pathways for restored sites.	PMU/MoECC, UNDP
D	**Social and Environmental Safeguards (Environmental and Social Standards)**	
D1	Publicize the project-level grievance mechanism continuously using visual, multilingual posters that inform communities of their right to escalate complaints directly to senior management.	PMU and UNDP
D2	Stop the practice of reporting zero grievances by creating a formal, audited grievance log to capture, track, and investigate emergent field conflicts.	PMU and UNDP
D3	Enforce mandatory occupational health and safety risk protocols by executing an immediate equipment replacement cycle for torn or missing boots and gloves.	PMU and UNDP
D4	Formulate and monitor the overdue safeguard management plans, including the integrated pest management plan, livelihood action plan, and conflict prevention plan.	PMU and UNDP

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Purpose and objective of the Mid-term Review

The midterm review serves as an essential, objective assessment designed to examine how effectively a project is moving toward its established goals and results. By identifying early signs of both achievements and difficulties, this process allows teams to implement strategic course corrections that keep the initiative responsive to changing environments. Conducting this review is a compulsory requirement for all full-sized projects as well as medium sized projects with a budget exceeding two million dollars that receive funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Its tracking efforts are specifically geared toward pinpointing bottlenecks that block progress toward the long-term goals defined in the project document. This evaluation emphasizes a practical, future oriented analysis to map out corrective actions, ensuring the project successfully achieves sustainable, high impact outcomes. Additionally, a thorough midway assessment lays a strong groundwork for the final terminal evaluation, strengthening the overall monitoring and learning framework.

2.2. Scope and Methodology

2.2.1. Scope of the MTR

Using the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects as a guide, the midterm review focused on assessing project performance and progress on four different categories namely:

- Project strategy – evaluating the appropriateness of the design in achieving the expected outcomes and assessing how effective the project strategy has been so far and the relevance of the project to country priorities. The results framework will also be analysed, ensuring that targets and indicators are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART), gender mainstreaming is properly carried out in the project activities and provide any revisions as needed.
- Progress towards results – assessing the progress made so far vis-à-vis mid-term and end of project targets, identifying any barriers and/or obstacles to the achievement of project targets.
- Project Implementation and Adaptive Management – a review of how effective the project management arrangements were, relative to the level of achievements so far as well as an assessment of the financial management controls and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems put in place for the project. The Environmental and Social Safeguards put in place for the project will be reviewed, including Stakeholder Engagement.
- Sustainability – risks to the sustainability of project outcomes will be assessed, including financial, socio-economic, environmental and institutional/governance risks.

Intended Users

The primary users of the evaluation results will be UNDP and GEF, but the evaluation results will also be equally useful to the relevant ministries of the Government of Sierra Leone, development partners, and other donors. The MTR was conducted according to the guidance, rules, and procedures established by UNDP and GEF[1].

Throughout the process, the evaluator maintained close collaboration with the project team, government counterparts, the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Office (CO), and the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), ensuring a transparent and consultative evaluation process.

2.2.2. Methodology

[1] LINK

The MTR of the WAP project was carried out in line with UNDP–GEF evaluation policies, standards, and ethical principles. It was designed as a summative evaluation, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to assess overall project performance, and formulate actionable recommendations. The evaluation adopted a participatory approach, engaging key stakeholders to both inform and validate findings, while maintaining close collaboration with the project team, government institutions, relevant regional and local actors, and project beneficiaries.

Stakeholder engagement was a core element of the evaluation process and was undertaken primarily through virtual and in-person interviews with a broad range of stakeholders, including government officials, the Project Management Unit (PMU), beneficiary communities, and staff of the UNDP Sierra Leone CO involved in project implementation.

The evaluation was implemented in three main phases: (i) an inception phase, (ii) a data collection and analysis phase, and (iii) a reporting and finalization phase. The evaluation framework, including the key assessment questions organized by evaluation criteria, is presented in **Annex B**.

Inception phase

The purpose of the inception phase was to bring both the project stakeholders and the evaluator to a common understanding of the objectives and scope of the assignment. This phase commenced with a virtual inception meeting held in March 2026 between the evaluator and the UNDP Sierra Leone CO. The meeting served as an opportunity to discuss the timeline of the assignment and the proposed date for the in-country mission. This was followed by the elaboration of the MTR inception report by the international consultant and submitted to the UNDP Sierra Leone CO. The approval of the inception report by the evaluation commissioning team from UNDP brought an end to the inception phase.

Data collection and analysis phase

Data collection within the framework of the TE included desk review and stakeholder consultations. Project documents were reviewed to assess the project's contributions to the country's national priorities and environmental objectives. Documents reviewed include the ProDoc, Results Framework, Annual Work Plans and Budgets, Progress Reports, Workshop and Meeting Reports, Quarterly Monitoring and Evaluation Plans and Reports, and other national documents among others. The full list of documents reviewed as part of the MTR mission is presented in **Annex C**.

Desk study and deeper dive of documentation

Once the inception phase of the MTR was completed, the evaluator undertook a thorough review of the relevant documentation provided. Data analysis for this MTR included content analysis in the review of secondary data, while during interviews and discussions, detailed notes were taken by the evaluator. The mixed methods approach allowed the evaluator to triangulate findings to ensure their reliability and robustness.

Stakeholder consultation

Sampling approach: the evaluation employed a multi-tiered sampling approach to ensure comprehensive data collection across all project components. For national level stakeholders and institutional partners, an exhaustive sampling method was applied, in which all relevant project actors identified by the evaluator in consultation with UNDP and the PMU were contacted for semi structured interviews. At the landscape and community levels within the Western Area Peninsula National Park (WAPNP), the evaluation utilized a census approach involving visits to all the project sites and the eight communities targeted by the project.

Regarding the qualitative approach, the evaluator collected data through virtual interviews with identified key partners and stakeholders, based on the list of stakeholders agreed during the inception phase. The interviews with stakeholders were conducted using the data collection instruments from the validated inception report. The list of the MTR respondents is presented in **Annex D** while the data collection instruments are presented in **Annex E**. In-country stakeholder consultations happened in Freetown and field

visit was made to the following project sites/communities: Gbonkowalay, Markobeh, Rogbelor, Sussex, No. 2 River, Tokeh, Mambo, Bathurst, Charlotte and Last Banking as the MTR itinerary presented in **Annex F**. The site visits also provided an opportunity for the evaluator to conduct field observations to identify the interventions of the project on the ground.

Verification of project monitoring data – triangulation

The evaluation utilized project monitoring and evaluation data, including annual project implementation reports and quarterly progress updates, as a primary quantitative baseline. These data sets were first audited for internal consistency and then used to develop interview and group discussion protocols. By mapping reported results against geographic locations, the evaluator was able to target specific restoration sites for physical verification. Verification of data was achieved through a systematic triangulation process. Reported achievements, such as hectares of land restored, were cross-referenced against direct field observations and the testimonies of local beneficiaries. This rigorous comparison of documentary evidence against field reality ensured that the final assessment of project effectiveness was grounded in verified outcomes rather than self-reported figures alone.

Reporting phase – draft and final MTR report elaboration

Information gathered through interviews was examined using content analysis, with triangulation applied to enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings. The assessment covered the project's design, implementation and adaptive management and sustainability, as well as the environmental and social safeguards, gender considerations, stakeholder engagement, and accountability and grievance redress mechanisms. The draft report followed the structure set out in the Terms of Reference and the GEF–UNDP MTR evaluation template. The MTR report was then submitted to the UNDP evaluation commissioning team for review and feedback. Comments received during the review process were addressed, and a revised version of the report was subsequently submitted, accompanied by an audit trail detailing the modifications made.

Overall, the evaluation was conducted using a gender-responsive and socially inclusive lens to ensure that the perspectives of women, men, youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups were adequately reflected. The MTR methodology integrated the following elements:

- **Integration of Gender and Social Inclusion Considerations:** Evaluation questions and criteria were designed to capture how the project addressed gender equality, disability, vulnerability, and broader social inclusion issues in its design and implementation.
- **Use of Disaggregated Data:** Wherever available, data were collected and analyzed in a sex-disaggregated manner.
- **Inclusive Data Collection:** Primary data collection methods, including interviews and focus group discussions, deliberately sought the participation of women, youth, and representatives of vulnerable communities. During consultation with communities, women were represented in the group discussions to ensure that the views of women relating to the implementation and results of the project were adequately captured.
- **Analysis of Gender-Related Outcomes:** The evaluation assessed the extent to which the project promoted women's participation in capacity-building and decision-making processes and strengthened technical skills among women beneficiaries.

Through this approach, the evaluation not only examined the project's overall performance but also highlighted its contributions to advancing gender equality, inclusivity, and social equity within the project zone.

2.3. Ethics

Ethics and norms

The evaluator adhered strictly to the ethical and professional requirements of the United Nations Evaluation Group, accepting and scrupulously respecting its Code of Conduct (**see Annex G**). More specifically, to ensure the highest standard of the mission, the following attitudes were observed:

- Ensuring sources of all necessary confidentiality and anonymity.
- Giving equal respect to interviewed stakeholders.
- Respect the freedom of speech of interviewees.
- Respect the diversity of stakeholders and reflect it in an inclusive sampling, with special attention towards women and vulnerable parties.
- Use appropriate protocols to adequately reach women and the most disadvantaged groups.
- Make it clear, at the outset, to all interlocutors that the Evaluator is neither a UNDP staff member nor a member of any other stakeholder, but an external and independent professional seeking feedback on the Programme and its implementation, and that information shared is done so anonymously.
- Dealing with all in a transparent, respectful, and calm manner.
- To refrain from any practices prohibited by law and morality.

2.4. Limitations to the Evaluation

The evaluation faced two main limitations. First, one responsible party (Environmental Foundation for Africa) was unavailable for an in-person interview during the MTR in-country data collection. However, after the MTR mission, the evaluator was able to meet with the EFA staff virtually. Second, the final day of the in-country mission coincided with a public holiday (the National Independence Day), which meant that the debriefing meeting planned for the last day of the field mission could not be held. This debriefing was subsequently rescheduled and conducted virtually at a later date.

2.5. Structure of the Evaluation Report

This MTR report has four major sections. The executive summary presents information on the project and a summary of the evaluation findings. In section 2 (introduction), the objectives and purpose of the MTR as well as its scope and methodology are presented. The description and background of the project are presented in Section 3. The findings of the MTR are discussed in section 4 of the report, while in its Section 5, the MTR report presents the conclusions and recommendations.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1. Project start and duration, including milestones

The GEF-funded UNDP-supported project, " Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula" (PIMS # 5542) was designed to be implemented within 72 Months by UNDP under a National Implementation Modality. The project is executed by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC). The Project Management Unit (PMU) is located within MoECC. The project started on March 31, 2021, with an expected closure date of March 31, 2029. The total cost of the project is USD 23,209,909, funded by a GEF grant of USD 5,209,909, UNDP grant of USD 300,000, and parallel co-financing amounting to USD 17,700,000 from the Government of Sierra Leone through the Environment Protection Agency. As the GEF Implementing Agency, UNDP is responsible for managing the GEF grant.

The Project Identification Form (PIF) received approval on November 30, 2017. The project was granted CEO endorsement on April 27, 2022. The Project Document (ProDoc) was signed on June 13, 2023 which also marked the official project start date. The inception workshop took place on December 19, 2023. The project's First Disbursement Date was December 7, 2023 (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Project timeline and key milestones

Timeline	Nov 30, 2017	Apil 27, 2022	June 13, 2023	Dec 19, 2023	June 13, 2026	Mar 13, 2029	June 13, 2029
Milestones	PIF approved	Full project approved (CEO approval)	ProDoc signed; Official project start	Inception workshop	Mid-term review (MTR)	Terminal evaluation (TE)	Original Expected Date of Operational Closure:

3.2. Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objectives and scope

3.2.1. Environment, and Socio-Economic Context

Socio-Economic Context

Sierra Leone is a small country (8.6 million people in 2024[2]) on the West African coast with a population of approximately 1.5 million in the Western Area District (rural: 444,270; urban: 1,055,964)[3]. Nationally, poverty remains a critical challenge, with an income poverty rate of 57% in 2018—rising to 72.4% in rural areas. This is compounded by a high youth population, with 63% under age 25 and roughly 70% underemployed or unemployed.

The Western Area Peninsula (WAP) has faced significant population influxes from the provinces following the civil war (1991–2002), driving unplanned urban expansion and encroachment into forest areas. Economic activities in target communities are dominated by trading, farming, and daily labor. Most residents depend on forest resources for subsistence, including fuelwood, which provides 86% of the country's primary energy and medicinal plants. Fishing is also a traditional but currently underutilized livelihood due to inadequate processing facilities and market access.

Environment Context

The target landscape covers 69,820 hectares in the extreme west of Sierra Leone. It forms a critical part of the Upper Guinean Forests of West Africa biodiversity hotspot and contains the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPNP), which hosts 80–90% of the country's terrestrial biodiversity. Its global

[2] World Bank
[3] ProDoc

ecological importance is reflected in its proposed nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Re-gazetted in 2012 to account for land-use changes and urban encroachment following the civil war, the park serves as a vital refuge for diverse fauna. It hosts over 50 mammal species, including seven primate species—five of which are of significant conservation concern, most notably the Endangered Western Chimpanzee (Pan troglodytes verus) and several species of Colobus and Mangabey monkeys. The park further supports threatened duiker populations, including the Vulnerable Jentink's Duiker (Cephalopus jentinki), and the West African endemic frog, Cardioglossa aureoli. Avian diversity is equally significant, with 314 recorded bird species. The WAPNP provides habitat for four species of global conservation concern, including the Vulnerable White-necked Rockfowl (Picathartes gymnocephalus) and the Yellow-casqued Hornbill (Ceratogymna elata). Field assessments have confirmed active nesting colonies of the White-necked Rockfowl within the park, emphasizing the area's role as a critical breeding ground for rare West African avifauna.

The coastal interface of the WAP landscape is a complex mosaic of mangrove-dominated wetlands, creeks, rocky shores, and sandy beaches. A significant portion of the Sierra Leone River Estuary (SLRE) falls within the northeast of the project landscape. The SLRE is a designated Marine Protected Area, an Important Bird Area (IBA), and a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. The estuary's extensive mangrove systems specifically within Aberdeen Creek and the Bunce River are essential for regional ecological stability. The SLRE regularly supports over 20,000 waders, making it one of the country's four primary wintering sites for Palearctic migrants. Notable species recorded include the Ringed Plover and Common Sandpiper, while specialized habitats like the No. 2 River community host rare species such as the White-crested Tiger Heron and important roosts of Royal Terns. Beyond its importance for avifauna, the mangrove and estuarine sediments are highly productive nurseries for marine life, supporting dense populations of commercially and ecologically important fish, crabs, and crustaceans (shrimps and lobsters), alongside a diverse array of invertebrates, including mollusks, bivalves, and echinoderms such as sea cucumbers.

Beyond biodiversity, the WAP acts as the main "water tower" for Freetown. its catchments, situated within the Protected Forest Reserve, possess the natural capacity to meet the entire peninsula's water requirements. However, this capacity is currently compromised by accelerating soil erosion and land degradation, driven largely by ineffective land-use management and the irregular issuance of construction permits on public lands. Consequently, the Guma Valley Water Company's infrastructure—specifically the Guma and Congo dams yield only 70,000 m^3/day, meeting barely 54% of the estimated daily demand of 130,000 m^3/day[4].

Beyond water provision, the forest remains a critical defense against geological hazards. Because a significant portion of the peninsula's urban expansion has occurred on steep, unstable hillsides, the forest's role in soil stabilization is essential for mitigating the high risk of landslides. To the north, the landscape transitions into the Sierra Leone River delta, home to the world's third-largest natural harbor. This coastal zone is defined by productive mangrove ecosystems that underpin the local economy. These forests provide foundational resources for regional livelihoods, supporting the fishing industry, artisanal aquaculture, and providing the primary fuel source for traditional fish smoking. Sierra Leone has already lost 70% of its natural forests, and the WAP is now identified as a hotspot of land degradation and declining productivity.

3.2.2. Institutions and Policy Factors

Institutional Framework Governance of the WAP landscape is shared across several national and local bodies. The Ministry of Environment (MOE), established as a standalone ministry in 2019, provides leadership on environmental resilience and supervises the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA). Other key national actors include the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MLHCP), which oversees land administration, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF).

[4] African Water Facility (2017). Greater Freetown: Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan and Investment Studies. LINK

Local governance is supported by a traditional system of tribal and village headmen. However, most natural resources—including forests and mangroves are often viewed as "open access" at the community level, offering little incentive for conservation.

Several legislative frameworks govern natural resource management, including the National Environmental Protection Act (2000) amended 2022, and the National Land Policy (2015). Despite these frameworks, many policies are outdated or inadequate for modern integrated landscape management (ILM). For example, the Forestry (Amendment) Act, 2022 does not reflect current international obligations.

Implementation is further hampered by overlapping institutional mandates, conflicting responsibilities between agencies like the MLHCP and NPAA, and a lack of transparency in issuing land permits. Effective management is also limited by low institutional capacity; a baseline assessment showed that most NRM institutions had capacity scores below 50% for policy implementation and partnership building.

3.3. Problems that the Project Sought to Address

As per the project document, the project was designed to address the drivers of land degradation and deforestation in the WAP. The ecological integrity of the WAP area is compromised by a complex interplay of anthropogenic pressures and climate-induced stressors. The primary driver of degradation is unsustainable land use, characterized by fragmented management and systemic encroachment. These threats are categorized as follows:

- **Agricultural Encroachment and Illegal Cultivation:** Shifting "slash-and-burn" agriculture continues to fragment the landscape, particularly in the Guma Dam catchment and Songo mangrove areas. Of particular concern is the estimated 1,000 hectares of illegal marijuana plantations located within the National Park, which contributes to both deforestation and security challenges.
- **Unplanned Urbanization and Peri-Urban Expansion:** Driven by a significant population influx from the provinces following the civil war, the Western Area has experienced rapid, unregulated expansion. This has led to widespread squatting and the conversion of forest and public lands into residential settlements, placing immense pressure on the WAPNP boundaries.
- **Unsustainable Biomass Energy Consumption:** Wood-based fuels account for 86% of Sierra Leone's primary energy sources. In Freetown, the burgeoning demand for charcoal—driven by a 2.2% annual population growth—imposes a disproportionate burden on forest resources due to the high wood-to-charcoal conversion ratio. This demand is further exacerbated by small-scale industries and institutional consumers.
- **Coastal Degradation and Reclamation:** Critical blue carbon sinks are under direct threat from infrastructure development and land reclamation. At Aberdeen Creek, for instance, significant areas of mangroves and mudflats are permanently lost to embankment and polder development, often without environmental impact assessments.
- **Extractive Industries and Construction Pressures:** The post-war construction boom has accelerated the demand for timber, sand, and rock. Illegal sand mining along beaches and riverbeds is destabilizing coastal and riverine systems, while the demand for fuelwood to support burnt-brick production remains a persistent driver of forest loss.
- **Overexploitation and Invasive Species:** Illegal hunting within the WAPNP buffer zones continues to deplete populations of endangered primates and birds. Furthermore, the spread of at least 31 invasive alien species, such as *Chromolaena odorata* and *Acacia mangium*, is altering native biodiversity compositions nationwide.
- **Environmental Pollution and Waste Management:** Weak waste management infrastructure facilitates the direct discharge of untreated sewage into the Sierra Leone River Estuary. Notably, Freetown's primary landfill is situated in a former mangrove forest, leading to chronic contamination of marine habitats with plastic and hazardous waste, particularly during flood events.

- **Climate Change and Vulnerability:** The impacts of global climate change act as a threat multiplier. Sierra Leone is experiencing increased rainfall variability and more frequent extreme weather events. These shifts, coupled with sea-level rise and storm surges, threaten to distort fundamental ecosystem processes, negatively impacting subsistence farming, water security, and the long-term viability of avian and aquatic habitats.

The specific barriers that the project sought to address are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Barriers that the project sought to address

Barrier category	Description

Barrier 1) Insufficient systemic and institutional multi-level capacity for governance and management for sustainable production in multiple-use landscapes	The primary barrier to achieving sustainable production in the Western Area Peninsula (WAP) is the lack of institutional and systemic capacity to govern multiple-use landscapes effectively. This deficiency spans across key agencies—including the EPA, NPAA, MLHE, NWRMA, and MTCA—and is characterized by the following dimensions:
	
	• **Weak Institutional and Policy Frameworks:** Governance bodies suffer from outdated policies, insufficient human resources, and a critical lack of funding, as natural resource management is frequently excluded from national development priorities. These gaps severely undermine law enforcement and environmental compliance, leaving the WAPNP and its watersheds vulnerable to encroachment.
	• **Low-Capacity Scores across Key Competencies:** According to the UNDP Capacity Assessment of 14 key institutions, capacity across critical functional areas is consistently low (largely scoring below 50%):
	  ○ **Policy Implementation:** Most institutions lack the political support and updated technical skills required to transition from traditional management to an Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) approach.
	  ○ **Partnership and Consensus Building:** There is a marked lack of collaborative management, with agencies often working in isolation due to conflicting mandates and the absence of a designated lead institution to spearhead collective efforts.
	  ○ **Knowledge Mobilization:** Technical skills in generating and utilizing up-to-date ecological data are weak. Despite the presence of GIS infrastructure in the country, it is rarely applied to natural resource monitoring or strategic planning.
	  ○ **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Reporting systems are fragmented, and there is institutional resistance to adopting Results-Based Management (RBM), which hinders the ability to measure project impacts or identify management gaps.
	• **Deficits in Evidence-Based Decision-Making:** Strategic planning for the peninsula is hampered by the limited application of spatial information. While GIS capacity exists within specialized agencies (such as the National Mineral Agency), it is not utilized to inform land-use trade-offs or determine priority investments. This lack of spatial data regarding ecosystem services and socio-economic drivers prevents decision-makers from identifying sustainable, long-term courses of action for the landscape.

Barrier 2) Insufficient demonstration of on-the ground integrated land management practices	The primary challenge in this category is the lack of a functional, "on-the-ground" model of ILM that demonstrates how to balance ecological, social, and economic interactions. Because the ILM concept is multifaceted and theoretically complex,

	the absence of successful local pilots has hindered stakeholder buy-in and prevented the mitigation of negative trade-offs between competing land uses. Specific dimensions of this barrier include: • **Deficiencies in Protected Area Management and Legal Coverage:** While the Western Area Peninsula National Park (WAPNP) exists, its current management plan lacks a defined buffer zone, limiting its effectiveness as a landscape-level tool. Furthermore, globally significant mangrove ecosystems remain outside the framework of national protection and lack clear legal or policy guidance for community-led co-management. • **Weak Extension Services and Low Innovation Adoption:** Although Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) offer viable alternatives for smallholder resilience, adoption is stalled by weak agricultural extension services. These services are currently under-equipped to promote technical innovations or facilitate the scaling-up of community-led restoration initiatives. • **Economic and Value-Chain Constraints:** Efforts to increase household income are blocked by fragmented value chains, underdeveloped market infrastructure, and limited access to finance. Small-scale farming remains unattractive to the youth, and potential private investors remain unaware of or uninterested in agro-processing and ecotourism opportunities due to high costs and low-quality local produce. • **Limited Stakeholder Awareness and Private Sector Engagement:** Local communities often lack a clear understanding of the link between ecosystem services and long-term livelihood security, leading to continued participation in unregulated urban and agricultural expansion. Simultaneously, the private sector lacks both the capacity and the incentives to pursue Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in natural resource management, traditionally engaging only through licensed exploitation rather than conservation. • **Institutional Disconnect at the Local Level:** While local community governance structures exist (including Headmen and Chairladies), these traditional bodies possess inadequate skills and knowledge to engage effectively with formal national NRM institutions, resulting in a breakdown of collaborative landscape governance.
Barrier 3) Insufficient financing to support biodiversity conservation and environmentally sustainable land management	The transition toward integrated landscape management in the Western Area Peninsula is severely hindered by a chronic funding deficit and the absence of a market-enabling environment. This barrier is characterized by two primary dimensions: **1. Financial Sustainability for Protected Area Management** Currently, the management of the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPNP) relies on a narrow range of financing mechanisms—primarily limited central government allocations and sporadic donor funds—that are insufficient for effective operations. While the annual financial requirement for the park is estimated at USD 1.45 million, the actual budgetary support remains negligible. Beyond staff salaries, only approximately 15% of the allocated national budget is made available for field activities stipulated in the management plan. This has resulted in a persistent average annual funding gap of USD 334,000. This deficit is exacerbated by an inability to capture the economic value of the landscape. Potential revenue streams from ecotourism, recreational concessions, and Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) remain largely untapped. Furthermore, the lack of bankable investment

	propositions and the absence of clear administrative and physical boundary demarcations deter private sector engagement and lead to the encroachment of areas with high tourism potential. **2. Lack of Incentives for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR)** In the wider landscape, sustainable land use is obstructed by the high short-term opportunity costs associated with conservation. For local farmers and land users with limited financial reserves, degrading practices—such as slash-and-burn agriculture and overharvesting—often appear more profitable in the immediate term than investing in sustainable alternatives. There is currently no comprehensive policy or market framework in Sierra Leone to incentivize behavioral change through mechanisms such as impact investment, climate finance, or eco-labeling. The absence of a detailed analysis regarding how capital and risk-mitigation instruments could support sustainable practices means that land-use decisions continue to be made without a full appreciation of the economic value of the ecosystem services being lost. Consequently, without targeted financial incentives and secure access rights, stakeholders lack the necessary environment to transition toward more resilient and sustainable land-use models.
Barrier 4) Mechanisms for M&E, knowledge management and gender mainstreaming are lacking	The effective management of the WAP landscape is significantly hindered by the absence of coordinated mechanisms for monitoring critical ecosystem functions and socio-economic variables. Current efforts are characterized by the following constraints: • **Weak Monitoring and Data Systems:** There is a lack of systematic tracking for biophysical factors such as carbon sequestration, water quality, and biodiversity as well as socio-cultural trends in the WAP area. Monitoring remains isolated and sector-specific, preventing decision-makers from accessing the integrated data required for coordinated landscape responses. • **Institutional and Resource Gaps:** M&E and knowledge management (KM) processes are undermined by a lack of dedicated personnel, insufficient budgetary allocations, and limited support from senior management. Furthermore, the absence of a centralized mechanism to identify and disseminate successful practices prevents the scaling-up of lessons learned, both nationally and within the broader West African region. • **Gender Inequalities in Resource Governance:** Although women are the primary providers of household water, food, and energy, they remain disproportionately vulnerable to resource degradation. Systemic barriers continue to limit women's access to land, a foundational asset for securing productive inputs, and they remain largely excluded from equitable participation in land-use decision-making processes. This lack of gender mainstreaming in natural resource management (NRM) not only increases physical and livelihood risks for women but also weakens overall community welfare and project sustainability.

Source: adapted from the ProDoc

3.4. Project Description and Strategy

3.4.1. Project Objective, outcome and expected results

The project has as an objective to strengthen conditions for the sustainable and integrated management of multiple-use landscapes (piloted in the WAP landscape) to protect globally significant biodiversity,

safeguard ecosystem services generating local and national socio-economic benefits, and advance towards land degradation neutrality.

Project Components and Expected Results

Component 1: Systemic and Institutional Capacity for ILM

Outcome 1: Systemic and institutional capacity lays long-term foundation for integrated landscape management of the 69,820 ha multi-use landscape

- Output 1.1: Capacity of targeted Government institutions and other stakeholders increased for collaborative land-use decision-making and management (Lead: EPA-SL)
- Output 1.2: Gaps in legal, sectoral policy, institutional and enforcement frameworks are identified and addressed, providing improved enabling conditions for integrated landscape management (Lead: EPASL)
- Output 1.3: A multi-level Coordination Platform and an open-access spatial planning system are established and operationalized for the WAP Multi-Use Landscape (Lead: MLHE)
- Output 1.4: Master Plan is developed for the Western Area Peninsula Landscape, including detailed land use zoning with clear cross-sectoral governance and implementation structures (Lead: MLHE, co-lead NPAA)

Component 2: Demonstration of ILM implementation on the ground

Outcome 2: Implementation of selected ILM and FLR interventions demonstrated in over 21,000 ha, securing biodiversity, ecosystem services and resilient livelihoods

- Output 2.1: The existing WAPNP Management Plan is updated and operationalized in cooperation with relevant national and international partners, increasing management effectiveness by at least twenty percentage points (Lead: NPAA)
- Output 2.2: Community coastal/mangrove PAs are proclaimed and designated, with site management programs rolled out, including in the Sierra Leone River Estuary Ramsar site (approx. 1,000 ha) (Lead: NPAA)
- Output 2.3: Implementation of the Forest Landscape Restoration Plan demonstrated, leading to increased forest cover of at least 2,000 ha and adoption of SLM and higher efficient wood systems with at least 35% reduction in woodfuel consumption (Lead: NGO EFA)
- Output 2.4: Sustainable income generating activities e.g. ecotourism, waste-to-wealth, processing of agricultural products) are implemented, micro-grants, training opportunities, and tools are provided to generate alternative sources of income for targeted groups, including local youth in critical high-impact communities (Lead: NGO WONES)
- Output 2.5: Strategies are developed and implemented to increase knowledge and promote solutions for environmental, health and social effects of deforestation and land degradation (Lead: NGO Tacugama)

Component 3: Innovative Financing

Outcome 3: Financing frameworks for sustainable integrated landscape management increase ILM, PA and Biodiversity Finance by at least 25% over the baseline.

- Output 3.1: The role of ecosystem services is mapped and valued for supporting both the ecological integrity of the Western Area Peninsula multiple-use landscape's natural assets and human well-being, including detailed quantitative analysis of the environmental, economic, and social benefits delivered by the ecosystems under business-as-usual and sustainable management scenarios (Lead: NPAA)

- Output 3.2: Financing plan for priority initiatives is developed based on the Master plan for the Western Area Peninsular Landscape, with clear costing for basic and optimal management, current financing level and gaps to be addressed (Lead: NPAA SL)
- Output 3.3: Sustainable financing options piloted (Lead: EPA SL)

Component 4: Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E

Outcome 4: Systems designed and used to ensure monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and gender mainstreaming

- Output 4.1: Gender action plan operationalized and used to guide project implementation, monitoring and reporting (Lead: EPA SL)
- Output 4.2: Participatory project Monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy developed and implemented (Lead: EPA SL)
- Output 4.3: Project lessons and best practices collated and disseminated for uptake, and upscaling strategy developed and implementation supported (Lead: EPA)

3.4.2. Project area and key sites

As per the ProDoc, the project is implemented across the Western Area Peninsula (**Figure 1**), targeting specific communities that are critical to the landscape's ecological and hydrological integrity. The selection of these pilot sites was underpinned by five strategic criteria:

1. **Hydrological Significance:** Location within the Congo and Guma Dam catchment areas, which are the primary sources of potable water for the peninsula.
2. **Ecological Vulnerability:** High levels of habitat degradation and immediate threats to biodiversity.
3. **Community Dependency:** High level of local reliance on ecosystem services and natural resources.
4. **Feasibility:** Accessibility for the implementation of pilot activities.
5. **Social Capital:** Explicit willingness of community members to engage in project interventions.

The project focuses on eight primary communities distributed across four strategic locations. Interventions include Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), Sustainable Land Management (SLM), Income Generating Activities (IGAs), and the establishment of Mangrove Protected Areas (PAs).

Table 3: Location of project sites and interventions

Location	Community	Intervention
Congo Dam catchment area	Bathurst and Charlotte communities	FLR, SLM, IGAs
Guma Dam catchment area	Sussex, No.2 River and Tokeh communities	FLR, SLM, IGAs
Aberdeen Creek	Last Banking	Mangrove PA along Aberdeen creek, SLM, IGAs
Songo	Markobeh and Rogbeloh communities	Mangrove PA along the Sierra Leone River, SLM, IGAs

Source: ProDoc

Figure 1: WAP National Park and its edge communities



The socio-economic landscape of the project area is characterized by high levels of vulnerability and heavy reliance on the natural resource base. The livelihood activities across the project sites include:

- **Livelihoods and Income:** Economic activity is dominated by petty trading, subsistence farming, and daily manual labor. While fishing is a traditional mainstay, it is currently hampered by a lack of processing infrastructure and market access. Mining (sand and stone) and fuelwood collection provide supplementary income but contribute to landscape degradation.
- **Agricultural Practices:** Farming primarily consists of backyard gardening for vegetables and hillside cultivation of groundnuts and cassava. The transition to sustainable intensification is blocked by systemic barriers, including a lack of improved seed varieties, high labor costs, and a lack of access to micro-credit or agricultural extension services.
- **Resource Dependency:** Many inhabitants remain dependent on the forest for energy (fuelwood) and construction materials (timber). While the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) has established a designated buffer zone for community use, the high demand for these resources continues to challenge the boundaries of the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPNP).

The project's focus on these specific sites is intended to demonstrate that integrated landscape management can decouple local livelihoods from forest degradation by providing the necessary skills, materials, and governance structures to transition toward sustainable, resilient income sources.

3.5. Project Implementation Arrangements

The project implementation arrangements for the Western Area Peninsula (WAP) project are designed to ensure multi-sectoral coordination and local ownership through a National Implementation Modality (NIM).

Governance and Management Arrangements

Implementing Partner

The **Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)** serves as an Implementing Partner. Established in 2019, the MoE provides leadership for environmental resilience and supervises the agencies regulating the environment sector. The MoECC is responsible for project planning, coordination, financial management, and the overall delivery of outputs.

Project Board (Project Steering Committee)

The Project Board is the senior oversight body, responsible for strategic guidance and high-level decisions. It assesses major risks and reviews project performance based on progress reports and evaluations. The board is chaired by a representative of MoE (Chief Director). The board is composed of representatives of the following institutions: UNDP, Women Network for Environmental Sustainability (WoNES), Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA), Environment Protection Agency (EPA), and Tacugama Sanctuary.

Project Management Unit (PMU)

The PMU is responsible for day-to-day management and technical backstopping. As per the ProDoc, It is led by a Project Manager (PM) and supported by a Lead Technical Advisor (TA), a Project Assistant, and specialized officers for M&E, Gender, and Safeguards. However, at mid-term review, the PMU was found to be composed of four staff: Project Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer, Finance and Administrative Officer, and a Driver. The PMU is being supported by a technical adviser, an international expert based overseas.

Responsible Parties and Output Ownership

Three government agencies and three NGOs serve as Responsible Parties, leading the execution of specific project outputs (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Responsible parties of the WAP project

Responsible Party	Relevant Project Outputs
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	• **Output 1.1:** Capacity building for land-use decision-making • **Output 1.2:** Policy and enforcement framework gap analysis • **Output 3.3:** Piloting sustainable financing options • **Outcome 4:** Systems for M&E, KM, and gender mainstreaming
Ministry of Lands, Housing & Environment (MLHE)	• **Output 1.3:** Multi-level Coordination Platform and spatial planning system • **Output 1.4:** Development of the WAP Master Plan
National Protected Area Authority (NPAA)	• **Output 2.1:** WAPNP Management Plan update and operationalization

	• **Output 2.2:** Establishment of community coastal/mangrove PAs • **Output 3.1:** Ecosystem service mapping and valuation • **Output 3.2:** ILM financing plan development
Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA)	• **Output 2.3:** Implementation of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) plans
Women's Network for Environmental Sustainability (WONES)	• **Output 2.4:** Sustainable income-generating activities and value chains
Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary (Tacugama)	• **Output 2.5:** Awareness strategies for deforestation and land degradation

Source: ProDoc

Technical Advisory Committee

The project establishes a thematic group on Integrated Land Management (ILM) comprising technical experts from government, NGOs, and academia. Led by the MLHE, this group provides scientific oversight to ensure interventions are technically sound and meet social and environmental standards.

3.6. Total resources for the project

The total project funding was USD 23,209,909, with USD 5,209,909 from the GEF Trust Fund, USD 300,000 from UNDP, and USD 17,700,000 from MoECC (**Table 5**).

Table 5: Resources for the WAP project

Source of financing	Amount Year 1 (USD)	Amount Year 2 (USD	Amount Year 3 (USD)	Amount Year 4 (USD)	Amount Year 5 (USD)	Amount Year 6 (USD)	Total (USD)
GEF	879,759	847,559	906,376	845,562	853,982	876,671	5,209,909
UNDP	108,044	38,044	38,544	38,244	38,280	38,844	300,000
MoECC	2,950,000	2,950,000	2,950,000	2,950,000	2,950,000	2,950,000	17,700,000
TOTAL (US$)	**3,937,803**	**3,835,603**	**3,894,920**	**3,833,806**	**3,842,262**	**3,865,515**	**23,209,909**

3.7. Main Stakeholders involved in implementation and their roles

The project was designed to be implemented by several responsible parties with responsibility over specific outputs of the project, as presented in **Table 4**. In addition, as per the stakeholder engagement plan elaborated during the PPG stage, other entities such as non-governmental organizations, private entities (water companies), and government institutions were meant to potentially play a role during project delivery (**Table 6**).

Table 6: Stakeholders and their responsibilities in project implementation

Stakeholder	Mandate and role of stakeholders	Potential support and contributions of stakeholders to the project
Community Groups in Pilot Areas	Local landowners and resource managers with deep knowledge of local flora, fauna, and mangroves.	Primary drivers of ILM implementation. They participate in participatory planning, mangrove restoration, and the adoption of SLM practices, while benefiting from income-generating activities and energy-saving initiatives.
Water Companies (Guma Valley Water Company – GVWC and Sierra Leone Water Company - SALWACO	Utilities responsible for providing potable water and securing water infrastructure.	To serve as PSC members who contribute to ILM planning, the WAP Master Plan, and the implementation of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) and reforestation schemes.
Non-Governmental Organizations (Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and	Organizations specialized in biodiversity	To provide: co-financing and serve as members of the PSC; advocacy and support during project implementation to site management groups and

Climate Change Environment and Forest Conservation)	conservation, community empowerment, and environmental education.	additional capacity to complement the government agencies; technical facilitation, community training, and lead awareness campaigns
Media Groups	Includes national television, radio, and local community stations.	To be responsible for broadcasting project opportunities and raising public awareness on the importance of forest conservation and watershed services.
Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MTCA)	Tasked with promoting sustainable tourism for economic growth and cultural preservation.	To act as a PSC member and technical participant. Focuses on developing nature-based ecotourism value chains and ensuring environmental sustainability within tourism sites.
National Water Resources Management Authority (NWRMA)	Mandated to control and manage national water resources sustainably.	To participate as a PSC member. Supports the protection of watershed functions and identifies critical areas for reforestation to secure water supplies for Freetown and surrounding areas.
Chiefs and Traditional Rulers	Provide decentralized governance and play vital roles in local land-use decisions and resource protection.	To serve as PSC members and assist in establishing mangrove Protected Areas (PAs). They lead community awareness campaigns and enforce local conservation and sustainable harvesting regulations.
Development Partners (UNDP, FAO, World Bank, etc.)	Agencies providing development finance and supporting private-sector-led programs.	Provide co-financing and establish technical synergies with ongoing and future interventions in biodiversity, climate change, and livelihoods.
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) - national, provincial and district forestry officers	Responsible for national agricultural and forest security policy, crop improvement, and resource mobilization.	To serve as a Project Steering Committee (PSC) member. Leads Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) planning, the Western Area Peninsula (WAP) Master Plan development, and the execution of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) activities.

Source: Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the project.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Project Strategy

4.1.1. Project Design

Integration of lessons from other projects into the project design

Evidence exists in the ProDoc that WAP project design integrated lessons and best practices from a wide range of past and ongoing interventions at national, regional, and global levels. The following key lessons were incorporated:

- **Integrated Multi-Stakeholder Coordination:** The FAO project funded by the German Government, entitled "Improving governance of tenure of land, forestry and forests," supported the establishment of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT). The WAP project design recognized that the VGGT enabled stakeholders from different sectors and levels to engage in the process of building a more inclusive, transparent, and democratic tenure system. Consequently, the project identified the VGGT as one of the coordination mechanisms it will build during its delivery.
- **Landscape-Scale Planning:** The project design drew on the **African Landscapes Action Plan** (led by NEPAD) to apply the principles of Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) at scale, emphasizing the need to break government silos and promote cross-sectoral collaboration.
- **Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Tools:** Technical methodologies for SLM and spatial planning were integrated from the Decision Support for Mainstreaming and Scaling Out SLM (DS-SLM) and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT). These global frameworks provide the basis for the project's spatial planning system and data-driven decision-making processes.
- **Forest Restoration and Value Chains:** The project adopted the Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) methodology successfully piloted in Rwanda by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and IUCN. For its livelihood interventions, it incorporated the African Agribusiness Supplier Development Program (AASDP) value chain analysis methodology to ensure sustainable market linkages.
- **Community-Led Conservation:** Lessons from the GEF Small Grants Program and EU-funded community projects were used to design the income-generating activities (IGAs) and the co-management arrangements for new mangrove protected areas.
- **Innovative Financing:** The design of the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) pilot and the Targeted Scenario Analysis (TSA) was informed by global best practices to ensure schemes are socially appropriate and avoid common pitfalls like "leakage" or "adverse self-selection".
- **Synergies with Ongoing Projects:** The project specifically planned for coordination with the World Bank's Resilient Urban Sierra Leone project on spatial planning and the USAID West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA-BiCC) program for its mangrove surveys and climate resilience work.

Alignment of project to country priorities and country drivenness

The project is highly aligned with national development priorities and is fundamentally country-driven, as evidenced by its integration into the strategic policy frameworks of Sierra Leone. The following points detail the project's alignment with national priorities and plans:

Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019–2023: The project directly supports Policy Cluster 7, which focuses on addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience. It specifically feeds into Result Areas 7.1 (Building national environmental resilience) and 7.2 (Strengthening forest management

and wetland conservation)[5] by promoting integrated landscape management to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services. While the project was originally designed to align with the MTNDP 2019–2023, its core objectives—protecting globally significant biodiversity, halting land degradation, and generating socio-economic benefits directly advance the subsequent goals of the 2024–2030 framework. The alignment of the project with the MTDNP 2024-2030[6] is as follows:

- **Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Management:** The MTNDP 2024–2030 prioritizes national resilience against environmental disasters (Enabler 3: Advancing climate and environmental action). The project aligns with this by implementing forest landscape restoration (FLR) and sustainable land management (SLM) on over 21,000 ha to reduce the risks of erosion and landslides on the steep hillsides of the peninsula.
- **Protection of Natural Assets and Biodiversity:** The plan emphasizes the sustainable management of wetlands and forests. The project directly supports this by bringing 18,634 ha of the landscape under effective protection, including the establishment of 1,000 ha of new community-managed mangrove protected areas within the Sierra Leone River Estuary Ramsar site.
- **Water and Food Security:** Hydrological integrity is a key focus of the national development agenda – the MTNDP 2024-2030 seeks to increase access to safe and potable water. The project safeguards the Western Area's water tower, which provides Freetown's potable water, by restoring catchments and preventing encroachment into critical watersheds. Additionally, it seeks to increase agricultural productivity by 50% through sustainable practices, directly contributing to the plan's food security goals.
- **Youth and Women's Economic Empowerment:** The MTNDP 2024–2030 focuses on inclusive growth and human capital development. The project aligns with this by targeting youth (60% of beneficiaries) and women (50% of beneficiaries) for vocational training and sustainable income-generating activities (IGAs), such as ecotourism and agri-processing value chains.
- **Governance and Land Reform:** The national plan calls for improved land administration and transparency. The project supports this through the creation of a multi-level Coordination Platform and an open-access spatial planning system to harmonize mandates between natural resource management agencies and local authorities.
- **Sustainable Financing for Development:** Transitioning toward sustainable development requires innovative fiscal mechanisms. The project aligns with national priorities by piloting Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) and increasing biodiversity finance by at least 25% over the baseline, creating a blueprint for self-sustaining environmental governance in Sierra Leone.

National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) 2017-2026: The project concept is in line with the NBSAP's framework for sustainable exploitation of biodiversity for poverty alleviation. Through the implementation of sustainable land management and restoration of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems, the WAP project responds to the NBSAP 2017-2026 vision's which is "Sierra Leone's biodiversity, natural ecosystems and habitats are well protected and sustainable managed for the development and perpetual prosperity and wellbeing of its present and future generations"[7]

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Targets: Sierra Leone has identified the Western Area Peninsula (WAP) as a land degradation hotspot[8]. The project contributes directly to Target 2 of the national LDN targets, which mandates the rehabilitation of over 12,237 sq. km of declining or stressed land by 2035.

National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) 2007: The project aligns with selected sectoral priorities as expressed in the NAPA document. The WAP project's interventions relating to sustainable

[5] Government of Sierra Leone (2019). Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023. LINK
[6] Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan 2024 – 2030. LINK
[7] Republic of Sierra Leone (2017). Sierra Leone's Second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2026. LINK
[8] Ministry of Lands (2018). Sierra Leone Land Degradation Neutrality National Report. LINK

land management through restoration and increase in the area of protected areas aligns with the following NAPA priority actions under the forest sector: establishment of forest reserves, protected areas and national parks and demarcation of existing ones to maintain their integrity; and the management and protection of forests reserves and catchments areas including wetlands. Equally, the restoration work of the WAP project aligns with a priority action in the coastal zone sector (rehabilitation of degraded coastal habitats) and the fisheries sector (Preserve and restore essential habitats; promote conservation and environmental education)[9]

National Land Policy 2015: By establishing an open-access spatial planning system and refining institutional mandates, the project supports the National Land Policy's goals of enhancing transparency and accountability in land tenure[10].

The Western Area Peninsula (WAP) project is fundamentally aligned with Sierra Leone's updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)**, submitted to the UNFCCC in 2021 and updated through subsequent policy cycles (NDC 3.0). The project serves as a direct implementation vehicle for several of the country's quantified climate mitigation and adaptation targets:

- **Mitigation: Forest Conservation and Carbon Sequestration.** The project directly supports Sierra Leone's goal to maintain and improve its forests as a major carbon sink. By bringing 18,634 ha of the WAP landscape under effective protection and restoring 2,000 ha of forest, the project contributes to the NDC's[11] goal of enhancing carbon sinks through targeted land-use management. The project's efforts to develop innovative financing, such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), align with the NDC's focus on earning forest carbon credits through REDD+ programs to develop a climate-abatement economy.
- **Adaptation: Watershed and Coastal Resilience.** The project addresses several adaptation areas defined in the updated NDC. The project's intervention relating to the elaboration of a WAP master plan aligns with an NDC 3.0 adaptation action under the freshwater ecosystem sector which is geared towards developing strategic National integrated Watershed Management Policy and Plan by 2029. Also, the restoration of the WAP area aligns with a forestry sector adaption target in the NDC which reads as follows "By 2029, catalogue 100% of water catchments in forest areas, with 50% of these under sustainable management plans by 2035". Through the training of youths within communities in the planting, maintenance and tracking of trees and mangroves, the project contributes towards the NDCs' cross-cutting target of training more than 5000 youths on climate actions including forest conservation and coastal ecosystem adaptation techniques among others.

Country-Driven Ownership: The project is implemented through a National Implementation Modality (NIM), with MoECC serving as the lead implementing partner. This structure, combined with the participation of multiple national agencies (EPA, NPAA, MLHE, MAF) and traditional leaders in the Project Steering Committee, ensures that the initiative is led and owned by national and local stakeholders. Equally, the involvement of national NGOs (WoNES, EFA, Tacugama) in the delivery of the project is equally a demonstration of country drivenness in the delivery of the project. Furthermore, communities are strongly involved in the restoration, maintenance, and monitoring of forest and mangrove ecosystems, further strengthening the country's ownership of the project.

Sustainability and viability of project externalities relevant to the project strategy

The project's sustainability and viability are integrated into its design through a multi-faceted approach that addresses long-term governance, financial mechanisms, and socio-economic resilience. The project explicitly accounts for external factors, or externalities, as both risks and opportunities within its strategy.

[9] Government of Sierra Leone (2007). National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA). LINK
[10] The Government of Sierra Leone. (2015). Final National Land Policy of Sierra Leone. LINK
[11] Republic of Liberia (2025). Liberia's 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0). LINK

Sustainability and Viability of the Project. The sustainability and viability of the project are integrated into its design through a multi-layered strategy that addresses institutional, financial, and socio-economic resilience. Central to its long-term viability is the institutionalization of integrated landscape management (ILM) within national structures, to be achieved by establishing a permanent multi-level Coordination Platform and an open-access spatial planning system hosted by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment. Financial sustainability is anchored in Outcome 3, which aims to increase biodiversity and ILM financing by at least 25% through the development of a comprehensive financing plan and the piloting of innovative mechanisms such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). These efforts are reinforced by social and livelihood sustainability measures, where the project provides tangible economic incentives for conservation by promoting sustainable income-generating activities and targeting a 50% increase in agricultural productivity for local communities.

Externalities and Project Strategy. The project strategy incorporates external factors, treating them as both critical risks and strategic justifications for intervention. For instance, the high vulnerability of the Western Area Peninsula to climate-induced landslides and erosion is addressed by positioning forest restoration and sustainable land management as essential ecological infrastructure for disaster risk reduction. Similarly, the design includes a dedicated analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic, viewing the conservation of intact ecosystems as a proactive measure to reduce the risk of future zoonoses while leveraging economic recovery opportunities through green growth models. National economic fragility and the threat of large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the proposed fish harbour at Black Johnson Beach, are managed through proactive stakeholder engagement, the application of environmental and social safeguards, and the development of resilient value chains that prioritize women and youth. Ultimately, the project document acknowledges that while it establishes the necessary enabling conditions, the long-term success of the ILM approach is an iterative process that will require sustained political will and the successful transition from finite project funding to institutionalized state budgeting.

Environmental and social risks alongside mitigation measures presented in the ProDoc

Evolution of Risk Identification (2019 vs. 2023). The project was subjected to the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) during the PPG phase. The project's risk profile has been refined over time, moving from a broad set of 16 risks (2019 SESP version) during initial formulation to a more targeted set of 11 risks in the implementation update (2023 SESP version).

The 2019 version established a high-risk baseline, identifying critical threats such as potential forced evictions (Risk 13) and permanent physical displacement (Risk 11) resulting from the creation of new coastal protected areas. It also highlighted significant risks to indigenous peoples and traditional property rights (Risks 14 & 15), noting that Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) had not yet been initiated at that stage. The 2023 version of the SESP which is the updated screening, consolidates several earlier concerns while introducing new, context-specific threats. Notable additions include Risk 10 (Conflicts with artisanal miners), which addresses potential tensions over resource access, and Risk 11 (COVID-19 exposure), which reflects modern health constraints. While the overall risk rating was lowered from "High" to "Substantial," the version remains thorough in its requirement for high-level assessments.

Thoroughness of Mitigation and Management Measures. The current (2023) SESP provides a robust framework for managing identified risks through a combination of completed and planned actions. The 2023 version mandates the development of an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) within the first six months of implementation. To address economic displacement and tenure issues, the project has planned for targeted management plans including a Livelihood Action Plan, a Conflict Prevention Plan, and an Indigenous Peoples Plan. Safeguard plans already completed during the project design phase included a Gender Action Plan and a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, which incorporates a project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM).

Identified Gaps. Despite the detailed screening, the following gaps are evident when considering the project’s specific activities:

- **Risk Downscaling:** The 2023 version downplays the risks of physical displacement and forced evictions, which were rated as "High Significance" in 2019. While the 2023 version focuses on *economic* displacement (Risk 5), the MTR did generate evidence that the risk of *physical* displacement is still being actively monitored by the project, especially in encroached coastal areas. During the MTR visit, field observation identified demolished buildings in the WAP area (such as in the Tacugama area) that were under construction, and information gathered revealed that the demolition happened because the houses were being built illegally in the protected area. The evaluator confirmed the demolition was not connected to the WAP project and consequently, does not qualify as physical displacement. Moreover, the individuals had not been living in the property, and they were erecting buildings in a protected area without legal authorization to do so.
- **Pollution and Resource Efficiency:** The 2023 SESP identifies risks related to the release of pollutants and generation of waste (Standard 8). However, there is a lack of specific protocols for the **"waste-to-wealth"** activities proposed under Output 2.4, which could introduce secondary pollution if not managed with technical rigor.
- **Agricultural Chemicals:** The screening acknowledges the potential application of pesticides (SESP 8.5). Given that the project operates within the primary water catchments for Freetown, the absence of a detailed Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan in the initial design constitutes a gap. Because the project operates directly within the primary water catchments for Freetown, any chemical application introduces a high risk of downstream water contamination. To mitigate this, the ESMP should include a comprehensive IPM Plan to prioritize non-chemical, biological, and mechanical pest controls. Second, to address specific concerns regarding chemical usage, the IPM must embed explicit Chemical Safety and Management Guidelines. These guidelines will provide exhaustive information on the types of permitted low-toxicity agrochemicals, strict application protocols, safe storage and disposal mechanisms.
- **Indigenous Representation:** The 2023 version identifies the Limba as Indigenous Peoples in the local context. While it mandates an Indigenous Peoples Plan, the project had to ensure that FPIC processes are not just planned but are effectively and culturally appropriately executed before any site-based activities commence.

Integration of the perspectives of stakeholders during project design

Actors to be affected by project decisions:

The project design phase for the Western Area Peninsula (WAP) initiative was grounded in a participatory framework that actively sought and integrated into the perspectives of those directly affected by project decisions. A stakeholder consultation workshop was organized in Freetown in April 2018 and saw the participation of actors including Government, multilateral and bilateral development agencies, NGOs, local communities, and the private sector[12]. The workshop was geared towards generating buy-in and receiving feedback from the participants to inform the project design. Furthermore, national experts conducted extensive field research and direct consultations with community-level stakeholders to ensure that the project's strategy reflected local socio-economic and ecological realities. These consultations were critical in defining the project's interventions and were supported by technical background studies, including a Gender Analysis and a Socio-economic Assessment, which identified the high level of dependence local households have on natural resources for survival.

However, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan reveals several gaps regarding the documentation of these early interactions. While the plan confirms that consultations involving communities took place, it lacks quantitative data, such as a detailed log of the specific number of participants or the exact dates of village-level meetings during the design phase. Additionally, the SEP provides limited evidence on the feedback

[12] Stakeholder Engagement Plan of the WAP project

provided by the local communities during consultations and how these were integrated into the design of the project. Equally, although the project commits to the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), the SEP indicates that the formal execution and documentation of FPIC processes were largely deferred to the first six months of the implementation phase rather than being fully completed during the design process.

Actors that could affect the outcomes of the project:

The SEP indicated that government entities were consulted during the PPG phase, but faileds to mention the specific government institutions that were consulted. Equally, information relating to the feedback provided by the government entities conducted and how this was integrated into the project design is not explicitly provided in the SEP. During the MTR in-country mission, the government entities consulted (NPAA and EPA) confirmed they were strongly consulted and involved in the elaboration phase of the WAP project.

Actors that could contribute information to the process:

The consultation workshop conducted in April 2018 involved a category of actors (NGOs, private sector, multilateral and bilateral partners) that could provide relevant information to the project development process and to the project implementation. While the details of the specific organizations conducted were not presented in the SEP, discussion with WoNES and the Tacugama Sanctuary during the MTR mission confirmed they were consulted during the project design phase. Overall, the SEP would have benefited from the inclusion of the following: a list of stakeholders consulted during the PPG phase and not just a listing of the category of stakeholders consulted; feedback provided by the different stakeholders; and how the feedback provided was integrated into the project design.

Raising of gender issues in the project design

The project design demonstrates an integration of gender considerations, ensuring that the WAP initiative addresses gender equality, women's empowerment, and the unique socio-economic vulnerabilities faced by women in the region.

Integration of Gender Issues in the Project Document. The Project Document identifies and addresses relevant gender issues, specifically focusing on the impact of the landscape approach on gender equality. The design recognizes that women are primary providers of water, food, and energy at the household level and are disproportionately affected by natural resource degradation. The project aims to improve gender equality by supporting women's economic activities through targeted training and organization. Furthermore, the project includes specific indicators broken down by gender and targets women for at least 50% of the beneficiary roles in alternative income-generating activities and vocational training.

Gender Issues in the UNDP SESP and Mitigation Measures. Gender issues were explicitly triggered during the mandatory UNDP Environmental and Social Screening Procedure (SESP), with the project being marked as having a "GEN 2" gender rating. The screening identified potential risks where the project might inadvertently limit women's ability to use or protect natural resources due to new conservation restrictions. To mitigate these risks, the following steps were built into the design:

- **Mandatory Gender Action Plan (GAP):** A comprehensive Gender Action Plan was developed during the design phase to break down project outputs into concrete, gender-responsive activities.
- **Safeguards and Inclusion:** The design mandates that all site-based activities follow a participatory approach that ensures the inclusion of women in decision-making and negotiations for land use.
- **Staffing and Governance:** A dedicated Gender and Safeguards Officer (national consultant) is included within the Project Management Unit (PMU) to oversee the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and ensure gender mainstreaming across all components.

Budgetary Allocation for Gender-Relevant Outcomes. The project budget specifically includes funding for gender-relevant outcomes and outputs. Funding is allocated for a Gender and Safeguards Officer to provide continuous technical oversight. Additionally, the budget supports the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, which includes activities such as gender-responsive policy reviews, training for technical staff on gender issues, and the provision of micro-grants and tools specifically for women and youth to generate alternative incomes.

Consultation with Gender Specialists and Women's Representatives. While the project design and preparation process involved consultations with stakeholders, neither the SEP or the GAP provides details of consultations conducted with women leaders, gender specialists and women groups. Hence, it is challenging for the MTR to effectively assess the extent to which consultations were held with gender specialists and women's representatives during the project design phase.

4.1.2. Results Framework

SMART analysis of logframe of the project

An analysis of the results framework of the project was carried out to assess the extent to which the project indicators and targets are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) (**Table 7**). Of the 12 project indicators, Seven were found to be fully compliant to the SMART criteria while five indicators (1.1, 1.2, 5, 6 and 8) were found not compliant with the specific criterion (**Table 7**). The target for indicator 7 is 69,820 ha, and it is unclear to the evaluator if this relates to the WAPNP or to a surface area that goes beyond the WAPNA. If the target relates to the WAPNP, it will have to be revised as the size of the WAPNP is approximately 18,000 hectares,as reported in the Asset Impact Monitoring from Space Report prepared by the World Food Programme (WFP)[13].

Table 7: SMART analysis of project indicators

Indicators	End-of-project Target	Terminal evaluation SMART analysis					Evaluator's Feedback
		S	M	A	R	T	
Project Objective: To strengthen conditions for the sustainable and integrated management of multiple-use landscapes (piloted in the WAP landscape) to protect globally significant biodiversity, safeguard ecosystem services generating local and national socio-economic benefits, and advance towards land degradation neutrality.							
Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 11: # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	Women: 2,214 Men: 2,213 Total: 4,427						**The indicator is fully SMART.** It is highly specific, completely quantifiable, realistic, aligned with /GEF core impact standards, and bounded by the 6-year project timeframe
Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.1: Terrestrial protected areas newly created	At least 1,000 ha of mangroves under new community PA management system						**The indicator is questionably SMART**. It is partially compliant to the specific criteria. Firstly, the framing of the indicator is vague - it could be better framed as follows "Number of newly established protected areas or Area (ha) of newly established protected area. Secondly, the indicator refers to newly

[13] WFP (2025). Western Area Peninsula National Park Extended Analysis – May 2024 to April 2025 Report.

Indicators	End-of-project Target	Terminal evaluation SMART analysis					Evaluator's Feedback
		S	M	A	R	T	
							created terrestrial protected areas while the target refers to mangroves which are not a terrestrial ecosystem.
Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.2: Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness	Management effectiveness of WAPNP (17,634.15ha) increases by 20 percentage points						**The indicator is questionably SMART.** It utilizes a globally verified tracking tool (the METT scorecard) against an explicitly defined baseline of 46%.
Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 3.2: Area of forest and forest land restored	2,000 ha						**The indicator is fully SMART.** The physical acreage target is explicitly defined and measurable through spatial verification and site surveys.
Outcome 1: Increased systemic and institutional capacities lay long-term foundation for improved management of the 69,820-ha multiple-use Western Area Peninsula landscape							
Indicator 5: Aggregated institutional capacity score for the relevant NRM institutions and community groups, as measured by the UNDP institutional capacity development scorecard	Aggregated institutional capacity score increases to at least 63.5 (men and women benefit equally)						**The indicator is questionably SMART.** The framing of the indicator is partially compliant to the specific criterion. It would have been preferable if the indicator was framed as follows "Percent increase in the Aggregated institutional capacity score for the relevant NRM institutions and community groups, as measured by the UNDP institutional capacity development scorecard"
Indicator 6: Prioritized sectorial policies incorporate SLM/ILM standards Wildlife Conservation Act of 1972 and its implementing regulations; the Forestry Act of 1988 and its implementing Regulations of 1990; the Environmental Policy of 1994; the Environment Protection Act of 2008; the Environment Protection (Mines and Minerals) Act of 2013; the National Water Resources Management Act of 2017; the Mines and Minerals Act	Prioritized policies/acts reviewed and submitted to Cabinet						**The indicator is questionably compliant.** "Prioritized policies/acts" is vague in the indicator formulation, although specific acts are itemized in the baseline text. *Recommendation:* Reformulate as: *"Number of prioritized environmental and sectoral acts integrating SLM/ILM standards formally submitted to Cabinet*

Indicators	End-of-project Target	Terminal evaluation SMART analysis					Evaluator's Feedback
		S	M	A	R	T	
Indicator 7: Area of the landscape covered by a sustainable, integrated land management plan (the WAP Master Plan) that promotes improved sustainable land management regimes	ILM plan for 69,820 ha approved						**The indicator is fully SMART.** It maps exactly to the total spatial scale of the WAP multiple-use boundary.
Outcome 2: Implementation of selected ILM and FLR interventions demonstrated in over 21,000 ha, securing biodiversity, ecosystems services and resilient livelihoods							
Indicator 8: Increased yields of selected agroforestry products/crops in areas under improved land management regimes	Yields increase by at least 50% over baseline values						**The indicator is partially compliant.** It is not fully *Specific* because the exact type of "agroforestry products/crops" is omitted from the indicator string, and the baseline is deferred to the inception phase. *Recommendation:* Reformulate as: *"Percentage increase in the average yields of at least three targeted crops (e.g., backyard vegetables, cassava) over inception-determined baselines."*
Indicator 9: Effectiveness of awareness and education outputs on the environmental, health and social effects of deforestation and land degradation	awareness raising strategy formulated, and communication outputs reaching 100% of target audiences, with at least 50% reporting change in behavior linked to the messages						**The indicator is fully SMART.** It effectively captures both outreach volume (100% reach) and qualitative behavioral impact (50% behavior change verification via self-reporting surveys)
Outcome 3: Financing frameworks for sustainable integrated landscape management increase ILM, PA and Biodiversity Finance by at least 25% over the baseline							
Indicator 10: New financing mechanisms operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management	At least 2 effective financing mechanisms operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management by at least 25% over the baseline (to be established by the public expenditure review).						**The indicator is fully SMART.** It requires a precise number of mechanisms and sets a clear fiscal increase target (25%) tied back to the 2017/2018 public expenditure baseline review.
Outcome 4: Systems designed and used to ensure monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and gender mainstreaming							
Indicator 11: Communication outputs and knowledge products produced and disseminated to targeted audiences on lessons learned and good practices identified through project implementation, taking into account stakeholder groups and communication tools identified in the project Stakeholder Engagement Plan	At least 12 substantive knowledge outputs produced and disseminated to targeted audiences; including minimum 1 PANORAMA publication, and 1 UNDP photo blog						**The indicator is fully SMART.** It moves past vague numbers to define the exact qualitative platforms (PANORAMA and UNDP photo blogs) required for upscaling.

Indicators	End-of-project Target	Terminal evaluation SMART analysis					Evaluator's Feedback
		S	M	A	R	T	
Indicator 12: % of sub-indicator targets in Gender Action Plan met	80%						**The indicator is fully SMART.** It links directly to a verifiable operational framework (the Gender Action Plan) to quantify accountability targets.

Legend

SMART criteria compliant	Questionably compliant to SMART criteria	Non-compliant to SMART criteria

Integration of broader development objectives into project design

The WAP project design demonstrates a deliberate and well-integrated approach to factoring broader development effects into its core strategy. Rather than treating socio-economic advancement, gender equality, and institutional governance as secondary or incidental benefits, the project explicitly positions them as essential drivers for achieving long-term environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation. The design logic recognizes that halting deforestation and land degradation on the peninsula is impossible without simultaneously addressing the underlying structural drivers of environmental degradation, such as poverty, lack of alternative livelihoods, and weak public administration.

Sustainable income generation and tangible livelihood benefits are deeply embedded within the operational outputs of Component 2. The project transitions away from traditional, strictly exclusionary preservation models by directly investing in nature-based economies that offer community members viable alternatives to destructive practices like illegal charcoal burning and sand mining. Specifically, through Output 2.4, the project design establishes micro-grants, technical training, and equipment distribution to support sustainable value chains, including eco-tourism, "waste-to-wealth" processing initiatives, and the value-added processing of local agricultural goods. This economic safety net is further reinforced by a targeted 50% planned increase in agricultural productivity through climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry, directly improving local food security while easing encroachment pressures on the WAPNP.

Gender equality and women's empowerment were systematically prioritized during the formulation phase, shifting the project from a standard environmental initiative to a gender-responsive development program. Backed by a comprehensive Gender Analysis and a dedicated Gender Action Plan, the project explicitly addresses the regional dual-holding land tenure system and the socio-cultural barriers that traditionally limit women's access to natural assets and financial resources. To ensure an equitable distribution of benefits, the project mandates that women make up at least 50% of the active participants in vocational training and alternative livelihood options. Furthermore, the institutional structures enforce accountability by including a permanent Gender and Safeguards Officer within the PMU and applying a "two-thirds gender rule" to physical planning meetings to promote women's leadership in local landscape governance.

Improved environmental and spatial governance serves as the institutional foundation of the entire project design, primarily consolidated under Component 1. The framework addresses the historical challenges of fragmented public administration by establishing a permanent, multi-level Coordination Platform designed to harmonize overlapping mandates between national entities, sector ministries, and traditional local authorities. By creating an open-access spatial planning system and driving the collaborative creation of the WAP Master Plan, the project builds systemic and technical capacities across the EPA, the NPAA, and local municipal structures. This governance model strengthens transparency, updates enforcement

mechanisms for forest rangers, and embeds accountability through active community co-management arrangements and a functional Grievance Redress Mechanism.

Finally, the project addresses long-term financial viability and structural economic sustainability through the innovative mechanisms detailed in Component 3. Recognizing that project-based conservation often collapses following the exhaustion of donor funds, the design focuses on increasing national biodiversity and landscape financing by 25% over the baseline. It accomplishes this broader developmental and economic effect through two key structural interventions built into the initial design:

- **Operationalizing National Trust Funds:** Providing the specific regulatory frameworks, legal strategies, and capacity building required to fully activate the pre-existing National Conservation Trust Fund to guarantee sustained state-level fiscal backing.
- **Piloting Market-Based Mechanisms:** Collaborating directly with major utility stakeholders, such as the Guma Valley Water Company (GVWC), to design and deploy Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes. This links downstream water security for the capital city of Freetown directly to upstream forest conservation, establishing a self-sustaining financial loop.

4.2. Progress towards Results

4.2.1. GEF Tracking Tool

During the MTR, the evaluator reviewed the GEF tracking tool completed at mid-term and compared the data in the tracking tool at midterm to that which was included in the tool and submitted to the GEF for CEO Endorsement. The GEF indicators included Core Indicator 1 (Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use); Core Indicator 3 (Area of land restored); and Core Indicator 11 (Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF). For each of the core indicators, targets at the PIF stage, at CEO Endorsement, and the value achieved at mid-term were presented in the tracking tool. Of all the core indicators, only Core Indicator 11 had achieved a mid-term value that was over 50% of the expected target set at the PIF and CEO Endorsement stage.

The project objective comprises four GEF core indicators – Mandatory GEF core indicator 11, 1.1, 1.2 and 3.2. Of these four indicators, progress towards the achievement of the targets at mid-term for two indicators (1.1 and 3.2) was rated moderately unsatisfactory, progress towards indicators 1.2 and 1.1 was rated highly unsatisfactory and highly satisfactory respectively (**Table 8**).

4.2.2. Progress towards outcome analysis

Outcome 1: Systemic and institutional capacity lays long-term foundation for integrated landscape management of the 69,820 ha multi-use landscape

During the 2025 financial year (FY25), the project advanced institutional capacity building by delivering training sessions on effective integrated forest management, forestland restoration, and adaptive management techniques for relevant government agencies. Utilizing findings from a previously conducted capacity assessment, the project formulated a comprehensive Capacity Enhancement Strategy for the EPA and facilitated a review of the agency's draft integrated forest management capacity scorecard. To address long-term policy structures, the project initiated the procurement process to recruit consultants tasked with harmonizing policies related to Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Integrated Land Management, alongside drafting a comprehensive management plan for the Western Area Peninsula National Park. Outcome 1 has three indicators – 5, 6 and 7. Of these, progress towards achievement of the targets for indicators 5 and 7 were rated highly unsatisfactory while indicator 6 was rated moderately unsatisfactory (**Table 8**). Overall, progress towards outcome 1 at mid-term is rated **Unsatisfactory**.

Outcome 2: Implementation of selected ILM and FLR interventions demonstrated in over 21,000 ha, securing biodiversity, ecosystem services and resilient livelihoods

The project successfully finalized rapid assessments across several Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) and Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) pilot sites—specifically Makorbeh, Rogbaloh, Bathurst, Charlotte, Tokeh, No. 2 River, Sussex, and Aberdeen—focusing on socio-economic dynamics and agroforestry crop value chains with high growth potential. While these foundational assessments are complete and documented within the project library, formal evaluations regarding crop yield increases have not yet been executed as of this Mid-Term Review (MTR). Additionally, the project laid the groundwork for its communication campaigns by conducting initial stakeholder consultations, community mapping exercises, baseline surveys, and awareness-raising sessions to inform the development of a comprehensive education and communication strategy. Outcome 2 has two indicators – 8 and 9. While progress towards achievement of indicator 8 was rated highly unsatisfactory, indicator 9 was rated highly satisfactory. Overall, the progress towards outcome 2 is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Outcome 3: Financing frameworks for sustainable integrated landscape management increase ILM, PA and Biodiversity Finance by at least 25% over the baseline.

Progress under Outcome 3 remains on track to increase funding for Integrated Land Management (ILM), Protected Areas (PA), and biodiversity conservation by at least 25% over the established baseline. The specific target for the MTR focuses on operationalizing at least one functional financing mechanism to boost government allocations for landscape management by 15% relative to the 2017/2018 public expenditure review baseline. To achieve this, the project recruited a consultant to design the regulatory framework and the operationalization strategy required to fully activate the newly established National Conservation Trust Fund. Progress towards the indicator for outcome 3 (indicator 10) is rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

Outcome 4: Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E

Outcome 4 is on track to deliver robust systems for monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, and gender mainstreaming. Meeting the MTR target—which mandates the production and distribution of at least one substantive knowledge product every six months with a 40% female outreach rate, the project successfully produced specialized educational materials detailing the importance of protecting the WAPNP. These materials were translated into three local languages (Krio, Temne, and Mende) and distributed as posters and radio jingles throughout the park zone, ultimately engaging 400 community members, composed of 41.5% women and 58.5% men. The progress towards achievement of the indicator targets under outcome 4 (indicators 11 and 12) were both rated as Highly Satisfactory. Hence, progress towards outcome 4 at mid-term is rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

Table 8: Progress towards results matrix (Achievement of outcomes against end-of-project targets)

Project strategy	Indicator[14]	Baseline Level[15]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[16]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment[17]	Achievement Rating[18]	Justification for Rating
Objective: To strengthen conditions for the sustainable and integrated management of multiple-use landscapes (piloted in the WAP landscape) to protect globally significant biodiversity, safeguard ecosystem services generating local and national socio-economic benefits, and advance towards land degradation neutrality	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 11: # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	Women: 0 Men: 0 Total: 0	1,163 Men: 741: Women: 422	Women: 1,107 Men: 1,106 Total: 2,213	Women: 2,214 Men: 2,213 Total: 4,427		HS	At mid-term, the number of beneficiaries include: Women: 1,309 Men: 1,063 Total: 2,372 The above values are greater than the mid-term target.
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.1: Terrestrial protected areas newly created	286,000 ha of mangroves; 30,000 ha of it under community forest management	0 ha	At least 500 ha of mangroves under new community PA management system	At least 1,000 ha of mangroves under new community PA management system		MU	At mid-term, 253ha of mangrove had been restored which is below the mid-term target
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.2: Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness	Management effectiveness of the WAPNP (17,634.15ha) is currently at 46% (see METT scorecard)	0	Management effectiveness of WAPNP (17,634.15ha) increases by 10 percentage points	Management effectiveness of WAPNP (17,634.15ha) increases by 20 percentage points		HU	Technical personnel underwent capacity building in the use of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), facilitated

[14] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards
[15] Populate with data from the Project Document
[16] If available
[17] Colour code this column only
[18] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

								by an international consultant. This training was designed to establish a "train-the-trainer" model, enabling participants to lead future instruction for additional project staff. During this session, the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPNP) was formally evaluated, resulting in an overall management effectiveness score of 39% (in 2024), a 7% decline in effectiveness compared to the project baseline. This downward trend is attributed to escalating environmental threats—including residential encroachment, charcoal production, illegal logging, and unauthorized cultivation—alongside the impacts of road construction. Furthermore, the park's protection is compromised by resource deficiencies,

								specifically a shortage of forest guards and inadequate funding from the responsible governing institutions.
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 3.2: Area of forest and forest land restored	0 ha	0	1,000 ha	2,000 ha		MU	At mid-term, 745 ha of terrestrial protected areas had been restored. This achievement is below the mid-term target.
Outcome 1: Increased systemic and institutional capacities lay long-term foundation for improved management of the 69,820-ha multiple-use Western Area Peninsula landscape	Indicator 5: Aggregated institutional capacity score for the relevant NRM institutions and community groups, as measured by the UNDP institutional capacity development scorecard	Aggregated institutional average capacity score is 43.5 (see completed UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard in Annex 13)	0	Aggregated institutional capacity score increases to at least 50 (men and women benefit equally)	Aggregated institutional capacity score increases to at least 63.5 (men and women benefit equally)		HU	At mid-term, information on the assessment of the institutional capacity score was not available. However, a draft capacity scorecard specifically designed for integrated forest management has been reviewed based on existing capacities needs
	Indicator 6: Prioritized sectorial policies incorporate SLM/ILM standards Wildlife Conservation Act of 1972 and its implementing regulations; the Forestry Act of 1988 and its implementing Regulations of 1990; the Environmental	Seven relevant policies/Acts do not integrate SLM/ILM adequately	0	Prioritized policies/acts reviewed and recommend-dations developed for improvement	Prioritized policies/acts reviewed and submitted to Cabinet		MU	A consultant for the policy gap analysis has been hired and a draft report of the policy gap analysis has been elaborated.

	Policy of 1994; the Environment Protection Act of 2008; the Environment Protection (Mines and Minerals) Act of 2013; the National Water Resources Management Act of 2017; the Mines and Minerals Act							
	Indicator 7: Area of the landscape covered by a sustainable, integrated land management plan (the WAP Master Plan) that promotes improved sustainable land management regimes	0	0	ILM plan for 69,820 ha developed and under discussion	ILM plan for 69,820 ha approved		HU	At mid-term, the plan had not been elaborated. However, the NPAA acting on behalf of the project, engaged a national expert to draft a management plan aimed at enhancing sustainable land management within the WAPNP. The formulation of this plan was initiated with a series of stakeholder consultation sessions
Outcome 2: Implementation of selected ILM and FLR interventions demonstrated in over 21,000 ha, securing biodiversity, ecosystems services and resilient livelihoods	Indicator 8: Increased yields of selected agroforestry products/crops in areas under improved land management regimes	(baseline tbd during inception phase)	0	Yields increase by at least 30% over baseline values	Yields increase by at least 50% over baseline values		HU	An assessment on an increase in yields had not been conducted at mid-term.
	Indicator 9: Effectiveness of	Very limited information on	A one-day sensitization	Education and awareness raising	Education and awareness raising		HS	At mid-term, a 73% of the audience of

	awareness and education outputs on the environmental, health and social effects of deforestation and land degradation	the importance of the environment, biodiversity, and land degradation effectively being disseminated	and awareness raising workshop targeting local councils among others organized.	strategy formulated, and communication outputs reaching 100% of target audiences, with at least 25% reporting change in behavior linked to messages	strategy formulated, and communication outputs reaching 100% of target audiences, with at least 50% reporting change in behavior linked to the messages			the project sampled reported a positive change in behaviour
Outcome 3: Financing frameworks for sustainable integrated landscape management increase ILM, PA and Biodiversity Finance by at least 25% over the baseline	Indicator 10: New financing mechanisms operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management	There is one conservation fund; the National Protected Area Authority and Conservation Trust Fund. However, it has mobilized very limited funding. The actual baseline funding will be established by the public expenditure	0	At least 1 effective financing mechanism operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management by at least 15% over the baseline (to be established by the public expenditure review).	At least 2 effective financing mechanisms operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management by at least 25% over the baseline (to be established by the public expenditure review).		MU	At mid-term, no achievement had been recorded by the project relating to the mid-term target. However, a consultant has been hired and a first draft report of the resource mobilization strategy for the National Conservation Trust Fund (NCTF) was elaborated.
Outcome 4: Systems designed and used to ensure monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and gender mainstreaming	Indicator 11: Communication outputs and knowledge products produced and disseminated to targeted audiences on lessons learned and good practices identified through project implementation, taking into account stakeholder groups and communication tools identified in the project Stakeholder Engagement Plan.	Lack of availability of knowledge products on ILM in Sierra Leone specifically targeting prioritized audiences (e.g. politicians, farmers, private sector).	Project inception report published on MoECC Facebook page	At least 1 substantive knowledge output produced and disseminated to targeted audiences each 6 months	At least 12 substantive knowledge outputs produced and disseminated to targeted audiences; including minimum 1 PANORAMA publication, and 1 UNDP photo blog		HS	Instructional and educational content concerning the protection of the environment, including posters and audio jingles, was created and translated into three local languages—Krio, Temne, and Mende—before being distributed throughout the Western Area Peninsula. Equally, a documentary (Explainer on mangroves

								restoration) was produced.
	Indicator 12: % of sub-indicator targets in Gender Action Plan met	0	0	40%	80%		HS	60% of the GAP targets had been achieved at mid-term, surpassing the mid-term target.

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved

4.2.3. Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

1. Escalating Anthropogenic Threats and Encroachment

A primary threat to the project's success is the continuous degradation of the Western Area Peninsula National Park (WAPNP) due to human pressure. The FY25 PIR document a 7% decrease in management effectiveness from the baseline, which is directly attributed to widespread encroachment for residential housing development, illegal logging, commercial charcoal burning, and unauthorized cultivation within protected zones. Furthermore, large-scale infrastructure developments, such as ongoing road construction around the peninsula, physically fragment critical habitats, disrupt ecosystem corridors, and facilitate easier public access into previously isolated forest areas. Hence, restricting access to the protected area through enhanced enforcement and other measures such as establishing a physical barrier around the area is fundamental for securing the project gains.

2. Critical Monitoring and Enforcement Resource Deficiencies

On-the-ground protection and enforcement mechanisms remain severely constrained by a lack of operational inputs. The National Protected Area Authority suffers from a significant shortage of active forest guards to patrol the massive, multi-use landscape. This human resource gap is compounded by a lack of sustained, dedicated funding from relevant national institutions earmarked explicitly for field-level park protection. Without adequate patrols, equipment (such as the information technology), and logistical support, enforcing conservation regulations and stopping illegal resource extraction inside the park boundaries remains an uphill battle.

3. Operational and Delivery Gaps in Livelihood Evaluations

While the project has successfully completed rapid socio-economic and crop value chain assessments across various pilot sites (such as Makorbeh, Rogbaloh, Bathurst, Charlotte, Tokeh, No. 2 River, Sussex, and Aberdeen), there is a structural gap in measuring actual on-the-ground impact. Formal evaluations to determine whether alternative livelihood interventions are successfully increasing agricultural yields or household incomes have not yet been conducted. Until these socio-economic benefits are verified and scaled, local communities may lack the long-term economic incentives required to permanently abandon destructive practices in favor of conservation stewardship.

4. Systemic Implementation Lag in Policy and Legal Harmonization

Although foundational capacity building and training have been delivered to government ministries, institutional and policy-level reforms are moving slowly. The project only recently of recruited the external technical consultants required to harmonize national policies on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Integrated Land Management (ILM). This delay in formalizing and aligning overlapping institutional mandates prevents the creation of a legally binding, cross-sectoral regulatory framework, leaving governance responsibilities fractured between competing sector agencies.

5. Delays in Operationalizing Sustainable Financing Mechanisms

Achieving self-sustaining environmental governance remains a major challenge due to execution delays under the financing component. The project's mid-term goal is to operationalize at least one effective financing mechanism and secure a 15% increase in domestic funding over the baseline. However, the project only recently recruited consultants to develop the basic regulatory framework and operationalization strategy required to fully activate the National Conservation Trust Fund. Until this trust fund and planned market-based mechanisms (like Payment for Ecosystem Services and ecotourism) are structurally functioning, the project remains completely dependent on finite donor funding, threatening post-closure sustainability. It could be worthwhile for the PMU to explore options of working with the Tacugama Wildlife Sanctuary to elaborate and pilot a tourism business plan.

6. Institutional inertia and cross-ministerial coordination failure

The successful achievement of the project objective remains significantly constrained by institutional silos and a lack of active cooperation from key government partners, specifically regarding the development of the Master Plan for the WAP area. Although the Ministry of Lands is structurally mandated to lead the elaboration of this strategic Master Plan, administrative inertia and a lack of responsiveness from the designated ministerial focal point have halted progress. This breakdown in inter-ministerial coordination creates an institutional bottleneck, directly delaying the rollout of foundational spatial planning frameworks that the broader WAP project relies upon.

7. Macroeconomic shocks and systemic funding depletion

The successful execution of Component 2, which focuses on ecosystem restoration, is severely jeopardized by critical budget deficits driven by unforeseen macroeconomic shocks. While the project design commenced in 2017, implementation commenced only in 2023, after the Covid-19 pandemic. This six-year gap between project design and implementation and coupled with the fact that the project's budget estimates and assumptions were not updated prior to project start and after the pandemic, exposed the project's financial architecture to intense inflationary pressures, drastically driving up the unit costs of logistics, procurement, and labor. Consequently, the capital allocated for tree planting and mangrove restoration has been entirely exhausted. The standard operational flexibility provided by the allowed 5% budget reallocation margin is mathematically insufficient to bridge this financial gap, creating a structural barrier where the remaining project funds cannot match the actual market costs of restoration activities. For instance, studies by Goto et al. (2022) indicated that the baseline expenditure for restoring a single hectare of mangrove forest within Africa stands at US$ 1,058[19]. Relying on this financial projection, fulfilling the overarching project goal of restoring 2,000 hectares of mangrove ecosystems would necessitate a total funding allocation of US$ 2,116,000 which is higher than the overall budget allocated for mangrove and terrestrial restoration under the WAP project. Hence, maintaining the original acreage targets for mangrove and terrestrial restoration is operationally impossible. Attempting to fulfill the initial targets without an influx of co-financing would result in substandard implementation, high sapling mortality rates, and a failure to achieve sustainable ecological outcomes. To maintain the strategic integrity of the project, an immediate adaptive management intervention is required through a formal restructuring of the project's logical framework. It is technically and financially justifiable to recommend a downward revision of the indicator targets for restoration to align with remaining budgetary capacities. Furthermore, the project must optimize its remaining funds by pivoting its geographical focus away from high-cost, high-pressure, or socially contested zones. Refocusing restoration efforts onto highly secure areas with lower degradation pressures and fewer land-tenure conflicts will minimize administrative delays, reduce protection costs, and maximize the survival rate of the planted biomass, ensuring the sustainable, albeit downscaled, delivery of targeted global environmental benefits. Such refocus of restoration efforts should be accompanied by the implementation of the WAP management plan and government enforcement measures lest the sites with less human pressures could be degraded in the near future.

8. Financial liquidation delays and administrative bottlenecks

A major operational barrier to achieving the project's objectives is the systemic delay in the financial liquidation cycle among project partners. Under current administrative arrangements, the MoECC and its local responsible parties must fully liquidate previously advanced funds before UNDP can release subsequent financial tranches. Because partners frequently delay the submission of these required financial liquidations, the disbursement of funds from UNDP to MoECC and onward to field operations is consistently stalled. This administrative bottleneck creates a cascading cash-flow shortage that halts field activities, effectively disrupting the project's planned implementation timeline. Equally, inadequate planning by the by the PMU led to delays in the recruitment of project staff and consultants, affecting the delivery of the project.

[19] Goto et al. (2025). Implementation costs of restoring global mangroves forests. LINK

The financial disbursement delays generate severe consequences because they fail to align with critical ecological timelines, particularly for forestry and restoration components. Effective tree planting and mangrove restoration are highly time-sensitive activities that must be executed during the peak rainy season, specifically within the narrow May and June window, to guarantee high sapling survival rates. When funding is delayed, the seasonal planting window is missed entirely. This occurred during the 2025 operational cycle, when restoration funds were disbursed only after the rainy season had concluded, forcing field teams to plant under sub-optimal, arid climatic conditions.

9. Occupational health and safety vulnerabilities and compliance risks

A serious operational barrier affecting field execution is the lack of adequate individual protective equipment for community planters and trackers. Consultations revealed that in specific project zones, such as Last Banking, field workers are conducting mangrove planting and tracking activities without essential footwear or safety gear. This exposure places them at high risk of sustaining physical injuries, including having their limbs pierced by sharp submerged objects and debris in the water. Furthermore, in areas where protective gear was previously distributed, such as Rogbaylor, workers reported that their boots and gloves are completely torn and unusable, highlighting a clear gap in equipment replacement cycles. If left unaddressed, these sub-standard field conditions could directly trigger compliance risks under the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards, specifically Standard 7 on labor and working conditions. The lack of intact protective gear violates occupational health and safety risk protocols outlined in section 7.6 of the standard. This non-compliance not only risks the physical well-being of the local workforce but also exposes the project to institutional liability, potentially stalling disbursements if formal labor grievances are raised.

10. Technological deficits and data integrity failures in geospatial tracking

The project's monitoring and verification framework is further constrained by data integrity errors caused by inadequate tracking technology. Several field trackers are currently utilizing counterfeit or low-quality android smartphones during field exercises. These substandard devices experience severe geolocation glitches, generating and uploading inaccurate geographical coordinates alongside the tracked plant data. This technological deficiency creates a significant data validation problem, as the entity managing the back end of the platform cannot reliably verify the precise locations of restoration interventions or ensure the accuracy of the project’s geographic information system databases. To resolve these technological challenges, the PMU confirmed that it is planning a structured equipment deployment model that balances data collection needs with asset security. Instead of distributing permanent individual smartphones to temporary tracking staff, the project will procure authentic, high-quality android mobile phones and assign them directly to stationed site rangers. Trackers will be granted temporary access to these official devices to perform their geospatial logging duties during field exercises. Upon completion of each tracking session, the phones will be returned to the site rangers for safe keeping, maintenance, and data synchronization

4.3. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

4.3.1. Management Arrangements

Quality of UNDP Support to the project

Focus on Results

UNDP has demonstrated a consistent focus on results by anchoring its technical oversight to the quantifiable metrics established in the project results framework. The collaboration between the UNDP Country Office and the Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) has ensured rigorous reporting on key multi-sectoral milestones. While output-level verification is meticulous, UNDP's focus on higher-level ecosystem and economic outcomes shows a slight lag; for instance, the formal tracking of yield increases in areas under improved land management (indicator 8) remains deferred to later project phases.

Adequacy of Support to the Executing Agency (EA) / Project Management Unit (PMU)

The adequacy of support provided to the MoECC (the Implementing Partner) and the PMU is substantial. Operating under the NIM, UNDP has adequately supported the PMU/MoECC in several areas including providing oversight to implementation through the review of PIRs, the recruitment of consultants (such as for audits and the MTR), providing safeguards training to the PMU and other stakeholders, and providing direct support the PMU/implementing partners on financial reporting when challenges emerge.

Quality and Timeliness of Support to the EA / PMU

At the commencement of each annual operational cycle, a three-day technical retreat is organized with project stakeholders, during which UNDP conducts specialized training on financial management for the project management unit and local responsible parties. UNDP maintains a highly supportive presence, actively boosting institutional capacity by providing targeted programmatic guidance whenever the PMU encounters operational challenges. Furthermore, when the PMU faces administrative bottlenecks related to financial liquidation processes, UNDP directly deploys its own staff to work alongside the team, effectively resolving the documentation issues and unblocking the flow of project funds.

Candor and Realism in Annual Reporting

UNDP's annual reporting reflects commendable candor and transparency regarding project setbacks. Rather than obscuring implementation failures, the PIRs explicitly detail that the updated 2024 METT evaluation resulted in a score of 39%, highlighting a 7% decline in park management effectiveness from the baseline. The reports are realistic in acknowledging that macro-environmental threats are expanding faster than institutional capacity, ensuring that the project's data remains an accurate baseline for adaptive governance.

Quality of Risk Management

The MTR stakeholder consultations revealed that UNDP maintains a highly supportive role in project risk management by consistently flagging operational and implementation risks. The agency operates directly within the established management systems, hosting and tracking the project risk log within the quantum digital platform. To ensure continuous risk monitoring, the project management unit collaborates closely with the monitoring and evaluation specialist from UNDP. Together, they systematically review each identified risk factor and perform regular updates directly in quantum to reflect current field realities and adaptive management needs.

Responsiveness to Significant Implementation Problems

By reviewing the PIRs, UNDP identifies operational bottlenecks and offers strategic guidance for the MoECC and the PMU to implement to accelerate field activities. for instance, when the PMU faced difficulties hiring a national safeguards consultant and was forced to repeatedly re-advertise the vacancy due to a lack of qualified applicants, UNDP intervened to facilitate the process. and actively supported the recruitment effort by circulating the terms of reference across its broader networks to reach potential qualified candidates directly.

Project Delays and Impact on Outcomes and Sustainability

UNDP has systematically utilized the project implementation reports to highlight ongoing delays in execution and to analyze how these bottlenecks negatively impact the overall financial delivery and budget utilization rates of the project. by consistently documenting these operational challenges, the agency does not merely track issues but provides proactive oversight, offering specific, actionable recommendations designed to help the project management unit and its partners streamline administrative processes and accelerate field delivery.

Mitigation and Management of Environmental and Social Risks

Throughout the project execution phase, UNDP has consistently maintained strict compliance with its social and environmental standards, maintaining the rigorous oversight required by the high risk status determined

during initial project planning. To ensure effective risk management, the agency conducted comprehensive safeguards capacity building workshops for the MoECC, the project management unit, and local responsible parties. Furthermore, the dedicated social and environmental safeguards team from the UNDP continues to provide active, ongoing technical assistance to the project, guaranteeing that all required environmental and social safeguard action plans are thoroughly prepared and systematically put into action. The overall rating of the UNDP support to the project is rated **Satisfactory (Table 9)**.

Table 9: Assessment of UNDP Support to the project

Area of assessment	**MTR Rating**
Focus on results	6 (Highly Satisfactory)
Adequacy of support to the Executing Agency (EA) / Project Management Unit (PMU)	6 (Highly Satisfactory)
Quality and timeliness of support to the EA / PMU	5 (Satisfactory)
Candor and realism in annual reporting:	6 (Highly Satisfactory)
Quality of risk management	5 (Satisfactory)
Responsiveness to significant implementation Problems	5 (Satisfactory)
Note of project delays and how they may have affected project outcomes and sustainability	5 (Satisfactory)
Adequacy in the mitigation and management of environmental and social risks identified in the ProDoc	5 (Satisfactory)
Overall rating	**Satisfactory**

Quality of the Executing Agency (MoECC) Execution of the project

The quality of execution by MoECC is rated Moderately Satisfactory (**Table 10**).

Table 10: Assessment of the quality of execution by the Executing Agency

Area of assessment	**MTR Findings**	**MTR Rating**
Appropriate focus on results and timeliness	This is the first NIM project and so far, implementation has been happening although there is room for improvement in some areas. Relating to focus on results, the PMU ensures that the annual workplans for the different responsible parties are aligned with the multi-year annual workplan in the project document. Concerning timeliness, the project has experienced implementation delays. Some of the delays are linked to untimely liquidation by some of the project responsible parties, affecting the disbursement of project resources from UNDP to the MoECC. Delays in the implementation of project activities were also caused by: inadequate planning by the PMU culminating in delayed recruitment of project staff and consultants; and coordination issues between the implementing partner and a responsible party (Ministry of Lands) It is the responsibility of the PMU/MoECC to keep a close eye on the responsible parties and detect early signals that point to potential untimely liquidation issues so that corrective measures could be proactively taken.	5 (Satisfactory)
Adequacy of management of inputs	The PMU/MoECC is responsible for managing the day-to-day management of the project. The PMU	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)

and processes (budget and procurement)	works with the different responsible parties in the preparation of their annual workplans and based on the approved workplans, GEF resources received from UNDP are transferred to the responsible parties by the MoECC. Procurement is conducted by the respective responsible parties following the national procurement guidelines.	
Quality of risk management	Risk management was identified as an area where the PMU/MoECC required capacity strengthening. As the executing entity of the project, the MoECC is responsible for the project risk management. An instance that revealed the need for enhancement in the risk management capacity of MoECC relates to the reporting of the area reforested by EFA. The MoECC/PMU reported that a total number 103,804 saplings planted over 350 hectares of land but as per UNDP's verification in January/February 2025, only 17,754 saplings were planted over a surface area of 23.64 hectares[20].	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)
Candor and realism in reporting:	The PMU/MoECC elaborates project narrative and financial reports for submission to UNDP based on reports submitted to the PMU by the responsible parties. Hence, the PMU consolidates the reports submitted by the different responsible parties to come up with a global narrative and financial report for the project. In doing so, UNDP reports on project progress as presented by project partners with no deliberate intention for misrepresentation. Cases of reporting of incorrect facts by PMU could arise due to insufficient verification of the information presented by the responsible parties such as the case of the number of saplings planted and surface area reforested by EFA which was later contested by UNDP through an oversight mission.	5 (Satisfactory)
Government ownership	The Government ownership of the project is strong. MoECC took charge for hiring the staff of the PMU and take part in the project steering committee. Country ownership is strongly evident by the involvement of the senior management of the MoECC in the project. For instance, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was involved in a joint oversight mission in August 19 – 20, 2025 to the Mambo Waterfall, Mile13 (Guma Dam) and Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary Buffer Zone[21]. During the MTR in-country mission, the Minister of Environment made himself available to discuss with the MTR evaluator, further demonstrating government ownership of the project.	6 (Highly Satisfactory)

[20] Amponsah. C. (2025). Independent Verification and Monitoring of WAP Project's Tree Plantation. Back to Office Report
[21] Oversight mission to degraded areas of the Western Area Peninsula National Park (19th and 20th August, 2025)

Adequacy in the mitigation and management of environmental and social risks identified in the ProDoc	The PMU/MoECC did not pay particular attention to safeguard issues, and this is related to their limited capacity on social and environmental safeguards. Delays in the implementation of the safeguards management plans were flagged in the PIR and steps taken to hire a safeguards consultant in the country was met with challenges as it was difficult to find a qualified consultant but at mid-term, the consultant had been hired. UNDP provided internal social and environmental safeguard resources to support the WAP project on. Safeguards and equally provided safeguards training to the MoECC.	3 (Moderately Unsatisfactory)
Final (average) rating		**Moderately Satisfactory**

Actual management arrangements vis-à-vis management arrangements presented in the ProDoc

At MTR, the project's management arrangements reveal a strong structural adherence to the governance framework originally laid out in the Project Document, with execution handled under the National Implementation Modality. The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change continues to fulfill its role as the principal Implementing Partner, providing the political and administrative leadership required to steer the initiative. The formal oversight mechanism remains anchored by the Project Steering Committee which is actively chaired by the Ministry of Environment and serves as the primary body for strategic decision-making and inter-agency coordination. Through this established structure, the PMU has been able to maintain institutional connections with key technical executing agencies, most notably the NPAA and the Environment Protection Agency EPA.

While the core institutional hierarchy matches the original design, operational adaptations have been made during the implementation phase to address coordination and delivery challenges. Rather than altering the macro-level governance arrangements, these changes have focused on shifting execution responsibilities to specialized entities to bypass capacity bottlenecks. Specifically, the project has increasingly relied on international and national consultants to spearhead highly technical deliverables such as the creation of the WAPNP management plan, the drafting of the EPA Capacity Enhancement Strategy, and the formulation of the regulatory framework for the National Conservation Trust Fund—rather than relying solely on the internal technical staff of the partner ministries. Regarding the designated entities responsible for delivering project outputs as outlined in **Table 6**, the Mid-Term Review (MTR) observed several notable modifications to the original institutional arrangements. A major operational shift occurred with the transfer of terrestrial restoration responsibilities to the Women's Network for Environmental Sustainability (WONES) and the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. This reallocation followed the suspension of the Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) from the project, which was triggered by a breach in procurement procedures concerning restoration materials and supplies. At the time of the MTR, EFA's suspension remained in effect, leaving the institution's future participation in the project highly uncertain. To resolve this impasse, a UNDP oversight and verification mission was scheduled for April 2026 to audit the trees previously planted by EFA. The findings of this upcoming mission will serve as the deciding factor on whether EFA will be formally reinstated into its original project role.

Another structural adjustment identified by the MTR involves the evolving role of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). During the initial project formulation phase, a macro-level shift in the national environmental governance mechanism had not been anticipated. However, the subsequent establishment of the Ministry of Environment—which occurred after the project design was finalized—led to a significant diversion of responsibilities, with the newly formed Ministry absorbing most of the strategic roles originally designated for the EPA. Consequently, during project implementation, the EPA's scope of work was modified to focus primarily on technical and supportive functions. These refined responsibilities include

the development of management tools, institutional capacity-building initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns, and providing technical support to other responsible parties in the execution of their respective project activities.

Clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines

Operational accountabilities and reporting channels are distinct, given that each responsible parties possesses a defined and unique role in achieving the project's results, with individual institutions taking the lead on executing specific outputs. In terms of reporting lines, the responsible parties submit their progress updates directly to the PMU housed within the MoECC, which in turn reports onward to the UNDP Country Office and the Project Steering Committee. Stakeholders consulted during the MTR review opined that roles and responsibilities alongside reporting lines for the project are clear.

Timeliness and transparency of decision-making

An analysis of the project implementation reports indicates that while the project's strategic decision-making framework is highly transparent, its operational execution suffers from systemic delays that hinder timely implementation. High-level decisions are routed transparently through the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which is actively chaired by the MoECC and includes representation from core statutory agencies like the NPAA and the EPA. The transparency of the governance structure is further reinforced by a clear reporting line where responsible parties submit progress updates directly to the Project Management Unit (PMU), which then consolidates and elevates this data to the UNDP Country Office and the PSC. Furthermore, UNDP's annual reporting exhibits a high degree of candor, openly documenting critical setbacks such as the 7% decline in the park's management effectiveness score, ensuring that strategic pivots are based on realistic, unclouded operational data. Overall, stakeholder consultations during the MTR revealed that decision-making within the framework of the project has so far been transparent and timely.

The management arrangement is rated **Satisfactory**.

4.3.2. Work Planning

Delays in project start-up and implementation

An analysis of the of the project's PIRs' indicates that the project experienced a significant seven-month gap between its official approval and the initiation of field activities, moving from a signature in June 2023 to actual ground implementation in February 2024. This initial delay, combined with subsequent operational bottlenecks, heavily constrained the early implementation timeline, leaving a highly compressed window for activity delivery during its inaugural phase. The causes of the project start-up and implementation delays can be attributed to a combination of rigid administrative procedures, political context, institutional adjustments, and systemic technical issues:

- **UNDP Administrative and Technical Bottlenecks:** Before the Project Document could be signed, UNDP internal processes required hiring a consultant to update the SESP. Following the signature, the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Office faced severe technical glitches in creating and configuring the project within its Quantum ERP platform, which directly delayed subsequent financial disbursements.
- **Political Volatility:** The project design and launch phase coincided with the 2023 national elections in Sierra Leone, during which heightened political tensions temporarily halted administrative momentum.
- **National Implementation Modality (NIM) Inexperience:** This initiative represents the very first project implemented under a full Nationally Implementation Modality (NIM) by the Government of Sierra Leone. As the primary Implementing Partner, the Ministry of Environment required a substantial learning curve to establish the Project Management Unit (PMU), complete staff recruitment, and finalize basic internal administrative arrangements, such as opening the dedicated project bank account.

- **Operational Inefficiencies and Technical Gaps:** Financial disbursements and resource commitments were not executed on time, which was further exacerbated by a mandatory audit process at the start of the year that delayed fiscal-year project initiation. Furthermore, some of the designated Responsible Parties demonstrated limited technical capacities, particularly regarding compliance with standardized procurement processes.
- **Delayed Technical Leadership:** A critical factor driving implementation gaps was the delay in onboarding the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA). The prolonged absence of this key technical lead resulted in poor coordination among government institutions, an incoherent execution of project activities, limited early results, weak monitoring systems, and low-quality progress reporting.

These combined delays severely impacted the project's early performance, resulting in an exceptionally low financial delivery rate. The Cumulative General Ledger (GL) delivery stood at a mere 1.34% against the total approved amount outlined in the project document, and only 4.56% against the expected delivery targets for that fiscal year[22].

In examining whether these issues have been solved, the PIR text demonstrates that the project has successfully transitioned out of its stagnant start-up phase and mobilized on the ground, though structural capacity challenges remain. The initial technical issues surrounding Quantum configuration and bank account openings have been resolved, enabling the PMU to finally trigger field operations as of early 2024.

During the MTR in-country mission (April 2026), an audit for the project was ongoing and implementation of project activities for the year had not commenced yet. Several responsible parties expressed concerns over the late disbursement of project resources, delaying implementation of project activities.

Results-based nature of work planning

An analysis of the 2024 and 2025 PIRs indicates that the project's work-planning processes are mixed, demonstrating a compliance-driven, output-based structure rather than being fully results-based. On the positive side, the annual work plans (AWPs) successfully capture clear, quantifiable target metrics at the operational level and MTR consultations with project stakeholders revealed that the elaboration of the AWPs is informed by the multi-year workplan in the ProDoc. Each responsible party prepares their workplan and transmit it to the PMU for consolidation. The PMU tracks tangible, direct deliverables—such as delivering capacity training to technical staff, reviewing the EPA draft scorecard, completing socio-economic value chain assessments, and distributing multi-lingual awareness jingles around park boundaries. This ensures that work-planning timelines are tightly mapped to the immediate, physical targets specified under the project components.

However, the current work-planning framework falls short of being truly results-based because it treats activity execution as the final goal, decoupling annual plans from higher-level ecological and economic impacts. For instance, while the 2025 work plan successfully executed rapid assessments for agroforestry value chains across eight pilot communities (Makorbeh, Rogbeloh, Bathurst, Charlotte, Tokeh, No. 2 River, Sussex and Aberdeen), the PIR notes that formal evaluations to determine if these interventions are translating into increased crop yields or improved household income have yet to occur. At MTR, formal evaluation regarding increased crop yields had not yet been established. The evaluator noted that finalizing this assessment is particularly challenging because the project design did not specify any direct restoration interventions (such as agroforestry) on privately owned agricultural lands, nor did it identify specific climate-resilient farming techniques or technologies tailored for local farmers and their fields. Furthermore, while the terrestrial restoration efforts inside the WAPNP did incorporate agroforestry species like avocado and mango, these planted trees require a substantial amount of time to reach maturity and yield fruit, typically taking three to five years for grafted varieties, and even longer for those grown from seeds[23].

[22] FY24 PIR
[23] LINK

More critically, the disconnect between work planning and results is evident in the project's primary conservation objective; despite achieving short-term activity milestones, the overall management effectiveness score of the WAPNP suffered a 7% decline from its baseline due to unabated external pressures like illegal logging and residential encroachment. This reveals that the work-planning process is currently structured to complete tasks on time rather than dynamically adjusting resources to achieve long-term conservation results. However, it is critical to recognize that implementing these operational realignments remains entirely contingent upon the availability of budget. To re-orientate the work-planning processes toward a strict focus on results, the evaluation the project could consider the following:

- **Incorporate Impact-Linked Milestones into the AWP:** The PMU should shift annual planning away from simple completion targets (e.g., "conduct value chain studies") and instead condition final success on outcome-level verification (e.g., "verify a 10% increase in household revenue from alternative livelihoods").
- **Tie Financing Mechanisms to Accountability Targets:** Given the delays in operationalizing the National Conservation Trust Fund, future work planning should break this massive objective down into sequential, results-based steps. Successive tranches of activity funding for consultants should be explicitly tied to the formalization and cabinet submission of regulatory frameworks rather than simple reporting intervals.
- **Strengthen Responsible Party Monitoring and Field Auditing:** To prevent long delays such as the disruption caused by the EFA procurement breach, the work-planning process must integrate mandatory, quarterly procurement compliance audits for all partner agencies. This allows the Project Steering Committee to proactively spot systemic capacity gaps before they result in project-wide implementation standstills.

Use of project logframe as a management tool

The results framework (logframe) functions as the primary blueprint for monitoring, accountability, and strategic oversight, rather than as a dynamic day-to-day operational tool. Evidence gathered from stakeholder interviews during the MTR confirms that no formal structural changes, modifications, or adaptive revisions have been made to the indicators, baselines, or targets within the results framework since the project's inception. Instead, the logframe remains exactly as it was approved in the original ProDoc, serving as a fixed baseline against which all subsequent project performance is rigidly measured.

In terms of its practical application, the results framework is utilized strictly for compliance and high-level governance reporting within the annual PIR cycle. The PMU populates the logframe metrics annually to detail progress across the four main project outcomes. These completed PIRs are subsequently shared with the Project Board (Project Steering Committee), serving as the foundational evidence base for governance reviews. The Project Board uses these logframe metrics to identify components that are not progressing well and to make corrective governance decisions.

Work planning is rated **Moderately Satisfactory.**

4.3.3. Finance and Co-finance

Financial controls

An evaluation of the project's financial architecture reveals that while robust and rigorous financial control mechanisms have been established to track expenditures and ensure accounting compliance, they do not function in a manner that allows for the timely flow of funds or smooth operational decision-making. On the side of oversight and accountability, the controls are extensive. The project integrates its multi-year budget directly into UNDP’s Quantum ERP platform. The fund disbursement and verification process follows a strict multi-tiered approval chain under the National Implementation Modality (NIM) framework:

- **Advance Request Controls:** Responsible parties must formulate detailed Itemized Cost Estimates (ICEs) based on their work plans. These are consolidated by the Project Management Unit (PMU) and undergo sequential national sign-offs—first by the Project Manager, next by the Chief Director of the MoECC, and finally by the Permanent Secretary before being submitted to the UNDP Country Office alongside the Funding Authorization and Certification of Expenditures (FACE) form.
- **Procurement Compliance:** All IPs are mandated to strictly follow national procurement guidelines during activity execution to prevent irregularities.
- **Ex-Post Verification Controls:** Following activity delivery, IPs must submit their actual expenditure data within the ICE form, backed by their official cash books and institutional bank statements, which are systematically audited and verified by the PMU's Finance Officer before any costs are cleared.

While these structures provide exceptional transparent checks and balances, non-compliance to the procedures and processes severely paralyze the timely flow of funds and hinder project execution. A primary source of funding disruption is the systemic delay in finalizing annual work plans. Although the UNDP Regional Office for Africa automatically releases 30% of the Annual Spending Limit (ASL) at the start of the year, additional funds cannot be released until the full annual work plan is approved by the Project Board, signed by the MoECC, transmitted to the UNDP Country Office, endorsed by the Resident Representative, and uploaded onto Quantum. The MoECC consistently struggles to transmit these signed documents on time. For example, during the 2026 fiscal year, the Board convened in February, but by the time of the MTR mission in April 2026, the signed work plan and FACE form had still not reached the UNDP Country Office, completely freezing the release of the ASL.

Furthermore, the project's collective liquidation policy acts as a compounding driver of fund disbursement delays. Under UNDP rules, subsequent funding tranches are withheld until a strict 80% expenditure liquidation threshold is met. To achieve this, *all* participating IPs must individualistically cross the 80% liquidation mark so the PMU can submit a consolidated clearance package to UNDP. In practice, certain IPs routinely experience technical capacity gaps and miss reporting deadlines, which inadvertently freezes financial flows for the entire project, trapping higher-performing partners in localized funding standstills.

Ultimately, these internal financial control failures have had a direct, negative impact on overall project delivery rates. As explicitly documented in the early PIRs, Quantum setup glitches combined with un-committed resources and early-year audit pauses created immense backlogs. Because resources are not committed on time, the Cumulative General Ledger (GL) delivery rate reached just 1.34% against the total approved ProDoc budget and a mere 4.56% against the annualized expected targets.

Planned and actual expenditures

The project experienced significant and persistent variance between planned and actual expenditures, characterized by severe financial under-delivery during the project's initial operational cycles. In the early phases of implementation, the project faced massive spending shortfalls where actual expenditures represented only a small fraction of the approved budgets detailed in the ProDoc and AWPs. Specifically, the cumulative General Ledger (GL) delivery against the total approved ProDoc budget reached a mere 1.34%. Even when measured against the adjusted, annualized expected delivery targets for that specific timeframe, actual expenditures only reached 4.56%, leaving a vast majority of the allocated funds unspent and carried forward.

The primary drivers of these substantial expenditure variances are rooted in structural startup delays and systemic technical disruptions within the UNDP financial architecture. Although the project document was signed in June 2023, on-the-ground execution did not begin until February 2024, creating an immediate multi-month gap where planned expenditures were completely frozen. This initial delay was heavily compounded by severe technical glitches experienced by UNDP Sierra Leone in setting up and configuring

the project within the Quantum ERP platform. These Quantum integration issues directly blocked the timely disbursement of funds, meaning that resources could not be committed or expended according to the original work-plan timelines. Additionally, the presence of a mandatory audit at the start of the year (2054) further paused financial allocations and delayed the initiation of planned fiscal activities.

Beyond administrative and platform issues, the variance was exacerbated by institutional capacity constraints and compliance actions among the executing partners. Because this is the first project implemented under the full NIM by the Government of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Environment faced a steep learning curve in establishing the PMU and setting up basic banking channels.

Due diligence in the management of funds – annual audits

The project was subjected to an annual audit in 2025 commissioned by the UNDP CO and in 2026, it was subjected to a second audit, and this was ongoing at the time when the in-country MTR mission was being conducted. The PMU also confirmed that outside the UNDP CO commissioned audits for the project, the MoECC is also subjected to an annual government audit, and this involves auditing all the projects under the MoECC.

Co-financing materialization

An assessment of the co-financing architecture reveals that tracking and verifying the exact level of materialization of co-financing committed during the project design phase remains a significant reporting challenge. While the original Project Document outlined clear parallel funding commitments from MoECC, the 2024 and 2025 Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) do not explicitly provide a finalized or fully updated dollar-for-dollar materialization matrix for these parallel investments. The FY2025 PIR reported co-financing materialization from UNDP. Out of the USD 300,000 in cash co-financing committed by UNDP, an allocation of $50,000 was deployed during the 2025 financial year. In addition to these liquid funds, UNDP furnished the Project Management Unit (PMU) with an operational vehicle valued at $39,000, bringing the materialization amount to $89,000 – representing 30% materialization rate. Although the FY2024 and FY2025 PIR reported no co-financing materialization from the Government of Sierra Leone, co-financing materialization was reported at the time of the MTR alongside signed letters confirmation co-financing materialization. The co-financing materialized from the EPA at MTR was less than 1% of the amount pledged during the PPG phase (**Table 11**) and the MTR was unable to identify the reason for this very low materialization rate. Co-financing was also mobilized from the MoECC although this entity did not commit to co-financing during the PPG phase since the institution was non-existent at the time. Overall, the co-financing materialization rate of the project at MTR was 47.7%. It is worthwhile for the PMU to continue tracking and reporting co-financing annually.

Table 11: Materialization of co-financing for the WAP Project

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
UNDP	UNDP TRAC Resources	Grant	300,000	89,000	30%
Government of Sierra Leone	EPA	Grant	17,700,000	57,039.26	0.32%
Government of Sierra Leone	MoECC	Grant	0	8,453,085.75	NA
		TOTAL	**18,000,000**	8,599,125	**47.7%**

Finance and co-finance is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

4.3.4. Project level monitoring and evaluation systems

Quality of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan implementation

An evaluation of the project's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework indicates the integration of an M&E plan into the ProDoc. The budget allocated during the design phase (USD 146,600) was structurally sufficient to cover standard GEF and UNDP tracking requirements, including annual Project Implementation Reviews, tracking tools, and this MTR and terminal evaluation. Discussion with the PMU team confirmed that the resources allocated for M&E is sufficient and has so far been used effectively for conducting monitoring of the project activities. An assessment of the project's compliance with the M&E requirements of the GEF is presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Assessment of the WAP project's compliance with its M&E plan

GEF M&E requirements	Prescription as per the ProDoc	MTR assessment on the extent to which the requirement has been adhered by the WAP project
Inception workshop and report	An **inception workshop** will be conducted within 60 days of project CEO Endorsement. The purpose of the workshop is to, among other things: Familiarize core stakeholders with the comprehensive project strategy while evaluating any macroeconomic, political, or environmental shifts that have occurred since the project's initial conceptualization to determine their influence on implementation; Define the explicit roles and responsibilities of the project team, establishing clear reporting lines, stakeholder engagement frameworks, and formal conflict resolution mechanisms; Review the project logframe and monitoring plan, clarify institutional responsibilities for tracking progress, finalize the dedicated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) budget; Clarify the specific oversight roles of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Operational Focal Point (OFP) and other key institutions involved in project-level monitoring; Review and update risk management matrices, including the project risk log, the SESP, the ESMF, grievance redress mechanisms, the gender mainstreaming strategy, and knowledge management frameworks; Establish standardized financial reporting systems, structure budget monitoring procedures, outline mandatory compliance requirements, and agree upon formal arrangements for the annual independent audit; Schedule upcoming Project Board sessions, finalize the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Board members, and formalize the first-year annual work plan; and Formally inaugurate and launch the project's field operations.	The WAP project adhered to inception workshop – the workshop was organized on December 19, 2023 and the inception report was elaborated within the same month.
Project Implementation Report	The PIR will be prepared for each year of the project's lifecycle, capturing activities conducted from July of the preceding year through June of the current year. Throughout this process, any identified social and environmental risks, along with their corresponding mitigation and management plans, will undergo routine monitoring, with updated progress formally documented within the PIR. Once submitted to the GEF, these annual reviews will be shared directly with the Project Board to support governance oversight, and the	The WAP project is compliant to the PIR requirements. At MTR, two PIRs had been elaborated – FY24 and FY25.

	official quality assessment rating from the previous year's report will be used to guide and improve the preparation of the next reporting cycle.	
GEF and/or LDCF Core Indicators	The GEF Core Indicators will serve as the primary metrics for tracking global environmental benefits, and they must be formally updated for GEF reporting before the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and Terminal Evaluation (TE). The project management team holds the direct responsibility for maintaining and updating the status of these indicators. Furthermore, this updated monitoring dataset must be shared with the MTR and TE consultants in advance of their respective evaluation missions, ensuring that the information is readily available for subsequent field verification and ground-truthing.	The completed GEF Focal Area Tracking Tool was shared with the MTR consultants during the MTR mission.
Independent mid-term review	The evaluation will be conducted in an independent, impartial, and rigorous manner. To ensure objectivity, the consultants recruited by UNDP evaluation specialists to execute this assignment will have no prior operational connections to any organizations involved in the project's design, execution, or advisory phases. Ultimately, the finalized MTR report along with its original Terms of Reference (TOR) will be made publicly accessible in English and will be officially published on the UNDP Evaluation Resource Center (ERC) database by June 10, 2026.	This is adhered to – UNDP commissioned the MTR and contracted an international consultant to conduct the MTR. The final MTR report will be available by June 10, 2026.
Terminal evaluation	An independent terminal evaluation (TE) will be conducted once the project's main outputs and activities have been completed. The evaluation process will commence three months prior to the project's operational closure. The finalized TE report along with its original Terms of Reference (TOR) will be made publicly accessible in English and will be officially published on the UNDP Evaluation Resource Center (ERC) database by March 9, 2029.	This is planned.

Appropriateness of M&E system to the project context

The conceptual design of the M&E system is appropriate and well-aligned with the project's technical objectives and international accountability standards. By incorporating specialized evaluation instruments such as the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), the GEF Core Indicators, and the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), the design directly targets the core conservation demands of the Western Area Peninsula National Park (WAPNP). The METT, for instance, is an exceptionally relevant choice for this specific context, as it provides a structured, quantitative baseline to measure the long-term impact of protected area management interventions. Furthermore, the inclusion of gender-disaggregated tracking and multi-lingual knowledge management metrics under Outcome 4 matches the localized socio-economic profile of the eight pilot communities, ensuring that community engagement and alternative livelihood rollouts are measured equitably.

Monitoring tools

Provision of necessary information: The existing monitoring tools provide necessary but highly uneven information, excelling at tracking administrative compliance while lagging on field-level outcome verification. At the strategic and safeguard levels, tools like the annual PIR and the updated Social and Environmental Screening Procedure effectively capture risk logs, financial expenditures, and gender-disaggregated targets. Furthermore, the mandatory application of the METT provided critical, high-level

data by logging an overall score of 39% for the WAPNP. The mobile-based monitoring/tracking of the planted trees and mangroves provides information on the number of trees and mangroves planted alongside their survival status. The project has a tool for assessing the knowledge of participants on key themes before and after a workshop in order to track the impact of the project's workshop on its participants. Equally, a scorecard has been developed for the project and the scorecard will be used to measure the impact of capacity building interventions of the project.

Involvement of key partners: The involvement of key partners in the M&E process is structurally defined. Formally, a clear reporting chain exists: responsible parties formulate Itemized Cost Estimates (ICEs) and progress updates, submitting them to the Project Management Unit (PMU) within MoECC, which then consolidates the data for the UNDP Country Office and the Project Steering Committee). Each IP is responsible for conducting monitoring for their respective activities under implementation and the PMU provides monitoring oversight.

Alignment or mainstreamed within national systems: Alignment of the M&E system of the project with national systems remains weak. During the MTR, stakeholders consulted confirmed the existence of a newly established secretariat for national monitoring under the office of the president, but the project monitoring system is not linked or aligned to it.

Use of existing information: the MTR did generate any information pertaining to the use of existing information by the project's M&E system.

Need for additional monitoring tools: The project must move away from purely retrospective annual reporting by integrating satellite-based or GIS-mapped spatial tracking tools. This is required to provide the NPAA with immediate, field-level alerts regarding boundary encroachment and illegal logging hot-spots.

To enhance community engagement and data precision, the project team utilized an inclusive, innovative, and participatory monitoring framework that directly involved local residents. Specifically, the ecological restoration of both terrestrial and coastal ecosystems relied on recruiting and training community members to act as field trackers. Using mobile smartphones, these trackers log individual data points for each planted tree and mangrove, which are then transmitted directly to a centralized cloud platform. This system generates automated, real-time metrics detailing the total volume of flora planted alongside its exact health status, such as whether a plant is in good or critical condition. At the MTR stage, however, it was verified that the project's allocated cloud storage space had reached full capacity, temporarily preventing new tracking data from being synchronized or displayed on the digital platform. Despite this technological bottleneck, the integration of a dedicated mobile application for field-level ecological tracking is recognized as a highly innovative management practice.

The MTR also assessed the extent to which the recommendations made in the PIRs have been implemented. The assessment revealed that most of the recommendations were addressed as presented in **Table 13**.

Table 13: Analysis of the extent to which recommendations made in the PIRs were addressed

Recommendations	**Measures taken / status**
2024 PIR - RTA	
To PMU	
Prepare the project delivery acceleration plan to fully utilize the total budget for the first 2 years of the project by 12 June 2025 as detailed in the total budget and work plan of project document	Done. The project delivering of 38% as at 2025 and this is year, the PMU intends to accelerate to over 50%

Expedite the process of implementing the SESP/ESMF plan to timely address concerns of communities/project beneficiaries.	SESP Consultant has been hired and draft report produced. GRM system has been put in place with phones provided to the 8 targeted communities complaint committees
Ensure all project co-financiers submit e-mails or letters indicating the amount of co-finance materialized for the next PIR to ensure figures provided are backed by evidence.	Process ongoing
Implement the Gender Action Plan developed at the PPG instead of developing a new one	No new Gender Action Plan is being developed. The project is implementing existing Gender Action in ProDoc
Work with concerned government institutions and communities to confirm official boundaries of the WAPN and other sites to be restored by the project mangrove forests, other forest land)	The PMU has severally engaged the Leadership of the Ministry of the Environment regarding the demarcation of the WANP
Develop clear road map that breaks down the multi year work plan into well sequenced activities and share it with the RTA for review.	Budget revision is done every year and shared
Prepare an interim WAPNP law enforcement and biodiversity monitoring plan to guide the guards' patrols and inform the work of stakeholders in the area	This sit within NPAA mandate and the PMU is following up with the Ministry
Establish the multi-level Coordination Platform as soon as possible to guide the development of the WAPNP management plan and the broad WAP Master Plan.	The PMU has built synergy with already Water Fund with existing Multi-level coordination platform. Management plan already developed and plans are underway for to the Master Plan
Develop an education and awareness plan to guide the work Responsible Parties and other stakeholders in the area.	Knowledge and Communication strategy has been developed by Tacugama who is dealing with this component
PMU to consult different institutions and stakeholders to ensure the consultancies to be undertaken under outcome 3 are well identified, ToR reflects the desired deliverables and all necessary work is timely done to ensure the pilot projects start on time.	Consultant has been hired to develop Financial strategy and draft report produced. A lot of consultation were carried involving stakeholders including the community members and RPs
2025 PIR	
From UNDP CO	
Institution of Monthly Technical Coordination Meetings Establish regular monthly technical meetings involving key stakeholders, including the Project Management Unit (PMU), UNDP, Responsible Parties, and relevant Ministry representatives	This is fully implemented where monthly technical meeting with RPs is held
Deployment of Interim Technical Support In light of delays in international recruitment, the regional Technical Advised the review of TOR for CTA to be streamlined and focused on sustainable land management.	This has been done. With the support from UNDP and RTA International consultants have been hired including CTA and Policy Gap consultant
Strengthening Procurement Compliance Conduct targeted training sessions for Responsible Parties on procurement procedures and financial reporting	This is being implemented. Every year the PMU and UNDP organize training sessions for the RPs in the areas

requirements. This will help reduce delays in liquidation and improve adherence to established protocols.	procurement, reporting, financial Management and compliance issues
Implementation of a Performance Monitoring Dashboard Develop and operationalize a real-time dashboard to track key performance indicators (KPIs), budget utilization, procurement status, and milestone achievements. This will enable proactive management and early identification of risks.	
Streamlining Decision-Making Processes: Define and document clear decision-making pathways, including escalation protocols for unresolved issues. This will minimize delays caused by unclear responsibilities or bureaucratic bottlenecks.	This process is on-going
Enhanced Field-Level Coordination: Strengthen coordination between field teams and central PMU through scheduled site visits, joint planning sessions, and shared reporting templates. This will improve data flow and ensure that field realities are reflected in strategic decisions.	Monthly Technical meeting and on one to one coordination is ongoing. Also, the project has in place WhatsApp forum involving all the RPs project focal person as well as the heads of Institution implementing the project
Quarterly Implementation Reviews In addition to monthly technical meetings, institute quarterly implementation reviews with senior leadership and technical committee to assess overall progress, validate strategic direction, and reinforce accountability.	In addition to the monthly Technical meeting and Board meeting, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change is briefed on weekly basis on the project progress, challenges and strategic direction hence reinforcing accountability
From RTA	
UNDP CO to enhance oversight of the project to ensure CTA and Gender and Safeguards Officer are recruited as soon as possible.	In addition to the oversight role UNDP is currently playing, CTA and Safeguards Officer have been recruited
UNDP CO to engage the SES TA to advise on implementation of the SESP/ESMF as the Gender and Safeguards Officer gets recruited	Done
The IP to ensure CTA and Gender and Safeguards Officer are recruited as soon as possible to fill the current gaps in the project implementation	Done
PMU to develop delivery acceleration plan.	Done. The project delivery was at 38% as of 2025 and this is year, it is the intent of the PMU to accelerate to over 50%
PMU to monitor materialization of co-financing.	At MTR, the PMU provided information of co-financing materialized from the Government

The project level monitoring and evaluation system is rated **Satisfactory.**

4.3.5. Stakeholder engagement

Development and leveraging of necessary and appropriate partnership

An analysis of the 2024 and 2025 PIRs and stakeholder consultations during the MTR demonstrates that while the project has successfully built and leveraged core partnerships with primary, high-level statutory stakeholders, its engagement with tangential and local executing partners has been uneven, occasionally suffering from severe operational and compliance disruptions. On the positive side, the project has effectively cemented its macro-level institutional relationships under the NIM. The established MoECC

serves as a politically committed Implementing Partner, actively chairing the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and maintaining strong strategic alignments with core bodies like the NPAA and the EPA.

At the community and grassroots level, the project has developed innovative, participatory partnerships to drive output delivery and build local ownership. A particularly strong example of an appropriate local partnership was the recruitment and training of community members to serve as planters and ecological trackers. While the planters were in charge for the planting and maintenance of trees and mangroves, the trackers utilize an innovative mobile application to log the health and volume of individual trees and mangroves, sending data directly to a cloud platform.

However, severe partnership vulnerabilities emerged at the intermediary delivery level, where compliance failures and technical bottlenecks disrupted project momentum. A critical partnership breakdown occurred with the EFA, the non-governmental entity originally budgeted to lead terrestrial restoration outputs. EFA was formally suspended following a verified breach in procurement procedures concerning restoration supplies, which completely stalled reforestation activities and left the partnership in a state of prolonged uncertainty pending a scheduled UNDP audit mission. While the project demonstrated excellent adaptive management by rapidly leveraging new partnerships with the WONES and the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary to resume field restoration, the initial infraction exposed a lack of proactive capacity screening among executing partners.

Furthermore, the project's partnership model has struggled to effectively bridge the gap between high-level policy engagement and operational enforcement. While the partnership with the NPAA is solid within the boardroom, it has failed to translate into effective field-level protection. Due to severe domestic funding shortages from the state to the NPAA, the partnership lacks the operational inputs and forest guards necessary to secure the park boundaries. This resource gap has allowed rapid residential encroachment, commercial charcoal burning, and illegal logging to outpace project interventions, causing a 7% decline in the park's overall management effectiveness score.

Participation and country-driven processes

An analysis of PIRs alongside MTR stakeholder interviews demonstrates a high level of country ownership, with both national and local government stakeholders actively supporting and driving the project's objectives. At the national level, the project is characterized by strong political leadership, particularly from the MoECC, which serves as the principal Implementing Partner under the full NIM. The high level of national commitment is explicitly demonstrated by the Minister's active engagement, including leading joint monitoring missions to key project sites such as Mambo and the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. This direct high-level involvement underscores a strong passion for the project's success and provides the necessary political backing to keep implementation moving forward despite broader structural challenges.

National stakeholders continue to hold an active, institutionalized role in project decision-making through the formal governance mechanisms established in the Project Document. The Project Board, which is actively chaired by the MoECC and includes statutory representatives from the NPAA and EPA, serves as the central hub for strategic steering and project delivery decisions. At the local and grassroots level, community stakeholders demonstrate strong ownership and are highly integrated into the project's daily decision-making processes. For instance, in field-level restoration zones, local communities provide direct input and recommendations regarding which indigenous tree and agroforestry species (such as mango and avocado) should be prioritized for planting. Furthermore, local ownership is highly visible within the established Village Savings and Land Associations (VSLAs), where community members independently manage financial decision-making, set the terms for issuing alternative-livelihood loans, and govern their own internal repayment structures.

Despite this robust stakeholder support and active participation in decision-making, the effectiveness and efficiency of these country-driven processes are severely bottlenecked by downstream operational constraints within the government structures. While the Ministry of Environment provides exceptional

boardroom leadership, national systems struggle with administrative and financial efficiency. Delays within the MoECC in finalizing and transmitting signed annual work plans to the UNDP Country Office consistently freeze the release of the Annual Spending Limit (ASL), creating severe funding gaps that stall field implementation. Additionally, the project's country-driven enforcement is weak; due to severe state funding shortages, the NPAA lacks the operational resources and forest guards necessary to back up Board decisions in the field, allowing rapid external threats like illegal logging and residential encroachment to outpace project interventions.

Participation and public awareness

Documentary evidence and MTR interviews with stakeholders indicates that public awareness and stakeholder engagement have served as vital engines for the project's foundational progress. Under Outcome 4, the deployment of extensive conservation education campaigns and audio jingles has effectively shifted local mindsets. By translating these communication materials into three local languages (Krio, Temne, and Mende) and distributing them systematically across the WAPNP border zones, the project successfully fostered environmental literacy. Stakeholder interviews confirm that this heightened awareness has directly altered community behaviors, prompting beneficiaries to abandon destructive environmental practices and engage in more sustainable livelihoods, especially those individuals receiving direct support from the project (planters, trackers, and VSLAs members). This shift has accelerated field-level progress, creating an inclusive participation profile where outreach campaigns successfully engaged 400 active participants, maintaining a balanced ratio of 41.5% female and 58.5% male engagement.

Nevertheless, there is a profound, deeply invested interest among both community and national stakeholders in the project’s long-term success and sustainability. At the national level, the MoECC exhibits strong institutional ownership under the NIM, with the Minister personally leading joint monitoring missions to field sites to drive success. At the grassroots level, local communities are heavily invested because their long-term economic resilience is now directly tied to the project’s alternative livelihood frameworks, such as the self-governed VSLA loan structures. Furthermore, the innovative use of mobile tracking applications has empowered community members to act as ecological trackers, generating a sense of local guardianship over the planted mangroves and trees. However, to ensure this invested interest translates into permanent sustainability past the project's mid-term mark, the PMU must urgently unblock the delayed National Conservation Trust Fund to secure a steady stream of domestic landscape financing, ensuring that community-led protection does not collapse once external donor funds are exhausted.

Stakeholder engagement is rated **Satisfactory**.

4.3.6. Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

Concerning the status of social and environmental safeguards implementation, the project’s revised SESP (2023) determined the project risk rating to be substantial. This rating necessitated the development of an environmental and social management framework (ESMF) to guide risk mitigation throughout the project lifespan. The ESMF for the project was developed during the PPG phase. The SES implementation was retarded due to severe delays in recruiting essential project personnel. The project implementing partner, the Ministry of Environment, experienced challenges in recruiting a dedicated Gender and Safeguards Officer. In 2024, the UNDP RTA flagged that the terms of reference for this position were produced, but the hiring process had not commenced. By the 2025 reporting period, this key position remained vacant, leaving the project without the necessary technical capacity to execute the ESMF. Hence, tree planting and mangrove restoration had commenced without the safeguard framework in place. To mitigate these risks, the RTA requested the UNDP CO to work closely with the UNDP SES Technical Advisor to implement the SES as the Gender Safeguards Officer gets recruited. At the time of the MTR, it was confirmed that the National Safeguard Consultant had been hired. An assessment of the state of implementation of the safeguard plans and measures is presented in **Table 14**.

Table 14: Assessment of the implementation of SES measures and plans of the WAP project at mid-term review

SES measures / plans	MTR assessment
Environmental and social impact assessment. This was meant to be completed within the first semester of the project implementation.	The ESIA was not conducted within the first six months of the project implementation. At the time of the MTR, the ESIA had been conducted, and a draft report was available.
Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). This was to be developed by the first year of project implementation.	The ESMP had not been developed by first year of project implementation.
Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment	At MTR, there was no evidence that a SESA had been conducted.
Livelihood Action Plan (LAP). This was to be developed by the first year of project implementation.	At MTR, there was no evidence that a LAP had been elaborated.
Economic Displacement Risk Assessment and Conflict Prevention Plan (CPP)	At MTR, there was no evidence that a CPP had been elaborated.
Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP). This was to be elaborated by the first year of the project	At MTR, there was no evidence that a IPP had been elaborated. Discussion with the PMU revealed that indigenous peoples were not identified in the project area and non-existent in Sierra Leone. Consequently, there was no need to elaborate the plan. It is worthwhile for such changes to be reported in the PIRs.
Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). This was planned to be established within the first three months of the project implementation	At mid-term, the grievance redress mechanism became operational through the setup of dedicated grievance committees across the target communities. To facilitate direct communication with the project management unit and the implementing partner, committee representatives received mobile phones specifically for reporting community complaints. Despite these foundational structures, a significant awareness gap remains among local residents. Community members generally do not know that they possess the right to bypass their local committee and submit unresolved issues directly to higher management at the PMU or the UNDP. Furthermore, the specific procedural steps required to escalate a grievance through these higher oversight channels have not been effectively communicated to the public. Regarding the formal registration of complaints, the PMU did not document any grievances, and consequently, none were reflected in the annual implementation reports prior to the midterm review. In the view of the evaluator, however, several operational issues raised by project partners

	meet the criteria for grievances and required official logging by the PMU: • For instance, one responsible party disclosed that rangers disrupted planting activities in the Mambo region and destroyed a portion of the newly established vegetation. • Additionally, a separate incident in Rogbaylor involved the destruction of restored mangrove fields by an outside community. While this matter was reported to the project management unit, the situation was ultimately managed and resolved by the National Protected Area Authority. • Finally, a partner organization reported instances of land encroachment and fire outbreaks at active terrestrial restoration plots, emphasizing the urgent necessity for increased site security. This particular security threat was also formally introduced to board members during a scheduled project board meeting.

Social and Environmental Safeguards is rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

4.3.7. Reporting

Reporting of adaptive management by project team and sharing with the project board

Stakeholder consultations as part of the MTR and analysis of project documentation reveals that while the Project Management Unit (PMU) frequently practices real-time adaptive management to overcome operational bottlenecks, the formal reporting and sharing of these changes with the Project Board remains inconsistent and partially undocumented. Structurally, macro-level adaptive shifts are not systematically recorded within the annual PIRs. The most notable of these high-level changes occurred when the Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) was suspended due to a procurement infraction. This critical operational pivot—and the subsequent reallocation of restoration duties to the WONES and the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary was a decision taking by the project board but this information is not reported in the PIR under the adaptive management section.

At the field and execution levels, the project team has successfully implemented highly practical adaptive adjustments to address immediate logistical challenges, though their formal reporting varies. For instance, during the reforestation rollout in the Mambo area, WONES discovered that the rugged, inaccessible terrain prevented vehicles from transporting restoration materials directly to the storage center or planting sites. Recognizing that the initial limit of 60 workers was insufficient for manual portage under these conditions, WONES submitted an official amendment request to the PMU. The PMU efficiently approved the request, allowing the workforce to double to 120 individuals, which successfully preserved planting schedules. Similarly, to combat systemic delays stemming from national procurement guidelines where Request for Proposal (RFP) processes routinely consume up to three months, at MTR, the PMU was working on initiating a proactive scheduling adjustment. By pre-identifying upcoming RFP-dependent activities and launching their procurement sequences well in advance of the planned implementation window, the PMU designed an operational workaround to ensure contracts are finalized "just in time," thereby eliminating delays that prevent responsible parties from liquidating funds on schedule. This is an adaptive management

that is worthwhile documenting in the PIR (under the implementation schedule) and the information should be shared with the project board and the relevant IPs.

Despite the operational success of these tactical maneuvers, a significant reporting gap exists regarding some of the project's most impactful and innovative socio-economic adaptations. A primary example is the introduction of the VSLAs across the eight pilot communities. While the VSLA approach has emerged as a cornerstone for community ownership, micro-incentives, and alternative livelihood financing, it was entirely absent from the original Project Document design. Although this represents a classic, highly successful example of grassroots adaptive management, MTR findings reveal that the shift has not been formally documented in the PIRs. To ensure comprehensive oversight and institutional memory, the PMU needs to establish a formalized "Adaptive Management Log" within its standard reporting toolkits.

Fulfillment of GEF reporting requirement

Consultations with key stakeholders indicated that the MoECC and the PMU have consistently compiled the annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) in a timely manner. The standard operational workflow dictates that once the PMU develops an initial draft, it is submitted to both the UNDP Country Office and the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor for their formal review and commentary. The PMU then systematically addresses all received feedback, maintaining an iterative refinement process until the PIR is officially validated and cleared by UNDP.

Sharing of PIRs with project board and other stakeholders

Stakeholder consultations with project stakeholders and members of the project board revealed that the completed PIRs are shared with the project board and the responsible parties of the project.

Documentation and sharing of lessons learned with key partners

According to the 2025 PIR, the project actively captures and disseminates best practices and lessons learned by documenting operational experiences, conducting post-activity reviews, and leveraging knowledge-sharing networks—such as the dedicated WAP Project M&E platform and the official Facebook page of the MoECC. However, the MTR was unable to locate an official, consolidated document compiling these insights, nor did it find verified evidence that such a knowledge product had been shared with project partners.

Reporting is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

4.3.8. Communications and Knowledge Management

Internal project communication

The internal communication network among project stakeholders is well-structured and operates with high efficiency. At the executive level, regular and productive communication flows continuously between key national government bodies, including the MoECC, the NPAA, and the EPA. Operationally, the primary channels used to facilitate these daily internal exchanges are email and a dedicated project WhatsApp group that includes all active responsible parties. Whenever an organization launches a field activity or hosts an official event, real-time updates and logistics are circulated within this digital group to ensure comprehensive awareness across the entire partner network. This continuous digital engagement is further reinforced by formal quarterly review meetings that bring all project partners together. During these sessions, executing entities present detailed reports on completed activities and share emergent lessons learned, creating a reliable, collaborative feedback loop that allows the project team to identify issues and implement corrective management measures early on.

External project communication

The project has successfully established robust, far-reaching, and culturally appropriate external communication channels to convey its progress and intended impacts to the public. Rather than relying on

a singular external medium, the project team deployed a multi-tiered communication strategy under Component 4 that successfully combined social media presence with intensive, localized public awareness campaigns designed to penetrate communities surrounding the WAPNP.

The digital web presence and information dissemination infrastructure have been anchored directly by national systems to ensure institutional alignment and visibility. External communication is channelled systematically through the official social media networks of the MoECC, most notably its active Facebook page. Discussion with the PMU during the MTR mission indicated that the project is currently financing and supporting a comprehensive redesign of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's official website. Once completed, this upgraded digital platform will serve as a primary public portal to showcase and publicize the project's ongoing activities, milestones, and formal outputs.

In addition to the use of the social media space, the project designed and executed highly successful, inclusive outreach and public awareness campaigns. A standout feature of this external communication strategy was the translation of conservation education materials and radio jingles into three dominant local languages: Krio, Temne, and Mende. By using localized radio broadcasts, the project was able to bypass literacy barriers and communicate its intended long-term impact directly to the target public. These external awareness drives have yielded immediate behavioral progress; according to the 2025 PIR and mid-term observations, the continuous sensitization campaigns successfully shifted community mindsets, steering local beneficiaries away from illegal logging or charcoal burning and toward sustainable alternative activities like agroforestry and village savings networks. The external campaigns maintained an equitable public reach, engaging 400 active community members with a balanced participation split of 41.5% female and 58.5% male participants.

Communication and knowledge is rated **Highly Satisfactory.**

Overall, the implementation and adaptive management of the project is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

4.4. Sustainability

4.4.1. Financial risks to sustainability

Document review and MTR interviews indicate the likelihood of financial resources not being available following project closure is high if current operational and structural trends are not corrected. There is a severe and persistent baseline under-funding of the national entities legally mandated to protect the landscape. Specifically, the NPAA is explicitly flagged as lacking the basic inputs and necessary financial resources required to maintain its forest guard presence on the ground. Because domestic public funding is severely deficient, the project area is experiencing a 7% drop in its METT score (falling to 39%). This decline is driven by rapid real-world threats that the state cannot afford to intercept, including illegal logging, commercial charcoal burning, and aggressive residential encroachment. Without the core GEF trust fund to subsidize operations, national institutions currently lack the independent fiscal capacity to sustain project outcomes. The project has engaged local communities in the planting, maintenance and tracking of planted trees and mangroves through cash for work. There are mixed views in relating to the possibility of community members to continue maintaining the planted trees and mangroves post project closure. While a few communities confirmed that they will continue maintaining the planted trees and mangroves beyond the life of the project, members of other communities confirmed they will not be in a position to provide further maintenance for the planted trees after the life of the project due to the lack of financial support (payments) to embark on the maintenance.

The MTR identifies two distinct tiers of financial opportunities to secure the project’s future. First, the project's primary built-in financial opportunity is the creation and operationalization of the National Conservation Trust Fund (NCTF) under component 3. The explicit objective of this mechanism is to diversify funding sources by attracting public, private, and international green capital, aiming to secure a permanent 15% to 25% increase in domestic landscape financing. Second, on the ground, the project is leveraging economic opportunities through terrestrial and coastal restoration activities. By integrating high-

value fruit-bearing species like mango and avocado in the terrestrial restoration, the project is establishing an economic engine for local farmers, providing a self-sustaining economic incentive for communities to protect the park boundaries.

Relating to factors needed to create an enabling environment for continued financing, the MTR identifies the operationalization of the National Conservation Trust Fund as primordial. The Trust Fund represents a national mechanism that could ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends. However, due to the slow consultant recruitment pipelines documented under Component 3, the regulatory and capitalization mechanisms required to capture public and private market investments remain unfinalized. At the local level, the project has successfully funded and deployed grassroots economic mechanisms (VSLAs) to ensure local benefit flows.

The financial risks to sustainability of the project is rated **Moderately Likely**.

4.4.2. Socio-economic risks to sustainability

The MTR identifies severe, active social and economic pressures that present a critical, real-world threat to the long-term sustainability of the project's ecological outcomes. The WAPNP border zones face acute external threats driven by localized economic survival and urbanization. Specifically, rapid residential encroachment, widespread illegal logging, and extensive commercial charcoal burning represents ongoing disruptions. These societal pressures are directly causing a tangible decline in conservation integrity, as evidenced by a 7% drop in the park's overall METT score. Because the economic drivers behind these activities are deeply rooted in the surrounding population's baseline livelihood needs, they create a persistent social friction that constantly pushes against the project's conservation boundaries.

Pertaining to stakeholder ownership and interest, at the macro political level, ownership is high; the MoECC serves as a politically committed Implementing Partner under the NIM, providing robust boardroom leadership. However, there is a severe operational risk that state ownership is insufficiently capitalized to sustain project benefits. The NPAA is explicitly flagged as lacking the basic domestic funding and operational resources necessary to field a sufficient force of forest guards to enforce protection. This resource gap means that while high-level government stakeholders see it as a priority that project benefits continue to flow, they currently lack the financial capacity to back up that interest with field-level law enforcement. At the local level, local communities actively recognize that their long-term economic security is directly tied to the project's success, particularly through sustainable alternative frameworks like village savings networks.

As it relates to the adequacy of public and stakeholder awareness in support of the project's objective, the project is highly successful. The project team engineered an inclusive, multilingual outreach campaign by translating conservation materials and educational radio jingles into Krio, Temne, and Mende. This broad public awareness has successfully shifted local mindsets, driving community members to actively abandon destructive habits and participate in participatory monitoring, restoration, and the VSLAs.

A significant operational gap exists regarding the continual documentation of lessons learned by the project team. While the 2025 PIR claims that the project captures and disseminates emergent best practices through post-activity reviews, local documentation, and digital media channels—including the WAP Project M&E platform and the Ministry's official Facebook page, the MTR could not identify a standalone, verifiable document detailing lessons learned and best practices that has been officially published or systematically shared back with the broader circle of project partners and executing entities.

The socio-economic risks to sustainability of the project is rated **Moderately Unlikely.**

4.4.3. Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

The current institutional framework poses significant structural risks that threaten to jeopardize the project's long-term conservation benefits. The existing legal framework has failed to protect the landscape from rapid external threats. Due to overlapping ministerial jurisdictions, the lack of a unified regulatory approach has

allowed commercial charcoal burning, and illegal logging to outpace field interventions. The project established VSLAs across communities and provided support in the establishment of their internal procedures and regulations. At MTR, a full assessment of operational challenges was precluded by the fact that most of these groups had been active for only three months. Although group members across all target communities expressed confidence that the Village Savings and Land Associations (VSLAs) will remain operational after the project concludes, ongoing programmatic oversight and targeted capacity-building support from the project team remain critical. Extending this transitional support will ensure the associations achieve long-term maturity and accumulate the baseline operational experience required to remain financially viable and self-sustaining beyond the project's official lifecycle.

Consultations with key stakeholders during the Mid-Term Review (MTR) highlighted that rapid personnel turnover among park rangers poses a direct risk to the project's long-term sustainability. While many rangers have received specialized technical training through the project, the vast majority are employed on short-term contracts. Consequently, when their contractual agreements with the NPAA expire, these trained personnel leave the institution and are replaced by unequipped recruits, resulting in a continuous loss of institutional knowledge and technical capacity. The MTR did not identify any stakeholder consensus regarding project's immediate objectives and a formal consensus on a concrete post-project course of action

The institutional and governance risks to sustainability of the project is rated **Moderately Likely**

4.4.4. Environmental risks to sustainability

Climatic hazards, such as droughts and shifting precipitation patterns, can severely jeopardize the survival rates of newly planted trees. Similarly, members of the VSLAs who engage in agricultural initiatives risk having their productivity and yields heavily disrupted by the dual threats of drought and flooding. The environmental risk to sustainability is **Moderately Likely.**

The overall sustainability rating of the project is Moderately Likely (**Table 15**).

Table 15: Overall sustainability rating for the WAP project

Sustainability dimension	**MTR rating**
Financial risk	Moderately Likely
Socio-economic risk	Moderately Unlikely
Institutional framework and governance risk	Moderately Likely
Environmental risk	Moderately Likely
Overall rating	**Moderately Likely**

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

The mid-term review for the Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula project confirms that the initiative has built essential high-level institutional and grassroots foundations but faces critical operational, financial, and risk-management bottlenecks that impede progress toward its core objective. The project exhibits a highly balanced profile of clear strategic strengths alongside acute operational vulnerabilities that must be addressed to ensure long-term sustainability.

Project Strengths

Based on available evidence, the primary strength of the project lies in its high degree of alignment with national development priorities and updated climate targets, including the medium-term national development plan and the nationally determined contributions of Sierra Leone. This alignment has fostered robust country-driven ownership at the highest political tiers, characterized by active leadership from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and multi-agency representation on the project steering committee.

Furthermore, the project has successfully engineered highly inclusive and innovative community-level frameworks. The translation of environmental awareness campaigns into three local languages has driven verified behavioral progress, prompting local beneficiaries to abandon destructive practices. Grassroots mechanisms, specifically the self-governed village savings and land associations and the mobile-based ecological tracking framework executed by local residents, have generated genuine local guardianship and alternative financial lifelines across the target communities.

Project Weaknesses and Shortcomings

Conversely, the evaluation identifies systemic implementation lags and structural governance weaknesses that paralyze the project's delivery. At the institutional level, bureaucratic inertia and a lack of active cooperation from key partners have halted critical spatial planning deliverables, such as the master plan for the peninsula. Policy harmonization efforts remain delayed, leaving natural resource management mandates fractured.

A significant technical shortcoming relates to the early-stage management of social and environmental safeguards. Tree planting and coastal restoration commenced before a dedicated safeguards officer was hired or core risk assessment plans were finalized, creating compliance exposures.

The financial architecture is severely constrained by systemic administrative bottlenecks. The collective liquidation rules combined with delayed submissions from responsible parties routinely trigger cascading cash-flow shortages. These funding delays frequently cause teams to miss optimal ecological planting windows.

Finally, the project faces a massive structural funding gap due to intense inflationary pressures and global fuel crises that arose during the five-year start-up delay between initial conceptualization and actual field launch. Consequently, the capital allocated for ecosystem restoration has been exhausted, making the original acreage targets operationally unachievable under current financial parameters.

Strategic Results and Mid-Term Standing

The results achieved by the mid-term stage are highly polarized across the different project components. Progress toward gender mainstreaming, monitoring systems, and community communication under outcome four is highly satisfactory, with the project surpassing its direct beneficiary and gender action plan targets. Awareness drives have generated strong behavioral shifts, with a large majority of sampled audiences reporting positive changes.

However, core environmental and institutional outcomes are severely off-target. Progress under outcome one on institutional capacity and outcome three on innovative financing is unsatisfactory due to slow consultant recruitment and the complete absence of operational domestic financing mechanisms. Most critically, the management effectiveness score of the western area peninsula national park suffered a notable decline from its baseline. This downward trend is driven by expanding, real-world anthropogenic pressures, including illegal logging, commercial charcoal production, and aggressive residential encroachment, which consistently outpace the current enforcement capacities and human resource limits of the national protected area authority.

Long-Term Sustainability Insights

The long-term durability of the project's benefits remains vulnerable, resulting in an overall sustainability rating of moderately likely. The structural economic drivers behind boundary encroachment are deeply tied to baseline local livelihood needs, creating persistent social friction. While state and community stakeholders maintain high interest in sustaining the project's interventions, national systems are insufficiently capitalized to maintain field-level protections or guard presence once external global environment facility funding terminates.

The critical mechanism to bridge this sustainability gap is the operationalization of the national conservation trust fund and planned market-based financing schemes. Until these legal and capitalization frameworks are structurally finalized to capture green capital, the post-closure viability of both the ecological infrastructure and the community co-management models will remain severely compromised.

5.2. Recommendations

Rec #	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
A	**Corrective Actions for Project Design, Implementation, and Financial Management**	
A1	**Restructure Results Framework Indicators and Downwardly Revise Targets**. The project should execute a formal logical framework amendment through the Project Board to address structural design errors and unachievable targets driven by macroeconomic shocks. • **Indicator 1.1 Revision**: Reformulate Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.1 from newly created terrestrial protected areas to an explicit mangrove-specific metric, aligning the indicator framing with its actual marine target ecosystem. • **Indicator 7 Boundary Realignment**: Revise the target for Indicator 7 down from 69,820 hectares to match the actual, verified physical boundaries of the WAPNP, which stands at approximately 18,000 hectares according to World Food Programme spatial data. • **Indicator 8 Parameterization**: Specify the exact types of backyard vegetables, cassava, or targeted agroforestry crops within the indicator text, and formally establish the deferred baseline values. • **Downward Target Adjustments**: Reduce the final acreage targets for tree planting and coastal restoration. The time lag between project design (2017) and implementation (2023) exposed the restoration budget to intense inflation and a global fuel crisis, completely exhausting the capital allocated for biomass cultivation. Maintaining original targets is operationally impossible.	MoECC, UNDP & Project Board
A2	**Mitigate Financial Liquidation Cascades and Establish Proactive Scheduling**. To resolve the chronic cash-flow shortages that stall field	PMU and UNDP

	operations, the PMU should transition from a retrospective reporting model to a proactive monthly tracking system. • **Monthly Risk Signaling**: The unit must engage responsible parties on a strict monthly basis to detect early administrative signals that point to potential liquidation delays. • **Targeted Capacity Support**: Technical support must be deployed directly to underperforming partners to ensure they cross the mandatory 80% expenditure liquidation threshold required to unblock subsequent UNDP financial tranches. • The project should consider providing an annual report card which rates the performance of each responsible party based in a set of established criteria. The report card could serve as a basis for the selection or exclusion of responsible parties in future projects implemented by UNDP.	
A3	**Reallocate Fragmented Ministerial Portfolios for Spatial Planning**. The Project Steering Committee should intervene to resolve the administrative inertia and inter-ministerial coordination failures currently blocking Component 1. The execution of the Master Plan and all associated open-access GIS spatial planning interventions should be structurally relocated from the Ministry of Lands to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. To accelerate this transition and leverage existing co-financing channels, the project should formally onboard the specialized GIS unit housed within the Forestry Department, building directly upon their existing technical experience from parallel FAO governance initiatives	Project Board
A4	**Resolve Executive Agency Suspension**. Following the finalization of its scheduled April 2026 field verification and financial audit of the trees previously planted by the Environmental Foundation for Africa, UNDP should make a definitive administrative decision regarding reinstatement or formal contractual termination and communicate it immediately to EFA to resolve the prolonged operational standstill and permanently stabilize the management arrangements for terrestrial restoration.	UNDP
A5	Assess the impact of alternative livelihoods: Formal assessments to determine whether alternative livelihood interventions are successfully increasing agricultural yields or household incomes have not yet been conducted. To secure community buy-in and ensure the sustainability of conservation outcomes, the project should measure and demonstrate these financial returns (such as from the VSLAs, and agricultural returns where possible, provided the project delivers targeted interventions geared at enhancing crop yields.	PMU
B	**Actions to Follow Up or Reinforce Initial Project Benefits**	
B1	**Expand Cloud Storage Architecture for Digital Geospatial Monitoring**. To safeguard the data integrity of the project's highly innovative mobile tracking framework, the PMU should immediately procure additional cloud storage capacity. The existing cloud server has reached full capacity, completely freezing the synchronization and verification of field-level tree data. Expanding this digital infrastructure is essential to permit trackers to resume logging individual plant health metrics in real time.	PMU/MoECC
B2	**Standardize and Systematize Co-Financing Tracking.** The project team must design and deploy a standardized dollar-for-dollar co-financing tracking tool to remediate severe reporting gaps in annual implementation reviews. While cash contributions from UNDP are tracked, parallel investments from the Government of Sierra Leone present extremely low materialization rates relative to original pledges. The PMU must	PMU/MoECC

	systematically collect signed letters and financial evidence from co-financiers annually to analyze how funding deficits impact broader project components.	
C	**Future Directions: Main Objectives and Mitigating Sustainability Risks**	
C1	**Formalize a Self-Financing Model for Protected Area Management**. To transition the WAPNP away from its total dependence on finite donor funding, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and the National Protected Area Authority must actively pilot the market-based mechanisms detailed under Component 3. The project must accelerate technical collaborations with major downstream utility stakeholders, specifically the Guma Valley Water Company, to operationalize a functional Payment for Ecosystem Services framework. This framework must structurally link urban water revenues directly to upstream forest conservation, creating a self-sustaining financial loop to bridge the park's persistent funding deficits.	PMU/MoECC
C2	**Construct Physical Boundaries and Deploy Spatial Information Technologies**. To stop accelerating habitat fragmentation, illegal logging, and commercial charcoal burning within the protected area, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change should aggressively explore securing domestic capital to establish a physical barrier and a clear boundary demarcation around the park. This physical protection could be combined with advanced park-management information technologies, such as the Earth Ranger platform, to provide real-time boundary encroachment alerts and optimize the patrol routes of the limited forest guard workforce.	MoECC
C3	**Accelerate the Participatory Elaboration of a Project Exit Strategy**. The PMU should immediately initiate the formulation of a comprehensive, participatory exit strategy following the conclusion of this MTR. This process must actively engage national ministries, traditional rulers, village headmen, and non-governmental entities to forge a binding post-project consensus. The exit strategy must establish clear operational transfer pathways for the long-term maintenance of restored ecosystems and specify state budgeting allocations to ensure community co-management models do not collapse once external assistance terminates	PMU/MoECC, UNDP
D	**Social and Environmental Safeguards (Environmental and Social Standards)**	
D1	**Publicize and Escalate the Project-Level Grievance Redress Mechanism**. The Project Management Unit must immediately address critical awareness gaps regarding the accountability and grievance framework across all target landscapes. While dedicated grievance committees have been equipped with mobile phones across the eight communities, local residents remain entirely unaware of their legal right to bypass the established grievance committee and elevate unresolved complaints directly to the PMU or UNDP. The mechanism must be continuously publicized during all community forums and board sessions using highly visual, multi-lingual posters translated into Krio, Temne, and Mende.	PMU and UNDP
D2	**Systematically Log and Investigate Operational Grievances.** The project team must abandon the inaccurate practice of reporting zero grievances within annual project documentation. The Project Management Unit must establish a formal, audited Grievance Log to capture and track emergent field conflicts that meet the criteria for social and environmental infractions.	PMU and UNDP
D3	**Enforce Mandatory Occupational Health and Safety Protocols**. To eliminate severe compliance risks under UNDP Social and Environmental Standard 7 regarding labor and working conditions, the project must implement an immediate equipment replacement cycle. Field trackers and community planters in zones like Last Banking are actively executing	PMU and UNDP

	mangrove restoration barefoot, exposing their limbs to severe lacerations from submerged debris. In regions like Rogbaylor, previously distributed protective gear is completely torn and unusable. The project team must mandate that no site-based restoration work is executed unless laborers are fully equipped with intact, high-quality industrial boots, gloves, and appropriate individual protective equipment.	
D4	**Revision, elaboration, implementation and monitoring of safeguards plans:** The project team should immediately conduct a comprehensive review of the safeguard plans that were originally identified during the project preparation grant phase for development and execution during implementation. This assessment should specifically focus on the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment, the Economic Displacement Risk Assessment and Conflict Prevention Plan, and the Livelihood Action Plan. Following this review, the project should prioritize the immediate formulation and execution of all plans that remain relevant to the current project context. In addition, the project should continuously monitor the physical resettlement risks and other risks associated with its interventions.	PMU and UNDP

ANNEXES

Annex A: Terms of Reference of the MTR

Mid-Term Review Terms of Reference
BASIC CONTRACT INFORMATION

Location: Home-based and mission travel
Type of Contract: Individual Contract
Post Level: International consultant
Languages Required: English
Starting Date: 03 March 2026
Duration Contract: 03 March 2026 through 8 June 2026 (estimated level of effort 30 working days)

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the medium-sized UNDPsupported GEF-financed project titled Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula (PIMS 5542), implemented through the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, which is to be undertaken in 2026. The project started on June 13, 2023, and is in its third year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* (*ERC*).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Western Area Peninsula (WAP) Integrated Landscape Management Project is a GEF-supported initiative designed to strengthen the sustainable and integrated management of the Western Area Peninsula multiple-use landscape in Sierra Leone. The project is implemented in the Western Area Peninsula, covering approximately 69,820 hectares in the extreme west of the country. This ecologically significant landscape forms part of the Upper Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot and includes the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park and the Sierra Leone River Estuary, the latter of which is also designated as a Ramsar site. The landscape hosts the majority of Sierra Leone's terrestrial biodiversity and serves as the main water catchment for the capital city, Freetown, while its mangrove ecosystems represent a significant proportion of the country's mangrove forests.
Despite its global ecological importance, the Western Area Peninsula landscape is under increasing pressure from unsustainable land-use practices, including agricultural encroachment, unplanned urban expansion, quarrying and sand mining, and overexploitation of forest resources. These pressures are exacerbated by weak institutional coordination, limited capacity for participatory landscape management, insufficient data and information for informed decision-making, and inadequate long-term financing for biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management. The project is therefore justified by the urgent need to address these systemic and institutional barriers while tackling the direct drivers of biodiversity loss and land degradation.

The goal of the project is to protect globally significant biodiversity, halt and reverse land degradation, safeguard critical ecosystem services, and generate local and national socio-economic benefits through the integrated and sustainable management of the Western Area Peninsula landscape. Its

overall objective is to strengthen enabling conditions for integrated landscape management, using the WAP as a pilot multipleuse landscape, to advance progress toward land degradation neutrality while maintaining ecosystem services that underpin livelihoods and national development. The project adopts an integrated landscape management approach to establish durable governance systems, resilient institutional capacities, and inclusive decision-making processes that allow multiple stakeholders to pursue shared and complementary objectives.

The project's overall strategy is to address the above-described threats and safeguard the ecological functionality and biological productivity of the Western Area Peninsula landscape, to meet multiple objectives such as biodiversity conservation, carbon storage, and watershed services, as well as to support resilient economic development, agricultural production, and livelihoods, and contribute to land degradation neutrality objectives. This can be achieved through the adoption of an integrated landscape management (ILM) approach that balances the different stakes and needs of target stakeholders, and by actively engaging in an inclusive, gender-sensitive, and collaborative process to identify and implement long-term shared objectives and strategies for sustainable utilization of the landscape.

The project has 3 components:
Component 1: Systemic and Institutional Capacity for ILM
Component 2: Demonstration of ILM implementation on the ground
Component 3: Innovative Financing
Component 4: Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management, and M&E
The expected outcomes of the project are as follows:
Outcome 1: Systemic and institutional capacity lays a long-term foundation for integrated landscape management of the 69,820 ha multi-use landscape
Outcome 2: Implementation of selected ILM and FLR interventions demonstrated in over 21,000 ha, securing biodiversity, ecosystem services, and resilient livelihoods
Outcome 3: Financing frameworks for sustainable integrated landscape management increase ILM, PA, and Biodiversity Finance by at least 25% over the baseline
Outcome 4: Systems designed and used to ensure monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, and gender mainstreaming

The project is implemented through four mutually reinforcing impact pathways that focus on strengthening systemic and institutional capacities for integrated landscape management, demonstrating sustainable land management interventions across more than 20,000 hectares, increasing financial flows for integrated landscape, protected area, and biodiversity management by at least 25 percent over the baseline, and mainstreaming gender equality, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management to support learning, sustainability, and scaling-up of results.

The project started on 10 June 2023 and is scheduled to end on 09 June 2029, with a total GEF-supported budget of USD 5,509,909 and planned co-financing amounting to USD 17,700,000. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change serves as the Implementing Partner, assuming full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of UNDP resources and the delivery of project outputs. UNDP provides implementation oversight and technical support, while key implementation partners, including the Environmental Protection Agency-Sierra Leone, WONES, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, and the Environmental Foundation for Africa, contribute to technical delivery, community engagement, conservation actions, and knowledge generation in close collaboration with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

3. MTR PURPOSE

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also:

The MTR will also

- Review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability
- Review the relevance and suitability of the indicators in the results framework.
- Review the extent to which the planned project activities can lead to programme output/outcomes by project completion and suggestions on adjustments if required.
- Where possible, identify lessons learned (including unsuccessful practices) in relation to the design, implementation, monitoring and management of the project, and any best practices which should be fed into national or sectoral policies or have shown significant potential for replication in similar GEF projects.

The MTR will be commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and will be conducted according to the guidance, rules, and procedures for such evaluations established by UNDP. The final MTR report will be cleared by the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Office and the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor and will be approved by the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful.

The international consultant will review all relevant sources of information, including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e., PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP), the Project Document, project reports including annual PIRs, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review. The international consultant will review the baseline GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The international consultant is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach, ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office, the Nature, Climate and Energy (NCE) Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the Project Management Office, the Implementing Partner, UNDP Sierra Leone, executing agencies, senior officials, task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government, and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the international consultant is expected to conduct field missions to Sierra Leone, including the project sites in the Western Area Rural district. The specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the international consultant and the above-mentioned parties regarding what

is appropriate and feasible for meeting the MTR purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given the limitations of budget, time, and data. The international consultant must use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs, are incorporated into the MTR report.

The final methodological approach, including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the MTR, must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the international consultant.

The final MTR report must describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach, making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of the methods and approach of the review.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The international consultant will assess the following four categories of project progress. **i. Project Strategy**

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
    - o Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Log frame:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's log frame indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?

- Examine if progress so far has led to or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e., income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance, etc.) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDPSupported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator[24]	Baseline Level[25]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[26]	End-ofproject Target	Midterm Level & Assessment[27]	Achievement Rating[28]	Justification for Rating

[24] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

[25] Populate with data from the Project Document

[26] If available

[27] Colour code this column only

[28] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

Objective: To strengthen conditions for the sustainable and integrated management of multipleuse landscapes (piloted in the WAP landscape) to protect globally significant biodiversity, safeguard ecosystem services generating local and national socioeconomic benefits, and advance towards land degradation neutrality	Indicator (if applicable): **Mandatory** GEF Core Indicator 11: direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	Women: 0 Men: 0 Total: 0		Women: 1,107 Men: 1,106 Total: 2,213	Women: 2,214 Men: 2,213 Total: 4,427			
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.1: Terrestrial protected areas newly created	286,000 mangroves ; 30,000 ha of them under communit y forest manageme nt		At least 500 ha of mangroves are under the new communit y PA manageme nt system	At least 1,000 ha of mangrov es under the new communi ty PA managem ent system			
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1.2: Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness	Manageme nt effectivene ss of the WAPNP is currently at 46% (see METT scorecard)		Manageme nt effectivene ss of WAPNP increases by 10 percentage points	Managem ent effective ness of WAPNP increases by 20 percentag e points			

	<u>Mandatory</u> GEF Core Indicator 3.2: Area of forest and forest land restored	0 ha		1,000 ha	2,000 ha			
Outcome 1: Increased systemic and institutional capacities lay a long-term foundation for improved management of the 69,820-ha multiple-use Western Area Peninsula landscape	**Indicator 5:** Aggregated institutional capacity score for the relevant NRM institutions and community groups, as measured by the UNDP institutional capacity development scorecard	Aggregated institutional average capacity score is 43.5 (see completed UNDP Capacity Assessment Scorecard in Annex 13)		Aggregated institutional capacity score increases to at least 50 (men and women benefit equally)	Aggregated institutional capacity score increases to at least 63.5 (men and women benefit equally)			

	Indicator 6: Prioritized sectorial policies incorporate SLM/ILM standards Wildlife Conservation Act of 1972 and its implementing regulations; the Forestry Act of 1988 and its implementing Regulations of 1990; the Environmental Policy of 1994; the Environment Protection Act of 2008; the Environment Protection (Mines and Minerals) Act of 2013; the National Water Resources Management Act of 2017; the Mines and Minerals Act	Seven relevant policies/Acts do not integrate SLM/ILM adequately		Prioritized policies/acts reviewed and recommendations developed for improvement	Prioritized policies/ acts reviewed and submitted to Cabinet			

	Indicator 7: Area of the landscape covered by a sustainable, integrated land management plan (the WAP Master Plan) that promotes improved sustainable land management regimes	0		ILM plan for 69,820 ha developed and under discussion	ILM plan for 69,820 ha approved			

Outcome 2: Implementation of selected ILM and FLR interventions demonstrated in over 21,000 ha, securing biodiversity, ecosystems services and resilient livelihoods	**Indicator 8:** Increased yields of selected agroforestry products/crops in areas under improved land management regimes	(baseline tbd during inception phase)		Yields increase by at least 30% over baseline values	Yields increase by at least 50% over baseline values			
	Indicator 9: Effectiveness of awareness and education outputs on the environmental, health, and social effects of deforestation and land degradation	Very limited information on the importance of the environment, biodiversity, and land degradation effectively being disseminated		Education and awareness raising strategy formulated, and communication outputs reaching 100% of target audiences, with at least 25% reporting change in behavior linked to messages	Education and awareness raising strategy formulated, and communication outputs reaching 100% of target audiences, with at least 50% reporting change in behavior linked to the messages			

Outcome 3: Financing frameworks for sustainable integrated landscape management increase ILM, PA and Biodiversity Finance by at least 25% over the baseline	**Indicator 10:** New financing mechanisms operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management	There is one conservation fund the National Protected Area Authority and Conservation Trust Fund. However, it has mobilized very limited funding. The actual baseline funding will be established by the public expenditure review.		At least 1 effective financing mechanism operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management by at least 15% over the baseline (to be established by the public expenditure review).	At least 2 effective financing mechanisms operationalized, increasing government funding for landscape management by at least 25% over the baseline (to be established by the public expenditure review).			
Outcome 4: Systems designed and used to ensure monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and gender mainstreaming	**Indicator 11:** Communication outputs and knowledge products produced and disseminated to targeted audiences on lessons learned and good practices identified through project implementation, taking into account stakeholder groups and communication tools identified in the project Stakeholder Engagement Plan.	Lack of availability of knowledge products on ILM in Sierra Leone specifically targeting prioritized audiences (e.g. politicians, farmers, private sector).		At least 1 substantive knowledge output produced and disseminated to targeted audiences each 6 months	At least 12 substantive knowledge outputs produced and disseminated to targeted audiences, including a minimum of 1 PANORAMA publication, and 1 UNDP photo blog			

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool/Core Indicators at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made, and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decisionmaking transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes, and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project's start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?

- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Sources of Cofinancing	Name of Cofinancer	Type of Cofinancing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
Recipient government	Recipient government - Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Grants In-kind	17,601,271 98,729		
GEF Agency	UNDP-Sierra Leone	Grants	300,000		
		TOTAL	**18,000,000**		

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team), which categorizes each co-financing amount as 'investment mobilized' or 'recurrent expenditures. (This template will be annexed as a separate file.)

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively? • Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
  - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization.
  - The identified types of risks[29] (in the SESP).
  - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP).
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

A given project should be assessed against the version of UNDP's safeguards policy that was in effect at the time of the project's approval.

Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications & Knowledge Management:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)

[29] Risks are to be labeled with both the UNDP SES Principles and Standards, and the GEF's "types of risks and potential impacts": Climate Change and Disaster; Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups; Disability Inclusion; Adverse Gender-Related impact, including Gender-based Violence and Sexual Exploitation; Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources; Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; Cultural Heritage; Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention; Labor and Working Conditions; Community Health, Safety and Security.

- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.
- List knowledge activities/products developed (based on knowledge management approach approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

iv. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the Quantum Risk Register are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures, and processes pose risks that may jeopardize the sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The international consultant will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive

summary. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.
The international consultant should make no more than 15 recommendations in total.

Ratings
The international consultant will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in an *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for Sustainable and Integrated Landscape Management of the Western Area Peninsula

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 30 working days over the period of 13 weeks and shall not exceed three and a half months from when the consultant is hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETION DATE
Issuance of Contract	…	03 March 2026
Inception meeting with the commissioning unit and project team	…	04 March 2026
Handover of documentation to international consultant; Document review and preparation of MTR Inception Report	3	04-10 March 2026

Circulation of draft MTR Inception Report for comments	…	
Validation and submission of the final MTR Inception Report	1	20 March, 2026
Data collection and stakeholder meetings, interviews and field visits	15	01-15 April, 2026
Mission wrap-up meeting and presentation of initial findings	1	15 April 2026
Preparation of draft MTR report and submission of the draft for comments	7	30 April, 2026
Circulation of draft MTR report for comments	…	
Incorporation of comments on draft MTR report into Audit Trail & finalization of MTR report	3	15 May, 2026
Preparation & Issue of Management Response (by the Commissioning Unit)	…	29 May, 2026
Expected date of full MTR completion	…	10 June, 2026
Total	**30**	

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**MTR Inception Report**	International consultant clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	28 March 2026	International consultant submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	**Presentation**	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission (15 April 2026)	International consultant presents to the project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	**Draft MTR Report**	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	30 April, 2026	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	**Final Report***	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	10 June, 2026	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is *the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Office.*

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Office for the international consultant and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the international consultant to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

9. TEAM COMPOSITION

An independent consultant will conduct the MTR. The consultant will be responsible for the overall design of the MTR process, assessment of the project results and writing the MTR report, etc., including assessing emerging trends with respect to regulatory frameworks, budget allocation, capacity building, and working with the Project Team in formulating the MTR report.

The consultant should not have been involved in the preparation of the project concept (i.e. PIF) or the Project Document or in the execution of any project activities and should not be benefiting from the project activities in any way. To avoid any conflicts of interest regarding related activities, the consultant will be required to declare them by signing the declaration form.

The selection of consultants will be in the following areas:

Education

- A Master's degree in Natural Resources Management, Environmental Management, or any other closely related field

Experience

- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 8 years;
- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to Climate Change;
- Experience in evaluating projects;
- Experience working in West Africa;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and Biodiversity Conservation, Climate Change, experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis;
- Excellent communication skills;
- Demonstrable analytical skills; and
- Project evaluation/review experiences within the United Nations system will be considered an asset.

Responsibilities

- Defining the evaluation methodology and schedule, and reporting to the Commissioning Unit;
- Documentation of the review data gathering;
- Leading in planning, conducting, and reporting on the evaluation;
- Ensuring the timeliness of reports;
- Use of best practice evaluation methodologies in conducting the evaluation;
- Presentation of the draft evaluation findings and recommendations in-country, conducting the debriefing for the Commissioning Unit and the SLMWAP PMU; and
- Drafting and finalization of the MTR report.

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English.

10. ETHICS

The consultant will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This MTR will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. S/he must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing the collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure the security of collected information before and after the MTR and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information, where that is expected. The information, knowledge and data gathered in the MTR process must also be solely used for the MTR and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

Annex B: Evaluation Question Matrix

Evaluative theme	Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?				
Design - problem statement	Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.	- alignment of assumption from project document with real-life assessment and experience of stakeholders (poor - good - very good alignment)	-Project document, - PIR (context changes) - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	compilation of the assumptions and risks described in the Prodoc; comparison with risks and assumptions identified by project team and stakeholders assessment of alignment between these two assessment; identification of gaps and improvement potential, formulation of recommendations
Design - project strategy	Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?	- alignment of theory of change with problem statement (poor - good - very good) - mentioning of lessons learned	- project documents	reconstruction of the theory of change; assessment whether lessons were incorporated identification of potential gaps and formulation of recommendations
Design - relevance for country priorities	Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?	- alignment of project objective with country priorities (poor - good - very good)	- project documents - national policies, plans and programs (e.g., NDCs and reporting to the UNFCCC, national development plans) - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	qualitative discussion of relevant elements of the country's priorities, identification of improvement potential, recommendations.
Design - decision making	Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?	- alignment of development process with UNDP project development standards with respect to the number and inclusivity of stakeholder consultations	- project documents - standard stakeholder categories from inception report - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	- stakeholder mapping, and comparison with standard stakeholder groups as discussed in the generic inception report, categorizing them into affected, influential and resource persons - qualitative description of the process for including these three groups of stakeholders during project design phase - comparison of this process with the UNDP standards for project development (section 3.1 here https://popp.undp.org/procedure/formulate-development-projects) - qualitative description of the process for including these three groups of stakeholders during project implementation phase - comparison of stakeholders included in design phase with those included currently in the project - gap analysis, formulation of recommendations as needed
Design - gender	Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for further guidelines. - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?	- compliance with gender policy (binary indicator: fully - insufficiently)	- project documents, - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	- qualitative description of alignment with GEF and UNDP gender policies - assessment of quality of Gender Action Plan against requirements
Results Framework/Logframe - indicators and targets	Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.	- SMARTness of indicators (binary indicator: fully - insufficiently)	- project documents, - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	- quality and relevance assessment of indicators based on stakeholder perspectives and expert judgement - potential recommendation for revision of indicators
Results Framework/Logframe - outcomes	Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?	- SMARTness of targets (binary indicator: fully - insufficiently)	- project documents, - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	- plausibility assessment based on stakeholder perspectives and expert judgement - potential recommendation for revision of indicators
Results Framework/Logframe	Examine if progress so far has led to or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved	- completeness of indicator coverage on development impacts	- project documents, - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	- analysis of country context for conservation; compilation of observed effects during field trip, interviews and analysis of project monitoring documents-formulation of indicator recommendations as appropriate

- development outcomes	governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.			
Results Framework/Logframe - measuring gender	Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.	- relevance of indicators wrt gender dimension	- project documents, - interviews with project team, project designers and project stakeholders	- assessment of relevance and quality of indicators on gender - recommendation on indicators as appropriate
Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?				
Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis	Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects;	colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).	- PIRs - Interviews with project team and stakeholders	- assessment of project implementation speed - comparison of project scope with national potential and historic experiences with similar roll-outs
Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis	Has progress been in line with expectations until now?	yes/no	- PIRs - Interviews with project team and stakeholders	Compare and analyse the GEF Core Indicators at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review
Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis	What are the remaining barriers to achieving the project objective?	narrative comparing barrier removal effectiveness with original barrier analysis	- PIRs - Interviews with project team and stakeholders	Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project
Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis	How can the project become more successful?	narrative reflecting on factors of success and whether it is possible to leverage them more effectively	- PIRs - Interviews with project team and stakeholders	By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation? To what extent has progress been made in the implementation of social and environmental management measures? Have there been changes to the overall project risk rating and/or the identified types of risks as outlined at the CEO Endorsement stage?				
Management Arrangements	Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement	- narrative reflecting on changes / adaptive management, - decision making transparency - decision making timeliness - reporting line transparency (Likert scale 1 - 5) - responsibility transparency	interview with project team, UNDP CO	rating
Management Arrangements	Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	interview with UNDP	rating
Management Arrangements	Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement	- timeliness, - relevance, - clarity and level of ambiguity, - quality of technical advice (including through	interviews with project team	rating

		learning from regional project and other countries)		
Management Arrangements	Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?	- access to women for human resources - access to women cooperatives	- interviews with project team and stakeholders - gender counts of gender-disaggregated indicators	narrative description
Management Arrangements	What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?	percentage	- staffing table - interview with project leader	counting, narrative description
Management Arrangements	What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?	percentage	- Board member list - interview with project leader	counting, narrative description
work planning	Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.	- cumulative delay in days	- PIRs, monitoring reports - interviews with project leader, UNDP Country Office, RTA	narrative
work planning	Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?	Likert Scale (fully results based - not at all results based)	- work plan - interview with project manager	assessment, potentially recommendation
work planning	Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.	Likert Scale (results framework is only orientation for management - results framework is not used at all)	- work plan- interview with project manager	assessment, potentially recommendation
Finance and cofinance	Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.	Likert Scale (fully cost-effective - not at all cost effective)	- PIRs, monitoring reports - interviews with project leader, UNDP Country Office, RTA	assessment based on alternative spending opportunities, potentially recommendation
Finance and cofinance	Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.	Likert Scale (fund allocations are fully appropriate - not at all appropriate)	- PIRs, monitoring reports - interviews with project leader, UNDP Country Office, RTA	assessment based on alternative spending opportunities, potentially recommendation
Finance and cofinance	Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?	Likert Scale (fully cost-effective - not at all cost effective)	- PIRs, monitoring reports - interviews with project leader, UNDP Country Office, RTA	assessment of missed opportunities due to potential lack of financial control by project team, potentially recommendation
Finance and cofinance	Is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?	Likert Scale (fully functional cofinancing strategy - not at all functioning)	- co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team - interviews with project leader, UNDP CO, RTA, cofinanciers, other donors, other financial intermediaries	assessment of missed opportunities due to implementation of cofinancing strategy by project team, potentially recommendation
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems	Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?	Likert Scales: - fully complete information - no information - fully aligned with national systems - not aligned with national systems - extremely efficient - extremely inefficient	- monitoring plans / frameworks - monitoring reports - PIRs - interviews with project team, CO, RTA, potentially also local stakeholders (Steering Committee? Board?)	support ratings with narratives on the following questions: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?

		- extremely participatory - extremely exclusive		
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems	Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- budgetary documents - interview with MEL lead of project team	if needed: recommendation on improvements
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems	Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for further guidelines.	- did stakeholder workshops include discussions on gender issues (all - where applicable - never) - did gender specialists and women representatives participate in stakeholder workshops? (all - where applicable - never) - are the project's results framework indicators disaggregated by sex and whereever possible by age and by socioeconomic group? (yes - no) - Are the project's results framework targets set up to guarantee a sufficient level of gender balance in activities (e.g., quotas for male and female participation)? (yes-no) - Are gender sensitive indicators included in the project's results framework? (all - where applicable - never)	- results framework - monitoring plan - stakeholder workshops participants lists	if needed: recommendation on improvements; recommendation as needed
Stakeholder Engagement	Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- interviews with project stakeholders - literature review of documentation on stakeholder feedback provided by the project	narrative description, formulation of recommendations as needed
Stakeholder Engagement	Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?	Likert Scales: - fully supported by the local governments who are engaged during the project - no communication with local governments - fully supported by the national government which is engaged during the project - no communication with national government	- interviews with local governments - interviews with national government (ministry of Environment) - documents showing support of governments	scales with one sentence justification each; recommendation as needed

Stakeholder Engagement	Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?	Likert Scales: - all opportunities for participation and outreach have been leveraged - no communication with the outside world- outreach and stakeholder involvement have had optimal contribution to progress - no contribution	- Stakeholder engagement plan- gender action plan- interviews- document analysis	- assessment of outreach activities - evidence based discussion of potential impact of outreach activities
Stakeholder Engagement	How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?	- engagement with women and girls on local level; - level of ambition of the gender action plan (Likert Scale)	- Stakeholder engagement plan - gender action plan - interviews with target communities - gender action plan	rating supported with short narrative description, formulation of recommendations as needed
Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)	Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any revisions needed?	- level of agreement of relevant stakeholders with risk rating	- interviews - SESP	narrative, recommendation to (not) adjust risk ratings
Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)	Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to: - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization. - The identified types of risks (in the SESP). - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP) .	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - unsatisfactory)	- PIRs - interview with project leader and UNDP CO, cofinanciers	summary and assessment
Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)	Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- SESP- SES management measure implementation reports (monitoring documents or PIR)	description and assessment; recommendations as needed
Reporting	Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- SESP - SES management measure implementation reports (monitoring documents or PIR)	description and assessment; recommendations as needed
Reporting	Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- PIRs - interview with project leader and UNDP CO	description and assessment; recommendations as needed
Reporting	Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- PIRs - interview with project leader and UNDP CO	description and assessment; recommendations as needed
Communications & Knowledge Management	Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- PIRs - Interviews with project team and stakeholders	description and assessment; recommendations as needed
Communications & Knowledge Management	Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)	- PIRs - Interviews with project team and stakeholders	description and assessment; recommendations as needed

	presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)			
Communications & Knowledge Management	For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.	Likert Scale (highly satisfactory - highly unsatisfactory)		
Communications & Knowledge Management	List knowledge activities/products developed (based on knowledge management approach approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval).		- knowledge management approach approved at CEO Endorsement - knowledge activities and products	list reflecting comparison of actual KPs with KM approach
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?				
general risks to achieving outcomes	Are the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register the most important ones? Are the risk ratings appropriate and up to date? If not, explain why.	Likert Scale (fully appropriate - not at all appropriate)	- interviews - PIR - Atlas Risk Register	Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why. Give Recommendations for adjustment
general risks to achieving outcomes	What are risks that might affect the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation measures which are planned or already undertaken to address these.			Complete the "Risks to achieving outcomes" template (Annex J to these TORs) to summarize risks that might affect the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation measures which are planned or already undertaken to address these.
Financial risks to sustainability	What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?	Likert Scale (sustainability is highly likely - not at all likely)	- interviews with project team, UNDP CO	
Socio-economic risks to sustainability	Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?	Likert Scale (sustainability is highly likely - not at all likely)	- interviews with project team, UNDP CO, CSOs, womens groups, direct project beneficiaries	discussion of the various questions, rating of overall likelihood
Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability	Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.	Likert Scale (sustainability is highly likely - not at all likely)	- national plans as well as related documents - interviews with government entities,	Discussion with government entities
Environmental risks to sustainability:	Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?	Likert Scale (sustainability is highly likely - not at all likely)	- climate risk resilience strategy - interviews - observations in the field visits	discussion of potential enviornmental risks (including climate risks) and recommendations as needed

Annex C: List of Documents Reviewed

- Annual Work Plans (AWP) 2023, 2024, 2025
- Minutes of the Annual Steering Committee Meetings
- Co-financing letters
- ProDoc and relevant annexes (SESP, ESMF, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Action Plan)
- Project Inception workshop report
- Project Risk Log
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- Guidance for Conducting Mid-term Reviewof UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects
- Project Implementation Reports (FY24, FY25)
- United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2025
- United Nations Development Programme Country Programme Document
- Standard operating procedures established between the Ministry of Environment and UNDP
- Technical project reports and mission reports
- Quarterly progress reports

Annex D: Stakeholders Consulted

Institution	Number of individuals consulted		
	Male	Female	Total
NPAA	2	2	4
EPA	1	0	1
EFA	1		1
Tacugama	2	0	2
MoECC	2	1	3
WoNES	1	1	2
PMU	2	1	3
WAP Chief Technical Adviser	1		1
UNDP SES Team	1	2	3
UNDP	3	2	5
Communities / restoration sites			
Gbonkowalay	3	0	3
Markobeh community	12	10	22
Rogbaylor Community	56	64	120
Sussex Community	7	24	31
No. 2 River Community	3	9	12
Tokeh Community	4	5	9
Mambo Community	2	11	13
Bathurst Community	14	14	28
Charlotte Community	7	9	16
Last Banking Aberdeen	23	90	113
Total (individual interviews and group discussions			**392**

Annex E: Interview and FGD guides used for Data Collection

Data collection tools (KII) with UNDP, PMU and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

Project strategy

Project design

To what extent is the project in line with national development priorities?

To what extent were the perspectives of the following groups taken into account during the project design phase: (I) those would be affected by project decisions; (ii) those who could affect the outcomes of the project; and (iii) those who could contribute information or other resources to the process?

Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in Sierra Leone, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) taken into consideration during design of the project?

Progress towards results

Overall, what is your appreciation of the project's vis-à-vis expectations at mid-term of implementation?

What are the remaining barriers to achieving the project objective?

How can the project become more successful?

Project implementation and adaptive management

Management arrangements

Have changes been made to the management arrangements of the project as spelled out in the project document? If yes, what changes have been made and why?

Are responsibilities and reporting lines for the different actors engaged in the project clear?

To what extent is decision-making within the framework of the project transparent and timely? Are there any recommendations for improvement in the timeliness and transparency of decision-making?

What is your assessment of UNDP's execution of the project as it relates to the following areas (**question for MoECC and PMU**):

- Adequacy of UNDP support to the MoECC and the PMU
- Quality and timeliness of technical support to the MoECC and Project Team
- Candor (openness and sincerity) and realism in annual reporting
- The quality of risk management
- Responsiveness to significant implementation problems
- Adequacy in the mitigation and management of environmental and social risks as identified through the UNDP SESP

What is your assessment of MoECC in the implementation of the project as it relates to the following areas (**question for UNDP**):

- Appropriateness on the focus of results and timeliness
- Adequacy of management inputs and processes, including budgeting and procurement
- Quality of risk management
- Candor (openness and sincerity) and realism in reporting
- Government ownership

- Adequacy in the mitigation and management of environmental and social risks as identified through the UNDP SESP

What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?

What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

Work Planning

Were there delays in project start-up? If Yes, what were the causes and how were the delays resolved?

Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?

To what extent is the project's results framework used as a management tool? Were there any changes made to the logframe since the start of the project?

Finance and co-finance

What financial controls were established and used for the project to allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time, and allow for the timely flow of funds and the payment of satisfactory project deliverables?

Are there any variance between planned and actual expenditures?

Does the project exhibit due diligence in the management of funds, including annual audits?

Were there any changes made to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions? If yes, what is the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions?

Is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project?

Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

Was the M&E plan sufficiently budgeted and funded during project preparation and implementation thus far?

Are sufficient resources being allocated to M&E? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

How appropriate is the M&E system to the project context?

What are the monitoring tools being employed in the monitoring of the project? Do these provide the necessary information? Do the tools involve key partners?

Are the monitoring tools or system aligned or mainstreamed with national systems?

Do the monitoring tools use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective?

Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?

To what extent is the Project Team using inclusive, innovative, and participatory monitoring systems[30]

To what extent were follow-up actions, and/or adaptive management were taken in response to the PIRs?

[30] Such as crowdsourcing, real-time, simple reporting (text, pictures, videos made from computer/mobile device for provision of real-time updates); participatory statistics, mobile data collection, micro-narrative, data exhaust (collection of data from people using digital services), intelligence infrastructure, remote sensing, data visualization, outcome harvesting, multi-level mixed evaluation method. LINK

How are perspectives of women and men involved and affected by the project monitored and assessed?

How are relevant groups' (including women, indigenous peoples, children, elderly, disabled, and poor) involvement with the project and the impact on them monitored?

How adequate is the mitigation and management of environmental and social risks as identified through the UNDP SESP?

Stakeholder engagement

Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?

To what extent do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?

Do local and national stakeholders continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?

Has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives? If yes, in what ways?

Are there any limitations to stakeholder awareness of project outcomes or to stakeholder participation in project activities?

To what extent is there invested interest of stakeholders in the project's long-term success and sustainability?

Reporting

To what extent have adaptive management changes have been reported by the Project Team and shared with the Project Board?

How well has the project team and partners undertaken and fulfilled GEF reporting requirements, including addressing poorly rated PIR?

Were the project PIRs shared with the members of the project board and other key stakeholders?

Were lessons learnt from adaptive management process documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners and incorporated into project implementation?

Communications

Is there regular and effective communication among the project stakeholders?

Are there key stakeholders left out of communication?

Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received?

Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and long-term investment in the sustainability of project results?

Have proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (e.g. web presence or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?).

Are there possibilities for expansion of educational or awareness aspects of the project to solidify a communications program?

In your opinion, are there aspects of the project that might yield excellent communications material?

Sustainability

Financial risk to sustainability

What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends – e.g. are there opportunities for availability of financial resources (e.g. from the Government) to monitor and manage the restored sites after project closure?

Are there opportunities for financial sustainability?

What additional factors are needed to create an enabling environment for continued financing?

To what extent has there been the establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (i.e. from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes?

What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained?

Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? If yes, provide evidence to substantiate

Is there sufficient public/ stakeholder awareness in support of the objectives of the project?

Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis? If yes, what is the frequency

Are the project's successful aspects being transferred to appropriate parties, potential future beneficiaries, and others who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes of the country pose risks that may jeopardize project benefits?

Has the project put in place frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes that will create mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer after the project's closure?

How has the project developed appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.) that will be self-sufficient after the project closure date?

Did the the project identify and involved champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society) who can promote sustainability of project outcomes?

Has the project achieved stakeholders' (including government stakeholders') consensus regarding courses of action on project activities after the project's closure date (exit strategy)?

Does the project leadership have the ability to respond to future institutional and governance changes (i.e. foreseeable changes to local or national political leadership)?

Can the project strategies effectively be incorporated/mainstreamed into future planning?

Environmental risks to sustainability

Are there environmental factors, risks or hazards that could undermine and reverse the project's outcomes and results, including factors that have been identified by project stakeholders?

Data collection tools – other project stakeholders excluding direct beneficiaries and traditional rulers (e.g. other government entities, implementing partners, steering committee members, etc.)

Project strategy

Project design

To what extent is the project in line with national development priorities?

To what extent were the perspectives of the following groups taken into account during the project design phase: (I) those would be affected by project decisions; (ii) those who could affect the outcomes of the project; and (iii) those who could contribute information or other resources to the process?

Progress towards results

What are the remaining barriers to achieving the project objective?

How can the project become more successful?

Project implementation and adaptive management

Management arrangements

To what extent is decision-making within the framework of the project transparent and timely? Are there any recommendations for improvement in the timeliness and transparency of decision-making?

What is your assessment of MoECC in the implementation of the project as it relates to the following areas (**question for UNDP**):

- Appropriateness on the focus of results and timeliness
- Adequacy of management inputs and processes, including budgeting and procurement
- Quality of risk management
- Candor (openness and sincerity) and realism in reporting
- Government ownership
- Adequacy in the mitigation and management of environmental and social risks as identified through the UNDP SESP

Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

Are you/your institution involved in the monitoring of the project? If yes, please explain the involvement

Stakeholder engagement

To what extent do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?

Do local and national stakeholders continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?

Has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives? If yes, in what ways?

Are there any limitations to stakeholder awareness of project outcomes or to stakeholder participation in project activities?

To what extent is there invested interest of stakeholders in the project's long-term success and sustainability?

Reporting

To what extent have adaptive management changes have been reported by the Project Team and shared with the Project Board?

Were the project PIRs shared with the members of the project board and other key stakeholders?

Were lessons learnt from adaptive management process documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners and incorporated into project implementation?

Communications

Is there regular and effective communication among the project stakeholders?

Are there key stakeholders left out of communication?

Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received?

Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and long-term investment in the sustainability of project results?

Have proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (e.g. web presence or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?).

Are there possibilities for expansion of educational or awareness aspects of the project to solidify a communications program?

In your opinion, are there aspects of the project that might yield excellent communications material?

Sustainability

Financial risk to sustainability

What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends – e.g. are there opportunities for availability of financial resources (e.g. from the Government) to monitor and manage the restored sites after project closure?

Are there opportunities for financial sustainability?

What additional factors are needed to create an enabling environment for continued financing?

To what extent has there been the establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (i.e. from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes?

What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained?

Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? If yes, provide evidence to substantiate

Is there sufficient public/ stakeholder awareness in support of the objectives of the project?

Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis? If yes, what is the frequency

Are the project's successful aspects being transferred to appropriate parties, potential future beneficiaries, and others who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes of the country pose risks that may jeopardize project benefits?

Has the project put in place frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes that will create mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer after the project's closure?

How has the project developed appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.) that will be self-sufficient after the project closure date?

Did the the project identify and involved champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society) who can promote sustainability of project outcomes?

Has the project achieved stakeholders' (including government stakeholders') consensus regarding courses of action on project activities after the project's closure date (exit strategy)?

Does the project leadership have the ability to respond to future institutional and governance changes (i.e. foreseeable changes to local or national political leadership)?

Can the project strategies effectively be incorporated/mainstreamed into future planning?

Environmental risks to sustainability

Are there environmental factors, risks or hazards that could undermine and reverse the project's outcomes and results, including factors that have been identified by project stakeholders?

Data collection tools –traditional rulers

Project strategy

Project design

To what extent is the project in line with the local development priorities of your area?

Do you remember being consulted or members of your community being consulted during the preparation of the project?

Progress towards results

What are the remaining barriers to achieving the project objective?

How can the project become more successful?

Project implementation and adaptive management

Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

Are you/members of your community involved in the monitoring of the project? If yes, please explain the involvement

Stakeholder engagement

To what extent do local government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?

Do local stakeholders continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?

Has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives? If yes, in what ways?

Are there any limitations to stakeholder awareness of project outcomes or to stakeholder participation in project activities?

Is it in your/your community's interest to ensure the project's long-term success and sustainability?

Reporting

Are you/your community provided regular updates by the project team on project progress, especially relating to those activities in which you are engaged?

Communications

Is there regular and effective communication between you/your community and the project team?

Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received?

Are you aware of the existence of an accountability and grievance mechanism of the project?

Has there been an outreach or sensitization programme conducted by the project team in your community? If yes, what was the sensitization about?

Sustainability

Financial risk to sustainability

What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends – e.g. are there opportunities for availability of financial resources (e.g. from income generating activities) to monitor and manage the restored sites after project closure?

Will your community be able to continue engagement in the project activities even the end of the project? If yes, how and if no, what are the challenges that will impede you from doing so?

Are there opportunities for financial sustainability?

What additional factors are needed to create an enabling environment for continued financing?

Do you think the project has established income generating activities in your community that will continue generate cash flow after project closure?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes?

Do you/community members consider the activities of the project to be for the benefit of the community and have the interest to ensure that the activities started by the project continue even after the project ends?

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

Did the project establish a committee or association (e.g. management committee and VSLAs) in your community? If yes, how do you see this committee continue functioning after the project ends? Any foreseeable challenges?

Did the project identify and involve any champions within your community who can promote sustainability of project outcomes?

Environmental risks to sustainability

Are there environmental factors, risks or hazards that could undermine and reverse the project's outcomes and results, including factors that have been identified by project stakeholders?

Focus Group Discussion Guide – with direct beneficiaries (community members)

Project strategy

Project design

To what extent is the project in line with the local development priorities of your community?

Do you remember if members of your community were consulted during the preparation of the project?

Progress towards results

What are the remaining barriers to achieving the project objective?

How can the project become more successful?

Project implementation and adaptive management

Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

Are members of your community involved in the monitoring of the project? If yes, please explain the involvement

Stakeholder engagement

To what extent do members of your community support the objectives of the project?

Do members of your community continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?

Has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives? If yes, in what ways?

Are there any limitations to stakeholder awareness of project outcomes or to stakeholder participation in project activities?

Is it in your community's interest to ensure the project's long-term success and sustainability?

Reporting

Is your community provided regular updates by the project team on project progress, especially relating to those activities in which you are engaged?

Communications

Is there regular and effective communication between your community and the project team?

Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received?

Are members of your community aware of the existence of an accountability and grievance mechanism of the project?

Has there been an outreach or sensitization programme conducted by the project team in your community? If yes, what was the sensitization about?

Sustainability

Financial risk to sustainability

Will your community be able to continue engagement in the project activities even the end of the project? If yes, how and if no, what are the challenges that will impede you from doing so?

Are there opportunities for financial sustainability?

What additional factors are needed to create an enabling environment for continued financing?

Do you think the project has established income generating activities in your community that will continue generate cash flow after project closure?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes?

Do members of your community consider the activities of the project to be for the benefit of the community and have the interest to ensure that the activities started by the project continue even after the project ends?

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

Did the project establish a committee or association (e.g. management committee and VSLAs) in your community? If yes, how do you see this committee continue functioning after the project ends? Any foreseeable challenges?

Did the project identify and involve any champions within your community who can promote sustainability of project outcomes?

Environmental risks to sustainability

Are there environmental factors, risks or hazards that could undermine and reverse the project's outcomes and results, including factors that have been identified by project stakeholders?

Annex F: MTR Mission Itinerary

Time	Meeting	Venue	Participants
Monday 20 April 2026			
09 :30 -10 :00	Introductory session with UNDP management (Resident Representative / Deputy Resident Representative)	UNDP CO	DRR, UNDP M&E Specialist, WAP Project M&E Officer and Evaluator
10 :00 – 10 :30	Security briefing	UNDP CO	UNDSS, Evaluator
11 :30 -13 :00	Meeting with NPAA	NPAA Office	NPAA WAP Project Team and Evaluator
Tuesday 21 April 2026			
09 :00 – 17 :00	Visit to the **WAP project sites :** - Gbonkowalay mangrove restoration planting site - Rogbaylor mangrove restoration planting site - Markobeh community	Gbonkowalay Rogbaylor Markobeh	WAP Project Team, Evaluator and Local beneficiaries (VSLAs members, planters and trackers, rangers)
Wednesday 22 April 2026			
09 :00 – 17 :00	Visit to WAP project sites for terrestrial restoration - Sussex Community - Number 2 River Community - Tokeh Community - Mambo Community	Sussex Number 2 River Tokeh Mambo	Evaluator and project beneficiaries (VSLAs members, planters and trackers, rangers)
Thursday 23 April 2026			
11 : 30 – 13 :00	Meeting with EPA	PMU Office	EPA WAP Focal Point and Evaluator
13 :30 – 15 : 00	Meeting with WoNES	WoNES Office	Evaluator and WoNES Team
16 :00 – 17 :00	Meeting with Tacugama	Tacugama Office	Evaluator and Tacugama Team
Friday 24 April 2026			
09 :00 – 10 : 20	Meeting with the PMU	PMU Office	PMU Team and Evaluator
10 :30 – 11 :00	Meeting with MoECC	MoECC	MoECC Director and Evaluator
11 :20 – 11 :30	Courtesy visit to the Permanent Secretary of MoECC	MoECC	Permanent Secretary of MoECC, PMU and Evaluator
12 :30 – 13 :00	Meeting with MoECC	MoECC	Minister of Environment, PMU and Evaluator
13 :30 – 14 :10	Meeting with the UNDP RTA	Virtual	UNDP RTA and Evaluator
14 :30 – 16 :10	Continuation of meeting with the PMU	PMU Office	PMU Team and Evaluator
Saturday 25 April 2026			

9 :00 – 17 :00	Visit to WAP project sites and communities : - Bathurst Community (terrestrial restoration) - Charlotte Community - Sites reforested by Tacugama - Comfort Bridge (site reforested by EFA) - Last Banking (mangrove restoration)	Bathurst Charlotte Tacugama Sanctuary Area Comfort Bridge Last Banking	PMU, Local beneficiaries (VSLA members, planters and trackers) and Evaluator
Monday 27 April 2026			
10 :00 – 11 :12	Meeting with the UNDP CO	Virtual	UNDP CO Team and Evaluator

Annex G: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Form

Independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence or pressure by any party (including the hiring unit) and providing evaluators with free access to information on the evaluation subject. Independence provides legitimacy to and ensures an objective perspective on evaluations. An independent evaluation reduces the potential for conflicts of interest which might arise with self-reported ratings by those involved in the management of the project being evaluated. Independence is one of ten general principles for evaluations (together with internationally agreed principles, goals and targets: utility, credibility, impartiality, ethics, transparency, human rights and gender equality, national evaluation capacities, and professionalism).

Evaluators/Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.
8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained, and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.
9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Evaluator: _Kevin Enongene

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at ____Ottawa, Canada_____ (Place) on ___March 20, 2026_____ (Date)



Signature: _____ _____

Annex H: GEF Core Indicators

Core Indicator 1	**Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use**					***(Hectares)***
			Hectares (1.1+1.2)			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			2000	*2000*	*745 ha*	
Indicator 1.1	Terrestrial protected areas newly created					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Community Mangrove PA		VI	1000	*1000*	*253 ha*	
		Sum				
Indicator 1.2	Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score		
				Baseline	Achieved	
				PIF	Endorsement	MTR	TE
WAP PA		II	17,634.15ha	20%.	20%.	*-7%*	
		(select)					
		Sum	17,634.15ha				
Core Indicator 3	**Area of land restored**					***(Hectares)***
			Hectares (3.1+3.2+3.3+3.4)			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			3000	*3000*	*998 ha*	
Indicator 3.1	Area of degraded agricultural land restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			N/A	*NA*	NA	
Indicator 3.2	Area of forest and forest land restored					
			Hectares			

			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			2000	*2000*	*745 ha*	
Indicator 3.3	Area of natural grass and shrublands restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			NA	*NA*		
Indicator 3.4	Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			1000	*1000*	*253 ha*	
Core Indicator 11	**Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment**					***4427: half of them female***
					Number Achieved	
					MTR	TE
				Female	*1,309*	
				Male	1,063	
				Total	*2372*	

Annex I: MTR Rating Scales

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	**Highly Satisfactory (HS)**	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice".
5	**Satisfactory (S)**	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	**Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)**	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	**Unsatisfactory (U)**	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	**Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)**	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	**Highly Satisfactory (HS)**	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice".
5	**Satisfactory (S)**	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only a few that are subject to remedial action.
4	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	**Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	**Unsatisfactory (U)**	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	**Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)**	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm

		Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex J: Signed MTR Clearance Form

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)

Name: Birendra Dash

DocuSigned by:
Birendra Dash
A136E650D8614AC...

Signature: _____ Date: 30-Jun-2026

Regional Technical Advisor

Name: Madeleine Nyiratuza

DocuSigned by:
617BF9D7149840F...

Signature: _____ Date: 30-Jun-2026

Annex K: Audit Trail of Comments (Attached as a separate file)