

**PARTICIPATORY SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SYNTHESIS OF
LIBERIA'S REDD+ READINESS PROCESS
(R-PACKAGE)**

August 4th, 2017

- Final Report –

**Forestry Development Authority
Republic of Liberia**



Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS..... | 3 |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 4 |
| Background and Introduction..... | 4 |
| Results of the self assessment..... | 4 |
| Overall scores | 6 |
| Recommendations..... | 6 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW | 8 |
| 1.1. COUNTRY CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF FCPF SUPPORT | 8 |
| 1.2. OTHER KEY DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS WORKING IN REDD+ | 9 |
| 1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW | 10 |
| 1.4. PROCESS USED IN THE REVIEW | 11 |
| 1.5. REPORT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS..... | 12 |
| 2. READINESS ORGANIZATION AND CONSULTATION..... | 16 |
| 2.1. SUB-COMPONENT 1A: NATIONAL REDD+ MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS | 16 |
| 2.1.1. Overall progress and constraints | 16 |
| 2.1.2. Progress and major achievements under component 1A | 16 |
| 2.1.3. Results of self-assessment..... | 19 |
| 2.2. SUB-COMPONENT 1B: CONSULTATION, PARTICIPATION, AND OUTREACH..... | 21 |
| 2.2.1. Progress and major achievements..... | 21 |
| 2.2.2. Results of self-assessment..... | 23 |
| 3. REDD+ Strategy Preparation | 25 |
| 3.1. SUB-COMPONENT 2A. ASSESSMENT OF LAND USE, LAND-USE CHANGE DRIVERS, FOREST LAW, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE..... | 25 |
| 3.1.1. Progress and major achievements..... | 25 |
| 3.1.2. Results of self-assessment..... | 26 |
| 3.2. SUBCOMPONENT: 2B. REDD+ STRATEGY OPTIONS..... | 27 |
| 3.2.1. Results of self-assessment..... | 28 |
| 3.3. SUB-COMPONENT 2C. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK..... | 29 |
| 3.3.1. Progress and major achievements..... | 29 |
| 3.3.2. Results of self assessment..... | 30 |
| 3.4. SUB-COMPONENT 2D: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS | 31 |
| 3.4.1. Progress and major achievements..... | 31 |
| 3.4.2. Results of self assessment..... | 32 |
| 4. Reference Emission Level/Reference Level | 33 |
| 4.1. SUB-COMPONENT 3A. REFERENCE EMISSIONS LEVEL/REFERENCE LEVELS | 33 |
| 4.1.1. Progress and major achievements..... | 33 |
| 4.1.2. Results of self assessment..... | 34 |
| 5. MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR FORESTS AND SAFEGUARDS | 35 |
| 5.1. SUB-COMPONENT 4A. NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING SYSTEM (NFMS) | 35 |
| 5.1.1. Progress and major achievements..... | 35 |
| 5.1.2. Results of self assessment..... | 35 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 5.2. SUB-COMPONENT 4B: INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR MULTIPLE BENEFITS, OTHER IMPACTS, GOVERNANCE, AND SAFEGUARDS | 36 |
| 5.2.1. <i>Progress and major achievements</i> | 36 |
| 5.2.2. <i>Results of self assessment</i> | 37 |
| 6. Overall conclusions | 39 |
| 6.1. SUMMARY OF OVERALL PROGRESS | 39 |
| 6.2. Overall scores..... | 41 |
| 7. NEXT STEPS | 42 |

Annexes

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Annex I: Persons consulted | 44 |
| Annex II: References..... | 48 |
| Annex III: Questions used in the self assessment | 49 |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| CI | Conservation International |
| CFMA | Community Forest Management Agreement |
| CTF | Conservation Trust Fund |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| ESMF | Environmental and Social Management Framework |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FCPF | Forest Carbon Partnership Facility |
| FDA | Forestry Development Authority |
| FFI | Fauna and Flora International |
| FLEGT | Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade |
| FIFES | Forest Incomes for Environmental Sustainability |
| FMC | Forest management contracts |
| FMT | Facility Management Team (of the FCPF) |
| FREL | Forest Reference Emissions Level |
| IPCC | International Panel on Climate Change |
| LFSP | Liberia Forest Sector Project |
| LoI | Letter of Intent |
| LISGIS | Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture |
| MoFDP | Ministry of Finance and Development Planning |
| MoGCSP | Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection |
| MLME | Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy |
| MoPEA | Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs |
| MoT | Ministry of Transport |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MRV | Monitoring, Reporting and Verification |
| NCCSC | National Climate Change Steering Committee |
| NORAD | Norwegian Agency for International Development |
| PFMU | Project Financial Management Unit |
| REL | Reference Emission Level |
| RL | Reference Level |
| RIU | REDD+ Implementation Unit |
| RSPO | Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil |
| RTWG | REDD Technical Working Group |
| SESA | Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment |
| TSC | Timber Sale Contract |
| UoL | University of Liberia |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| VPA | Voluntary Partnership Agreement |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Introduction

Liberia has been implementing REDD+ Readiness Activities since June 2012 with financial support from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank. The REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU) of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) is responsible for the coordination of Liberia's REDD+ Readiness process. REDD+ Readiness in Liberia is at an advanced stage and Liberia is now in a position to submit the participatory self-assessment of its REDD+ Readiness process (the Readiness Package (R-Package)).

The views presented in this report come from a series of participatory, self-assessment exercises conducted with key REDD+ stakeholder groups in Liberia, including the RIU, the REDD+ Technical Working Group (RTWG), the SESA Working Group and the NGO coalition. Further inputs were obtained from resource persons and representatives of key funding agencies. In total, 73 persons were consulted as part of this assessment exercise between 8th – 26th May, 2017.

Results of the self assessment

1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements

Progressing well but further development required. REDD+ management and co-ordination structures are functional and operate in an open and transparent manner. Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed with key government agencies involved in REDD+ implementation. Funding has been secured for REDD+ readiness as well as performance based actions, and the various donor and NGO inputs are co-ordinated and harmonised. Capacity gaps continue to exist within government and within NGOs involved in REDD+. The RIU has increased its staffing capacity to cover areas such as communication, stakeholder engagement, monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), safeguards and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The feedback and grievance redress mechanism (FGRM) is not operational, and the process of its design has been delayed due to non-performance of the selected consultants.

1b. Consultation, participation and outreach

Significant progress achieved. Important results have been obtained with regard to communications and outreach, including the REDD+ Communication Strategy, SESA consultations and engagement around the REDD+ Strategy at national and sub-national levels, and validation and endorsement of the REDD+ Strategy by the National Climate Change Steering Committee. Efforts have been made to ensure communication at the local level is in an appropriate format and delivered through appropriate media. SESA consultations have been undertaken extensively at community level, through focal group discussions with different stakeholder groups, including women and civil society organisations have been strongly involved. There has been limited engagement from the private sector, such as large-scale companies producing palm oil, rubber and timber who have viewed the national REDD+ process with scepticism. The outputs of consultation especially with civil society organizations and local communities have fed into and informed National REDD+ strategy development process in a transparent way. Communicating on REDD+ has been challenging, given the fact that it is a complex and abstract concept, and that it is yet to be operational. Concerns have been raised over the sustainability of communication efforts following the completion of the PCI Media / FFI Consultancy Package (responsible for communication under contract) – although communication on REDD+ has now been built into the Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP) workplan.

2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance

Significant progress achieved. Assessment of land use and deforestation drivers was thorough and inclusive, building on earlier work and using recent land-cover maps to inform analysis. Barriers and constraints to addressing drivers were well elaborated in the REDD+ Strategy development process. The REDD+ Strategy Roadmap, including an implementation plan, has been developed, although the financial requirements remain to be determined. Links between VPA/FLEGT process and REDD+ process have been made, but there are still opportunities for greater learning and exchange.

2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

Significant progress achieved. The National REDD+ Strategy has been produced and is a high quality product, with a strong technical basis, which has benefitted from wide consultation and input. It was formally approved by the National Climate Change Steering Committee (NCCSC) in June 2017. The development of the strategy was a rational process that identified and selected strategy options using cost-benefit analysis and feasibility analysis, reviewed barriers to addressing deforestation drivers as well as identified appropriate policies and measures needed.

2c. Implementation Framework

Further development required. To date, no REDD+ specific laws or policies have been adopted by the Government of Liberia (and none implemented). The legal review has shown that some laws could potentially be used within the context of REDD+. However, specific legal guidance will be needed on issues such as carbon rights, REDD+ benefit sharing and financing modalities. Recent experiences in Liberia with regard to the sharing of forest revenues offer transparent mechanisms for revenue sharing, although currently no REDD+ revenues have been disbursed in Liberia. The REDD+ Registry and FGRM have yet to be established, although both are planned.

2d. Social and Environmental Impacts

Significant Progress Achieved. A detailed and thorough SESA process was conducted which involved consultations as well as validation exercises at sub-national and national levels. Synchronisation of the REDD+ Strategy process and SESA process meant that the two processes were mutually reinforcing. The SESA process was used to influence the development and prioritisation of the strategy options, in identification of safeguard issues and in the selection of appropriate mitigation actions. The ESMF has been produced, but yet to be operationalized, as REDD+ implementation activities are yet to begin.

3a. Forest Reference Level/Reference Levels

Demonstrating progress, but further development required. A national Forest Reference Emissions Level (FREL) has been developed through a consultancy package implemented by Winrock International together with Conservation International. The analysis used secondary data due to resource constraints, since national level primary data could not be gathered. The FREL covered the period from 2000 to 2014. The consultants undertook relevant capacity building for RTWG, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), FDA, EPA and Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), as knowledge around reference level methodology is low within Liberia. The assessment was challenged by the non-linear trajectory of deforestation, caused by civil war and then resumption of economic activities. There is recognition of the need to improve the FREL through the inclusion of primary data. This will be achieved through a planned collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), who will conduct a National Forest Resource Assessment, improve the FREL and develop a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS).

4a. National Forest Monitoring

Not yet demonstrating progress. To date, there has been limited progress with developing a functional NFMS. Consultations have been held and an MRV road map has been developed, with assistance from the FAO and Wageningen University. Roles and responsibilities between national institutions with regard to forest monitoring are agreed. Plans are being made to establish an MRV working group to guide the development of the NFMS – as per above, the FDA is planning this development to be undertaken in collaboration with the FAO.

4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Limited progress achieved. The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) has been finalised and has helped identify potential impacts and safeguard issues. The Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) has also been finalised and provides a comprehensive framework to monitor downstream impacts and risks. Significant capacity gaps exist within government, if the ESMF is to be operationalized. A Safeguards Information System (SIS) (required under UNFCCC and agreed in a Letter of Intent (LoI) with Norway) has not been established, and as such regular updates around impacts, safeguards, benefits or livelihoods are not currently being made available. However, it is important to note that to date, REDD+ implementation has yet to move beyond readiness activities, and, therefore, impacts are unlikely.

Overall scores

A summary score is presented below at sub component level based on the responses and scores of questions for each of the sub-components that were received from different stakeholder groups. Overall, the assessment identifies 4 green, 2 yellow and 2 orange and one red scores as presented below in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary of performance scores for Liberia

| Component | Sub Component | Summary of scores |
|--|---|-------------------|
| Readiness organization and consultation | 1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements | Yellow |
| | 1b. Consultation, participation and outreach | Green |
| REDD+ Strategy preparation | 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance | Green |
| | 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options | Green |
| | 2c. Implementation Framework | Orange |
| | 2d. Social and Environmental Impacts | Green |
| Reference Emission Level/Reference Level | 3a. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels | Yellow |
| Monitoring system for forests and safeguards | 4a. National Forest Monitoring | Red |
| | 4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards | Orange |

Recommendations

The assessment clearly points to a number of areas that require action if Liberia is to be fully REDD+ ready. These areas are presented below. Additional recommendations are included that emerged from the final validation session held on 19th May, 2017 at FDA headquarters.

- The National Climate Change Steering Committee on June 20, 2017 formally approved Liberia's National REDD+ Strategy. However, there is a need to support existing projects

in linking activities and output reporting to the main actions in the REDD+ Strategy through improved coordination and engagement.

- RIU to move forward to appoint qualified consultants to design the FGRM to guide the implementation of REDD+ in Liberia, and FDA to operationalize at national, county and local levels
- RIU to work with FAO to upgrade REL, to include activity data gathered from field sites as part of National Forest Resource Assessment, meeting UNFCCC requirements
- Establish and operationalize the NFMS to guide sectorial reporting on forest cover changes and carbon sequestration for Liberia's forest
- RIU to work with an external service provider to design and establish national REDD+ registry
- RIU working with EPA and FDA to establish a SIS, to operationalize the ESMF and to comply with Cancun and Warsaw agreements under UNFCCC
- RIU to facilitate process leading to clarification and legal basis for carbon rights and benefit sharing within the context of REDD+, financing arrangements for REDD+ funds (e.g. Trust Fund) consistent with Liberia's Revenue Code as well as other priority legal and policy areas identified in the REDD+ Strategy
- RIU to engage a consultant to undertake capacity needs assessment and plan for RIU, RTWG and other key stakeholder groups
- RIU to re-vitalise the RTWG to make it more interactive and learning-focused. This could include rationalising the RTWG to a smaller size, with self-selected representatives from civil society and private sector, and with cross-sectional representation from government. A wider "REDD+ Platform", which could be more inclusive, could complement this for information sharing purposes.
- RIU to establish MRV, Safeguards and Communications Working Groups and monitor implementation of communications work to ensure that it continues within context of LFSP.

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1. COUNTRY CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF FCPF SUPPORT

Liberia has been implementing REDD+ Readiness Activities since June 2012 with financial support from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank. The REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU) of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) is responsible for coordinating Liberia's REDD+ Readiness process. Liberia has made good progress on activities funded by the FCPF's REDD+ Readiness thematic components, i.e.:

- Preparation of a National REDD+ Strategy
- Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)
- Readiness Organisation and Consultation
- Establishment of a Forest Reference Emission Level/ Reference Level (RL) and development of land and forest cover map.

The first phase of Liberia's REDD+ Readiness was successfully completed in November 2016. Liberia received additional funding from the FCPF for continuation and consequent completion of REDD+ Readiness Activities to enable the country fully develop all the frameworks, systems and structures necessary for engagement in an international REDD+ mechanism. The Additional Funding was provided as per Resolution PC/18/2014/1 after approval of Liberia's mid-term review report (October 2014), which provided a snapshot of Liberia's REDD+ Readiness at the time.

REDD+ Readiness in Liberia is at an advanced stage and Liberia is now in a position to submit the participatory self-assessment of its REDD+ Readiness process (R-Package). The R-Package, dated August 2017, prepared in accordance with FCPF requirements as per the R-Package Assessment Framework¹, is intended to provide an overview of a country's REDD+ Readiness Preparation process.

The implementation of REDD+ readiness activities in the period since the MTR has been cognizant of the recommendations of the FCPF PC as expressed in the Co-Chairs' Summary of the 18th meeting of the PC held in Arusha, Tanzania²:

- Liberia utilized different sources of funding for the REDD+ readiness activities (from the FCPF, Norway, NGOs / CSOs, etc.) judiciously, ensuring synergies of activities and avoiding duplication of funding;
- National ownership has been strong through engagement of stakeholders at various levels and steering through a national level committee
- Recognizing capacity constraints, all consultancies under the FCPF packages had a strong element of in country capacity building to ensure sustainability Decentralized stakeholder engagement platforms have been strengthened throughout the process.

Liberia is also in the process of developing a Reference Level (RL), to be submitted to the UNFCCC with a view of securing future funding through other mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund.

¹The R-Package Assessment Framework was adopted at the 14th session of the FCPF Participants' Committee (PC), see Resolution PC/14/2013/1 and FMT Note 2013-1 rev, available on the FCPF website (www.forestcarbonpartnership.org)

²<https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/fcp/files/2014/November/FCPF%20CoChairs%20Summary%20PC18%20and%20PA7.pdf>

This report summarises the results of the self-assessment process in line with the guidelines and assessment framework developed by the FCPF Facility Management Team (FMT)³.

1.2. OTHER KEY DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS WORKING IN REDD+

Liberia's REDD+ readiness process is being complemented by other closely related initiatives in the forestry and environment sectors. Some of these initiatives are listed in Table 2, below:

Table 2: Other closely related initiatives in the forestry and environment sectors complementary to REDD+

| Initiative | Overview |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP) | <p>The LFSP is the implementation vehicle for the Lol signed between the governments of Liberia and Norway on REDD+⁴. The project is financed through the World Bank and administered using World Bank policies and procedures. As with the FCPF grant, co-ordination takes place through the RIU of the FDA and implemented through a number of sectoral and cross-cutting agencies including the EPA, FDA, LISGIS, MoA, Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, Ministry of Finance, and the Liberia Land Authority (LA).</p> <p>The Lol commits Liberia to a range of policies measures designed to reduce deforestation, including a moratorium on the award of new industrial logging concessions as well as a suspension of any concessions that are of questionable legal origin. The Lol further commits Liberia to legal reviews in the forest sector and the promulgation of new laws that support sustainable forest management and community forestry; expansion of protected area system; sustainable agricultural investments and development including the promotion and realisation of zero deforestation commitments. A total budget of Norwegian Krone 900 million has been provided to support implementation, between 2015 and 2020.</p> |
| Conservation International (CI) | <p>CI have been involved in REDD+ in Liberia since around 2008 when they helped establish a carbon consultative group (the precursor to the REDD+ Technical Working Group) and supported much of the early work around the preparation of Liberia's Readiness Preparedness Proposal (R-PP). They helped build capacity within Liberia for REDD+ and supported FDA in establishing the REDD+ Implementation Unit. Once assured funding support from FCPF was found, CI's efforts have focused more on local level activities around piloting and testing models of conservation agreements in areas around East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR). In addition, CI is working in coastal areas on mangrove and sea-turtle conservation as well as with palm oil companies and out-growers with a view to mainstreaming high conservation value (HCV) and high carbon stock (HCS) commitments. All of these interventions are relevant to the emerging national process, and will generate useful lessons learned on different models and approaches for REDD+ implementation in the field.</p> <p>CI worked together with Winrock International to produce Liberia's first reference scenario, as one of the main outputs from the FCPF readiness activities.</p> |

³ The Readiness Assessment Framework was adopted at the 14th session of the FCPF PC, see Resolution PC/14/2013/1 and FMT Note 2013-1 rev and is available on the FCPF website (www.forestcarbonpartnership.org)

⁴ <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b8b93fa03bda4ac893d065d26d64075b/letterofintentliberia.pdf>

| | |
|---|--|
| Flora and Fauna International (FFI) | <p>Like CI, FFI also supported the development of basic capacity within government agencies as well as early efforts to mobilise civil society and private sector engagement in the REDD+ process, through funding from NORAD. These national level efforts were complimented by initiatives at the local level to develop REDD+ pilots in Sinoe County. After several years of failed attempts to do this in communities surrounding Sapo National Park in Sinoe County, the project shifted efforts to the proposed Protected Area of Wonegizi in Lofa County, near the border with Guinea. With additional funding from NORAD, the project has now produced a verified project design document and is focusing work on carbon assessment, demarcation of the protected area and provision of alternative livelihoods and the development of benefit sharing mechanisms.</p> <p>FFI worked together with PCI Media to develop and implement a REDD+ communication strategy as part of FCPF Readiness activities.</p> |
| Forest Incomes for Environmental Sustainability (FIFES) | <p>This USAID funded project has an overall goal to develop key rural forest-based enterprises that provide inclusive, sustainable economic opportunities for rural farmers and forest-dependent communities in a way that also combats deforestation and biodiversity loss. With a total budget of USD22 million, and implemented by ACDI/VOCA, the project aims to support forest and agricultural value chains, establish legal and management frameworks for 65 small and medium forest enterprises and support community forestry groups to develop management plans to facilitate better governance and a more equitable sharing of benefits.</p> |
| UN-REDD Targeted Support to West Africa | <p>UN-REDD Programme has provided limited support to Liberia, through a regional support programme to West African countries aimed at strengthening MRV and forest monitoring capacities at country level. The programme ran from 2011 – 2015.</p> |
| Forest Trends REDD+ Tracking Forest Finance Project (REDDX) | <p>The REDDX initiative worked in a number of countries (including Liberia) preparing for REDD+ to identify flows of REDD+ financing between 2009 and 2014, including an analysis of funds committed and funds disbursed, as well as how funds were allocated across different cost areas.</p> |

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The terms of reference prepared for this assessment define the following key tasks:

1. Assessment of progress achieved to date (outputs and outcomes)—description of significant achievements and areas requiring further development related to the corresponding assessment criteria (using the 35 assessment questions as per the Guide to the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework);
2. A report of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process;
3. Identification of key strengths in the readiness process and areas requiring further work;
4. Identification of additional actions that may assist Liberia to fully achieve the objectives outlined in its R-PP;
5. Identification of other information, as relevant, such as significant readiness work in progress or major constraints that could hinder progress;
6. Progress achieved in activities funded by the FCPF original grant and additional funding phase (second phase) and identify any delays in the implementations of these activities. Identify the causes for the delay, and propose actions to address the causes of the delay where necessary;

7. Overall sufficiency of available finances and plans to source resources for the overall Readiness preparation activities, including funds pledged by other development partners;
8. Description of the SESA process and outputs;
9. The degree of national ownership of and participation of stakeholders in the Readiness activities;
10. Synergies with REDD+ and relevant projects/programs in the country, particularly the LFSP, Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT), Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) and the NORAD-funded Wonegizi REDD+ Pilot project being implemented by the FFI.

1.4. PROCESS USED IN THE REVIEW

The assessment process was guided by two main inputs. Firstly, the assessment was guided by the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework, which describes a participatory process and set of 35 structured guiding questions, which are to be used in carrying out the assessment (For the full set of questions used, see Annex III). Secondly, the process of the development of this synthesis report benefited greatly from the review of the R-Package reports from Ghana⁵, Costa Rica⁶, DRC⁷ and Mexico⁸, submitted in 2015 and, in the case of Mexico and Ghana, in 2016. These reports were reviewed to see how comparative assessments had been done in other countries. At the time of writing this report, 8 countries have submitted R-Packages, including in addition to those mentioned above, Republic of Congo, Vietnam, Nepal and Chile.

An independent, external consultant with a background in forestry, REDD+ and evaluation facilitated the assessment. The role of the consultant was made clear throughout the consultation process – namely to solicit inputs from stakeholders, encourage balanced discussion and ensure a broad-based input, rather than to provide expert judgment or evaluation assessments.

In undertaking this assessment, the external facilitator worked together with the RIU to identify a list of suitable stakeholders that represented individuals and institutions with a strong stake and engagement in the National REDD+ process. This included members of key institutions involved in REDD+ process, particularly the REDD+ Technical Working Group with membership drawn from relevant state institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations, forest-fringe communities, the private sector and development partners and the SESA working group, which worked alongside the SESA consultants.

It was agreed that the assessment would concentrate on national level processes through engagement with representatives of institutions and organisations involved directly in REDD+ readiness, as well as representatives of constituencies whose interests may be impacted (positively or negatively) by the REDD+ process. This was for two main reasons:

- Firstly, there was concern that there had been a significant amount of consultations at the community level already and their views and concerns had been well incorporated into proposals developed as part of the readiness process.

⁵ Government of Ghana. 2016. Participatory Self Assessment and Synthesis of Ghana's REDD+ Readiness Process. Forestry Commission of Ghana

⁶ Cruz, G and R. Martinez. 2015. Self-Assessment Process Report of the Relevant Interested Parties Regarding The REDD+ Strategic Costa Rica Readiness Phase. Conservation International.

⁷ Co-ordination Nationale REDD+. 2015. Participatory Self-Assessment of the REDD+ Readiness Package in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo





⁸ CONAFOR. 2016. REDD+ preparation package document for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Government of Mexico

- Secondly, as the assessment is only evaluating “readiness”, rather than actual implementation, the discussion is rather abstract and far removed from the realities of community-level concerns.

As specified in the FCPF Readiness assessment guidelines, a colour-coded system was used to assess progress on each of the questions. Four responses were included as presented in the Figure 1: Colour-coding score systemFigure 1.

A short description of the self-assessment process is presented below in Section 1.5. Inputs were obtained either from plenary discussions, with differing viewpoints being agreed within the group, or in group sessions through which feedback was brought up for discussions at the plenary for final scores to be determined.

Figure 1: Colour-coding score system used in assessment process

| | |
|---|---|
|  | Significant progress achieved |
|  | Progressing well, but further progress required |
|  | Further development required |
|  | Not yet demonstrating progress |

The outcomes of the self-assessment exercises are presented in the main body of the text. Given the differences of opinions between different stakeholder groups, scores are presented to reflect such differences. The accompanying text provides an explanation or discussion for the reasons for any divergence of opinion.

1.5. REPORT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The RIU convened a series of meetings over a 12-day period during May 2017 as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Stakeholder meetings held as part of the self-assessment process

| Stakeholder group | Date of consultation | Objective of meeting |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU) | 8 th May, 2017 | Participatory self assessment (all questions) |
| REDD+ Technical Working Group | 9 th May, 2017 | Participatory self assessment (all questions) |
| SESA Working Group | 10 th May, 2017 | Participatory self assessment (questions relating to SESA, ESMF and safeguards) |
| NGOs, CSOs from the national NGO Forum engaged in REDD+ activities | 11 th May, 2017 | Participatory self assessment (questions relating to consultation, communication, linkages, and structures) |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Development partner representatives, additional resource persons from key national and international NGOs working in Liberia; VPA Secretariat | Between 10 th – 21 st May 2017 | Overall assessment of progress of REDD+ process – specific questions focusing on relevant issues. Provided opportunity for more detailed discussions |
| Cross-section of stakeholder groups | Friday 19 th May, 2017 | Validation and triangulation of initial findings from consultations |

Questions clustered in four different categories were presented to different stakeholder groups for their inputs and assessment scores. In some cases, there was a deliberate process of targeting questions to individual target groups, where it was noted that certain issues would be more relevant according to the interests or expertise of that particular group being consulted⁹. During the final validation workshop, stakeholder group presented the scores, noted any major differences, discussed and then generated an overall score.

Where a different interpretation of the same question by different stakeholder groups was identified (which generated different responses) a common consensus was gained on the specific question and in some cases the scores were adjusted with the consensus of the plenary group. Where the question was understood in the same way, but different perceptions existed, no adjustments were made to the scoring.

In total 73 persons participated in the self-assessment process. A higher number of different stakeholders were invited but inevitably a few were unable to participate. Working with small groups facilitated greater interaction and participation than a larger plenary group would have allowed for. A summary of participation in the self-assessment from different interest groups is presented in Table 4. In general, good participation and input was obtained from government and civil society groups. Private sector was not well represented, although the national charcoal union and national chainsaw union participated in various forums. Larger scale companies such as timber or palm oil companies did not participate, although representatives were invited to attend. Although difficult to verify, there has been some concerns from private sector interests that REDD+ was intended to curb land-based private sector activities such as palm oil production and awarding of large scale logging concessions. As such, there has been suspicion within private sector and limited engagement to date as most have viewed the national REDD+ process have the perception that REDD+ can restraint their business interests.. The communication strategy is continuously engaging these stakeholders for perception change that enables Liberia benefits from REDD+ funding and ensures that the country meets it's international commitments and obligation.

Table 4: Stakeholder representation in the self-assessment process

| Meeting | Representation | | | Gender | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----|--------|--------|--------|
| | Govt | PS | NGO/CS | Male | Female |
| REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU) | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| REDD+ Technical Working Group | 9 | 1 | 10 | 17 | 3 |
| SESA Working Group | 2 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 2 |

⁹ For example, questions around impacts, safeguards and non-carbon benefits were tabled specifically to the SESA working group.

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| NGOs, CSOs from the national NGO Forum engaged in REDD+ activities | 0 | 0 | 14 | 12 | 2 |
| Development partner representatives | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Cross-section of stakeholder groups for final validation meeting | 7 | 2 | 15 | 22 | 2 |
| Totals | 23 | 7 | 43 | 63 | 10 |

In each workshop, a presentation was given initially by the facilitator introducing the readiness assessment framework, its aims, objectives and the process adopted for undertaking the assessment, including the scoring system used. The “ground rules” were also spelled out clearly, including the point that this was a self-assessment process, rather than an externally driven evaluation. The RIU also provided context and clarifications as needed, but not views or opinions on progress or scores other than in the session dedicated to RIU on Monday 8th May (see Table 2).

There was some adjustment of the original generic questions presented in the FCPF assessment framework, to take account of local conditions and national circumstances. Liberia has for a number of years been supporting reforms to its forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) framework, as part of its commitments under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed with the European Union. There are many overlaps between REDD+ and FLEGT processes and this was specifically included in the questions under the assessment. Secondly, the Readiness Assessment Framework pays limited attention to gender (other than reference to participation of women in consultation processes). As such, an additional question was included relating to mainstreaming of gender throughout the REDD+ readiness process. The complete set of questions can be found in Annex III of this report.

Two challenges emerged during the self-assessment:

- Firstly, some of the questions are long, with multiple, or compound descriptors that all need to be met if an overall score is to be given. In some cases, some or most of the descriptors were met, but one or more was not. In such cases there was divergence of views as to what overall score should be given.
- Secondly, some of the questions appeared to some participants to be encroaching on the realm of REDD+ implementation, rather than readiness. For example, for the feedback and grievance redress mechanism to be “operating at national, sub-national and local levels”, results based actions would have to be implemented, potentially triggering feedback, grievance or redress processes. In the period of readiness it is impossible to achieve a green score for this and other questions (see for example similar concerns around the operations of the ESMF, which is designed to identify and mitigate impacts generated during REDD+ implementation).

In general, there was consensus across the different interest groups and clear (relative) trends can be seen between different components and sub-components. With regard to the assessment from civil society, in general, a more critical view was given, but this is to be expected in a process that is largely driven by government, partially due to stakeholders’ level of expectations such as immediate monetary benefits. However, at all times, the atmosphere was congenial, open and constructive, despite the differences in viewpoints.

In the following sections, each of the FCPF sub-components is assessed in turn. For each sub-component, an overall report is given regarding progress made to date, and is followed by the

results of the self-assessment. Results are presented by question and by stakeholder group. No attempt is made, at this stage to give a summary score – as this reduces the transparency and objectivity of the overall assessment process. Instead, where significant differences were observed between the groups, these areas were pointed out during the plenary validation session. Where, for example, different interpretations of the same question had been made, a process was used to get common understanding and provides scoring that represented such understanding. Where different groups understood the question in the same manner, but different scores were given, no attempt was made to modify scores.

In the conclusion section of this report, an overall, summative assessment is given, based on the relative frequency of different scores across each sub-component identified by different stakeholder groups.

2. READINESS ORGANIZATION AND CONSULTATION

2.1. SUB-COMPONENT 1A: NATIONAL REDD+ MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

2.1.1. Overall progress and constraints

Liberia received USD 3.6 million for REDD+ readiness over the period 2012 – 2016. In 2014, when Liberia submitted its mid term review report, it made a request for an additional USD 5 million in funding, on the basis that current funding was insufficient to cover all readiness work. This request was approved and Liberia is now preparing or initiating the implementation of outstanding activities such as the national forest monitoring system, national forest assessment, an FGRM, and REDD+ registry.

Overall progress in terms of implementation REDD+ readiness activities has been significantly affected by the Ebola crisis, which impacted heavily on all economic activities in Liberia over an 18-month period starting in April 2014. All international consultants engaged by the project invoked *force majeure* and suspended activities until Liberia was declared Ebola-free in January 2016. This had the effect of significantly delaying progress on a number of key consultancy packages, such as the REDD+ strategy and the SESA, although these have now been completed.

2.1.2. Progress and major achievements under component 1A

REDD+ activities are co-ordinated in Liberia at three principle levels as presented below in Figure 2:

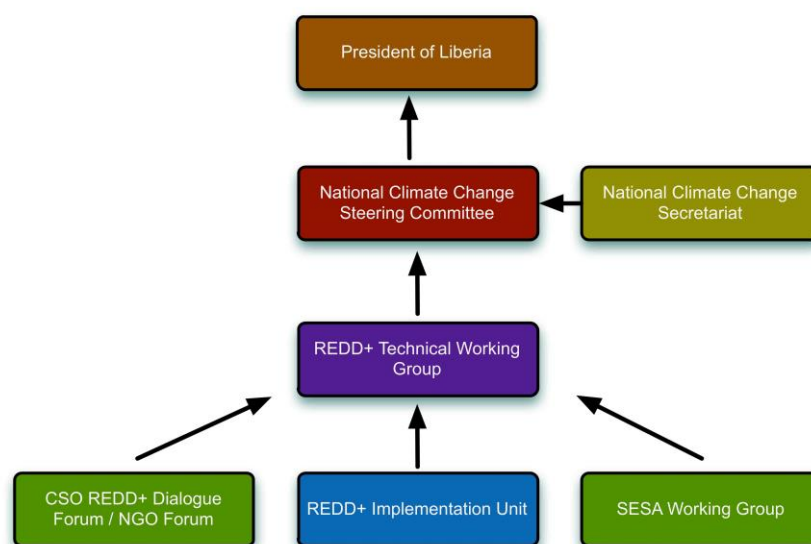


Figure 2: REDD+ Institutional Arrangements in Liberia

REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU)

At the operational level, the RIU - a small unit within the FDA - is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of agreed REDD+ activities under the FCPF grant as well as the LFSP. A request has been made (and approved), and recruitments done to expand the staffing of the RIU to be able to manage its increasing workload. Nine staff currently constitute the RIU: the National Coordinator, a Policy Co-ordinator, a Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Specialist, a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, a Social Safeguards Specialist, a Procurement Officer, a Procurement Specialist, a Project Accountant and Project Officer. The recruitment of

a team assistant is well advanced. Additional staffs to be recruited for the FDA include an MRV Officer and an additional Procurement officer or Procurement Specialist. The EPA, with joint responsibility for implementation of the FCPF (with particular emphasis on monitoring of environmental impacts) will also be provided with an Environmental Safeguards Specialist. One additional MRV Officer will be recruited and assigned to LISGIS.

REDD+ Technical Working Group (RTWG)

The RTWG is an advisory body that serves as a multi-stakeholder platform for REDD+ activities and decision-making. The RTWG provides technical advice to inform and guide decisions about the program development in Liberia, and it is co- chaired by the FDA and EPA. The current membership of the RTWG consists of 34 members, and includes representatives of government ministries and agencies, civil society organizations, development partners, international non-governmental organizations, youth groups, academia and the private sector. A minimum of four formal meetings are scheduled to occur annually, but emergency meetings can be called through written communication by the co- chairs through the RTWG Coordinator to deliberate on urgent matters. The RTWG built upon an earlier, more informal platform called the Carbon Consultative Group, formed with support from Conservation International and FFI.

The RTWG is designed to be a “knowledge hub” for REDD+ in Liberia, providing a platform where all REDD+ actors’ (practitioners and specialists, government, private sectors, development partners and CSOs) activities are coordinated. The RTWG provides the technical supervision for all REDD+ implementation and ensures that lessons learned are shared effectively, overlaps are avoided, and activities are mutually reinforcing and in-line with national needs and priorities. The RIU which acts as the secretariat to the RTWG, is leading the implementation of the FCPF readiness process, and the two bodies are coordinated and in continual communication. The RTWG and the RIU also provide the platform for the coordination of both FCPF and other partner-funded activities, through sharing of information on budgets, timelines and activities, and ensuring that all actions fit with the emerging national needs and policies for REDD+.

SESA Working Group

This working group was established to provide oversight to the on-going SESA process, supervision and the revision of technical reports from the SESA Consultant. This group was formerly known as the Consultation and Participation (C&P) Task Force during the R-PP formulation phase, but had to change its nomenclature and membership composition due to its new mandate. The first meeting of the working group was held on 14th February 2014, and its membership constituted based on nomination from selected institutions (Government ministries and agencies, CSOs, private sector, universities, etc.). During the SESA process, the EPA chaired the SESA Working Group, and the SESA National Coordinator working out of EPA co-ordinated its day-to-day activities. The SESA co-ordinator has now left but EPA remain responsible for overseeing work on safeguards and SESA implementation. This group reports to the REDD+ Technical Working Group for validation and the RIU for implementation. The primary role of the SESA Working Group has been to support the SESA process including consultations at all level. As the SESA preparation has been completed, the SESA Working Group has been merged with the RTWG. Unless in emergency cases, in the future, the SESA Working Group will be reactivated to guide the implementation of the Environmental Social Management Framework (ESMF) and facilitate consultations at all levels.

National Climate Change Steering Committee (NCCSC)

Overall co-ordination and supervision of climate change activities in Liberia takes place through an inter-ministerial committee, the NCCSC. The President of Liberia established the NCCSC in 2010 to ensure cross-governmental commitment and co-ordination on climate change matters

and to support policy development processes related to climate change mitigation and adaptation across the country. The Minister of Finance is designated to chair the NCSSC. The steering committee had not been active since its inception although in November 2016 the President reconstituted the steering committee and it met for the first time in March 2017. A second meeting took place on 16th June, 2017. Membership of the NCCSC is drawn from the following agencies and ministries:

- Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP)
- Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
- A Civil Society Organization (CSO) Representative
- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MoFDP)
- Ministry of Transport (MoT)
- Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy (MLME)

To date, the NCCSC has coordinated the development of the National Climate Change Policy and approved and adopted the National REDD+ Strategy in June 2017. Further support has been provided to the NCCSC included the refurbishing and equipping of an office to host the National Coordinator of the National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS the administrative arm of the NCCSC) and staff with a function to coordinate the NCCSC, within the Office of the President

Due to the high cost associated with the implementation of other activities, specifically the SESA and the Consultation and Participation for all aspects of the project, the development of the national feedback and grievance redress mechanisms could not be funded under the original FCPF 3.6 million grant. A decision was taken to include the budget for developing the national FGRM in the request for FCPF additional funding, agreed in 2014. Parley Liberia, the consultant hired to execute this task has delivered an inception report. However, the firm has failed to consistently submit monthly progress reports as required, and has failed to respond and address all issues of non-performance raised by the FDA. Due to Parley's non-performance, the contract for this assignment has been terminated. The FDA has engaged the next ranked consultant (firm) to submit proposals for its consideration. Consequently, the final deliverable for the FGRM is now expected within the first quarter of 2018.

Financing of REDD+ readiness activities is well provided for, with two phases of FCPF readiness grant secured as well as funding from the Norwegian government through the LFSP. A number of national and international NGOs are also supporting REDD+ implementation at community and national levels (See Table 2). As part of its NOK900 million commitment to Liberia, the government of Norway has also agreed to provide funding for results based actions (emission reductions through land-use change). The World Bank estimates that in an optimistic scenario Liberia could leverage up to US\$11 million per year (assuming US\$5 per ton CO₂) starting from year 5 of the LFSP implementation for verified ERs. These payments would be available once the program achieves, independently verifies, and reports on reduced emissions.

Liberia is in the process of designing a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF), with support and technical advice from the World Bank and Conservation International Liberia. The initial thinking on the CTF suggests that the CTF will support conservation activities in the forest landscapes, including in protected areas. Subject to successful capitalization, the CTF would contribute to the financial sustainability of Liberia's protected area system. The CTF is envisaged to be capitalized by a combination of public and private financing coming from diverse sources including forest fee and taxes, carbon payments, donors' direct financing, and biodiversity offsets. The Conservation Trust Fund will yield useful lessons for management of future REDD+ funds or may even be potentially used as a vehicle for the carbon payments' flow.

2.1.3. Results of self-assessment

Overall assessment: Progressing well but further development required. REDD+ management and co-ordination structures are functional and operate in an open and transparent manner. MoUs have been signed with key government agencies involved in REDD+ implementation, which include EPA, MOA, LISGIS, MLME, LLA, and MoFDP. Funding has been secured for REDD+ readiness as well as performance based actions, and the various donor and NGO inputs are co-ordinated and harmonised. Capacity gaps continue to exist within government and within NGOs involved in REDD+. The RIU has increased its staffing capacity to cover areas such as Communication, Stakeholder Engagement, Project Officer, MRV, Safeguards and M&E. The FGRM is not operational, and the process of design has been delayed due to non-performance of the selected consultants. .

Table 5: Self-assessment scores on national REDD+ management arrangements

| | RIU ¹⁰ | RTWG ¹¹ | SWG ¹² | NGOF ¹³ |
|---|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Accountability and Transparency | | | | |
| How are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrating they are operating in an open, accountable and transparent manner? | | | | |
| 2. Operating mandate and budget | | | | |
| How is it shown that national REDD+ institutions operate under clear mutually supportive mandates with adequate, predictable and sustainable budgets? | | | | |
| 3. Multi-sector coordination mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration | | | | |
| How are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements ensuring REDD+ activities are coordinated, integrated into and influencing the broader national or sector policy frameworks (e.g., agriculture, environment, natural resources management, infrastructure development and land-use planning)? | | | | |
| 4. Technical supervision capacity | | | | |
| How effectively and efficiently are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements leading and supervising multi-sector readiness activities, including the regular supervision of technical preparations? | | | | |
| 5. Funds management capacity | | | | |
| How are institutions and arrangements demonstrating effective, efficient and transparent fiscal management, including coordination with other development partner-funded activities? | | | | |
| 6. Feedback and grievance redress mechanism | | | | |
| What evidence is there to demonstrate the mechanism is operating at the national, subnational and local levels, is transparent, impartial, has a clearly defined mandate, and adequate expertise and resources? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that potentially impacted communities are aware of, have access to, and the mechanism is responsive to feedback and grievances? | | | | |

There was widespread agreement that RIU has been effective in communicating outputs and decisions on REDD+ in a transparent and open manner. However, there is a sense among many who were consulted that the “REDD+ community” in Liberia is still rather small and that more work needs to be done to engage a wider circle of practitioners and resource persons working

¹⁰ REDD+ Implementation Unit

¹¹ REDD+ Technical Working Group

¹² SESA Working Group. Note: This group was not specifically consulted on Sub-component 2.1, but only on relevant technical areas related to their mandate

¹³ NGO Forum

in land, forests and natural resources sectors. Furthermore, a number of stakeholders felt that the RTWG had become somewhat less effective of late, as meetings appeared to be less frequent than before, there was less interaction and exchange and it tended to revolve around interactions with consultants who were looking for validation or specific inputs into various studies or assessments.

Regarding funding, it was agreed that Liberia is on a strong footing, in terms of REDD+ financing, however, there was concern that the process is very donor-dependent, and that there is very limited internal investment (from government or the private sector) to complement external donor financing. This means that investments to date are somewhat risky, and while Liberia is working towards results-based actions, there are many barriers to overcome before this can be done effectively and results based financing is secured. One of the key barriers to be addressed is the need to adequately coordinate activities related to funding for the sector, especially result based financing.

In terms of inter-governmental co-ordination, many participants noted the MoUs that had been signed between FDA and other key sector agencies, including the MoA, EPA, MLME, LISGIS, LA, and MoFDP. The MoU with MLME provides the opportunity for FDA to review potential licenses and permits, which will be important if mining impacts on deforestation are to be effectively addressed. A new initiative to establish regional inter-agency task teams has been started, which will ensure improved co-ordination of different agencies and sectors at sub-national level. Further, it was noted with satisfaction that the NCCSC has recently been reconstituted with a view to ensuring cross agency and cross-ministerial co-ordination. However, Liberia has committed itself to a strong agenda of economic development through the use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources and, as such, it will be an on-going challenge to ensure that REDD+ is truly integrated into national level policy making. Ensuring that the NCCSC is operational, active and engaged will be a critical means to address this challenge. Finally, it was observed by some participants that more efforts were needed to fully engage other departments within FDA, including departments for conservation forestry and commercial forestry.

Many participants noted good co-ordination and coherence with regard to the different sources of financing to REDD+. This is supported by the fact that both FCPF and LFSP work through the RIU, rather than through two parallel structures. As such, no additional project-specific structures or processes have been established. And, as discussed above, key implementing agencies (FFI and CI) are well represented and active on the RTWG and engaged in complementary activities.

The MoFDP, through a Project Financial Management Unit (PFMU) responsible for managing World Bank funding, undertakes financial management. This ensures smooth functioning of the financial aspects of both projects. A high level of satisfaction with regard to financial management was expressed, although some participants requested public disclosure of financial reports.

A major concern expressed by the RTWG and other stakeholders was the issue of technical capacity – REDD+ being a complex technical area with evolving guidelines and requirements. Many people within REDD+ consultative bodies expressed concern over their own ability to provide meaningful inputs on technical packages such as the reference scenario, analysis of drivers, and around the complex issue of safeguards. A response to this was that many of the consultants were requested to provide on-going capacity development as part of their on going work. However, a sentiment widely expressed was that greater effort was needed to build capacity across all major stakeholder groups, including government, if this small community of practice in Liberia was to be effectively expanded. The capacity building activities ongoing and planned with support from the FCPF AF grant are an effort in this direction. The LFSP also

includes substantial support to develop in country capacity on improved forest and natural resource management. A special focus is made on strengthening capacity of the Forestry Training Institute, as the primary forestry sector training institution, to develop its curriculum to keep up with the global forestry agenda and developments. Also the capacity building and strengthening of other Project Implementing Entities (PIEs) of the LFSP is currently on going. Under the LFSP, interns from the FTI and the University of Liberia are coming on board as part of the practical learning experience that will help to build the capacity of graduating students with the hope of addressing capacity gaps identified for implementing REDD+ in Liberia.

2.2. SUB-COMPONENT 1B: CONSULTATION, PARTICIPATION, AND OUTREACH

2.2.1. Progress and major achievements

Many of the outputs under this sub-component were delivered through a consultancy package awarded to PCI Media Impact in partnership with Fauna and Flora International (FFI) to develop and implement a national REDD+ Communication Strategy. The strategy aims to contribute to the successful implementation of the REDD+ Strategy in Liberia by enhancing collaboration between key partners, increasing the visibility of the REDD+ program, supporting a consultation process and promoting a common understanding on REDD+ across all levels of intervention. The communication strategy was developed and approved by the RTWG in May 2015. Its implementation started in July 2015 and was supported directly by PCI Media until November 2016. After November 2016, FDA has been responsible for its implementation - the Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Specialist in the RIU currently leads the implementation of the Communication Strategy.

The REDD+ communication strategy focused on four objectives:

- To increase the visibility and general awareness of REDD+ in Liberia.
- To enhance collaboration between internal RTWG partners, donors, and executing agencies by facilitating the sharing of information.
- To strengthen information sharing between external REDD+ stakeholders, including governmental, non-governmental institutions and corporate entities in Liberia.
- To promote a sense of understanding, encourage participation and ownership of REDD+ priority issues, and increase self-efficacy leading to effective forest conservation by key audiences at the national, civil society, industry and local levels.

The following audiences were prioritized for REDD+ communication:

- Implementing Partners (RTWG/RIU/SESA Working Group)
- Policy and decision makers
- Forest-dependent people
- County level civil society and citizen groups
- Private sector/industry

The REDD+ Communication Strategy made use of communication channels in 3 areas:

1: Internal Communications

- Quarterly meetings of the RTWG
- Monthly e-mail updates to key members of the RTWG updating them on REDD+ activities, learning, management, and next steps.
- Monthly updates to EPA and FDA websites
- Weekly updates to REDD+ social media
- Research briefs

2: External Communications

- Monthly updates to EPA and FDA websites
- Weekly updates to REDD+ social media (including Facebook and Instagram)

3: REDD+ Communications for Development

- A 10-episode radio drama to engage people in forest dependent communities on understanding of REDD+
- A REDD+ song, music video and jingles to engage the general public
- County forums where people in forest-dependent communities could learn about and discuss REDD+
- Billboards and bumper stickers
- Call-in radio shows on REDD+

In addition to this, communications and consultations were an integral part of the SESA process as well as the REDD+ Strategy development process. Between 2014 and 2016, the REDD+ strategy consultants facilitated a total of four subnational and national, formal and informal and consultations with over 400 stakeholders to understand, obtain inputs and draw from stakeholders' experiences in managing land tenure, land use analysis, forest definition, cost-benefit implications, feasibility analysis of implementing REDD+, and other key issues associated with equitable benefit sharing in Liberia. Overall, an estimated seven hundred representatives from civil society, communities, academia, government institutions, donor partners, resources user groups (charcoal, timber) and private sector actors were involved in all the consultations. Due to the synchronisation of the SESA process with the National REDD+ Strategy development process, it was possible to ensure that as potential safeguard issues emerged from the SESA consultations, these were fed into discussions around strategy options. The reports that accompany the SESA and REDD+ Strategy process show clearly how comments and viewpoints expressed during consultations fed into and informed the final conclusions and outputs.

The SESA process itself undertook a detailed stakeholder analysis, to identify key groups at national, county and community levels who may be impacted (positively or negatively) by the REDD+ process. This list of key groups was validated at the inception workshop for the SESA process. National-level stakeholders included private sector concessionaires, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and donors; county-level stakeholder groups included county officials, county-level CSOs, and the private sector; community-level stakeholder groups included local government officials, forest user groups, community-based organizations, and various social groups.

Stakeholders that were identified and consulted during the SESA process include: communities that live within or immediately adjacent to forest areas, community forestry organizations, people that depend on forests for part or all of their livelihoods from timber or non-timber forest products (NTFPs, including charcoal), government agencies responsible for management and regulation of forests and related resources, private sector investors who are developing concessions (mining, agriculture, and forestry), CSOs that represent a diversity of interests (community land rights, conservation, etc.), and donors that contribute significantly to the sector. In summary, the stakeholder consultation and participation process involved twelve community level workshops, twelve regional level consultations, three national workshops and one technical workshop, involving over 650 persons. The RIU also facilitated a national and subnational dissemination process of the Process Framework (PF) and the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and the SESA report to stakeholders, including through the FDA website.

During the SESA inception workshop a crossed session of stakeholders selected six sites for the

conduct of case studies on some of the major drivers of deforestation. Case studies on (i) proposed Wonegizi PA, REDD+ site, benefit sharing; (ii) Community forestry, mining, PA management; (iii) Shifting cultivation and forest-dependent livelihoods; (iv) Oil palm plantation expansion/agriculture concession; (v) Logging concession and, community participation and benefits; (vi) chainsaw logging and Biomass energy (fuelwood) impacts and livelihoods were included in SESA development to provide more in-depth and detailed information about environmental and social aspects, impacts, and opportunities related to REDD+ than are available from written sources and mapping alone. The case studies provided insights into the interests and concerns of rural Liberian stakeholders; particularly those communities that are most dependent on forests for their livelihoods. Within the context of each case study, detailed community-level consultations were carried out using focal group discussions (men and women, youth and elders) to ensure that a broad cross-section of interests was captured.

2.2.2. Results of self-assessment

Overall assessment: Significant progress achieved. Important results obtained with regard to communications and out-reach, including the FFI-PCI Media consultant package, SESA consultations and engagement around the REDD+ Strategy. There have been efforts made to ensure communications at local level are in an appropriate format and use appropriate media. SESA consultations have been undertaken at community level, with focal group discussions with different stakeholder groups, including women. There has been limited engagement from the private sector, such as large-scale companies producing palm oil, rubber and timber. The outputs of consultations have fed into and informed emerging strategy development process in a transparent way. Communicating on REDD+ has been challenging, given the fact that it is a complex and abstract concept, and that it is yet to be operational. Concerns have been raised over the sustainability of communication efforts following the completion of the PCI Media / FFI Consultancy Package – although this has now been built into the LFSP workplan.

Table 6: Self-assessment scores on consultation, participation and outreach

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|--|-----|------|-----|------|
| 7. Participation and engagement of key stakeholders | | | | |
| How is the full, effective and on-going participation of key stakeholders demonstrated through institutional mechanisms (including extra efforts to engage marginalized groups such as forest-dependent women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities)? | | | | |
| What are the participatory mechanisms being used to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities have the capacity to effectively participate in REDD+ readiness and implementation? | | | | |
| What measures have been taken to mainstream gender considerations across REDD+ readiness activities? | | | | |
| 8. Consultation processes | | | | |
| What evidence demonstrates that consultation processes at the national and local levels are clear, inclusive, transparent, and facilitate timely access to information in a culturally appropriate form? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that the country has used a self-selection process to identify rights holders and stakeholders during consultations? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that Indigenous Peoples institutions and decision-making processes are utilized to enhance consultations and engagement? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that consultation processes are gender | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| sensitive and inclusive? | | | | |
| 9. Information sharing and accessibility of information | | | | |
| How have national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrated transparent, consistent, comprehensive and timely sharing and disclosure of information (related to all readiness activities, including the development of REDD+ strategy, reference levels, and monitoring systems) in a culturally appropriate form? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that information is accessible to stakeholders (e.g., in a format and language understandable to them) and is being received? | | | | |
| What channels of communications are being used to ensure that stakeholders are well informed, especially those that have limited or no access to relevant information? | | | | |
| 10. Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes | | | | |
| How are the outcomes of consultations integrated (fed into, disseminated, publicly disclosed and taken into account) in management arrangements, strategy development and technical activities related to reference level and monitoring and information systems development? | | | | |

The analysis above shows differences of opinion between government and civil society actors regarding the degree to which consultations have been widespread and effective and the degree to which information has been effectively shared at local levels. Representatives from the RTWG felt that more work was needed to really engage marginalised voices within the REDD+ process (such as forest-dependent communities).

However, there was consensus that information had been effectively shared at national level, through the communication campaign and through the forum of the RTWG. Despite this, there was recognition of and satisfaction with the wide variety of different channels used – including community radio networks, printed media, rallies and meetings, and social media. One concern that was raised by a number of players was the sustainability of communication processes, although recently this has been accommodated in the LFSP workplan and budget. The FDA website that includes a series of web pages for the REDD+ process is now back online after a period of non-activity. Communication in other media (radio, newsletters, etc) has also reduced dramatically since the contract ended. A full time communication officer has recently been engaged within the RIU and will lead the process of ensuring communication is restored and reinvigorated.

There was strong consensus among different stakeholder groups that when consultations had taken place, the views and concerns that were raised were taken into account and reflected in revisions of key strategy documents in a transparent manner (Question 10). In many cases, validation processes took place at different levels to further ensure that the results of consultations were fed back. Charcoal and chainsaw interests, often marginalised in such discussions, were reported to have been listened to and taken into account.

Self selection (Question 8) was further identified across the board as strength of the process. There was no effort to filter out specific interest groups. When working with different stakeholder groups, there was an effort to encourage a process of reflection and self selection. This was strongest among the NGO community (who identified representatives through the NGO forum) and at community level (during case studies for the SESA), when communities were asked to identify persons who could provide representative views to the consultation process. SESA team had a stakeholder engagement specialist who was able to ensure the quality of the consultation process. It was stated by representatives of the NGO coalition that there was a need to strengthen communication processes within the NGO community, so when representatives attend key events, the discussions and emerging issues are then fed to the

wider members of the coalition.

As noted under 1a, the participation of private sector has been limited – other than the chainsaw and charcoal groups. Larger scale forestry companies, palm oil or rubber companies have not engaged well, and it was reported (although not confirmed) that private sector continues to observe the REDD+ process with suspicion. However, there is evidence of increasing engagement of palm oil business sector through other forums such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and Forests 2020 platform.

Views on gender sensitivity were mixed. The SESA Working Group argued strongly that during SESA consultations efforts had been made to ensure participation by women, including women-only focal group discussions at community level. Furthermore, the RTWG is very inclusive and sensitive to gender issues. However, this attention to gender does not seem to have been mirrored in other consultative and communication processes.

3. REDD+ Strategy Preparation

3.1. SUB-COMPONENT 2A. ASSESSMENT OF LAND USE, LAND-USE CHANGE DRIVERS, FOREST LAW, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

3.1.1. Progress and major achievements

Land use, deforestation drivers and policy, law and governance were all reviewed as part of the contract with LTS / NIRAS to develop a national REDD+ strategy. This assignment, fully funded through FCPF, began in September 2014. An initial activity was the land-use option land use analysis, which was designed to define current land use, land use categories and suitability criteria. This was used to model different land use options, which following stakeholder buy-in, were translated into land use suitability options. To assist in this exercise, an up to date land and forest cover data was obtained from the 2015 Metria & GeoVille land cover assessment commissioned by the FDA and discussed later in this report. Spatial data on land use in Liberia is largely limited to Government of Liberia concessions for forestry, agriculture and mining. Also available are data on the land area that the Government has designated for conservation, as Protected Areas. The land uses included in the analysis were:

- Forestry concession; Forest Management Contracts (FMCs), Timber Sales Contracts (TSCs) and Community Forest Management Agreements (CFMAs).
- Agricultural concessions, including oil palm plantations and rubber plantation concessions.
- Mining, including large scale mineral development concessions and small-scale "artisanal" mining.
- Protected areas, where forest is to be used primarily or exclusively for biodiversity conservation.
- A variety of smallholder, subsistence uses of land at community level, including shifting-agriculture, chainsaw logging ("chain sawing") and charcoal production.

The outcomes of the land use assessment are presented in Annex C of the National REDD+ Strategy.

The assessment findings are being used to inform national policy makers to facilitate the alignment of Liberia's National REDD+ Strategy to national developmental objectives. It was prepared as an investigative work and will be share with relevant ministries and agencies and updated continuously to reflect the changing realities of Liberia's forest. As one of the practical outcomes of this assessment, currently, there are discussions among the Government of Liberia and partners regarding the setting up of a Conservation Trust Fund that may be used to support forest protection. This will include Protected Areas, Proposed Protected Areas and Community Forest that will want to do conservation.

The consultants also undertook a detailed policy and legal assessment. This summarised the existing legal and policy framework around forests and land use; identified the current status of carbon rights and benefit sharing; identified gaps within current legal framework and analysed institutional capacity. Based on the above, the consultants developed recommendations on addressing legal, policy and institutional capacity gaps identified that have formed part of the National REDD+ Strategy. These are presented in Technical Annex F of the REDD+ Strategy. In an effort to address legal and policy framework around forests and land use, the FDA is working with relevant government institutions to develop the appropriate policies in different sectors of government. The FDA has signed a number of MOUs with institutions such as the Ministry of Mines and Energy, Ministry of Agriculture and the Environmental Protected Agency etc. Liberia's REDD+ Strategy recognizes the need for sectorial coordination through policy development and implementation. Against this background, the FDA has coordinated with various government institutions to align REDD Strategy Options with national policies such as Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda (LATA), National Climate Policy, Liberia Agenda for Transformation and Liberia National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), amongst others.

The REDD+ Strategy includes an action plan (Technical Annex B to National REDD+ Strategy) that sets out key activities that will need to be implemented if drivers are to be adequately addressed. The action plan describes which actions could be taken up in existing, funded activities (such as the LFSP) or USAID's support to community forestry (through the FIFES project). It also outlines which activities are as yet unfunded under any already implemented project.

The VPA project has complementary activities to improve the sustainability of the commercial forestry sector and improve the implementation and enforcement of forestry laws and governance. Effective governance and trade are essential preconditions for effective REDD+ and as such are important as REDD+ activities transitions from readiness to implementation activities. Efforts have been made to link the VPA and REDD+ processes and many NGOs are involved on corresponding multi-stakeholder platforms (the VPA Multi-stakeholder platform and the RTWG).

3.1.2. Results of self-assessment

Overall assessment: Significant Progress Achieved. Assessment of land use and deforestation drivers was thorough and inclusive, building on earlier work and using recent land-cover maps to inform analysis. Barriers and constraints to addressing drivers were well developed in the REDD+ Strategy development process. The REDD+ Action Plan has been developed, although the financial requirements still need to be elaborated. Links between VPA/FLEGT process and REDD+ process have been made, but there are still opportunities for greater learning and exchange.

Table 7: Self-assessment scores on assessment of land-use, policy and law¹⁴

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|
| 11. Assessment and analysis | | | | |
| Does the summary of the work conducted during R-PP formulation and preparation present an analysis of recent historical land-use trends (including traditional) and assessment of relevant land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods (including traditional/customary), forest law, policy and governance issues? | | | | |

¹⁴ The SWG and NGOF were not consulted on this specific area as they were not in a position to provide an informed decision. As such, the focus of consultation was with the RIU and RTWG.

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 12. Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement | | | | |
| How was the analysis used to prioritize key direct and indirect drivers to be addressed by the programs and policies included in the REDD+ strategy? | | | | |
| Did the analysis consider the major barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (if appropriate) to be addressed by the programs and policies included in the REDD+ strategy? | | | | |
| 13. Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities | | | | |
| What evidence demonstrates that systematic links between key drivers, and/or barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (as appropriate), and REDD+ activities were identified? | | | | |
| 14. Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure, governance | | | | |
| Do action plans to make progress in the short-, medium- and long-term towards addressing relevant, land-use, land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods, and governance issues in priority regions related to specific REDD+ programs, outline further steps and identify required resources? | | | | |
| 15. Implications for forest law and policy | | | | |
| Does the assessment identify implications for forest or other relevant law and policy in the long-term? | | | | |
| 16. Links between REDD+ and VPA/FLEGT | | | | |
| How effective are the linkages and learning between national REDD+ readiness activities and those related to FLEGT within the context of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed with the European Union, and what specific measures (if any) have been taken? | | | | |

Generally, there was a consensus that the REDD+ strategy process had been conducted well and used a logical and methodical approach to identifying and prioritising deforestation drivers, building on earlier work done, while achieving validation through widespread consultation. Furthermore, there was satisfaction that strategy options were linked directly to addressing key deforestation drivers.

Mixed results were found in two areas only. Under question 14, there were some comments about the specificity of the action plans developed, with a feeling that the action plan could be elaborated with a greater level of details and with resource requirements included. The second area where mixed comments were found was under question 16, which looked into the linkages between FLEGT/VPA and REDD+. It was noted by some NGOs that the VPA process had more opportunities for genuine participation by civil society, and the process was well facilitated with a full-time facilitator. Some stated that in the VPA process, in-country stakeholders were more empowered to determine the outcome of discussions; while with REDD+ the outcomes were pre-determined and largely driven by external consultants due to inadequate national capacity.

3.2. SUBCOMPONENT: 2B. REDD+ STRATEGY OPTIONS

A range of different REDD+ strategy options were reviewed as part of the REDD+ Strategy development process. Overall, the process adopted included an elaboration of strategy options identified in the R-PP document and then subjecting them to a detailed cost-benefit analysis and feasibility analysis (including a review of barriers and potential policies and measures needed to overcome these barriers). Close communication with the SESA consultants ensured that emerging REDD+ strategy options were also subjected to a review of potential negative impacts through a social impact assessment. Where mitigating strategies were identified and developed, these were then included in the strategy option review process. The findings from this strategy option review are presented in Technical Annex D to the National REDD+ Strategy.

Cost-benefit analysis of the REDD+ strategy options indicates that Protected Areas are highly effective at carbon stock conservation but costly to establish and manage. More permanent

forms of agriculture, instead of shifting cultivation, will result in a clear net gain to farmers and investors, but also require considerable public sector investment. Sustainably managed forests offer the most promising balance of private and public benefits. Profitability is sufficient to attract private sector involvement whilst sustainably logged forest can retain high carbon stock and many of the other public goods inherent in natural forest.

The feasibility analysis identifies numerous barriers to measures that aim to change land use practices through incentive or regulation. The main barriers to changing livelihood practices, such as shifting cultivation, are lack of access to capital and lack of experience and knowledge of alternative methods. Government has a limited ability to implement policies and enforce laws. Land use practices are difficult to change because of poverty, undefined land rights and other issues. There is a risk that REDD+ measures such as the expansion of Protected Areas may conflict with the priorities of communities, as highlighted in the results of the SESA. The REDD+ Strategy does recognize such risks and ensures that safeguards are built into REDD+ policies and measures.

The outcome of these different analyses are presented in the National REDD+ Strategy, which also includes an action plan to guide implementation, showing short term and medium term priorities. The strategy document was approved at the last NCCSC meeting on 16th June, 2017.

3.2.1. Results of self-assessment

Overall assessment: Significant Progress Achieved. The REDD+ strategy has been produced and is a high quality product, with a strong technical basis; it benefitted from wide consultation and input. The strategy was approved in June 2017. The development of the strategy was a rational process that identified and selected strategy options, using cost-benefit analysis, feasibility analysis and review of barriers to addressing deforestation drivers as well as appropriate policies and measures needed.

Table 8: Self-assessment scores on REDD+ strategy options¹⁵

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|--|-----|------|-----|------|
| 17. Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options | | | | |
| Were REDD+ strategy options (prioritized based on comprehensive assessment of direct and indirect drivers of deforestation, barriers to forest enhancement activities and/ or informed by other factors, as appropriate) selected via a transparent and participatory process? | | | | |
| Were the expected emissions reduction potentials of interventions estimated, where possible, and how did they inform the design of the REDD+ strategy? | | | | |
| 18. Feasibility assessment | | | | |
| Were REDD+ strategy options assessed and prioritized for their social, environmental and political feasibility, risks and opportunities, and analysis of costs and benefits? | | | | |
| 19. Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies | | | | |
| Have major inconsistencies between the priority REDD+ strategy options and policies or programs in other sectors related to the forest sector (e.g., transport, agriculture) been identified? | | | | |
| Is an agreed timeline and process in place to resolve inconsistencies and integrate REDD+ strategy options with relevant development policies? | | | | |
| Are they supportive of broader development objectives and have broad community support? | | | | |

¹⁵ Note: NGO forum was not consulted on this particular sub-component as they were not strongly involved in the development of the REDD+ strategy options.

Among the different groups consulted, there was strong consensus regarding the quality of the process used to assess and review different REDD+ Strategy options, as seen from the consistency of scoring.

The only area that had some less positive questions is on the second sub-question under Question 17, relating to emission reduction (ER) potential. Given the limited data available regarding the effectiveness of different activities, including reducing emissions, the strategic priorities and related actions were therefore justified using the ER proxy of forest area. In other words, the consultants prioritised those land use activities, which affect the largest area of the most-densely stocked forest.

3.3. SUB-COMPONENT 2C. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

3.3.1. Progress and major achievements

There has been limited progress on this sub-component to date. A legal and policy review conducted as part of the REDD+ strategy development concluded that currently Liberian law does not explicitly address REDD+. However, certain aspects of REDD+, consistent with Liberian law, can be implemented administratively without the need for new legislation. Other aspects of REDD+ will require either legal or regulatory amendments, and several of the issues identified also require policy direction. A key part of the REDD+ strategy (and included within the LFSP) is the development of Liberia's national park system. In 2016, Liberia passed the National Wildlife and Conservation Protected Area Management Law, which was followed by the establishment of Gola National Park in 2016, covering an area of 395,000 hectares.

With regard to carbon rights, there is no existing national law regarding carbon rights. However, the Revenue Code, the Community Rights Law and the Forestry Reform Law (section 14.2(e)), provide for a benefit sharing formula from land rent and stumpage fees. Under the Community Rights Law, for example, communities are provided with 30% of land rental fees under Forest Resource Licenses (with 30% going to Counties and the remaining 40% going to the Ministry of Finance). The Liberia Revenue Code (2000, amended in 2011) includes a specific mention of carbon credits in Section 604(b), stating that any investor selling carbon credits needs to pay no less than 10% of the value of credits sold, as royalties to government. It does not specify benefit-sharing arrangements with communities.

The legal review conducted as part of the National REDD+ Strategy development identified a range of other areas that, if addressed, would create incentives for REDD+ measures, including addressing overlapping tenure claims between community forestry and protected areas; between community forests and concession areas. Furthermore, guidance on management planning for community forestry is yet to be developed and this could also benefit from integration of REDD+ priorities.

One important REDD+ related policy that has been agreed relates to the forest definition. To facilitate this process, the RIU organized a national workshop for the RTWG, NCCS as well as national and international partners to develop the national forest definition in the Liberian context considering the FAO definition. This workshop was held in Voinjama City, Lofa County from January 25th - 29th, 2016. More than 125 participants gathered to provide their inputs. By the end of the workshop, stakeholders agreed on the parameters for defining forest in Liberia to include the following: 30% minimum forest cover; 5 meter minimum height; 1ha minimum area.

Regarding the FGRM, as reported in question 6, this is yet to be operationalized. An inception report has been produced by the consultants, but as mentioned, their non-performance has resulted in their contract being terminated. A second firm is in negotiations with FDA for this work and as a result the deliverables will be significantly delayed.

A range of options regarding financing arrangements were proposed in the National REDD+ Strategy (including a national REDD+ trust fund, along the lines of that proposed in Indonesia and DRC, as well as nested approaches). However, no decision has been taken on this as yet.

Finally, a REDD+ Registry has been proposed and is included in the RIU workplan under the second phase of FCPF funding, although this work has yet to start.

Despite limited funding as a result of national circumstances, the Government of Liberia is committed to Liberia's REDD+ agenda by virtue of the below actions that government has taken over the years;

- The establishment of a functioning REDD+ Implementation Unit at the FDA that is guiding the REDD+ process in Liberia;
- Main streaming of REDD+ in the country's National Economic developmental agenda;
- Reconstitution and operationalization of the National Climate Change Steering Committee;
- Liberia's draft National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) was developed, reviewed by the National Climate Change Steering Committee, and validated by stakeholders in the sector. Committee inputs are being taken onboard, and the draft policy will be resubmitted for approval later in 2017. In June 2017, the Committee also approved Liberia's National REDD+ Strategy, which is expected to move into implementation through national management arrangements.
- Tropical Forest Alliance's 2020 Principles were adapted nationally for Liberia; these aim to ensure the country sets standards for achieving its zero-net deforestation target. The Principles were signed at the UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech in November 2016, along with the Declaration for Sustainable Oil Palm Development. Parts of this declaration form the basis for Liberia's Agriculture Transformation Agenda currently being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Other ongoing policy initiatives linked to Liberia's NCCP include: a Protected Area and National Wildlife Law; two new Acts to establish (i) the Gola Forest National Park and (ii) the Gredo Krahn National Park; a Land Rights Law passed by the House of Representatives that is awaiting concurrence by the Senate; and a Mining Act that will help to reconcile competing land uses. The Mining Act also states that certain areas, such as a sacred ground or wildlife sanctuaries, may be protected from mining, and its section on environmental protection requires that the Minister take into account the need to conserve natural resources in or on land over which the mineral title is sought.
- Liberia is also looking to mainstream climate change adaptation concerns into its agricultural sector policies. To this end, the country completed a policy review of its Agriculture Sector Investment Program, Food and Agriculture Policy, and Agenda for Transformation.

3.3.2. Results of self assessment

Overall assessment: Further development required. To date, no REDD+ specific laws or policies have been adopted by the Government of Liberia (and none implemented). The legal review has shown that some laws could potentially be used within the context of REDD+. However, specific legal guidance will be needed on issues such as carbon rights, REDD+ benefit sharing and financing modalities. Recent experiences in Liberia with regard to the sharing of forest revenues offer transparent mechanisms for revenue sharing, although currently no REDD+ revenues have been disbursed in Liberia. The REDD+ Registry and FGRM have yet to be established, although both are planned.

Table 9: Self-assessment scores on implementation framework

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|--|-----|------|-----|------|
| 20. Adoption and implementation of legislation/ regulations | | | | |
| Have policies, legislation and/or regulations related to REDD+ programs and activities been adopted? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that these relevant REDD+ laws and policies are being implemented? | | | | |
| 21. Guidelines for implementation | | | | |
| What evidence is there that the implementation framework defines carbon rights, benefit-sharing mechanisms, REDD+ financing modalities, procedures for official approvals (e.g., for pilots or REDD+ projects), and grievance mechanisms? | | | | |
| 22. Benefit sharing mechanism | | | | |
| What evidence is there to demonstrate benefit-sharing mechanisms are transparent? | | | | |
| 23. National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities | | | | |
| Is a national geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry operational, comprehensive of all relevant information (e.g., information on the location, ownership, carbon accounting and financial flows for sub-national and national REDD+ programs and projects), and does it ensure public access to REDD+ information? | | | | |

The overall assessment by different stakeholder groups identified that while existing Liberian legislation does provide opportunities for REDD+ development, further clarification and more explicit mention of carbon rights, benefit sharing and financing arrangements was needed.

Although no REDD+ Specific framework exists for REDD+ benefit sharing, one area that a number of participants pointed to was the recent decision to release funds from land rental fees with communities, channelling USD 1.25 million to owed to 22 communities in Rivercess County. Benefit sharing arrangements in forestry are overseen by a national Benefit Sharing Trust, which has strong civil society oversight, including representation from the National Union of Community Forestry Development Committees, and as such is relatively transparent.

3.4. SUB-COMPONENT 2D: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

3.4.1. Progress and major achievements

This sub-component has been addressed through the implementation of the SESA process, which was undertaken as a consultancy package under FCPF and implemented by TetraTech. As discussed in sub-component 1b, the SESA process ensured that widespread consultation and validation processes were undertaken at community and county level, with a view to identifying potential negative impacts of REDD+ interventions.

As a means to deepen consultation around impacts, six case studies were identified across Liberia, selected to represent the different geographical and ecological conditions of Liberia and in particular the different deforestation drivers that occur across Liberia. The case study sites represented the range of environmental and social issues likely to arise from REDD+ Strategy implementation. The land uses within the case study areas included Protected Areas (PAs), mining and agricultural concessions, commercial forestry, shifting cultivation, and charcoal production. A summary profile of the sites and case study findings are presented in Section 2.3 of the SESA final report. As such, the design of these case studies proposed that a discussion with stakeholders in these sites would facilitate an informed discussion about potential impacts of measures proposed to address deforestation and forest degradation. The characteristics and deforestation drivers across the six case study sites are presented in Table 10. Key concerns were explored through participatory approaches, involving forest user groups at community levels, women, men, youth, elders, local NGOs, private sector actors and government agencies.

Table 10: Location and characteristics of case study sites for the SESA

| Geographical location of case study site | Characteristics and deforestation drivers |
|--|---|
| Zigida (Lofa County; Zorzor District) | Artisanal mining; high bush-meat demand; pit-sawing; commercial logging |
| Gbarpa (Nimba County; Yarmein District) | Benefit sharing from mining concessions; chain-sawing; NTFP commercialization |
| Suakoko (Bong County; Suakoko District) | Population pressure; cash crops; land pressure; well established roads; large land owners |
| Newaken (Grand Kru County; Thren District) | Land pressure from concessions; conflict between communities and concessions; in-migration; |
| Teekpeh (Rivercess County; District #5, Central C) | Benefit sharing from logging concession; pit sawing |
| Sherman Farm (Margibi County; Kakata District) | Land pressure; increased use of land administration systems by elite; charcoaling; well established roads |

A secondary part of the SESA assignment was the development of an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). In support of this, FDA, EPA and Tetra Tech organized and held 6 regional cluster consultations in Fish Town, River Gee for Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland Counties; Zwedru, Grand Gedeh for Sinoe and Grand Gedeh Counties; Gbarnga, Bong for Nimba, Margibi and Bong Counties; Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount for (omi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount Counties; Buchanan, Grand Bassa for Rivercess, and Grand Bassa counties and finally Voinjama, Lofa County. The purpose of these meetings were: to present the impacts for validation and to solicit feedback on the issues that would affect the propose framework to mitigate these impacts; to provide critical opportunities for communities and county level stakeholders to review the REDD+ strategy options being considered and to make inputs that would be taken into account during revisions on the draft ESMF report. Over 240 persons representing communities, civil societies, government and academic institutions, participated in these regional consultations. These meetings were followed by a two-day national consultation and validation exercise, which brought together 89 participants in Monrovia to validate the draft ESMF.

3.4.2. Results of self assessment

Overall assessment: Significant Progress Achieved. A detailed and thorough SESA process was conducted which involved consultations as well as validation exercises at sub-national and national levels. Synchronisation of the REDD+ Strategy process and SESA process meant that the two processes were mutually reinforcing. The SESA process was used to influence the development and prioritisation of the strategy options and where safeguard issues were identified, mitigation actions were proposed. The ESMF has been produced, but yet to be operationalized, as REDD+ implementation activities have yet to begin.

Table 11: Self assessment scores on social and environmental impacts

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|
| 24. Analysis of social and environmental safeguard issues | | | | |
| What evidence is there that applicable social and environmental safeguard issues relevant to the country context have been fully identified/analysed via relevant studies or diagnostics and in consultation processes? | | | | |
| 25. REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| How were SESA results and the identification of social and environmental impacts (both positive and negative) used for prioritizing and designing REDD+ strategy options? | | | | |
| 26. Environmental and Social Management Framework | | | | |
| What evidence is there that the ESMF is in place and managing environmental and social risks/potential impacts related to REDD+ activities? | | | | |

There was widespread consensus regarding the quality of engagement around REDD+ related safeguard issues through the SESA process, as well as the fact that inputs and feedback were used to inform the screening, modification and selection of REDD+ strategies. It was confirmed that the ESMF had been done, with similar inputs, although it was currently not operational or “managing environmental or social risks and impacts”. This was simply because REDD+ activities were yet to be operational.

4. Reference Emission Level/Reference Level

4.1. SUB-COMPONENT 3A. REFERENCE EMISSIONS LEVEL/REFERENCE LEVELS

4.1.1. Progress and major achievements

In 2014, the FDA hired Winrock International and Conservation International to assist in the development of Liberia’s reference emission level (REL). The consultants used regional proxy data due to the unavailability of national data. Key activities include defining the scope of the RL (national level), analysis of the activity data (AD) through the evaluation of existing spatial datasets, deforestation rate estimation, characterization of deforestation trend and activity data development. The consultants also carried out analysis of Liberia’s emission factors, which included forest biomass carbon stocks, post deforestation biomass carbon stocks and soil carbon stocks. The study concluded with additional analysis of a projection on the future emission without REDD+ and an adjustment to national circumstances.

The RL described in the assessment for Liberia is based on Reference Period of 2005-2014. It accounts for only emissions from deforestation, based on data available for the country. It was concluded that the Hansen et al (2013) dataset provides the highest resolution data available to identify forest loss on an annual basis. The data was first processed to create a ‘Liberia-Corrected 2000% Canopy Cover’ map, stratified by forest class (30-80% Canopy Cover; >80% Canopy Cover), using a combination of information from the Metria/Geoville map and the published Hansen et al (2013).

Consistent with the capacity building elements under the task, Winrock International in collaboration with the RIU and the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-information Services (LISGIS) hosted a training initiative for national stakeholders including the RTWG and the SESA Working Group. The training provided an opportunity for participants to gain an understanding about RL creation and maintenance, using suitable country-specific data related to activity data and emission factors.

On 3 separate occasions, the RIU organized RTWG meetings to enable Winrock International to present their methodology and approach, progress achieved as well as soliciting feedback and inputs from stakeholders. By the end of the task, Winrock International per its mandate presented the RL findings and recommendations to the RTWG and the Government of Liberia through the FDA.

Liberia has not yet communicated its RL to the UNFCCC because it has been agreed that the RL would benefit from improvement if the primary data (rather than secondary as is currently the case) was used in the assessment. This is planned through support currently being negotiated

with FAO, who will undertake a national forest assessment and support the development of a national forest monitoring system, the costs of which will be shared between FCPF and LFSP.

The results of the RL indicate that the greatest change in forest cover has been a loss of over one million hectares of land classed as >80% canopy cover. Approximately a third of the area has been lost from the 30-80% class, with a consequent increase of approximately half a million hectares in the area of land classed as less than 30% canopy cover. Thus, deforestation of approximately 0.5 million hectares has occurred and around 1.5 million hectares has been degraded, over a 14 period from 2000 to 2014. Deforestation appears to have followed two patterns: large clearings associated with the creation of plantations, visible as five clusters each 20-50 km from the coast stretching down the whole coastline, and a network of small clearings located broadly throughout the country, though focused around roads and settlements. The small clearings are likely associated with agriculture and logging, and are relatively evenly spread throughout the time period, whereas the plantation clearings seem to be focused from 2011 onwards.

4.1.2. Results of self assessment

Overall assessment: Demonstrating progress, but further development required. A reference level (RL) has been developed through a consultancy package implemented by Winrock International together with Conservation International. The analysis used secondary data as resource constraints meant that national level primary data could not be gathered. The RL covered the period from 2000 – 2014. The consultants undertook capacity building of RTWG, EPA, FDA, MoA, UL and LISGIS, as knowledge around reference level methodology is low within Liberia. The assessment was challenged by the non-linear trajectory of deforestation, caused by civil war and then resumption of economic activities. There is a recognition of the need to improve the RL through the inclusion of primary data. This will be achieved through a planned collaboration with FAO, who will conduct a national forest resource Assessment, improve the RL and develop a national forest monitoring system (NFMS).

Table 12: Self assessment scores on FRL/RL

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|
| 27. Demonstration of methodology | | | | |
| Is the preliminary sub-national or national forest FRL or RL presented (as part of the R-Package) using a clearly documented methodology, based on a step-wise approach, as appropriate? | | | | |
| Are plans for additional steps and data needs provided, and is the relationship between the sub-national and the evolving national reference level demonstrated (as appropriate)? | | | | |
| 28. Use of historical data, and adjusted for national circumstances | | | | |
| How does the establishment of the FRL/RL take into account historical data, and if adjusted for national circumstance, what is the rationale and supportive data that demonstrate that proposed adjustments are credible and defensible? | | | | |
| Is sufficient data and documentation provided in a transparent fashion to allow for the reconstruction or independent cross-checking of the FRL/RL? | | | | |
| 29. Technical feasibility of the methodological approach, and consistency with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines | | | | |
| Is the FRL/RL (presented as part of the R-Package) based on transparent, complete and accurate information, consistent with UNFCCC guidance and the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines, and allowing for technical assessment of the data sets, approaches, methods, models (if applicable) and assumptions used in the construction of the FRL/RL? | | | | |

In general, the assessment provided by RIU and RTWG concluded that the RL had been done well, using the best information and data that was available at the time. It was also agreed that while the RL was a quality product, it would need to be improved if it was to fully comply with prevailing guidance from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and UNFCCC, using primary data gathered through a national forest assessment exercise. This is proposed through the collaboration with FAO.

5. MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR FORESTS AND SAFEGUARDS

5.1. SUB-COMPONENT 4A. NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING SYSTEM (NFMS)

5.1.1. Progress and major achievements

As with sub-component 2c, this sub component has yet to demonstrate significant progress. In large part this has been due to the fact that the initial FCPF grant provided funding for REL, but funding for the establishment of a functional national forest monitoring system was not sufficient. An additional funding request to include the NFMS within additional FCPF funding was included as part of the mid term report and accepted.

It is expected that by the NFMS will be developed with technical support from FAO, and co-financed by FCPF and LFSP projects¹⁶. The aim of the agreement is to develop a national forest assessment, using standard FAO protocols, which will generate primary data that can be used to enrich the RL (to a level which will allow it to be submitted to UNFCCC in 2019 at the latest). The second objective of this collaboration will be the establishment of a functioning national forest monitoring system, which is planned to be operational in early 2019.

To date, FDA, with support from Wageningen University in The Netherlands, have developed an MRV road-map¹⁷. This was developed through a workshop held in Liberia with a cross section of resource persons involved in remote sensing, GIS and mapping from both government, universities and research centres as well as NGOs. The road-map identifies the following seven core actions:

1. Establish institutional arrangements
2. Improve national forest monitoring: activity data
3. Improve national forest monitoring: carbon stocks and emission factors
4. Improve estimation and international LULUCF, GHG inventory and REDD+ reporting capacities
5. Prepare for MRV of REDD+ activities on the national level
6. Implement a program for continuous improvement and capacity development
7. Continued national and local communication mechanism on REDD+ monitoring

5.1.2. Results of self assessment

Overall assessment: Not yet demonstrating progress. To date, there has been limited progress with developing a functional NFMS. Consultations have been held and an MRV road

¹⁶ The component to be financed by the FCPF is expected to be completed by October 31, 2018, whilst activities financed by the LFSP are envisaged to be completed by March 31, 2019.

¹⁷ Wageningen University, FDA and FAO. 2016. Terms of Reference for Developing Capacities for a National Forest Monitoring and Measurement, Reporting and Verification System to support REDD+ participation of Liberia. Background, Capacity Assessment and Roadmap

map has been developed, with assistance from FAO and Wageningen University. Roles and responsibilities with regard to forest monitoring are agreed. Plans are being made to establish an MRV working group to guide the development of the NFMS. FDA is currently in discussion with FAO regarding support to undertaking a national forest assessment, improving the RL and establishing a functional NFMS.

Table 13: Self-assessment scores on National Forest Monitoring System

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|
| 30. Documentation of monitoring approach | | | | |
| Is there clear rationale or analytic evidence supporting the selection of the used or proposed methodology (combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches, systems resolution, coverage, accuracy, inclusions of carbon pools and gases) and improvement over time? | | | | |
| Has the system been technically reviewed and nationally approved, and is it consistent with national and international existing and emerging guidance? | | | | |
| Are potential sources of uncertainties identified to the extent possible? | | | | |
| 31. Demonstration of early system implementation | | | | |
| What evidence is there that the system has the capacity to monitor the specific REDD+ activities prioritized in the country's REDD+ strategy? | | | | |
| How does the system identify and assess displacement of emissions (leakage), and what are the early results (if any)? | | | | |
| How are key stakeholders involved (participating/ consulted) in the development and/or early implementation of the system, including data collection and any potential verification of its results? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that the system allows for comparison of changes in forest area and carbon content (and associated GHG emissions) relative to the baseline estimates used for the FRL/RL? | | | | |
| 32. Institutional arrangements and capacities | | | | |
| Are mandates to perform tasks related to forest monitoring clearly defined (e.g., satellite data processing, forest inventory, information sharing)? | | | | |
| What evidence is there that a transparent means of publicly sharing forest and emissions data are presented and are in at least an early operational stage? | | | | |
| Have associated resource needs been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software, and budget)? | | | | |

The assessment undertaken by the two stakeholder groups involved in this work (namely the RIU and the RTWG) showed high levels of agreement on most issues, although there was some slight disagreement around issues relating to the level of detail regarding resource and capacity needs for effective management and operation of an NFMS (question 32) and the overall level of stakeholder engagement to date (question 31), with government scoring more highly than the RTWG.

5.2. SUB-COMPONENT 4B: INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR MULTIPLE BENEFITS, OTHER IMPACTS, GOVERNANCE, AND SAFEGUARDS

5.2.1. Progress and major achievements

The ESMF provides a broad framework for monitoring impacts as well as the clarification of mandates and responsibilities for overseeing implementation and routine monitoring of impacts. The ESMF makes it clear that FDA and EPA are jointly responsible for monitoring safeguards, with EPA having responsibility for environmental safeguards and FDA having

responsibility for social safeguards. The FDA has recruited a Social Safeguards Specialist and the recruitment of an Environmental Safeguards Coordinator for EPA is in its advanced stage.

In terms of overall supervision of safeguards, there is a proposal to broaden the mandate of the SESA Working Group to become the Safeguards Working Group, to reflect the changing role of overseeing monitoring and reporting of impacts more broadly, rather than just the preparation of the SESA. Interagency task teams, being established at regional levels will be co-ordinated by FDA and will have a shared mandate for monitoring safeguard issues at sub-national levels.

The ESMF recognizes the very limited capacity in Liberia for social impact assessment and monitoring and recommends a thorough and in-depth programme of capacity building. However, it does not go into detail regarding the nature or cost of the capacity building needed.

Finally, it is important to note that REDD+ has yet to become operational in the Liberian context. As such, it is not possible to see any impacts from REDD+ (either positive or negative) at even an “early operational stage” as asked in question 32. This will not be possible until REDD+ moves into more direct implementation, which is planned under the support through LFSP.

5.2.2. Results of self assessment

Overall assessment: Limited progress achieved. The SESA has been finalised and has helped with the identification of potential impacts and safeguard issues. The ESMF has also been finalised and provides a comprehensive framework with which to monitor downstream impacts and risks. Significant capacity gaps exist within government if the ESMF is to be operationalized. A Safeguard Information System (required under UNFCCC and agreed in Lol with Norway) has not been established, and as such regular updates around impacts, safeguards, benefits or livelihoods are not currently being made available. However, it is important to note that to date, REDD+ implementation has yet to move beyond readiness activities and therefore impacts are unlikely.

Table 14: Self-assessment scores on Information system for multiple benefits and impacts

| | RIU | RTWG | SWG | NGOF |
|--|-----|------|-----|------|
| 33. Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issue | | | | |
| How have relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental safeguard issues of REDD+ preparations been identified? Are there any capacity building recommendations associated with these? | | | | |
| 34. Monitoring, reporting and information sharing | | | | |
| What evidence is there that a transparent system for periodically sharing consistent information on non-carbon aspects and safeguards has been presented and is in at least an early operational stage? | | | | |
| How is the following information being made available: key quantitative and qualitative variables about impacts on rural livelihoods, conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services provision, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD+ preparations, and the implementation of safeguards, paying attention to the specific provisions included in the ESMF? | | | | |
| 35. Institutional arrangements and capacities | | | | |
| Are mandates to perform tasks related to non-carbon aspects and safeguards clearly defined? | | | | |
| Have associated resource needs been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software, and budget)? | | | | |

The general assessment from different stakeholders was that much work had been done during the SESA process and in the REDD+ Strategy development process to identify safeguard issues as well as broader, non-carbon benefits, as has been documented in Section 2.2.1 of this report. Furthermore, the mandates regarding monitoring of non-carbon aspects as well as social safeguards are also well clarified. It was confirmed that there is an outline of capacity development needs for safeguard monitoring in the ESMF report.

However, the framework for monitoring has yet to be operationalized and implemented. A major factor behind this is due to the fact that implementation has yet to start in earnest.

6. Overall conclusions

6.1. SUMMARY OF OVERALL PROGRESS

1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements

Progressing well but further development required. Progressing well but further development required. REDD+ management and co-ordination structures are functional and operate in an open and transparent manner. MoUs have been signed with key government agencies involved in REDD+ implementation. Funding has been secured for REDD+ readiness as well as performance based actions, and the various donor and NGO inputs are co-ordinated and harmonised. Capacity gaps continue to exist within government and within NGOs involved in REDD+. The RIU has increased its staffing capacity to cover areas such as communication, stakeholder engagement, MRV, safeguards and M&E. The feedback and grievance redress mechanism is not operational, and the process of design has been delayed due to non-performance of the selected consultants.

1b. Consultation, participation and outreach

Significant progress achieved. Important results obtained regarding communications and outreach, including the REDD+ Communication Strategy, SESA consultations and engagement around the REDD+ Strategy at national and sub-national levels, and validation and endorsement of the REDD+ Strategy Roadmap. There have been efforts made to ensure communications at local level is in an appropriate format and uses appropriate media. SESA consultations have been undertaken at community level, through focal group discussions with different stakeholder groups, including women. There has been limited engagement from the private sector, such as large-scale companies producing palm oil, rubber and timber. The outputs of consultation have fed into and informed the National REDD+ Strategy development process in a transparent way. Communicating on REDD+ has been challenging, given the fact that it is a complex and abstract concept, and that it is yet to be operational. Concerns have been raised over the sustainability of communication efforts following the completion of the PCI Media / FFI Consultancy Package – although this has now been built into the LFSP workplan.

2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance

Significant progress achieved. Assessment of land use and deforestation drivers was thorough and inclusive, building on earlier work and using recent land-cover maps to inform analysis. Barriers and constraints to addressing drivers were well developed in the REDD+ Strategy development process. The REDD+ Strategy Roadmap, including an implementation plan, has been developed, although the financial requirements still need to be elaborated. Links between VPA/FLEGT process and REDD+ process have been made, but there are still opportunities for greater learning and exchange.

2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

Significant progress achieved. The REDD+ strategy has been produced and is a high quality product, with a strong technical basis and benefitted from wide consultation and input. It was approved by the NCCSC in June 2017. The development of the strategy was a rational process that identified and selected strategy options, using cost-benefit analysis, feasibility analysis and review of barriers to addressing deforestation drivers as well as appropriate policies and measures needed

2c. Implementation Framework

Further development required. To date, no REDD+ specific laws or policies have been adopted by the Government of Liberia (and none implemented). The legal review has shown that some laws could potentially be used within the context of REDD+. However, specific legal guidance will be needed on issues such as carbon rights, REDD+ benefit sharing and financing modalities. Recent experiences in Liberia with regard to the sharing of forest revenues offer transparent mechanisms for revenue sharing, although currently no REDD+ revenues have been disbursed in Liberia. The REDD+ Registry and FGRM have yet to be established, although both are planned.

2d. Social and Environmental Impacts

Significant Progress Achieved. A detailed and thorough SESA process was conducted which involved consultations as well as validation exercises at sub-national and national levels. Synchronisation of the REDD+ Strategy process and SESA process meant that the two processes were mutually reinforcing. The SESA process was used to influence the development and prioritisation of the strategy options and where safeguard issues were identified, mitigation actions were proposed. The ESMF has been produced, but yet to be operationalized, as REDD+ implementation activities have yet to begin

3a. Forest Reference Level/Reference Levels

Demonstrating progress, but further development required. A reference emission level (REL) has been developed through a consultancy package implemented by Winrock together with Conservation International. The analysis used secondary data as resource constraints meant that national level primary data could not be gathered. The RL covered the period from 2000 – 2014. The consultants undertook capacity building for RTWG, MoA, FDA, EPA and LISGIS, as knowledge around reference level methodology is low within Liberia. The assessment was challenged by the non-linear trajectory of deforestation, caused by civil war and then resumption of economic activities. There is recognition of the need to improve the RL through the inclusion of primary data. This will be achieved through a planned collaboration with FAO, who will conduct a National Forest Resource Assessment, improve the RL and develop a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS).

4a. National Forest Monitoring

Not yet demonstrating progress. To date, there has been limited progress with developing a functional NFMS. Consultations have been held and an MRV road map has been developed, with assistance from FAO and Wageningen University. Roles and responsibilities between national institutions with regard to forest monitoring are agreed. Plans are being made to establish an MRV working group to guide the development of the NFMS. FDA is currently in discussion with FAO regarding support to undertaking a national forest assessment, improving the RL and establishing a functional NFMS.

4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Limited progress achieved. The SESA has been finalised and has helped with the identification of potential impacts and safeguard issues. The ESMF has also been finalised and provides a comprehensive framework with which to monitor downstream impacts and risks. Significant capacity gaps exist within government if the ESMF is to be operationalized. A Safeguard Information System (required under UNFCCC and agreed in Lol with Norway) has not been established, and as such regular updates around impacts, safeguards, benefits or livelihoods are not currently being made available. However, it is important to note that to date, REDD+ implementation has yet to move beyond readiness activities and therefore impacts are unlikely.

6.2. Overall scores

A summary score is presented below at sub component level based on the responses and scores of questions for each of the sub-components that were received from different stakeholder groups. Overall, the assessment identifies 4 green, 2 yellow and 2 orange and one red scores as presented below in Table 15:

Table 15: Summary of performance scores for Liberia

| Component | Sub Component | Summary of scores |
|--|---|-------------------|
| Readiness organization and consultation | 1a. National REDD+ Management Arrangements | Yellow |
| | 1b. Consultation, participation and outreach | Green |
| REDD+ Strategy preparation | 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance | Green |
| | 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options | Green |
| | 2c. Implementation Framework | Orange |
| | 2d. Social and Environmental Impacts | Green |
| Reference Emission Level/Reference Level | 3a. Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels | Yellow |
| Monitoring system for forests and safeguards | 4a. National Forest Monitoring | Red |
| | 4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards | Orange |

7. NEXT STEPS

The assessment clearly points to a number of areas that require action if Liberia is to be fully REDD+ ready. Many of the recommendations presented below emerged during discussions with the different institutions and stakeholders consulted during the preparation of this R-Package. Additional recommendations are included that emerged from the final validation session held on 19th May at FDA headquarters.

Now that the REDD+ Strategy is formally approved (as of June 20th, 2017), it forms the guiding document to steer and co-ordinate the various inputs being provided by donor-funded projects, NGO activities and the government of Liberia. In order to make the document become operational there is a need to ensure that inputs being provided through these various sources contribute to and support the implementation of the REDD+ strategy. One way that this can be assessed is requesting externally funded projects, when planning and reporting, to demonstrate how they are contributing to the REDD+ strategy. This will help harmonise different forms of support as well as inform overall national reporting on implementation.

The design of the FGRM is delayed and as such there is no operationalization yet. However, with the preparations for the results based payments that need to be made, there is a need to ensure that as results based actions begin to materialise in the target Landscape, some form of FGRM is available. As such some kind of staggered approach may be advisable, with a simple FGRM being tested within the context of a sub-national REDD+ project, such as the one being implemented by FFI in Wonegezi, Lofa County. As other areas begin implementing activities related to reducing deforestation and forest degradation, the FGRM could be expanded to progressively take in these areas.

FDA has recently signed an MoU with FAO with a view to improving the reference level, to include activity data gathered from field sites as part of National Forest Resource Assessment, towards the FREL meeting the UNFCCC requirements. Furthermore, FAO have agreed to provide support to FDA with regard to establishing and operationalizing the NFMS. Both of these areas will be important to make progress on in the coming months as they represent important readiness milestones as Liberia begins to move into results based payments.

An additional area that has been identified in this review is the absence of the REDD+ Registry. This is planned and an external service provider will support the design and implementation of the REDD+ Registry.

One area that emerged during discussions during the final validation workshop was around the area of safeguards. It is clear that with FCPF support the SESA and ESMF are finalised, thereby satisfying the safeguard requirements of the World Bank. However, under UNFCCC, there is a need for participating countries to establish a Safeguard Information System (SIS), which will demonstrate how Cancun safeguards are being “addressed and respected”. This is additional to the requirements of FCPF and requires work to ensure the SIS is established and operational. By complying with the requirements of the UNFCCC, Liberia will be in a position to solicit for alternative (non-World Bank funded) sources of income, such as the Green Climate Fund. Establishment of the SIS has been planned under existing funding. The development and operationalization of the SIS, as one of the elements of REDD+ Readiness, has already been initiated, with support from the FCPF AF and the LFSP.

The review has highlighted certain key legal areas that remain unclear and will need clarification if REDD+ is to become operational. The areas identified include a process to clarify the legal basis for carbon rights; agreement on how the carbon (ie financing) and non-carbon benefits of REDD+ will be shared between different stakeholders at national and sub-national

levels; and financing arrangements for REDD+ payments (such as, for example, the establishment of a REDD+ Trust Fund).

Capacity gaps have been identified as a major area requiring additional attention in the future. To date, although capacity has been increased in some major institutions, REDD+ remains a complex and rapidly changing technical area and, to date, capacity is limited to a few key individuals. As an initial step, it is recommended to undertake a capacity needs assessment for key stakeholder groups involved in REDD+ development, including the RIU, RTWG and other key stakeholder groups.

Related to this recommendation, another proposal relates to the RTWG and the need to make it more interactive and learning focused, as concerns were raised that it has become a body used to validate studies and consultant inputs, rather than a medium for real informed discussion and planning. Suggestions made to revitalise the RTWG include rationalising the working group to a smaller size, with self-selected representatives from civil society and private sector, and with cross-sectional representation from government. A wider “REDD+ Platform”, which could be more inclusive, could complement this for information sharing purposes.

Finally, in light of the continuing needs relating to MRV, Safeguard issues and communications, it was proposed to establish and operationalize specific working groups related to these dedicated areas. These three working groups would then become the focal points for planning subsequent activities in these three areas of work. Already a “proto” working group on MRV has been established, but this has yet to be formalised. With the work beginning around NFMS, such a group will be an important platform for discussing and planning future work on MRV.

Annex I: Persons consulted

National REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU), Forest Development Authority

| Name | Position | Institution |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Saah A. David, Jr | National REDD+ Coordinator, REDD Implementation Unit | Forestry Development Authority |
| Borwen L. Sayon | REDD+ Policy Co-ordinator, REDD+ Implementation Unit | Forestry Development Authority |
| Anthony F. Vanwen | Communications Specialist, REDD+ Implementation Unit | Forestry Development Authority |
| Lorpu K. Sangai | Project Accountant | Forestry Development Authority |
| Ephraim S. Swen | Procurement Specialist, REDD+ Implementation Unit | Forestry Development Authority |

National REDD+ Working Group

| Name | Position | Institution |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Jessica Allen | Country Director | Conservation International |
| Annika Hillers | Country Director | Wild Chimpanzee Foundation |
| Matthias Yeaney | National Facilitator | NGO Coalition |
| Michael Yarbo | Executive Director | Society for Conservation and Nature in Liberia |
| Peter Mulbah | Policy Director | Conservation International |
| Zinnah Mulbah | Environmental Specialist | World Bank |
| Urias Gall | Deputy Executive Director | Environmental Protection Agency |
| James Kaddehyea | Biodiversity Manager | FIFES / FDA |
| Konika Nimely | Manager, EIA | Forest Development Authority |
| Elijah Whapoe | Manager, Planning and Policy | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Joel Gamys | National Co-ordinator | World Resources Institute |
| Blamah Goll | Conservation Co-ordinator | Forest Development Authority |
| Julius Kamara | President | Liberia Chainsaw Association |
| George Free | Research Officer | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Edward Kamara | Manager, Forest Products and Marketing | Forest Development Authority |
| Carl Wahl | Project Manager, Wonegizi | Flora and Fauna International |
| Janet Kerkulah | Project Co-ordinator | Flora and Fauna International |
| Colin Pringle | Senior REDDD+ Adviser | Flora and Fauna International |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| John T Woods | Chair of Department of Forestry | University of Liberia |
| David Suae | Ministry of Commerce and Industry | Technician |
| Jerry Yonmah | Protected Area Management | Forest Development Authority |

SESA Working Group

| Name | Position | Institution |
|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| George Free | Research officer | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Andrew Giahgwe | Director | Skills for Agricultural Development Society |
| Abraham Tumbey | Consultant | Union of Certified Environmental Professionals of Liberia |
| Julius Kamara | President | Liberia Chainsaw Association |
| Richard Dorbor | President | National Charcoal Union of Liberia (NACUL) |
| Oretha Klah | Accountant | National Charcoal Union of Liberia |
| Kolly Alison | Facilitator | Forest and Farm Facility – FAO |
| Julie T. B Weah | Director | Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI) |
| Mathias Yeanay | Facilitator | National NGO coalition |
| J. S Camue | Officer | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Sam Koffa | Independent Consultant | Union of Certified Environmental Professionals of Liberia |

CSO, NGO and Private Sector stakeholders

| Name | Position | Institution |
|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| Johnny Wealar | Field Facilitator | Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia |
| Titus Zeogar | Field Facilitator | Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia |
| Abraham Daye | Field Officer | ACORD |
| Isaac Saylay | Project Evaluator | Environmental Relief Development Research Association |
| Richard Hoff | Programme Manager | Volunteer to Support International Development in Africa |
| Venessa Togbe | Project Manager | Institute for Research and Democratic Development |
| Edward Sulue | Programme Assistant | Sustainable Development Institute |
| Dickson Chowolo | Executive Director | Forest Cry, Liberia |

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|--|
| David Kenkpen | Executive Director | Society for Environmental Conservation |
| Julie Weah | Director | Foundation for Community Initiatives |
| Henry Smith | Programme Co-ordinator | Society for Environmental Conservation |
| Julius Diakpoh | Programme Director | Organisation for Women Empowerment |
| Lawrence Bondo | Chief Executive Officer | Community Development Initiative |
| Dominic Johns | Youth Focus Officer | Youth Focus Center |

Development partners and other external stakeholders consulted

| Name | Position | Institution |
|---------------|---|--|
| Arild Skedsmo | Programme lead (Liberia) | Norwegian International Climate and Forests Initiative |
| Neeta Hooda | Task Team Lead (TTL), Liberia Forest Sector Project | FCPF Facility Management Team, World Bank, USA |
| David Rothe | Lead Consultant on National REDD+ Strategy | LTS Ltd (UK) |

Validation workshop

| Name | Position | Institution |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--|
| Aaron Barlea | Vice president | NACUL |
| Edward Suloe | Project Assistant | SDI |
| David Kinkpen | Executive Director | SEC |
| Julius Kamara | President | LICSAtDUN |
| Dickson Chowolo | Executive Director | Forest Cry Liberia |
| Richard Doff | Programme Manager | VOSIEDA |
| Jessica Tela | Office assistant | L T Association |
| Lawrence Bonolo | CEO | CDI |
| Anthony Vanwen | Communication specialist | FDA |
| Isaac Saylay | Project Evaluator | ERADRU |
| Konika Nimely | Manager EIA | Forestry Development Authority |
| George Free | Research officer | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Sampson Nyema | Forest Officer | Forestry Development Authority |
| Jeremiah Karmo | Executive Director | Forestry Training Institute |
| Andrew Giahgee | Director | Skills for Agricultural Development Society (SADS) |
| Vanessa Togbo | Project Manager | Institute for Research and Democratic Development |
| Carl Wahl | Project Manager | Fauna and Flora International |
| Julius Diakpoh | Programme Director | Organisation for Women Empowerment |

| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| Edward Kamara | Manager, Forest Products and Marketing | Forestry Development Authority |
| Henry Smith | Executive Director | Society for Environmental Conservation |
| Abraham Varney | Director | Farmer Associated to Conserve Environment |
| Borwen L Sayon | REDD+ Policy Co-ordinator | Forestry Development Authority |
| Dominic Johns | Youth Focus Officer | Youth Focus Center |
| Joseph Higgins | Project Officer | NGO Coalition |

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Annex III: Questions used in the self assessment

Subcomponent 1a: National REDD+ Management Arrangements

1. Accountability and transparency
 - How are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrating they are operating in an open, accountable and transparent manner?
2. *Operating mandate and budget*
 - How is it shown that national REDD+ institutions operate under clear mutually supportive mandates with adequate, predictable and sustainable budgets?
3. *Multi-sector coordination mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration*
 - How are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements ensuring REDD+ activities are coordinated, integrated into and influencing the broader national or sector policy frameworks (e.g., agriculture, environment, natural resources management, infrastructure development and land-use planning)?
4. *Technical supervision capacity*
 - How effectively and efficiently are national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements leading and supervising multi-sector readiness activities, including the regular supervision of technical preparations?
5. *Funds management capacity*
 - How are institutions and arrangements demonstrating effective, efficient and transparent fiscal management, including coordination with other development partner-funded activities?
6. *Feedback and grievance redress mechanism*
 - What evidence is there to demonstrate the mechanism is operating at the national, subnational and local levels, is transparent, impartial, has a clearly defined mandate, and adequate expertise and resources?
 - What evidence is there that potentially impacted communities are aware of, have access to, and the mechanism is responsive to feedback and grievances?

Subcomponent 1b. Consultation, Participation, and Outreach

7. *Participation and engagement of key stakeholders*
 - How is the full, effective and on-going participation of key stakeholders demonstrated through institutional mechanisms (including extra efforts to engage marginalized groups such as forest-dependent women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities)?
 - What are the participatory mechanisms being used to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities have the capacity to effectively participate in REDD+ readiness and implementation?
 - What measures have been taken to mainstream gender considerations across REDD+ readiness activities?
8. *Consultation processes*
 - What evidence demonstrates that consultation processes at the national and local levels are clear, inclusive, transparent, and facilitate timely access to information in a culturally appropriate form?
 - What evidence is there that the country has used a self-selection process to identify rights holders and stakeholders during consultations?
 - What evidence is there that Indigenous Peoples institutions and decision-making processes are utilized to enhance consultations and engagement?
 - What evidence is there that consultation processes are gender sensitive and inclusive?
9. *Information sharing and accessibility of information*
 - How have national REDD+ institutions and management arrangements demonstrated transparent, consistent, comprehensive and timely sharing and disclosure of information

(related to all readiness activities, including the development of REDD+ strategy, reference levels, and monitoring systems) in a culturally appropriate form?

- What evidence is there that information is accessible to stakeholders (e.g., in a format and language understandable to them) and is being received?
- What channels of communications are being used to ensure that stakeholders are well informed, especially those that have limited or no access to relevant information?

10. Implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes

- How are the outcomes of consultations integrated (fed into, disseminated, publicly disclosed and taken into account) in management arrangements, strategy development and technical activities related to reference level and monitoring and information systems development?

Subcomponent: 2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land-Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance

11. Assessment and analysis

- Does the summary of the work conducted during R-PP formulation and preparation present an analysis of recent historical land-use trends (including traditional) and assessment of relevant land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods (including traditional/customary), forest law, policy and governance issues?

12. Prioritization of direct and indirect drivers/barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement

- How was the analysis used to prioritize key direct and indirect drivers to be addressed by the programs and policies included in the REDD+ strategy?
- Did the analysis consider the major barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (if appropriate) to be addressed by the programs and policies included in the REDD+ strategy?

13. Links between drivers/barriers and REDD+ activities

- What evidence demonstrates that systematic links between key drivers, and/or barriers to forest carbon stock enhancement activities (as appropriate), and REDD+ activities were identified?

14. Action plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure, governance

- Do action plans to make progress in the short-, medium- and long-term towards addressing relevant, land-use, land tenure and titling, natural resource rights, livelihoods, and governance issues in priority regions related to specific REDD+ programs, outline further steps and identify required resources?

15. Implications for forest law and policy

- Does the assessment identify implications for forest or other relevant law and policy in the long-term?

16. Links between REDD+ and VPA/FLEGT

- How effective are the linkages and learning between national REDD+ readiness activities and those related to FLEGT within the context of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed with the European Union, and what specific measures (if any) have been taken?

Subcomponent: 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options

17. Selection and prioritization of REDD+ strategy options

- Were REDD+ strategy options (prioritized based on comprehensive assessment of direct and indirect drivers of deforestation, barriers to forest enhancement activities and/ or informed by other factors, as appropriate) selected via a transparent and participatory process?
- Were the expected emissions reduction potentials of interventions estimated, where possible, and how did they inform the design of the REDD+ strategy?

18. *Feasibility assessment*

- Were REDD+ strategy options assessed and prioritized for their social, environmental and political feasibility, risks and opportunities, and analysis of costs and benefits?

19. *Implications of strategy options on existing sectoral policies*

- Have major inconsistencies between the priority REDD+ strategy options and policies or programs in other sectors related to the forest sector (e.g., transport, agriculture) been identified?
- Is an agreed timeline and process in place to resolve inconsistencies and integrate REDD+ strategy options with relevant development policies?
- Are they supportive of broader development objectives and have broad community support?

Subcomponent: 2c. Implementation Framework

20. *Adoption and implementation of legislation/ regulations*

- Have legislation and/or regulations related to REDD+ programs and activities been adopted?
- What evidence is there that these relevant REDD+ laws and policies are being implemented?

21. *Guidelines for implementation*

- What evidence is there that the implementation framework defines carbon rights, benefit sharing mechanisms, REDD+ financing modalities, procedures for official approvals (e.g., for pilots or REDD+ projects), and grievance mechanisms?

22. *Benefit sharing mechanism*

- What evidence is there to demonstrate benefit sharing mechanisms are transparent?

23. *National REDD+ registry and system monitoring REDD+ activities*

- Is a national geo-referenced REDD+ information system or registry operational, comprehensive of all relevant information (e.g., information on the location, ownership, carbon accounting and financial flows for sub-national and national REDD+ programs and projects), and does it ensure public access to REDD+ information?

Subcomponent: 2d. Social and Environmental Impacts

24. *Analysis of social and environmental safeguard issues*

- What evidence is there that applicable social and environmental safeguard issues relevant to the country context have been fully identified/analysed via relevant studies or diagnostics and in consultation processes?

25. *REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts*

- How were SESA results and the identification of social and environmental impacts (both positive and negative) used for prioritizing and designing REDD+ strategy options?

26. *Environmental and Social Management Framework*

- What evidence is there that the ESMF is in place and managing environmental and social risks/potential impacts related to REDD+ activities?

Component 3: Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels

27. *Demonstration of methodology*

- Is the preliminary sub-national or national forest RL or RL presented (as part of the R-Package) using a clearly documented methodology, based on a step-wise approach, as appropriate?
- Are plans for additional steps and data needs provided, and is the relationship between the sub-national and the evolving national reference level demonstrated (as appropriate)?

28. *Use of historical data, and adjusted for national circumstances*

- How does the establishment of the REL/RL take into account historical data, and if adjusted

for national circumstance, what is the rationale and supportive data that demonstrate that proposed adjustments are credible and defensible?

- Is sufficient data and documentation provided in a transparent fashion to allow for the reconstruction or independent cross-checking of the REL/RL?

29. Technical feasibility of the methodological approach, and consistency with UNFCCC/IPCC guidance and guidelines

- Is the REL/RL (presented as part of the R-Package) based on transparent, complete and accurate information, consistent with UNFCCC guidance and the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines, and allowing for technical assessment of the data sets, approaches, methods, models (if applicable) and assumptions used in the construction of the REL/RL?

Subcomponent: 4a. National Forest Monitoring System

30. Documentation of monitoring approach

- Is there clear rationale or analytic evidence supporting the selection of the used or proposed methodology (combination of remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches, systems resolution, coverage, accuracy, inclusions of carbon pools and gases) and improvement over time?
- Has the system been technically reviewed and nationally approved, and is it consistent with national and international existing and emerging guidance?
- Are potential sources of uncertainties identified to the extent possible?

31. Demonstration of early system implementation

- What evidence is there that the system has the capacity to monitor the specific REDD+ activities prioritized in the country's REDD+ strategy?
- How does the system identify and assess displacement of emissions (leakage), and what are the early results (if any)?
- How are key stakeholders involved (participating/ consulted) in the development and/or early implementation of the system, including data collection and any potential verification of its results?
- What evidence is there that the system allows for comparison of changes in forest area and carbon content (and associated GHG emissions) relative to the baseline estimates used for the REL/RL?

32. Institutional arrangements and capacities

- Are mandates to perform tasks related to forest monitoring clearly defined (e.g., satellite data processing, forest inventory, information sharing)?
- What evidence is there that a transparent means of publicly sharing forest and emissions data are presented and are in at least an early operational stage?
- Have associated resource needs been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software, and budget)?

Subcomponent: 4b. Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

33. Identification of relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental issues

- How have relevant non-carbon aspects, and social and environmental safeguard issues of REDD+ preparations been identified? Are there any capacity building recommendations associated with these?

34. Monitoring, reporting and information sharing

- What evidence is there that a transparent system for periodically sharing consistent information on non-carbon aspects and safeguards has been presented and is in at least an early operational stage?
- How is the following information being made available: key quantitative and qualitative variables about impacts on rural livelihoods, conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem

services provision, key governance factors directly pertinent to REDD+ preparations, and the implementation of safeguards, paying attention to the specific provisions included in the ESMF?

35. *Institutional arrangements and capacities*

- Are mandates to perform tasks related to non-carbon aspects and safeguards clearly defined?
- Have associated resource needs been identified and estimated (e.g., required capacities, training, hardware/software, and budget)?