



COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY AND PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT (CBFM) PROJECT

ANNUAL NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2023

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| <p>Programme Title & Project Number:</p> <p>Programme Title: Community-Based Forestry and Protected Area Management (CBFM): Boosting Biodiversity Conservation and Improving Livelihoods of Forest-Fringe/Forest-Dependent Communities and Groups in Liberia</p> | <p>Project Locations:</p> <p>(The CBFM Project is implemented in 7 counties: (Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Sinoe, and River Cess) within the North-West and South-East Landscapes of Liberia.</p> |
| <p>Programme Number: 00133363</p> <p>MPTFO Project Number: 00133701</p> | <p>Priority Area/ Strategic Results</p> <p>UNSDCF Output 2.2: By 2024, National and subnational capacity to deliver sustainable natural resource management and climate-aware initiatives is strengthened.</p> <p>UNDP CPD OUTCOME 3:1 By 2024, Liberia has diversified, and inclusive economic growth underpinned by investments in sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture, food security, job creation and improved resilience to climate change and natural disasters.</p> |
| <p>Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ➤ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) | <p>Implementing Partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forestry Development Authority |
| <p>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total Approved Budget: US\$7,821,696.34</p> | <p>Report Submitted By:</p> <p>Robert Senkungu Joint Programme Manager Participating Organization (Lead): UNDP Email address: robert.senkungu@undp.org</p> |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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| AFC | : Authorized Forest Community |
| CBFM | : Community-Based Forestry and Protected Area Management |
| CDA | : Cooperative Development Agency of Liberia |
| CF | : Community Forest |
| CSO | : Civil Society Organization |
| FAO | : Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FDA | : Forestry Development Authority |
| FCI | : Foundation for Community Initiative |
| IPs | : Implementing Partners |
| IWL | : Integrity Watch of Liberia |
| LCC | : Liberia Cocoa Corporation |
| LoAs | : Letters of Agreement |
| M&E | : Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MPTF | : Multi Partner Trust Fund Office |
| NGO | : Non-Governmental Organization |
| PAs | : Protected Areas |
| PAPD | : Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development |
| PADEV | : Partners in Development |
| PPAs | : Proposed Protected Areas |
| SDI | : Sustainable Development Institute |
| SCNL | : Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia |
| TNC | : The Nature Compact |
| ToT | : Training of Trainers |
| UNSDCF | : United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework |
| UNDP | : United Nations Development Programme |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization leverage the expertise and skills of partners and consultants within a comparative environment for the implementation of the CBFM project. These partners are mostly from the Civil Society Organizations, local Community Based Organizations, Private Sector, and local NGOs who have the expertise to deliver the desired results through different Low Value Grants/Responsible Party Agreements or Letter of Agreements, in consultations with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and key stakeholders.

This report covers the period January 1 to December 31, 2023. The CBFM project year 2 started in May 2023 and shall run to June 2024. Despite the current reporting period, it is important to note that there are some activities from year 1 continuing into year 2.

The CBFM project's main implementing partners are the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), Partners in Development (PADEV), Integrity Watch of Liberia (IWAL), Corporative Development Agency (CDA) of Liberia, the Nature Compact (TNC), the Foundation for Community Initiative (FCI), Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), iCampus-Liberia and Forestry Training Institute of Liberia. These partners in collaborations with the UNDP, FAO, and FDA continue to leverage their expertise in driving the project implementations.

Summary of Progress towards Development Results:

During the period under review, there were numerous contributions made towards achieving targeted results. Some of these contributions were immediate while some are still ongoing. For example, in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023, the UNDP through its CBFM project hired two consultants to conduct community needs assessment, and a baseline study. In the same quarters, the UNDP signed a Low Value Grant Agreement with SCNL(a consortium of LCC, CHAP and SCNL) under the UNDP contract modality and recruited, trained and deployed 80 local community Eco-guards(34 women and 46 men) in the North-West landscape(Lofa, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties); mobilized, trained and grouped 160 small holders' lowland rice farmers(110 women and 50 men) into three groups; prepared cocoa nursery and trained 55(25 women and 30 men) farmers who planted 2,500 cocoa seedlings and 500 plantains on 2.5 acres of land under the climate resilient Agroforestry system in Lukasú. As of December 2023, a total of 7.5 acres of SRI rice (2.5 acres each in Benduma, Yandohun and Lukasú) were harvested. These activities are parts of ongoing activities which are expected to be expanded into different communities by 2024.

Similarly, UNFAO hired an Agrarian consultant to conduct a System Analysis and Diagnosis on the two Forestry Priority Landscapes. This assessment was concluded with report available to be used in the implementation of selected livelihood initiatives. Based on the Agrarian report, a draft criterion for value chains activities for livelihood interventions was developed. During the same period, the FAO hired a consultant for communication and visibility, Women Empowerment, and Inclusion for sustainable production standards. Similarly, the FAO signed three Letter of Agreements(LoAs) with 'the Nature Compact (TNC), the Foundation for Community Initiative (FCI) and Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) to begin the processes of supporting the establishment and management of 10 designated Community Forests in selected landscapes to go through the 9-steps, and three(3) existing authorized forest communities (AFC) were assessed and selected to participate in reviewing and updating of Community Forests Management Plan by FCI respectively.

In December 2023, the CBFM team (UNDP & UNFAO) hosted the Head of Development Cooperation (Deputy Ambassador) of the Swedish Embassy and his team to one of the project sites in Gbandi M'balloma, Lofa County. During the visit, the team which also included the UNDP Resident Representative a.i, with representation from FDA witnessed firsthand, the activities of the Eco guards. A selected team of eight Eco guards demonstrated to the visiting team how they conduct biomonitoring and forest patrols, applying the

skills acquired through the project support. Biomonitoring is conducted to monitor biodiversity in PAs and PPAs, using ecological tools procured by the CBFM project. During the same period under review, UNDP started discussions on the signing of Low value Grant Agreement with Integrity Watch of Liberia to develop and rollout an Anti-Corruption Reporting tool and platform at the forest community level to report forest corruption-related cases within the two landscapes. Additionally, the UNDP in December 2023 initiated a series of discussions with Partners in Development (PADEV), iCampus Liberia, Cooperative Development Agency of Liberia (CDA), Forestry Development Institute of Liberia (FTI) and the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) relative to forming collaboration to implement different project activities under the UNDP contract mobilities.

I. PURPOSE

The project seeks to strengthen the management of community forests and protected areas in Liberia through improved governance of community forest management bodies (CFMBs), capacity building of forest regulatory institutions; empowerment of national CSOs/NGOs and Forest and Farm Producer Organizations; integrated natural resources management and the promotion of sustainable livelihood incentives for forest fringe communities. The CBFM project is in line with Strategic UN Planning Framework (UNSDCF Outcome 2), geared towards Sustainable Economic Development - Diversified and inclusive economic growth; sustainable agriculture, food security, job creation; and resilience to climate change and natural disasters and the Liberian Government PAPD Pillar 2: Increased agricultural production and productivity and improved forest utilization through competitive value chains and market linkages.

II. RESULTS

i) Narrative Reporting on Results

OUTCOMES: Progress towards Development Results

The CBFM project has four (4) outcomes and thirteen (13) outputs. These results are expected to be achieved in the short and medium terms of the project implementation. Each of these outcomes have correspondent outputs which are contributing to achieving the desired results/outcomes. Progress towards achieving development results is ongoing as the project moves in year two (2).

During the period under review, there were numerous contributions made towards achieving targeted results. Some of these contributions were immediate while some are still ongoing. For example, in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023, the UNDP through its CBFM project hired two consultants to conduct community needs assessment, and a baseline study. In the same quarters, the UNDP signed a Low Value Grant Agreement with SCNL(a consortium of LCC, CHAP and SCNL) under the UNDP contract modality and recruited, trained and deployed 80 local community Eco-guards (34 women and 46 men) in the North-West landscape (Lofa, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties); mobilized, trained and grouped 160 small holders' lowland rice farmers (110 women and 50 men) into three groups; prepared cocoa nursery and trained 55 (25 women and 30 men) farmers who planted 2,500 cocoa seedlings and 500 plantains on 2.5 acres of land under the climate resilient Agroforestry system in Lukasú. As of December 2023, a total of 7.5 acres of SRI rice (2.5 acres each in Benduma, Yandohun and Lukasú) were harvested. These activities are parts of ongoing activities which are expected to be expanded into different communities by 2024.

During the same time, an Agrarian was hired by FAO to conduct a System Analysis and Diagnosis on the two Forestry Priority Landscapes. This assessment produced a report available to be used in the implementation of selected livelihood initiatives. Based on the Agrarian report, a draft criterion for selection of value chains activities for livelihood interventions was developed. UNFAO signed three Letter of Agreements (LoAs) with 'the Nature Compact (TNC), the Foundation for Community Initiative (FCI) and Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) to begin the processes of supporting the establishment and management of 10 designated Community Forests in selected landscapes to go through the 9-steps, and three(3) existing authorized forest communities (AFC) were assessed and selected to participate in reviewing and updating of Community Forests Management Plan by FCI respectively.

In December 2023, the CBFM team (UNDP & UNFAO) hosted the Head of Development Cooperation (Deputy Ambassador) of the Swedish Embassy and his team to one of the project sites in Gbandi M'balloma, Lofa County. During the visit, the team which also included the UNDP Resident Representative a.i, with representation from FDA witnessed firsthand, the activities of the Eco guards being demonstrated. A selected team of eight Eco guards demonstrated to the visiting team how they conduct biomonitoring and forest patrols, applying the skills acquired through the project support. Biomonitoring is conducted to monitor biodiversity in PAs and PPAs, using ecological tools procured by the CBFM project. During the same period under review, UNDP started discussions on the signing of Low value Grant Agreement with Integrity Watch of Liberia to develop and rollout an Anti-Corruption Reporting tool and platform at the forest community level to report forest corruption related cases within the two landscapes. Additionally, the UNDP in December 2023 initiated a series of discussions with Partners in Development (PADEV), iCampus Liberia, Cooperative Development Agency of Liberia (CDA), Forestry Development Institute of Liberia (FTI) and the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) relative to forming collaboration to implement different project activities under the UNDP contract mobilities.

Description of Results

Project Outcome 1.1: Strengthened institutional and community capacity, and regulatory framework for community forest management. To achieve this outcome, the forest communities need to have a strengthened institutional and community capacity, and regulatory framework for community forest management in place.

This outcome has two indicators: **Indicator 1.1a:** Number of communities with strengthened capacities in Community Forest Management (CFM) (Baseline 0 and Target 20 communities). **Indicator 1.1b:** Number of regulatory framework documents updated/simplified and in use by forest community beneficiaries (Baseline 0 and Target 2 regulatory frameworks). As of December 2023, not much was done in updating and simplifying regulatory framework documents on community forests management. However, in the North-western landscape of the project intervention, forest communities to some extents have strengthened community capacities to manage their forests through recruiting, training, and the deployment of 80 local community Eco-guards, while a Terms of Reference for a consultant/firm to update/simplify regulatory framework documents was prepared and advertised. It is expected that the results of these outcome indicators (.1a and 1.1b) will be fully achieved by the end of 2024.

Project Outcome 2.1: Status of key species and their habitat improved due to participatory forest management and biodiversity conservation. It is expected that in the medium and long-term, the project will contribute to improving the habitat and status of key species, using participatory forest management and biodiversity conservation approaches. Habitat conservation is a management practice that seeks to conserve, protect, and restore habitats and prevent species extinction, fragmentation, or reduction in range. It is a priority

of many groups that cannot be easily characterized in terms of any one ideology. Tree planting is an aspect of habitat conservation.

Outcome Indicator 2.1: Percentage increase in Biodiversity conserved in Protected Areas (Baseline 0 and Target 20%). As of the indicated reporting period, we witnessed Eco guards' patrolled and demonstrated how wildlife sightings are recorded which also speaks to habitat quality.

It is expected that 20% of habitat and status of key species will increase using participatory forest management and biodiversity conservation by the end of project.

Project Outcome 3.1: Livelihood options for communities are made climate-resilient through diversification, entrepreneurship, SLFM, and CSA.

This component of the project will address capacity barrier 5 by increasing livelihood opportunities for communities through promoting climate-friendly income-generating activities. Under this outcome, the project is supporting livelihood options for communities to strengthen their capacities to become more climate-resilient including through diversification, community-based enterprise development, marketing and access to finance using sustainable land and forest management as well as sustainable agricultural practices with value addition.

Outcome Indicator 3.1a: Number of climate-resilient livelihoods initiatives implemented in targeted forest communities (at least 1 per forest community engaged).

Indicator 3.1b: Number of persons with increased income through sustainable alternative livelihood activities. (Baseline 0 and Target at least 1 set per community engaged and 30 community-based enterprises will benefit). This result has not been achieved 100% due to delay in conducting due diligence and hiring of qualified and competent CSO/Firm to implement the assigned tasks, however, some efforts have been made to ensure this result is achieved. For example, in the 3rd and 4th quarters of the period under review, climate smart agriculture farming was introduced in the Lukasu forest community with a 2.5 ha occupied by integrated cocoa and plantain trees in an agroforestry system. Two implementing partners/service providers have been identified with terms of reference developed to ensure livelihood activities get started. The processes leading to achieving this result is ongoing and expected to be achieved in the medium term.

Project Outcome 4.1: Knowledge Management system built/strengthened to support gender-balanced CFM & co-management of PAs by communities.

Under this component, the project will facilitate the establishment and strengthening of a knowledge management system to support gender-balanced community forest management and co-management of PAs by communities. The project is expected to have products, resources, and content generated and disseminated within and around the forest communities.

Outcome Indicator 4.1: Number of beneficiaries with increased knowledge of CBF and gender-based management systems (Baseline 0 and Target at least 60% of targeted beneficiaries).

This result has not yet been achieved due to delays in the project implementation. However, one (1) gender-mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy has been developed, while a gender-mainstreamed assessment is yet to be conducted within PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe communities. However, the CBFM project team have submitted a concept note to begin a gender-mainstreaming assessment. When this report is submitted, the project would identify the gap in gender mainstreaming and apply the gender-mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy which has been developed to address the gap(s).

OUTPUTS: Progress towards project outputs

The CBFM project has thirteen (13) outputs. Each of these outputs contributes to achieving the desired project outcomes. During the period under review, series of activities were initiated and are contributing to achieving the project desired results within the short run.

Output 1.1.1: Existing local governance institutions [CFMBs/ Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)] and Conservancy-based forums strengthened. To achieve this result, the project needs to support the strengthening of community-level governance institutions, through training, provision of logistics and technical backstopping, building on work done under the Community Rights Law (2008), the Land Rights Law (2018), relevant forestry regulations and creating awareness on Community Forest Management.

Output 1.1.1 has three (3) indicators and each of these indicators are expected to be achieved within the short run. For example, **Indicator 1.1.1a: Number of Community Forest Management Body (CFMBs) with updated Community Forest Management (CFM) plans (Baseline 0 and Target; 3 Community Forest Management (CFM) Plans will be reviewed and updated).** Although, this result has not been achieved yet, however, in November 2023, the FAO signed three separate Letter of Agreement (LoA) with TNC, FCI and SDI to assess existing authorized forest communities, review and update their respective Community Forest Management Plans. Not much was done during the period under review. However, it is expected that the full assessment of existing authorized community forest to review and update Community Forest Management Plans will be concluded by 2024 within the two landscapes.

Indicator 1.1.1b: Number of persons/participants who are aware/sensitized on Community Forest Management (Baseline 0 and Target at least 6,000 persons within 20 forest communities are sensitized on community forest management). As of December 2023, about 4000 persons (67%: 2,400 males and 1600 females) were sensitized and aware of the Community Forest Management Plan within the two landscapes. The awareness and sanitizations were created by both the CBFM team and the assigned implementing partners/service providers (FCI, TNC and SDI) during their community assessment and stakeholders engagement meetings. It is expected that by 2024, more community forest beneficiaries will be aware and sensitive to Community Forest Management Plan.

Indicator 1.1.3c: Anti-corruption/rule of law and inclusive governance platform is developed and in used for reporting corruption cases involving forest management (Baseline 0 and Target beneficiaries within at least 20 community forests will know how to report forestry related corruption cases using an integrated platform). As of December 2023, UNDP had concluded discussions and signed a Responsible Party Agreement with Integrity Watch of Liberia (a Civil Society Organization) to create awareness, train and develop an integrated Anti-Corruption reporting platform at the forest community level for beneficiaries to report community forest related corruption cases. However, efforts have been exerted to ensure that this result is achieved in 2024.

Output 1.1.2: Community Forest Management Plans of existing authorized forest communities (AFC)/CFMBs are updated to reflect current reality.

Indicator 1.1.2: Number of CFM plans updated for existing authorized communities' forest (Baseline 0 and Target 3 authorized Community Forest Management Plans will be reviewed and updated).

To achieve this result, the project in collaboration with service providers/implementing partners will work with authorized forest communities to update existing community forest management plans and support forest communities to enable community forest management agreements. Subsequently, community forest inventories will be conducted for authorized communities, working with the relevant statutory entities (FDA, MIA, and LLA). This result has not yet been achieved.

As of December 2023, the service providers in collaboration with Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Liberia Land Authority (LLA) started having discussion centered around updating three (3) authorized community forests management plans. It is expected that this result will be fully achieved in 2024.

Output 1.1.3: Amendments/enabling the legal framework and policy instruments to enable sustainable CBFM plan and submitted to the Government for adoption. To achieve this result will require conducting activities aimed at reviewing relevant legal instruments and submitting new instruments (as deemed

appropriate) to national government, towards the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable community forest management.

Indicator 1.1.3: Number of CF regulatory legal frameworks and policy instruments amended/updated and submitted to key stakeholders for adoption (Baseline 0 and Target 2 CF regulatory legal framework documents/policy instruments will be amended/updated and submitted to key stakeholders for adoption). This result has not yet been achieved; however, a ToR was developed, launched, and evaluated, but applicant did not meet the minimum required score. It is expected that in the first or second quarter of 2024, a consultant will be hired to amend/update CF regulatory legal frameworks and policy instruments and submit said to key stakeholders for adoption.

Output 2.1.1: Co-management of selected Protected Areas implemented through tripartite (Government, CBOs, and conservation NGOs) agreements and terms of partnerships. The project will ensure that selected Protected Areas (PAs) are co-managed through tripartite arrangements comprising community-based organizations (CBOs/FFPOs), conservation NGOs and the government. Complementarily, a community-based patrol and monitoring system will be initiated as part of effective management of these PAs.

Indicator 2.1.1: Number of PAs and PPAs co-managed by civil society, FDA and communities through tripartite agreements under the CBFM project (Baseline 0 and Target; local Eco-guards will be recruited, trained and deployed within 5 different locations of PAs, PPAs and around forest fringe communities). As of December 2023, SCNL and her partners recruited, trained, and deployed 80 local community Eco-guards (34 women and 46 men) in the North-West landscape (Lofa, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties). The Eco guards are supporting the management of 1 PA and 1 PPA. This result has been achieved 50% and expected to achieve 100% when similar activities are conducted for local community Eco-guards within the South-Eastern landscape. It is expected that by 2024, a Low Value Grant Agreement will be signed with a service provider(s) to ensure that Eco-guards are recruited, trained, and deployed within selected forest communities around PAs, PPAs and Forest Fringe Communities within the South-Eastern landscape.

Output 2.1.2: FDA-Community reforestation by planting targeted hectares of indigenous trees in degraded forest landscapes in PAs. In a short-medium term, the project will facilitate the restoration of degraded areas within the Protected Areas, through restoration/reforestation of said places affected by activities of mining and unsustainable agricultural practices.

Indicator 2.1.2: Number of hectares reforested and restored in Protected Areas (Baseline 0 and Target number of hectares to be determined). Nothing has been done yet to achieve this result. However, it is expected that in 2024, UNDP will sign a Low Value Grant with Forestry Training Institute (FIT) to reforest and restore number of hectares selected Protected Areas within the two landscapes.

Output 2.1.3: Capacity support to FDA/communities, including remote sensing technologies, carbon monitoring tool to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring.

In the short run, the CBFM project will ensure that the capacities of the communities and FDA staff are strengthened through the provision of remote sensing technologies and carbon monitoring tool to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring in Protected Areas.

Indicator 2.1.3: Number of equipment used by FDA for collaborative forest monitoring including remote sensing technologies and carbon monitoring tool to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring in Protected Areas (Baseline 0 and Target, FDA to receive motor bikes, GPA, tablets, rain gear, camaras etc. for remote sensing technologies, carbon monitoring tools to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring). This result has been achieved 90%. During the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2023, UNDP Country Office through the CBFM project provided 25 new Yamaha motor bikes, including the provision of remote sensing technologies and carbon monitoring tools to FDA to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring in Protected Areas and for forest monitoring, natural resource appraisal and biodiversity

assessment and to enhance and strengthen the capacities of communities and FDA staff through training and collaboration. With a spot check field visit report, it is established that the motor bikes and rain gears were assigned to Rangers and Chief Park Wardens to monitor and patrol in and around Protected Areas.

Output 3.1: Strengthened climate resilience and productivity for crop and livestock management. Climate change affects agricultural production and food security through changes in rainfall and temperature. The magnitude of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities are mostly significant. This project will integrate climate-smart approaches across landscapes to improve productivity and climate resilience.

Indicator 3.1.1a: Number of climate resilient crops and livestock introduced and owned by beneficiaries around PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe Communities (Baseline 0 and Target at least 1 livelihood options per community and capacities strengthened to become more climate-resilient through diversification, enterprise development, marketing, and incoming generating modality). This result has not been achieved as of December 2023. Draft selection criteria for value chain interventions were developed (by UNFAO) and reviewed. Once approved, implementation will begin.

Indicator 3.1.1b: Percentage increase in income of beneficiaries from productive climate resilient crops and livestock (baseline 0 and Target at least 60% of beneficiaries' income increased). This result has not been achieved; however, the project will support at least 1 livelihood options per each of the 20 selected communities' forest and strengthen their capacities to become more climate-resilient through diversification, enterprise development, marketing, and incoming generating modality.

Output 3.1.2: Communities around PAs, PPAs and Forest Fringe livelihoods improved, sources of income diversified and enhanced.

In the short-medium term, the project will support and enhance livelihoods, and ensure sources of income are diversified through the promotion of cash crop production, using agro-forestry approach, and micro-enterprise development services, including cooperatives systems, crop insurance schemes, and sustainable certification schemes. Value chain-specific, post-harvest services (storage, processing, packaging, testing/standardization) will be provided for MSMEs involved in enterprises of both agriculture (food crop, livestock) and NTFPs.

Indicator 3.1.2: Number of persons in targeted communities with improved livelihoods and diversified sources of income (Baseline 0 and Target at least 60% of targeted beneficiaries income increased). This result has been partly achieved. For example, in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023, some of the communities around PPAs like Lukasu, Benduma and Yandohun in the Northwest landscape started harvesting the SRI lowland rice on 7.5 acres of land involving **160** small holders' lowlands rice farmers (110 women and 50 men) and **55** (25 women and 30 men) cocoa farmers also trained, grouped, and planted 2500 cocoa seedlings and 500 plantain trees as pilot project. As of December 2023, a total of 7.5 acres of SRI rice (2.5 acres each in Benduma, Yandohun and Lukasu) were harvested as a pilot project. These activities are part of ongoing activities which are expected to be expanded into different communities in 2024. It is also expected that in 2024, beneficiaries in selected forest communities will begin No Timber Forest Products livelihood activities.

Output 3.1.3: Increased value chain-specific assessment (VCA) based post-harvest services. The project will support increasing access to finance and market linkage opportunities will be enhanced for these community-based production and value addition enterprises across all sectors. Community based enterprises will be selected, trained and capacited to increase finance.

Indicator 3.1.3: Number of value chain-specific assessment-based post-harvest services being successfully undertaken in target forest communities (Baseline 0 and Target at least 1 per community). This result has not yet been achieved. However, the project is having discussions with qualified service providers to begin the implementation of said result by 2024.

Output 3.1.4: Market and finance access enhanced around PAs, PPAs and Forest Fringe Communities. The primary link between financial institutions and economic performance is the provision of resources by

these institutions to businesses in driving enterprise development. The project will ensure that selected community-based enterprises have access to market and finance.

Indicator 3.1.4a: Percentage of agriculture/forest MSME showing increased in sale due to market linkages (Baseline 0 and Target at least 30 community-based enterprises within targeted forest communities will benefit). This result has not yet been achieved. However, UNDP initiated discussions with potential Responsible Parties to begin the implementation of said result by 2024.

Output Indicator 3.1.4b: Number of agriculture and forest-based enterprises having access to business training and grant through the growth accelerator (Baseline 0 and Target at least 30 community-based enterprises within targeted forest communities will benefit). This result has not yet been achieved. However, UNDP initiated discussions with a potential Responsible Partner who submitted a proposal for review. Discussions on approach and target beneficiaries are ongoing and expected to be achieved in 2024.

Output 4.1.1: Enhanced generation of lessons learned best practices and knowledge management (KM) products. In the short-medium term, the project will facilitate the generation of products based on lesson-learned and best practices, using online repository and community-friendly platforms. These resource materials will be shared and maintained through collaboration with stakeholders.

Indicator 4.1.1a: Number of knowledge management product generated and shared in forest communities (Baseline 0 and Target at least 3000 knowledge management products generated and shared in all targeted communities). This result has not been achieved yet. UNDP through its Responsible Party Agreement is having discussions with Partners in Development (PADEV) to begin the full implementation of said agreement by 2024.

4.1.1b: Number of persons reached with awareness and education messages on the project and its expected desired results (Baseline 0 and Target at least 6000 persons accessing user-friendly multi-media outputs and contents in targeted forest communities). In the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023, the CBFM project team started the sensitization of beneficiaries in the project communities. To initiate implementation and achieve the said result, UNDP signed a Responsible Party Agreement with Partners in Development (PADEV) to begin the full implementation of said agreement by 2024.

Output 4.1.2: A mix of user-friendly multi-media outputs and contents produced for conservation activities. The project will support the dissemination of knowledge content and material through various user-friendly, multimedia outlets. Simultaneously, monitoring, evaluation and learning tools that are gender-mainstreamed and participatory will be used.

Indicator 4.1.2a: Number of user-friendly multi-media outputs and contents produced and in used (Baseline 0 and Target at least 6000 persons will access user-friendly multi-media outputs and contents in targeted forest communities). This result has not been achieved yet. UNDP signed a Responsible Party Agreement with Partners in Development (PADEV) in December 2023. PADEV will begin full implementation of said agreement by 2024.

Indicator 4.1.2b: Number of persons accessing user-friendly platforms developed by the project (Baseline 0 and Target at least 6000 persons will access user-friendly platforms developed by the project in targeted forest communities). This result has not been achieved yet. However, UNDP through its Responsible Party Agreement is having discussions with Partners in Development (PADEV) to begin the full implementation of said agreement by 2024.

Output 4.1.3: A gender mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy developed and implemented to facilitate adaptive project management decision making. In the short run, the project will ensure a gender

mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy developed and implemented to support the development and dissemination of knowledge management products for all outputs and a gender assessment conducted by project team.

Indicator 4.1.3a: A gender-mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy developed/ Evidence of references made to the gender-based strategies in decision making. By the end of December 2023, a draft gender-mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy was developed (Evidence of references made to the gender-based strategies in decision making) and is currently being reviewed.

Indicator 4.1.3b: Number of gender-mainstreamed assessment conducted within PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe Communities of the CBFM project (Baseline 0 and Target 1). One (1) gender-mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy assessment is pending to be conducted within PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe communities. It is expected that this result will be achieved in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2024.

- **Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned & best practices.**

- During the period under review, there were delays from qualified/competent CSOs/local NGOs in responding to call for proposals or advertisements made to recruit the best qualified CSOs or consulting firms to implement some of the activities that should have started in the 3rd and 4th quarters. For example, on different occasions, advertisements were made to hire consultants or firms and could not get the best candidate immediately and had to readvertise the positions which took time. To mitigate this situation, we have decided as part of our strategy to begin the processes of hiring/recruiting a consultant/firm/CSO/NGO at least two months ahead of time, considering that there might be delays in the process of receiving the right CSOs/Consultants.
- Some implementing partners (IPs) needed more time to prepare proposals/applications which delayed the award process. The project team offered some technical direction, including co-creation with some of them to expedite the process.
- Uncertainty about the National Election Outcomes. Uncertainty about the Liberian 2023 National Election Results was seen as one of the delays by implementing partners/service providers to jumpstart the implementations of agreements. For example, engagement meetings/consultations with local government authorities and other key stakeholders were almost impossible due to their respective campaign activities during the elections.
- Community's roads are terrible during raining season in Liberia and contribute to delays in project implementation.
- Agroforestry is never a quick "fix" because trees, unlike crops, take a long time to mature before they can really fulfill their purpose in the system. As such, it is expected that some of the Agroforestry activities will begin to yield results in the last year of the project implementation or maybe after the project closure, hence the income may not be captured during the life of project.
- The process of hiring qualified individuals/firms and awarding contracts has been slow in the last four-quarters of the project implementation. For example, sometimes, advertisements are made to hire consultants or firms and do not get the best candidate immediately and had to readvertise the position which takes time.
- Community engagements time were extended due to long distances of target communities specifically within the South-eastern landscape. Action taken to mitigate this challenge was to have 2 teams simultaneously moving in separate communities when necessary.

- **Qualitative assessment.**

The project's main implementing partners are the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), Partners in Development (PADEV), Integrity Watch of Liberia (IWAL), Corporative Development Agency

(CDA) of Liberia, the Nature Compact (TNC), the Foundation for Community Initiative (FCI), Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), iCampus of Liberia and Forestry Training Institute of Liberia. These partners in collaborations with the UNDP, FAO, and FDA continue to have monthly coordination meetings and follow-ups on project implementations. These coordination meetings have helped the project to accelerate the rate of delivery in hard-to-reach communities. Implementing Partners now have a platform where information can be easily disseminated. Besides, all IPs have one template used for reporting. Additionally, partners are always a part of the project planning meetings. Where and when necessary, the implementing UN agencies (UNDP and FAO) provide feedback and give direction to the implementing partners. This working relationship has helped to a greater extent to accelerate project deliverables.

For example, under Components one and three of the CBFM project, the UNDP and FAO have activities that are aligned and complementary in nature. The only way these activities can swiftly be implemented is by encouraging the implementing partners/service providers to coordinate how project information are disseminated and the community engagement and stakeholders' consultation approaches.

To further ensure that the project desired results are tracked and achieved, the Donor, UNDP, FAO and FDA conduct quarterly regular field monitoring visits to assess project implementation and give feedback where necessary. For example, in December 2023, the head of Development Cooperation (Deputy Swedish Ambassador) of the Swedish Embassy near Monrovia, the head of UNDP Country Office, a member of FAO, FDA team and implementing partner (SCNL) visited part of the project community in Gbandi M'balloma and witnessed local Eco guards demonstrated how they conduct biomonitoring around the PAs and PPAs. All of these coordination meetings have helped in providing strategic direction to implementing partners/service providers.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any) | Source of Verification |
|---|--|---|---|
| Outcome 1¹ Strengthened institutional and community capacity, and regulatory framework for community forest management. Indicator 1.1a: Number of communities with strengthened capacities in Community Forest Management (CFM). 1.1b: Number of regulatory framework documents updated/simplified and in used by forest communities' beneficiaries. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 20 Communities with strengthened capacities on CFM. | <p>The process of achieving these results has started and is ongoing. It is expected that by the end of 2024, these indicators/results will be achieved.</p> | <p>There were delays in the implementation of the project from the inception.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |
| Output 1.1.1 Existing local governance institutions [CFMBs/ Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)] and Conservancy-based forums strengthened. Indicator 1.1.1a: Number of Community Forest Management Body (CFMBs) with updated Community Forest Management (CFM) plans. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 3 Community Forest Management (CFM) Plans will be updated. Output 1.2.1: Community Forest Management Plans of existing authorized forest communities (AFC)/CFMBs are updated to reflect current reality. Indicator 1.1.2: Number of CFM plans updated for existing authorized communities' forest. Baseline: 0 | <p>The process has started, and the desired results are expected to be achieved by December 2024.</p> | <p>There were delays in recruiting qualified CSO/NGO/Consultant/Firm in the implementation of the project from the inception.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |
| | <p>The process has started, and the desired results are expected to be achieved by December 2024.</p> <p>The process to ensure this result is achieved has started. By the end of 2024, three (3) Authorized Community Forest Management Plans will be reviewed and updated.</p> | <p>There were delays in recruiting qualified SO/NGO/Consultant/Firm in the implementation of the project from the inception.</p> <p>There were delays in recruiting qualified SO/NGO/Consultant/Firm in the implementation of the project from the inception.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |

¹ Note: Outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets should be **as outlined in the Project Document** so that you report on your **actual achievements against planned targets**. Add rows as required for Outcome 2, 3 etc.

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| <p>Planned Target: 3 Authorized Community Forest Management Plans will be reviewed and updated.</p> | | | |
| <p>Output 1.1.3: Amendments/enabling the legal framework and policy instruments to enable sustainable CBFM plan and submitted to the Government for adoption.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 2 CF regulatory legal framework documents/policy instruments will be amended/updated and submitted to key stakeholders for adoption</p> | <p>ToR to recruit a consultant to amend/update 2 CF regulatory legal framework documents/policy instruments were developed, and opportunity advertised via UNDP portal. However, it is expected that this result will be achieved by December 2024.</p> | <p>There were delays in recruiting qualified SO/NGO/Consultant/Firm in the implementation of the project from the inception.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2.1: Status of key species and their habitat improved due to participatory forest management and biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Indicator 2.1: % increase in Biodiversity conserved in PAs by 20%.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 20% of habitat and status of key species will increase using participatory forest management and biodiversity conservation approaches.</p> | <p>The process has started. 80 Eco guards recruited and trained well equipped to support FDA illegal patrols and biomonitoring missions.</p> <p>N/A</p> | <p>This is a higher-level indicator which is early to report on given the stage of the project implementation.</p> <p>FDA to share data.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |
| <p>Output 2.1.1: Co-management of selected Protected Areas implemented through tripartite (Government, CBOs, and conservation NGOs) agreements and terms of partnerships.</p> <p>Indicator 2.1.1: Number of PAs and PPAs co-managed by civil society, FDA and communities through tripartite agreements under the CBFM project.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: Local Eco-guards will be trained within 5 different locations of PAs, PPAs and nearby forest fringe communities.</p> | <p>This result achieved 40%. Eighty (80) local Eco-guards within 3 locations have been recruited, trained, and deployed in the North-West landscape of Liberia. 1 PA and 1 PPA were covered by the end of 2023.</p> | <p>The process has started and ongoing within the North-West landscape.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |
| <p>Output 2.1.2: FDA-Community reforestation by planting targeted hectares of indigenous trees in degraded forest landscapes in PAs.</p> <p>Indicator 2.1.2: Number of hectares reforested and restored in Protected Areas.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: XXX number of hectares to be determined</p> | <p>Not yet started.</p> | <p>CBFM team discussing with FDA to select sites.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |

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| <p>Output 2.1.3: Capacity support to FDA/communities, including remote sensing technologies, carbon monitoring tool to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring.</p> <p>Indicator 2.1.3: Number of equipment used by FDA for collaborative forest monitoring including remote sensing technologies and carbon monitoring tools to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring in Protected Areas.</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: FDA to receive 25 motor bikes, GPA, 15 tablets, rain gear, camaras etc. for remote sensing technologies, carbon monitoring tools to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring.</p> | <p>This result has been achieved. UNDP through the CBFM project provided 25 new Yamaha motor bikes to FDA, including GPA, rain gears, tablets along with other accessories for remote sensing technologies, carbon monitoring tools to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring.</p> | <p>The motor bikes and other accessories are in used for remote sensing technologies, carbon monitoring tools to promote biodiversity and forest monitoring.</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly, Annual reports and field visits report.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 3.1: Livelihood options for communities are made climate-resilient through diversification and entrepreneurship. SLFM, and CSA</p> <p>Indicator 3.1a: Number of climate-resilient livelihoods initiatives implemented in targeted forest communities (at least 1 per Forest community engaged).</p> <p>Indicator 3.1b: Number of persons with increased income through sustainable alternative livelihood activities</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: At least 1 set per community engaged and 30 community-based enterprises will benefit.</p> | <p>The project partly achieved on a small scale, the production of a pilot SRI lowland rice on 7.5 acres of land, planted cocoa and plantains on 2.5 acres, involving 160 small holders' farmers (110 women and 50 men) and 55 (25 women and 30 men) cocoa farmers in Benduma, Lukasu and Yandohn communities respectively.</p> | <p>The process has started</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly, Annual reports</p> |
| <p>Output 3.1: Strengthened climate resilience and productivity for crop and livestock management.</p> <p>Indicator 3.1.1a: Number of climate resilient crops and livestock introduced and owned by beneficiaries around PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe Communities.</p> <p>Indicator 3.1.1b: Percentage increase in income of beneficiaries from productive climate resilient crops and livestock.</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: The project will support at least 1 livelihood options per community and strengthen their capacities to become more climate-resilient through diversification, enterprise</p> | <p>The process has started with the development of livelihood selection criteria.</p> <p>Not yet determined.</p> | <p>The process has started</p> | <p>Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports.</p> |

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| <p>Output 3.1.2: Communities around PAs, PPAs and Forest Fringe livelihoods improved, sources of income diversified and enhanced.</p> <p>Indicator 3.1.2: Number of persons in targeted communities with improved livelihoods and diversified sources of income. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 60% of targeted beneficiaries.</p> | The process has started with the development of ToR. | The process has started | Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports. |
| <p>Output 3.1.3: Increased value chain-specific assessment (VCA) based post-harvest services.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 1 per community</p> | The process has started with the development of ToR for the consultants. | The process has started | Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports. |
| <p>Output 3.1.3: Market and finance access enhanced around PAs, PPAs and Forest Fringe Communities.</p> <p>Indicator 3.1.4a: Percentage of agriculture/forest MSME showing increased in sale due to market linkages. Indicator 3.1.4b: Number of agriculture and forest-based enterprises having access to business training and grant through the growth accelerator. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 30 community-based enterprises within targeted forest communities.</p> | <p>The process has started with the development of ToR.</p> <p>Not yet achieved.</p> <p>Not yet started</p> <p>Not yet started</p> | The process has started | Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports. |
| <p>Outcome 4.1: Knowledge Management system built/strengthened to support gender-balanced CFM & co-management of Pas by communities. Indicator 4.1: Number of gender-balanced knowledge management systems built/used Indicator 4.1.1: Number and types of knowledge management products/tools developed. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 60% of targeted beneficiaries.</p> | The process has started | The process has started | Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports. |
| <p>Output 4.1.1: Enhanced generation of lessons learned best practices and knowledge management (KM) products.</p> | The process has started with the development of ToR. | The process has started | Monthly, Quarterly and Annual reports. |

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| <p>Indicator 4.1.1a: Number of knowledge management product generated and shared in forest communities. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 3000 knowledge management products generated and shared in all targeted communities.</p> <p>4.1.1b: Number of persons reached with awareness and education messages on the project and its expected desired results. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 6000 persons accessing user-friendly multi-media outputs and contents in targeted forest communities.</p> | | | |
| <p>Output 4.1.3: 1 gender-mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy developed and 1 gender-mainstreamed assessment conducted within PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe communities.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: Participatory MEL strategy developed and 1 gender-mainstreamed assessment conducted within PAs, PPAs or Forest Fringe communities.</p> | <p>1(0.5%) gender mainstreamed participatory MEL strategy developed and submitted for approval to facilitate adaptive project management decision making. Besides, orientation for gender mainstreaming was conducted for Service providers.</p> | <p>The process has started with the development of ToR.</p> | <p>The process has started</p> |

iii) A Specific Story

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Problem / Challenge faced:

Implementing forestry projects can be challenging considering the remoteness of the project's intervention areas. In Liberia, many of the forest communities lack network connectivity and good road infrastructure. These factors impede the normal working conditions of project/program implementers. However, the CBFM project has developed a strategy to enhance working with local partners/CBOs who are aware of alternative road transport, implementation modality and means of disseminating information, especially in hard-to-reach communities. In terms of communication, some of the foresters have learned to disseminate information through travelers and community leaders in a special arrangement. As challenges unfold, the CBFM project team adapts accordingly but with focus on achieving the objectives/desired results.

Result:

Lessons Learned:

As we further move into the project implementations, we continue to learn lessons that are documented and shared among stakeholders during project briefing. Below are few of the lessons learned during the period under review:

- We have learned that forest communities have a reservoir of knowledge about their forest resources, know about the forests around them, and they are ready/eager to cooperate with development partners to conserve their natural resources and increase benefits therefrom.
- It has been observed that in the absence of coordination and continuous community engagement, it might be difficult to implement successfully in some of the communities because of traditions and the way of life. To ensure that the project achieve the desired results, we continue to engage implementing partners/service providers to be present at the community forests during implementations.

III. Other Assessments or Evaluations

The evaluation (mid-term or End of project evaluation) of this project has not been conducted yet, however, the team continues to monitor and conduct spot checks during the project implementation.

IV. Programmatic Revisions

During the 3rd and 4th quarters of this report, the number of project communities was adjusted from 7-10 to 20 communities. This means that the project is now working in 20 communities inclusive of Protected Areas, Proposed Protected Areas, and Forest Fringe communities.