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## EVALUATION

# Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West Africa Regional Development (STEWARD III) Project

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# **MID TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF STEWARD III:**

**SUSTAINABLE AND THRIVING ENVIRONMENTS FOR WEST  
AFRICA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## **DISCLAIMER**

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# ACRONYMS

AUDER	Actuers Unis pour le Developpement Rural
CI	Conservation International
CIFOR	Center for International Forest Research
E3/FAB	USAID E3 Forests and Biodiversity Office
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EGAT	USAID Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade Bureau (now E3)
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
ETOA	Environmental Threats and Opportunities Assessment
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
GIS	Geographic Information System
ICRAF	International Center for Research in Agroforestry
IEE	Initial Environmental Evaluation
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LFI	Liberia Forest Initiative
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRU	Mano River Union
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OKNP	Outamba-Kilimi National Park
PBS	Performance-Based Support
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PZ	Priority Zone
REA	Regional Environmental Advisor
REDD+	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (plus denotes additional biodiversity and social benefits)
SAF	Strategic Activities Fund
SL	Sierra Leone
STEWARD	Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West Africa Regional Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFS-IP	US Department of Agriculture – Forest Service International Programs
V&A	Vulnerability and Adaptation (to climate change)
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Health
WWF	World Wildlife Fund (in USA), Worldwide Fund for Nature (elsewhere)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This mid-term evaluation has three objectives:

- To review the progress made in achieving the STEWARD III objectives;
- To identify critical mid-course program changes necessary to ensure sustainability of the program; and
- To the extent possible within the constraints of time and budget, identify lessons for consideration in future programming.

Intended users include USAID/West Africa, USFS-IP as the implementing body, and the Implementing Partners of STEWARD.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

STEWARD III is a forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods project working in trans-boundary priority zones in the Upper Guinean Forest ecosystem, occurring in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. It is the third iteration of the STEWARD program. STEWARD I was characterized as a design phase, and STEWARD II as a pilot phase. STEWARD III is intended to be the implementation phase. Its goals are to:

- Conserve biodiversity and improve rural livelihoods in critical trans-boundary landscapes in the Upper Guinean Forest ecosystem;
- Produce harmonized policies and legal frameworks for natural resources management (NRM) in a regional context; and contribute to national strategic plans on climate change in the Mano River Union states; and
- Promote resiliency in the face of climate change.

STEWARD III is implemented by the US Forest Service's International Program (USFS-IP), which has a history of excellence in technical assistance to USAID through a Participating Agency Partnership Agreement (PAPA). It is worth noting that prior to STEWARD the USFS-IP had not managed large projects in the developing world.

STEWARD III is a complex program, involving multiple funding streams (including biodiversity, adaptation, sustainable landscapes, and WASH funding). Each of these carries specific implementation criteria and reporting requirements. The project is managed through six concurrent sub-agreements, which are functionally separate cooperative agreements. This would pose a sufficiently challenging management task under ideal circumstances, yet the difficult physical and institutional environments in the STEWARD states of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire make it even more demanding. These are among the world's poorest countries, near the lowest rungs of the development ladder in terms of life expectancy, income, and education. All four countries have a recent history of civil strife, and they are in the midst of the world's worst-ever Ebola epidemic. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators for 2012 (the most recent year available) rank all four countries in the lowest quartile of all nations in the areas of government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. In short, these are very fragile states.

STEWARD III began in June, 2011, and became fully operational in 2012. In the course of implementation it has faced some serious challenges, including a series of personnel changes, financial fraud, and a major public health crisis. It has also made some important accomplishments in the face of challenging circumstances.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS, DESIGN, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation is organized around five Study Questions proposed by USAID and modified in consultation with the USAID Regional Office for West Africa, USFS-IP, and the Evaluation Team:

1. Are STEWARD program interventions achieving the planned goals and objectives?
2. Has STEWARD created a constituency that can support project goals and objectives sustainably?
3. How have pilot activities had the intended effect of influencing national policies, and by extension the regional policies of the Mano River Union (MRU)?
4. Are training and technical assistance being delivered as intended in the face of changing priorities and funding sources?
5. To what extent have STEWARD's livelihood interventions contributed to the achievement of the project goals?

This evaluation was conducted through a combination of desktop review and participative diagnostic process. The evaluation was divided into two components:

**The transect.** During the data collection phase, the evaluation team conducted a transect of STEWARD communities in Priority Zone (PZ) 1 and PZ2 to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews, and take direct observations. Over a one-month period between June 16 and July 16, 2014, the Evaluation Team visited 36 out of the 58 STEWARD communities in three countries – Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. During the transect the team held 13 focus group meetings, as well as 26 formal key informant interviews with stakeholders such as local and regional authorities, program staff, and community members. The Evaluation Team did not visit sites that were satellites of communities with major STEWARD participation (two cases, one in PZ1 and one in PZ2), communities new to STEWARD, and communities with very limited STEWARD participation. The Evaluation Team was forced to cancel a planned visit to one Guinean community in PZ2 because the road was impassable due to severe rain.

The objectives of the transect were twofold:

- a. To validate reporting of work on the ground in the Priority Zones and to understand the context of the project activities. This consisted of site inspections and interviews with project staff from Implementing Partners.
- b. To assess the sustainability of the activities through the degree of participation, buy-in, and perceived benefit by communities. This consisted of focus group discussions with communities, and with key informant interviews with community members and local government authorities.

**The document review.** The team reviewed over 120 documents, including all available project reporting, background information on project antecedents and project design processes, and outputs of the project. In particular, the outputs were compared with the Project Management Plan and workplans.

Limitations to conducting an effective evaluation included:

1. The Ebola virus epidemic, which limited team mobility, including to Conakry to consult with Ministry officials.
2. The season; the evaluation was conducted during the rainy season. During this time of the year, roads can be impassable and travel can be dangerous.
3. Lack of a knowledge management system; no entity was able to provide the team with a complete set of documents, and assembling the record was laborious and time consuming.
4. Unresponsiveness on the part of some implementing partners resulting in serious delays in obtaining critical information, and necessitating revisions of the evaluation report.
5. Absence or unavailability of baseline information against which to determine the significance of reported outcomes.

The analysis of observations was conducted through team meetings in Freetown between July 16 and 22, 2014. The reporting was conducted through a debrief of the preliminary findings of the evaluation, presented at a meeting hosted by the Mano River Union at their headquarters in Freetown, Sierra Leone on July 22, 2014

(participants are listed in Annex 4). A debrief was presented at the USAID West Africa Mission in Accra on July 25, 2014.

Due to difficulty in obtaining information from some IPs, there were gaps in the first iteration of the MTE report. Addressing these gaps required additional time, both to obtain and then synthesize the missing data. This resulted in a delay in submission of the final report.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### FINDINGS

STEWARD III is a complex transboundary natural resources management project. It operates at a landscape scale in two landscapes involving four countries through six implementing partners. The US Forest Service International Program (USFS-IP) implements STEWARD III under a Participating Agency Partnership Agreement. The USFS-IP in turn has a contractor responsible for direct implementation. Activities within these landscapes address biodiversity, climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and water, sanitation and health objectives. STEWARD III recalls the Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) implemented by USAID in the 1980s, in that it focuses on threat abatement and community resilience through sustainable livelihoods. The underlying assumption of USAID's ICDP approach was that rural poverty drives environmental degradation, and that raising living standards would reduce community dependency upon consumptive uses of natural resources (USAID, 2008). STEWARD III is based upon similar assumptions. It has successfully demonstrated approaches that show promise of improving livelihoods and linked to improved management of community forests. However, STEWARD III is not on track to meet all project objectives.

Its approach could be more effectively structured. The sub-agreements with the Implementing Partners, based upon concept notes submitted in response to a Request for Applications, do not fully address all objectives, leaving significant gaps, especially in scaling lessons from the field for national and regional implementation. It should be noted that USAID explicitly prescribed the approach that has been employed, involving the use of a Strategic Activities Fund from which concept notes would be solicited from prospective partners.

The Evaluation team found that where livelihood activities result in a switch away from destructive practices, project beneficiaries consistently reported that people who are not project beneficiaries filled vacated niches and resumed destructive practices. This phenomenon could not be quantified in the time available. It raises a significant question about the development hypothesis for Intermediate Result 1 (“that if new knowledge and capacity, new governance institutions and decision-making processes, and new economic options for supporting livelihoods and social development that address the causes of the threats to biodiversity in the target areas are developed and implemented, then biodiversity (at ecosystem, species, and/or genetic levels) will be conserved”). This militates in favor of an impact evaluation of STEWARD and other projects with similar development hypotheses in the region.

STEWARD's approach to biodiversity is loosely structured, lacking a framework for understanding the relationship between forest fragmentation, habitat, and species of concern. STEWARD's threats based approach to biodiversity focuses on sustainable livelihoods to reduce pressure on habitats and prevent deforestation. However, it lacks a threat reduction assessment mechanism to understand and deliver the right kinds of threat reduction to the right place. By the same token, it is difficult to link the actions of the project to threats. As a result, biodiversity conservation is functionally a byproduct of sustainable livelihoods inputs, rather than a clear target.

Progress is being made towards climate adaptation through community forest management that contributes to resilience. However, overall, climate adaptation efforts are weak, because they lack the tools to assess risks and vulnerabilities at the community and national levels, and because the vulnerability and adaptation desktop study prepared by the Forest Service hasn't been put to use.

Through catalytic action by STEWARD Implementing Partners (IPs), fire management may be coming of age in West Africa, representing an important contribution to sustainable landscapes. Fire is a major driver of forest degradation in the Upper Guinea Forest ecosystem, but it is also an important tool for agriculture and its use is ubiquitous. STEWARD IP Bioclimate is developing a model for linking fire management and sustainable fire use to ecosystem services through an innovative performance-based approach with strong potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting biodiversity, and improving forest resilience.

Initially, STEWARD III sought to implement pilot payments for ecosystem services (PES) programs in two community forests. The Implementing Partner was not able to fully develop these projects due in large measure to cultural barriers to the financial transaction model. Important lessons were learned about the applicability of the approach in the regional context, which can be applied to other projects under development. The IP also introduced and successfully tested technological developments that can advance Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) readiness within the region if scaled up.

STEWARD has not yet initiated its water, sanitation and health activities.

STEWARD is building a constituency for some project objectives, notably sustainable livelihoods, wildfire management, and community forestry, especially where linked to water availability. At the community level, the Evaluation Team documented support for biodiversity and climate adaptation when linked to ecosystem services, particularly water supply. It is not possible yet to determine whether or not this support will last beyond the project itself in the form of a constituency for forest protection.

At the national level, the communications strategy is producing evidence of growing awareness. Measurement of behavioral change will take more time.

STEWARD pilot activities have had little influence to date on national policies; however, through its strong communications program STEWARD has raised awareness of the importance of forests to biodiversity, resilience in the face of climate change, and as tools for climate mitigation.

Training and technical assistance are being delivered differentially with a greater focus on livelihoods under the biodiversity component, forest governance under the adaptation component, and fire management under the mitigation component.

It is too early to tell how livelihood interventions are contributing to project goals; an impact evaluation would be the best way to assess how effective this approach is in improving biodiversity and resilience of critical habitats to climate change.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Program Successes to Date

STEWARD IPs have produced some noteworthy results. These include:

- Very strong uptake from communities for the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), which have galvanized women in the communities to set their own development agendas.
- Strong support for and sensitization to the issue of fire management, which will be an issue of growing concern if dry seasons become hotter and more protracted.
- Linking community forest management to perennial concerns about water supply reinforces support for forest conservation.
- Innovation in measurement of above ground biomass using affordable techniques that will help to streamline REDD+ project preparation and monitoring, reporting, and verification.
- Overcoming a decade-long impasse to produce a tripartite management agreement for the Nimba massif, opening the way for cooperation in the management of this high-value landscape.
- An effective and wide-reaching outreach program using radio to engage the wider public in a dialogue on STEWARD issues.

Other developments are underway, that, if realized, would contribute significantly to the STEWARD legacy. These include:

- The potential to leverage STEWARD project design work to support ICRAF's PRODEV project, a major PES activity now under development in PZI.
- The potential to develop a formal biodiversity offset arrangement with extractive industries operating in the Nimba region. This is being developed via FFI for the East Nimba Nature Reserve, and via Bioclimate

for a trust fund for PES in PZI. Given the inevitability of increased mining, direct engagement with industry is probably the best strategy available to protect biodiversity and the quality of life for communities in proximity to mining. This must be combined with improved government capacity to monitor and enforce regulations and with real opportunities for benefit-sharing by affected communities.

- A model for land tenure mapping developed by Thomson Reuters has potential to be scaled up (although that potential is unlikely to be realized during STEWARD III).

## **Constraints to Program Success**

### ***Design and Program Coherence***

STEWARD III is not configured to optimally manage a program involving multiple funding streams with specific, detailed criteria and reporting requirements. Specifically, adaptive management to the complex requirements of STEWARD's financing, especially in changing circumstances, involves a degree of coordination difficult to obtain with the present arrangement of several sub-agreements under the USFS-IP, functioning as independent cooperative agreements. Moreover, this distributed responsibility is difficult to manage for quality control and compliance, and it leaves programmatic gaps that the STEWARD secretariat must address in taking pilot activities to scale and in building national and regional capacity.

### ***Capacity Building***

Although the need to build capacity in local, national, and regional institutions is a recurrent theme throughout STEWARD documentation, STEWARD III has not undertaken a comprehensive mapping of institutions or a capacity needs assessment, and it has only made limited efforts to build capacity at national and regional levels. Although STEWARD III had a clear mandate to build regional capacity with and through the Mano River Union, this organization was not adequately engaged during the first two years of the project, resulting in strained relations.

### ***Adaptive Management***

Landscape level approaches such as STEWARD III require monitoring capabilities to inform adaptive management strategies. STEWARD has not effectively implemented this approach. For example, during the life of the project extensive logging operations in the Sierra Leone side of PZI have taken root. The logging, which is taking place in community forests, is intensive, unregulated, and almost certainly unsustainable. It undermines STEWARD investments in forest restoration and reforestation. The logging is a result of asymmetric changes in regulation. In Guinea, regulation of lumber is tight and demand is high, while in Sierra Leone regulation is weak and supply is abundant. This difference created a path of least resistance for forest exploitation, sometimes referred to as "leakage". STEWARD has not effectively pivoted to respond to this growing challenge. Nor has it been able to implement the national and regional capacity components of the project, including harmonization of national legislation.

### ***Gender Issues***

Important innovations are empowering women under STEWARD. There are significant capacity constraints due to the low levels of literacy among women in the program area, making them dependent upon men. Financial literacy is being introduced, which will help, but the imbalance requires a targeted focus on women's literacy. The project has had some significant impacts on women's livelihoods however through the Village Savings and Loan Associations and through market gardens. However, the linkages to project objectives including improvements in biodiversity and climate resilience have not yet been established.

# EVALUATION PURPOSE & QUESTIONS

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

This mid-term evaluation has three objectives:

- To review the progress made in achieving the STEWARD III objectives;
- To identify critical mid-course program changes necessary to ensure sustainability of the program; and
- To the extent possible within the constraints of time and budget, identify lessons for consideration in future programming.

Intended users include USAID/West Africa, USFS-IP as the implementing body, and the Implementing Partners of STEWARD. The Statement of Work is included as Annex I.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation is organized around five Study Questions proposed by USAID and modified in consultation with the USAID Regional Office for West Africa, the USFS-IP, and the Evaluation Team. Annex II shows the design matrix.

Agreed Evaluation questions are:

Evaluation Question 1: Are STEWARD program interventions achieving the planned goals and objectives?

Evaluation Question 2: Has STEWARD created a constituency that can support project goals and objectives sustainably?

Evaluation Question 3: How have pilot activities had the intended effect of influencing national policies, and by extension the regional policies of the MRU?

Evaluation Question 4: Are training and technical assistance being delivered as intended in the face of changing priorities and funding sources?

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent has STEWARD's livelihood interventions contributed to the achievement of the project goals?

During the data collection phase, the evaluation team conducted a transect of all STEWARD communities in PZ1 and PZ2 to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews, and take direct observations. Over a one-month period between June 16 and July 16, 2014, the Evaluation Team visited 36 communities in three countries – Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. The team held 13 focus group meetings and 26 formal key informant interviews, with stakeholders such as local and regional authorities, program staff, and community members. Due to the difficulties in mobility arising from the Ebola epidemic the evaluation team did not visit national capitals except for Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. While there, the team interviewed senior officials of Sierra Leone's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security, and met with the senior staff of the Mano River Union Secretariat.

A debrief of the preliminary findings of the evaluation was presented to stakeholders at a meeting convened at the Mano River Union headquarters in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The analysis phase was conducted through team meetings in Freetown between July 16 and 22, 2014. The reporting was conducted through an evaluation debrief given to the USAID West Africa Regional Mission in Accra on July 25, 2014.

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

STEWARD III is a forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods project working in trans-boundary priority zones in the Upper Guinean Forest ecosystem occurring in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast.

The Upper Guinea Tropical Forest ecosystem of West Africa is a high global priority for biodiversity conservation due to extreme habitat fragmentation and land degradation. It is important not only for biodiversity conservation but for the provisioning of ecosystem goods and services, including water resources, fisheries, timber, and non-timber forest products. These forests are important to the cultural values and the welfare of West African societies. They also have climate change mitigation value.

Originally, the Upper Guinean Tropical Forest ecosystem stretched across an estimated 1,265,000 km<sup>2</sup> from Guinea to Togo. Today, the forest cover has been reduced to approximately 141,000 km<sup>2</sup>, roughly 15% of its original coverage. Of the forest that remains, only an estimated 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land is protected. This dramatic change has reduced the Upper Guinean Tropical Forest to a series of fragments separated by rural farming concessions. An estimated 9,000 species of vascular plants still remain; of these, 2,250 (25%) are believed to be unique, or endemic, to the region.

To address biodiversity loss, promote resilient communities and mitigate climate change, USAID partnered with the US Forest Service's International Program to implement the STEWARD Program.

The original goals of STEWARD were:

- To build capacity for increased regional collaboration in biodiversity conservation, fisheries, forestry, sustainable agriculture and trade within national and regional institutions.
- To foster regional policy innovations and harmonization of national policies for improved ecosystem conservation and natural resource management.
- To pilot transboundary conservation and natural resource management activities at selected sites.

STEWARD is now in its third phase, and this Mid-Term Evaluation is restricted to that phase (STEWARD III).

Today, STEWARD III works with six partners implementing activities across two site-specific project areas, or Priority Zones (PZ), in three countries. These zones encompass 51 communities in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire. The project's primary goal is to enhance economic opportunity, peace-building and well-being through the sustainable management of forest landscapes in targeted priority zones. Its development objective is "Resilience of biodiverse ecosystems and human communities in target areas is maintained and strengthened". The project proposed to accomplish this through three main objectives: 1) conserve biodiversity and improve rural livelihoods in critical trans-boundary landscapes in the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem; 2) produce harmonized policies and legal frameworks for natural resource management (NRM) in a regional context; and 3) contribute to sub-regional and national strategic plans on climate change in the Mano River Union (MRU) states.

STEWARD's partner organizations include CARE-Sierra Leone, Bioclimate Research and Development, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), *Acteurs Unis pour le Développement Rural* (AUDER), Thomson Reuters and PCI Media Impact. These organizations either have cross-cutting specializations and responsibilities, or site-specific activities in the PZs.

The geographic area of STEWARD (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire) presents a challenging working environment in the best of circumstances. All four countries have a recent history of civil strife. They are at or near the lowest rungs of the development ladder whether measured in terms of life expectancy, income, or education. The capacity of STEWARD states to respond to emerging challenges is very limited. The World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators for 2012, the most recent year, rank all four countries in the lowest quartile of all nations in the areas of government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (World Bank, 2013). During this Mid-Term Evaluation, the world's worst Ebola epidemic to date began to rage within three of the four countries, paralyzing the health infrastructure and economy.

In a note provided to the evaluation team by USAID from the preliminary stages of STEWARD planning (USAID 2007b), a regional vision for West Africa in five years included elements of eventual STEWARD goals, e.g., uniformity in commercial forestry standards, stronger national forestry institutions, on the ground conservation at priority sites, a network of protected areas, and adoption of the three pronged approach of the Liberia Forest Initiative (commercial, conservation, and community forestry). Clarified tenure systems using USAID best practices, corporate social responsibility in extractive industries, and transparency in payments and benefits to local stakeholders and governments were also sought.

## **HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF STEWARD**

### **STEWARD I**

Also, known as the Design Phase (2007-2009), STEWARD I was headquartered in Conakry. In October 2007, USAID/EGAT and USFS-IP entered into an agreement to implement STEWARD based on a concept note from Scott Bode of USAID/EGAT, proposing transboundary conservation efforts to address the degradation of remaining areas of the biologically important Upper Guinea Forest Belt (cited in Saxen et al, 2008). This proposal drew upon, among other things, recommendations of a 1999 Conservation International Assessment (CEPF 2000). USAID gave responsibility for implementation to USFS-IP, which had successfully provided technical assistance to USAID. The implementation of STEWARD represented an evolution in the USFS-IP/USAID relationship from a source of expertise to a manager of projects.

An Environmental Assessment and Strategy study was commissioned to prioritize interventions (Saxen et al, 2008). This study recommended that STEWARD work to build a shared vision among key stakeholders in the region that would result in increased productivity through better management to restore forests and degraded agricultural lands, incorporation of alternative land uses in dry and poor soil areas, including agroforestry, game ranching, and wildlife management; integration of ecosystem services; livelihood development through value chains for natural products, and reduced vulnerability through restoration and management.

The assessment recommended that STEWARD's 15-year strategy focus on knowledge management and sharing of lessons and best practices, an adaptive management approach, the integration of biodiversity into natural resources management systems, and capacity building (Saxen et al, 2008, p 43).

STEWARD I's Chief of Party, based in Conakry, served as an advisor to Guinea's forestry department (DNEF) in a cost-share arrangement with USAID/Guinea. STEWARD I identified priority zones (PZs) in the Upper Guinean Forest. Subgrants were issued to the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, the Royal Society for Protection of Birds, the Jane Goodall Institute, and the Nature Conservation Research Center, to form networks of stakeholders and working groups to promote a regional approach to biodiversity conservation. The Jane Goodall Institute subsequently declined their award, and it was taken up by CIFOR/ICRAF.

The Design Phase developed the focus of the STEWARD program, identified pilot sites, and conducted an analysis of the natural resource management issues and existing programs in the region.

### **STEWARD II**

Pilot Phase (2009-2011). The objectives of STEWARD II were to address regional threats to biodiversity and capitalize on opportunities to support peace building, biodiversity conservation, knowledge dissemination and policy harmonization. It was initially to cover Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Ghana. Originally based in Conakry, the project headquarters was relocated to Freetown in late 2009, after curtailment of USAID operations in Guinea due to a temporarily ordered departure of US Embassy personnel in response to the 2008 coup d'état following the death of President Lansana Conté (CRS, 2011). Transboundary work in Guinea was allowed to proceed from neighboring countries.

During the pilot phase, STEWARD identified five transboundary Priority Zones (PZs) in which to take projects to scale, at the Sierra Leone/Guinea border, the Sierra Leone/Liberia border, the Guinea/Liberia border, the Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia border, and the Guinea/ Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia border. In 2010, the PZs were reduced to three priority zones:

PZ-I Sierra Leone/Guinea (Tambakha Chiefdom Sierra Leone, Madina Oula, Soya and Ouré Kaba sub-prefectures, Guinea)

PZ-2 Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (Mount Nimba region)

PZ-3 Taï National Park (Côte d'Ivoire)/Sapo National Park (Liberia)

STEWARD II incorporated key elements from the USAID/West Africa-funded LAMIL project, which recommended enhanced productivity of smallholder agriculture (as a means of decreasing forest threats), improved natural resources management and biodiversity monitoring, better governance, and stronger institutions - including strengthening the capacity of communities in and around transboundary areas in agriculture, forestry, and forest resources management.

Reported results of STEWARD II included:

- Regional needs assessment of transboundary policy harmonization with the MRU Transboundary Natural Resource Management technical team;
- Training and capacity building in forest management;
- Communications products; and
- Development of a community-based carbon monitoring method.

### **STEWARD III**

The USAID/EGAT performance review of the STEWARD II program (June 2010) stressed the importance of trust with pilot communities and the risk that STEWARD's gains could be derailed through the disruption or delay of ongoing activities. It encouraged continuing the project through an Implementation Phase (2011-2015), termed STEWARD III. USAID's bilateral programs in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the West Africa regional Mission provided additional program buy-in. The STEWARD III Secretariat is based in Freetown. The goals of STEWARD III are to:

- Conserve biodiversity and improve rural livelihoods in critical transboundary landscapes in the Upper Guinean Forest ecosystem;
- Produce harmonized policies and legal frameworks for NRM in a regional context; and
- Contribute to national strategic plans on climate change in the Mano River Union states and promote resiliency in the face of climate change.

STEWARD III added additional activities to those of STEWARD II. In addition to biodiversity conservation in transboundary priority zones, STEWARD III was to improve the resilience of local communities in adapting to climate change, and improved livelihoods, food security, and market linkages. STEWARD III is also to improve regional and national frameworks for REDD+ and build REDD+ readiness, and increase sustainable access to safe water and sanitation and improved hygiene. These Implementation Phase objectives were subsequently simplified to four Intermediate Results (IRs):

1. Biodiversity ecosystems conserved in target areas;
2. Resilience to projected adverse effects of climate change improved;
3. Greenhouse emissions reduced in target areas; and
4. Access to adequate supplies of clean water improved in target areas.

Livelihoods, food security, and market linkages were integrated into IR 1.

Priority zones for STEWARD III were further refined to:

PZ-1 Sierra Leone/Guinea (Tambakha Chiefdom Sierra Leone, Madina-Oula, Soya and Ouré Kaba sub-prefectures, Guinea)

PZ-2 Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (Mount Nimba complex)

PZ-3 Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire (Grebo National Forest and Taï National Park). Activity was terminated by mutual agreement between USAID and USFS-IP due to instability at the Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire frontier. An alternative PZ was considered in the Zياما-Wologesi area on the border between Liberia and Guinea, but this did not move forward.

The STEWARD III project design directed by USAID stipulated that outside of core project management responsibilities, project activities would be implemented under the STEWARD Strategic Activities Fund (SAF). This is germane to the evaluation because it is a major factor shaping the project design and subsequent implementation<sup>1</sup>.

The intent was to maximize resources available to West African partners by providing funds for direct interventions. This could be through short-term contracts, grants, cost-sharing arrangements, and purchase orders. A strategic planning session would develop the overarching structure to ensure collaboration and synergies, build on activities underway in the region, and leverage results to maximize the impacts of STEWARD. This framework was to address crosscutting issues such as conflict mitigation, governance, and gender. Guided by this framework, stakeholder workshops were held in Freetown, Conakry, Monrovia, and Accra to identify partners and promote understanding of STEWARD objectives, outline the mechanisms used by the SAF, and develop a communications strategy.

The request for applications was designed to attract innovative, results-oriented approaches. The solicitation was issued on Sept 7, 2011, through a special notice issued on FBO.gov and Grants.gov. Awards were made in April 2012 to CARE, AUDER, Bioclimate, Fauna and Flora International, Thomson Reuters, and PCI Media Impact as Implementing Partners. Table 2 (Page 32) illustrates the matrix of Implementing Partners, Intermediate Results, and Priority Zones. Please note the gaps where program delivery is not covered by IPs. The only proposal by a regional entity to be accepted was that of AUDER.

## **IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES TO DATE**

STEWARD III has suffered a series of management setbacks. The first STEWARD III Chief of Party (later called Director), technically an employee of USFS-IP contractor Management and Engineering Technologies International, Inc. (METI), was removed for performance reasons after four months. From September 2011 until August 2012, Washington-based USFS-IP personnel oversaw the program (Otis, 2013). The interim leadership did not have senior project management experience. A succession of senior staff came and went subsequently, sometimes of their own volition. Significant fraud was discovered in early 2013, resulting in the loss of approximately \$700,000 from STEWARD bank accounts. Although the Forest Service restored lost funds, this was a setback for STEWARD implementation, resulting in the suspension of some activities. It was not possible under given terms of reference for this MTE to determine the extent to which program changes can be directly linked to the fraud. Some IPs indicate that some workplan elements were altered or cancelled due to short term impacts, but this is poorly documented, and it appears that there is ongoing confusion on the part of some project participants regarding causal linkages between some management decisions and the fraud case, foreshadowing a pattern of leadership at STEWARD.

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<sup>1</sup> The decision to use a Strategic Activities Fund to support multiple Implementing Partners through separate cooperative agreements was stipulated by USAID/WA (pers com, M Edwardsen, Ex-USFS-IP Africa Director).

# EVALUATION METHODS & LIMITATIONS

This evaluation was conducted through a combination of desktop review and participative diagnostic process involving key informant interviews and site visits. It is heavily focused on program delivery at the community level. The structuring phase took place June 16-17 at the USAID Regional Mission for West Africa in Accra, where the Team Leader and Technical Advisor met with the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative (TOCOR), Mr. Nicodeme Tchamou, and other key USAID personnel including Jody Stallings, Regional Environmental Advisor (REA) and Collins Osae, Mission Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to refine the methodology.

The evaluation is organized around five Study Questions proposed by USAID and modified in consultation among the USAID Regional Office for West Africa, the USFS-IP, and the Evaluation Team. Table I shows the design matrix.

Agreed evaluation questions are:

Evaluation Question 1: Are STEWARD program interventions achieving the planned goal and objectives?

Evaluation Question 2: Has STEWARD created a constituency that can support project goals and objectives sustainably?

Evaluation Question 3: How have pilot activities had the intended effect of influencing national policies, and by extension the regional policies of the MRU?

Evaluation Question 4: Are training and technical assistance being delivered as intended in the face of changing priorities and funding sources?

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent has STEWARD's livelihood interventions contributed to the achievement of the project goals?

During the data collection phase, the evaluation team conducted a transect of all STEWARD communities in PZ1 and PZ2 to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews, and take direct observations. Over a one-month period between June 16 and July 16, 2014, the Evaluation Team visited 36 communities in three countries – Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. 13 focus group meetings were held, and 26 formal key informant interviews, covering local and regional authorities, program staff, and community members were conducted. Due to the difficulties in mobility arising from the Ebola epidemic the evaluation team did not visit national capitals except for Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. Senior officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security were interviewed, and the team met with the senior staff of the Mano River Union Secretariat.

A debrief of the preliminary findings of the evaluation was presented at a meeting convened at the Mano River Union headquarters in Freetown, Sierra Leone (the participants are listed in Annex 4). The analysis was conducted through team meetings in Freetown between July 16 and 22, 2014. The reporting was conducted through a debrief to the USAID West Africa Regional Mission in Accra on July 25, 2014.

# FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## FINDINGS

This section is structured to follow the five study questions. The first of these addresses the Intermediate Results. Under STEWARD III, potential partners were invited to submit concept notes detailing how they would contribute to the IRs. STEWARD implementation therefore involves a matrix of Implementing Partners, Intermediate Results, and Priority Zones. Not all activities are being implemented uniformly in all priority zones. Annex V provides a detailed account of the progress in achieving the project Intermediate Results across Priority Zones. This section provides narrative on major developments and other relevant observations on progress in project implementation.

Major geographic coverage is provided by CARE (PZ1) and AUDER (PZ2). Other IPs have a more specific technical focus but are co-located within the PZs.

### **Are STEWARD program interventions achieving the planned goal and objectives? (Evaluation Question 1)**

The structure of the program as a series of competed sub-awards issued as cooperative agreements by the USFS-IP has produced gaps in coverage of the IRs. Therefore, not all the planned goals and objectives will be met in the project. In many cases, the work plan elements to implement sub-IRs are limited to only a few communities (e.g., community biodiversity monitoring, land tenure mapping under IR1), or are limited to a single priority zone (e.g., fire management in PZ1). Most of the greenhouse gas mitigation work is focused on two communities in PZ1, expanded to four this year). The third phase of STEWARD was designed to take to scale the approaches developed in prior phases, but as observed, in some areas it is actually implementing a series of pilots. In other cases, approaches are being scaled up through the expansion of the number of communities participating in an activity. Where scaling is occurring, it is primarily in activities addressing livelihoods. Generally, livelihood activities have not been strongly connected to the core objectives of the project. There is no evidence of scaling up of STEWARD interventions beyond the PZs, with the exception of the Village Savings and Loan Associations.

#### ***IR1. Biodiverse ecosystems are conserved in target areas.***

***The threats based approach being used by STEWARD is designed to take pressure off forests and promote restoration, but there is no mechanism to understand and deliver the right kinds of threat reduction to the right place. As a result, biodiversity is at risk of becoming a byproduct of sustainable livelihoods, rather than a clear objective.***

A key project assumption is that strengthening livelihoods will reduce pressure on forest fragments. The conservation of biodiversity in fragmented forests is dependent on the size of the fragment and connectedness of the forest blocks. In order to have an effective strategy, it is important to determine the amount of habitat necessary for species of concern, and to prioritize sites for conservation and sites for restoration.

STEWARD's approach treats all remaining forest fragments as important and seeks to protect them through improved forest governance and livelihood alternatives that reduce pressure on land for agriculture.

Biodiversity is for the most part addressed indirectly, as a byproduct of a diverse range of activities focusing on livelihoods and community forest management. The Evaluation Team found evidence of improved land use practices that can reduce pressure to forests. This included lowland rice/aquaculture systems, market gardens, and honey production. The Team also observed improved sensitization to fire and forest loss, informed by linkages between natural forest and water supply. It did not find evidence that these interventions necessarily lead to

improvements in biodiversity. The evaluation team identified a consistent pattern of reporting that as some community members take up more sustainable practices, others step in to occupy their vacated niche, so forest exploitation continues unabated.

The Evaluation Team was not able to find evidence that the project controls for leakage or rebound. Rebound effects from improved land use could include in-migration by new resource users, or expansion of level of effort by existing resource users to take advantage of the increased opportunities.

Another example of rebound is the common use of community forests small livestock grazing, noted by the Evaluation Team as a management practice inconsistent with forest restoration objectives and common in both PZs.

STEWARD III's approach to threat abatement does not systematically monitor against clearly identified threats in such a way that a reduction in threats to biodiversity can be clearly linked to project activities, as required by the Biodiversity Code. To do so would require a better understanding of ecosystem processes than is available.

However, at the local level, some communities in PZ I claim to see results after two years of work in terms of forest landscape restoration and forest protection through community forestry or forest co-management. Most commonly cited are improvements in water availability (discussed below under IR2) and more abundant wildlife. Human-wildlife interactions are a perennial concern for communities in the project area. Historically, crop predation by primates, rodents, and elephants has been a major problem.

The evaluation team looked for, and did not find, any evidence that the Implementing Partners understood and were prepared to address the potential rebound effects with potential to negate the biodiversity investments (discussed further in Question 5 below).

In PZ I, CARE is subcontracting to Cornell University to evaluate the potential for innovative alternatives to traditional slash and burn agriculture that use only the inputs presently available to the farmers (which do not include inorganic fertilizers, for the most part). Cornell scientists are testing biochar, a form of charcoal used as a soil amendment. Produced through low temperature pyrolysis of biomass, biochar is very stable, and has the additional quality of sequestering carbon in soils. The Cornell team hypothesizes that biochar is an efficient way for farmers to cycle high carbon-to-nitrogen ratio biomass, thus improving soil fertility and increasing soil pH for certain crops. In traditional practice, this occurs when the fallow vegetation is burned to produce ash, and again when the field is left fallow. It is unlikely that the results of assessment can be, if appropriate, taken to scale during the time remaining in the project. The evaluation team expressed some skepticism about the overall approach, and there was no one on site that could adequately explain it. Further information was obtained from the Cornell scientists to help the Evaluation Team to put this in perspective.

Progress in transboundary capacities for biodiversity conservation in general under STEWARD has not advanced due to the lack of engagement with the Mano River Union. Important progress has however been made working with the range states of the Nimba massif, resulting in the tripartite management agreement.

Significant work has been undertaken to improve the livelihoods of communities in both priority zones, in order to reduce pressure on forests and biodiversity. This is addressed in Study Question 5.

At the national and regional level, STEWARD has produced some detailed land use/land cover maps that help to provide a better understanding of the drivers and processes of forest habitat loss and the options for creating connectivity in the landscape. This is a necessary step in addressing the overall project goal of sustainable management of forest landscapes. However, the respective IPs are conducting their work in relative isolation.

#### *STEWARD III's Biodiversity Baseline*

Several separate and unrelated baseline data collection efforts were identified. These are not harmonized, nor are they centrally aggregated. Information had to be obtained from the separate implementers. Moreover, data collection is incomplete, and the program is approaching its conclusion. This poses significant limitations for future impact evaluations.

The major biodiversity monitoring effort is led by the Forest Service Monitoring and Evaluation Team (FS MET), formed in June 2012. The team includes three senior scientists from US Forest Service Research and Development. The team agreed to monitor and evaluate three USAID standard indicators:

- Standard Indicator 4.8.1-1: Number of hectares in areas of biological significance and/or natural resources showing improved biophysical conditions as a result of U.S. Government assistance;
- Standard Indicator 4.8.1-26: Number of ha of biological significance and/or natural resources under improved natural resource management as a result of USG assistance;
- Standard Indicator 4.8.1-6: Number of people with increased economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and conservation.

The original plan of FS MET was to produce a scientifically defensible assessment of the effectiveness of STEWARD interventions to maintain and increase biodiversity around communities and within protected areas. In addition, they planned to integrate social and ecological data by focusing on change within a 5-km radius of target communities.

The plan could not be implemented due to a lack of funds, but the exact nature of this issue is unclear. According to one of the team members, the original budget was reduced. However, the FS/IP indicates that the expectations of available funding were unrealistic and that there was no actual reduction in budget.

As a result, FS MET adopted an alternative approach that relies to a greater extent upon satellite data, augmented by limited ground surveys. According to FS-MET Research Ecologist Dr. John Stanturf, at the end of Phase III they will produce:

- A time series of land cover change around four target communities and their nearby protected areas (two each in Guinea and Sierra Leone);
- A baseline biodiversity characterization of ten community forests in PZ1; and
- An analysis of landscape diversity in PZ1 including the protected zones.

If funding can be maintained at the current level, FS MET expects to have a similar time series of land cover change around four target communities and their nearby protected areas in PZ2 and possibly baseline biodiversity of eight to ten selected community forests in PZ2. Less certain is whether we will have a land cover map of PZ2 from USGS to conduct the landscape diversity analysis of PZ2.

FS MET will not be able to provide an end of project evaluation of indicator 4.8.1-1, beyond what has already been described, because the elapsed time will be insufficient to detect change. Moreover, the funds available are insufficient to conduct the required fieldwork. While it is accepted that there may be lag times in change, the project fully expected to demonstrate results and will not be able to accomplish this in the absence of monitoring data on this key indicator.

Under a separate USAID West Africa project, a PZ1 land cover map at a scale of 1:100,000 is under development by the US Geological Survey from ASTER satellite data. This product is nearly a year behind schedule, and FS-MET is waiting to analyze the geospatial data using landscape ecological methods, once they have the completed data files. As a work-around, STEWARD contracted for a detailed land cover/land use interpretation of selected areas in PZ1 with Alan Mills, a remote sensing/GIS expert who was initially part of the Thomson Reuters team implementing STEWARD III. This work focused on the four target communities (two each in Guinea and Sierra Leone) where Susan Charnley and Sophia Polasky are conducting detailed socioeconomic monitoring. Mills, in cooperation with USGS, analyzed four dates of medium resolution satellite imagery (1:50,000) to develop a time series (1965, 2007, and 2013) of land cover change imagery around these four communities and within the nearest protected areas. A series of land cover maps were created for 5-km radii around the four communities, and 5x5-km areas of four nearby protected areas in Guinea and Sierra Leone. The FS-MET will conduct further analysis of these data in conjunction with the social scientists to document gross impacts on biodiversity through deforestation and land use change (personal communication, Dr. John Stanturf, June 2014).

Other baseline data collection efforts have been undertaken by IPs that are relevant to IR1.

Bioclimate has produced an above-ground biomass change map covering selected sites in PZ1 between 2007 and 2010, through remote sensing using side aperture radar from Japan's ALOS satellite; additional information is described under IR 3 below.

Thomson Reuters is compiling GIS data and has the capacity in place to produce maps for national and regional biodiversity analysis and planning. Engagement with and through MRU was stalled until recent change in leadership

due to inaction on the part of STEWARD. The establishment of national GIS nodes, and training in GIS at MRU has commenced, and plans are in place to transfer the GIS functions to MRU.

FFI has produced a basic conservation atlas for the Nimba region that has some utility for planning.

Managing long-term risks of collaborative data partnerships is consistent with harmonization; one way of doing that is to adopt open geospatial data standards. Use of open source metadata services and standards avoids the risk of data in a proprietary format becoming a constraint. Presidential Executive Order 12906 requires the standardized documentation of data (metadata) using the Federal Geographic Data Committee standard.

- Bioclimate has produced a scoping study for Plan Vivo Community PES certification based upon data it has collected and a literature review. This addresses social and environmental conditions, and is largely anecdotal. A more detailed and quantified socioeconomic analysis was also undertaken for two PES pilot sites. Bioclimate has also produced an above-ground biomass change map covering selected sites in PZI between 2007 and 2010 (described under IR 3);
- CARE conducted a baseline socioeconomic survey in PZI and produced a summary report;
- PCI Media Impact conducted its own socio-economic survey and has produced a report and
- Thomson Reuters has undertaken two of three planned land tenure mapping exercises.

## ***IR 2. Climate Change Adaptation: resilience to projected adverse effects of climate change improved.***

***Some progress in community forest management may contribute to community resilience and constitute adaptation, but this is a matter of conjecture without a systematic assessment of climate vulnerability.***

Elements to be addressed under IR2 include increased community level knowledge of climate change and adaptation strategies, and increased national level knowledge of adaptation and capacity to adapt. In STEWARD, most adaptation action is concentrated on scaling up livelihood initiatives, scaling up community forestry, and controlling wildlife.

Communities reported to the evaluation team that they observed changes that they directly attributed to forest protection and forest landscape restoration. In particular, they attributed improvements in dry season water availability at water sources. These observations can't be independently verified, and direct attribution of causality should be viewed with some skepticism, given that none of the IPs is collecting basic meteorological data. The correlation by community members between forest cover and ecosystem services such as water supply nevertheless helps to reinforce the formal community forest management approaches introduced by STEWARD.

USAID's guidance on climate adaptation in place during STEWARD III design takes a project level approach, whereby the development priorities are established, and vulnerability is assessed using a six-step process (USAID 2007):

1. Screen for vulnerability. The 2013 STEWARD Vulnerability and Adaptation Desktop Study is a first step in screening for vulnerability in the project Priority Zones. It is not tightly linked to development priorities but does provide a basis for initial scoping. However, the evaluation team could not find evidence that the study was used by the IPs operating in the field. There was no evidence also, that it has been made available to governments within the region. Likewise there's no evidence that it has been used with or by the MRU.
2. Identify adaptation options. Adaptation options were proposed by the IPs in response to the request for application to STEWARD III. This is not an adequate substitute for a systematic effort to identify adaptation options for the development priorities of STEWARD.
3. Conduct Analysis. Some analysis has been undertaken of capacity and training requirements. No evidence was found of explicit detailed analysis of climate vulnerability consistent with USAID guidance has been undertaken at local, national, or regional scales beyond the desktop study. Some analytical work undertaken on wildfire management options does contribute to analysis of options for climate change.
4. Select Course of Action. Explicit vulnerability screening and analysis is the next step in implementing an adaptation strategy. STEWARD III work plans were not based upon explicit vulnerability screening and analysis. They focus on best management practices to improve land use planning, reduce deforestation,

improve natural resources management, promote restoration, and improve rural livelihoods. They do not take climate risk into account in a systematic way that would inform management strategies, species used in re-afforestation, etc. Policy briefs on climate change issues in PZ2 have not been produced. A policy brief on REDD+ strategies included as an output on IR2 appears to be misplaced from IR3.

5. Implement Adaptations. Very limited activity has been undertaken to date on national level knowledge and capacity for any country. There is no evidence of awareness and use of the V&A desktop study and key informants were not familiar with it. STEWARD reporting cites training in fire management committee, PES, VSLAs, beekeeping, and agroforestry as contributing to climate adaptation capacity building as contributing to climate resilience. It also cites policy briefs on REDD+, Green Economy, and Natural Resources Management. All of these activities may contribute in general terms to climate adaptation, but they do not reflect a coherent strategy based upon an analysis of vulnerability and clear indicators of resilience.
6. Evaluate the Adaptations. It does not appear that this is being done. Analysis of climate impacts specific to communities is not in evidence, and basic data such as precipitation is not being recorded by the IPs.

Progress was indicated in STEWARD reporting under IR2 in building community capacity to implement management practices to reduce deforestation and improve natural resources management, which are contributory to climate adaptation. This was primarily in fire management training and reforestation. Some form of co-management is going on in virtually all community forests including those without management plans. See Annex 8 for a list of ongoing activities in community forests. As noted above, without a systematic approach to vulnerability screening and analysis, these may contribute to IR3 but are not solid contributions to IR2.

### **IR 3. Climate Change Mitigation: Greenhouse gas emissions reduced in target ecosystems**

***Fire management may be coming of age in West Africa through catalytic action by STEWARD. Important lessons have been learned in payments for ecosystem services approaches that can expedite the development of future REDD+ planning. Technological developments by STEWARD IPs will advance REDD+ readiness.***

Bioclimate is responsible for the bulk of STEWARD's work under this IR, through the payment for ecosystem services scheme, which was initially in two communities. Much of the work done has therefore been very much a pilot activity. Other projects play a larger role in taking REDD+ readiness to scale in Sierra Leone, notably a European Union funded (5 million euro) national REDD+ capacity building project. Bioclimate has focused on harmonization with the EU program. Progress in climate change mitigation capacity building has not yet occurred with and through the MRU as planned.

Bioclimate had initially proposed a **Payments-for- Ecosystem-Service** (PES) activity in PZI. A PES approach involves cash transfers between a buyer and a producer of ecosystem services, in this case, forest carbon. Bioclimate's PES project was to take place in two communities with community forests. Significant design work was undertaken including a socioeconomic evaluation, an assessment of land tenure, participatory design of community forest management plans, and an assessment of ecosystem services. In the course of the design process Bioclimate identified a number of constraints to a PES approach involving cash payments, including unrealistic expectations on the part of the communities and lack of experience in handling this type of transaction, leading to the potential for conflicts within and between communities. In addition, there was a lack of a clear buyer of ecosystem services; the voluntary carbon market has declined precipitously in recent years. Bioclimate recalibrated its approach based upon the findings of the design work and is now developing a **Performance-based Support for Ecosystem Services (PBS) approach**. This links the production of ecosystem services in community forests to in-kind support to the Forest Management Committees through Bioclimate. The PBS scheme is a poor substitute for PES due to the required intermediation, which potentially retards growth in capacity on the part of the FMCs. It is however the only realistic option available for STEWARD in the near term. Bioclimate reports that they are negotiating with extractive industries operating in and near PZI with a view to obtaining contributions to a trust fund to be used for PBS payments. This may be an important breakthrough should it occur, but it is only peripherally linked to STEWARD.

Bioclimate is also engaged in forest carbon mitigation through negotiation of a proposed link with a larger forest carbon project being developed by ICRAF (PRODEV). This project, which will extend beyond the life of STEWARD III, has a better chance of achieving the critical mass needed to attract donors/investors.

While payment for ecosystem services has not gained significant headway, some **REDD+ readiness activities** have advanced. Of particular note is the work done by Bioclimate to test and implement a relatively new and innovative low-cost technique for above-ground biomass measurement, using a satellite-based side-aperture radar instrument called PALSAR on Japan's Advanced Land Observing Satellite (ALOS). Results of experiments with ALOS/PALSAR elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa have been published in peer-reviewed publications. The use of data from side-aperture radar may provide a significant cost advantage over other data collection methods used to prepare baselines and measure change in biomass required of forest carbon mitigation projects. This has some distinct scaling opportunities. The innovative remote sensing approach being implemented by Bioclimate will represent an important STEWARD contribution to long-term forest carbon mitigation through more cost effective and practical monitoring and reporting.

**Fire management** was observed to be the second most dominant activity in PZ1 and PZ2, after VSLAs. Customary burning for clearance of underbrush and burning for agricultural clearances have eroded the boundaries of forest blocks and promoted drying and conversion to savannah. Communities have initiated a dialogue about reconciling the contradictory objectives of land clearance and watershed protection and the restoration and conservation of community forests.

88% of respondents in PZ1 indicated receiving training for the management of fire, and that they had received material support from STEWARD to fight fires in their community. In addition, they had also developed bylaws at the community level to levy fines on those who start fires as well as those who fail to contribute to the fighting of fires in their community.

In some communities, fire management was observed to be well integrated with community forest and co-forest management responsibilities, while other communities without community forests or co-management arrangements with public forests did not benefit from fire management training. Several communities that were promised fire management materials by CARE claim that they have never received the materials.

Focus group discussions revealed that communities that do not receive support for fire management are concerned about being passed over and are motivated to be involved.

As noted elsewhere, pastoralists and farmers have differing, and potentially conflicting, approaches to some natural resource management issues, and especially that of fire. Communities working to control fire and protect community forests may also build up a substantial store of biomass – a positive development on paper for a forest carbon mitigation activity. An increase in biomass can also represent risk of catastrophic fire. Pastoralists tend in this region to burn to keep the savannah open and to promote the growth of grass for grazing. Without a shared strategy to manage fire, forest carbon mitigation and other ecosystem benefits are at risk. Further, the communities are at risk of conflict over differing management strategies. It is interesting to reflect that the US Forest Service, a pioneer and global leader in wild land fire management, does not have an active role in the fire management and forest carbon activity of STEWARD.

**Agroforestry** efforts led by AUDER in PZ2 are also contributing to climate mitigation. 70 hectares have been planted, which is an important start, but would have to be scaled up significantly to have a major impact.

#### ***IR 4. Water – access to adequate supplies of clean water improved in target areas.***

This activity is still in the planning phase. The Capital City Forum format developed as an information exchange and discussion mechanism by PCI Media Impact may be adaptable for high-level discussions with decision-makers to sensitize them to the links between forests, ecosystem services, health and climate resilience. Plans are under development for a hydrological study. The desktop V&A study is available, but the downscaled climate projections for target areas are not available,

## **Has STEWARD created a constituency that can support project goals and objectives sustainably? (Evaluation Question 2)**

### *Coverage and Consistency with the Project Goals and Objectives*

Major geographic coverage is provided by CARE (PZ1) and AUDER (PZ2). Other IPs have a more specific technical focus but are co-located within the PZs.

Compatibility of the IPs' missions with STEWARD is variable. CARE and AUDER have a rural development focus and lack conservation capacity. PCI Media, Bioclimate and Thomson Reuters are well matched for their specific niches, as is FFI. CARE, FFI, AUDER, and Bioclimate have interests in the region that precede STEWARD and reflect commitment to development within the PZs, if not the specific STEWARD goals. STEWARD's interests and contributions may be secondary to the interests of the IPs; this was observed by the Evaluation Team in terms of branding.

FFI is not well integrated into STEWARD management, and has a separate agenda involving other donors for work in the same area. Its regional presence in Monrovia is not involved in STEWARD implementation activities. The other partners have staff working on STEWARD activities embedded in STEWARD headquarters (PCI Media Impact, Thomson Reuters) or in the PZs (Bioclimate, CARE, AUDER).

None of the IPs have the capacity to lead the national level capacity building and policy harmonization work required under the work plan. This has resulted in significant gaps in coverage that the STEWARD III Secretariat has not to date been able to address. Annex V provides a table showing where activities have taken place and by whom. STEWARD has not yet created the constituency at the national and regional level that will advance project goals, although significant attention is being focused on this by the new Director (Deputy Director of STEWARD since March 24, 2014, elevated to Director on June 15 2014), now evacuated to Ghana due to the emergency stemming from the Ebola epidemic.

In principle the IPs are adequate to address the scope and scale of the project. However, their approved proposals to the Strategic Action Fund do not completely address the full range of project goals, and it is difficult to see how STEWARD can achieve all IRs on the basis of the IP arrangements.

### *Cultural Relevance*

The understanding of the cultural underpinnings of natural resources in the PZs is uneven. There is an ongoing challenge in communications in this bilingual program. Even simple misunderstandings have the potential to lead to the failure of operations. In PZ2 for example, the Coordinator of AUDER did not understand the English of the outgoing STEWARD M&E officer requesting his participation in a debriefing meeting for the departing MTE team the following morning. As a result, the meeting did not take place.

As a local NGO, AUDER is well positioned to understand the cultural underpinnings. CARE and Bioclimate also benefit by relying heavily on local staff. However both CARE and Bioclimate have selected communities for specific treatment (e.g., PES, fire management, VSLA) without taking sufficient account of the ways in which selective treatment could polarize communities, create jealousy and the elevate the potential for conflict. We observed on numerous occasions frustration expressed by communities that they did not have equal access to project benefits. This is a risk when prototyping approaches in different locations with the intention of growing activities to scale. This issue was not observed in PZ2.

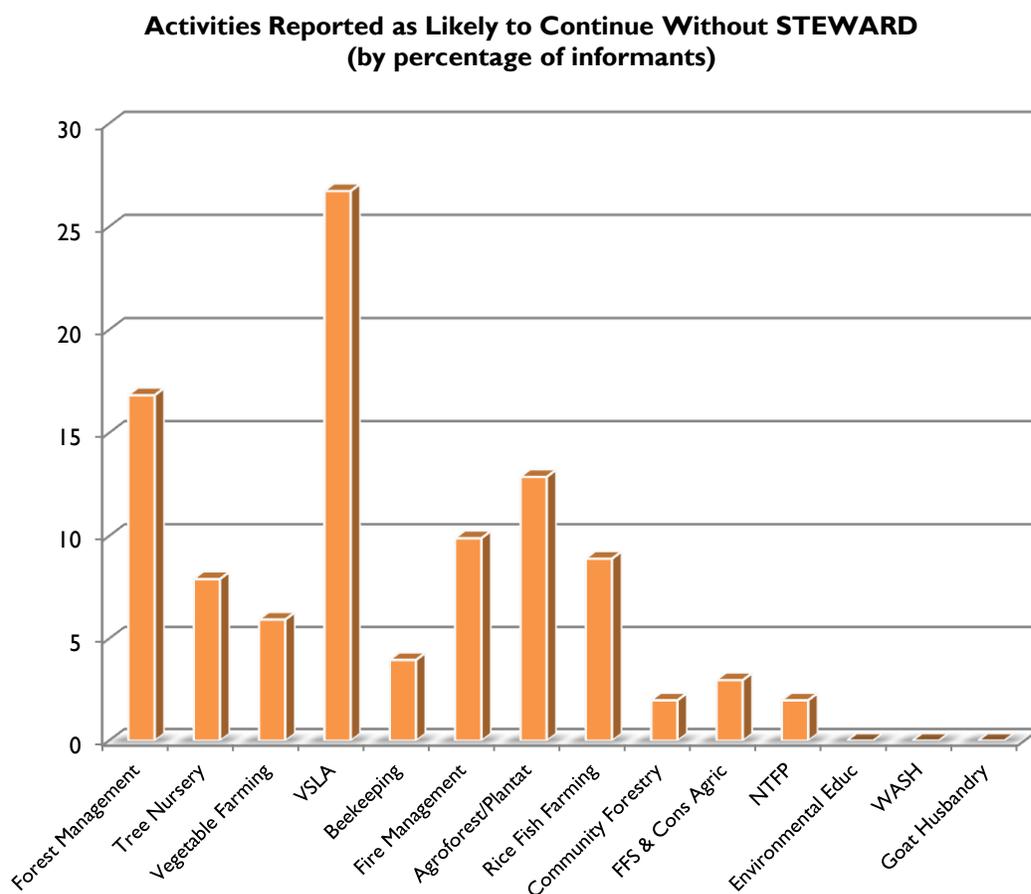
Fire management was observed to be the second most dominant activity in PZ1 and PZ2 and shows promise of sustainability. While target communities generally support and appreciate this activity, conflict between community members and migratory pastoralists was reported in some communities. The reason given was that the herdsmen need to burn the vegetation (grass) to provide food for their animals, while the sedentary community members support fire prevention for forest protection (and may be building up biomass due to fire suppression). The IP management on the ground do not seem to be aware of the competing interests and potential for conflict of pastoralists and farmers concerning fire use. Unless and until this is resolved, effective fire management may be difficult to achieve.

### Communication and Influence

The project has provided positive reinforcement through behavior change communications efforts led by PCI Media Impact. Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents indicated that their activities have been influenced by STEWARD's radio and drama activities. Discussions of the following activities were frequently aired on the radio:

- How plantations contribute to biodiversity conservation
- Forest and fire management
- Eco-stoves and forest conservation
- Woman and child beating and not sending children to school
- Environmental education on chimpanzees and not killing them
- No destruction of forests
- VSLA

Figure 1 indicates reporting from focus groups on activities that they planned to continue beyond the life of the project. Four of the top ten activities are forestry related, and fire management is prominent, but all are dominated by VSLA, which is only weakly linked to project objectives.



**Figure 1: Sustainability of Activities**

### Knowledge and skills contributing to the uptake of project activities

Eighty-seven and one-half percent (87.5%) of respondents indicated using the knowledge and skills they had acquired, primarily in these areas:

- Market gardening
- Keeping potable water clean
- Feed preparation for fish
- Production of Eco stoves
- Nursery establishment for the production of citrus, mango, papaya, *Gmelina*, cashew and palm
- Beekeeping

Forty five percent of the respondents indicated benefiting from learning exchanges. Most of the respondents indicated that, apart from the VSLAs, men have benefited more from the learning exchange than women because they have priority access according to common cultural practice. IPs understand this and are adjusting to deliver specifically to women, through market gardens, non-timber forest products, and VSLAs.

### **How have pilot activities had the intended effect of influencing national policies, and by extension the regional policies of the MRU? (Evaluation Question 3)**

During the tenure of the previous Director of STEWARD, no activity was undertaken to engage with MRU in regional capacity building by the STEWARD program. Further, relatively little work was done to influence national policies, beyond the efforts of FFI in the Nimba region and the indirect effects of the awareness raised through Capital City Forums.

One observed phenomenon captures the importance of influencing national and regional policies. It also highlights the shortcomings of STEWARD III and the need to refocus on regional coordination and capacity building.

Landscape level approaches such as STEWARD III require monitoring and adaptive management strategies in order to respond to displacement resulting from differences in management and regulation with the landscape. The Evaluation Team observed unexpected logging activities on the Sierra Leone side of PZ I (Figure 2). The logging appeared to target a single high-value species (identified by the team as *Pterocarpus erinaceus*). The logging was not mapped by the project, but it appears on the basis of the log decks observed and community members interviewed to be widespread and poorly regulated.



Figure 2: Logging deck, Tambakha Chiefdom, Sierra Leone (PZ1)

Unplanned and unmanaged logging has the potential to severely reduce the population structure and impact the future regeneration potential. This directly impacts forest biodiversity. Moreover, where it occurs, it undermines the project's investments in community forestry. *P. erinaceus* is important as a nitrogen-fixing species that provides additional benefits in terms of fodder for livestock. Interviews with key informants indicated that the logging was a response to tight regulation of logging and low supply due to prior overexploitation in Guinea. This created high demand for wood from other sources. Easy access to Sierra Leone's forest resources was attributed to lax enforcement in Sierra Leone. Unconfirmed claims point to sales of community forest resources for private gain by Chiefdom Council members. This path of least resistance for forest exploitation is sometimes referred to as "leakage".

This cross-border trade exploits inconsistencies in regulation and enforcement between Sierra Leone and Guinea, but this had not triggered a response from STEWARD as a whole to pivot to address a major threat to the project. Local level engagement by IPs must be supported through national level review and action to close loopholes through harmonized legislation and improved capacity. STEWARD has not effectively implemented the

national and regional capacity components of the project, which includes harmonization of national legislation, which would help to control for such leakage, nor has it pivoted to respond effectively.

The project management structure generally fails to provide a clear link between field activities and policy making. This is frequently because the two activities are implemented by separate organizations, and there was insufficient coordination between them. Also, field activities were not necessarily designed in consideration of how they would link to larger scale policy change.

For example, in PZ2 countries (Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire), FFI has a mandate to relate with administrative authorities (including Ministers and Prefects) while AUDER has the mandate to implement field activities with contacts mainly at the lower levels of government administrative services. While the Prefect of Lola (Head of the most important administrative jurisdiction of STEWARD's activities in PZ2) was fully aware of FFI activities, he was unaware of those of AUDER. AUDER's lower level government contacts are also insufficiently informed of AUDER's project outputs and outcomes, which would have equipped them to move information higher up the hierarchy and facilitate the uptake of project results into national policy and program development. Discussions revealed that the role of moving information up the hierarchy is not a preoccupation of AUDER's local government partners. While AUDER is aware of this deficiency it still remains to be addressed explicitly, including through better coordination between FFI and AUDER.

Initially FFI was to lead efforts to influence national policy, and to that end recruited an environmental policy expert to lead policy analysis work. The STEWARD Secretariat determined that this function was best addressed directly by STEWARD, and the policy expert was transferred to the STEWARD team. FFI narrowed its focus to the Nimba region in PZ2.

PCI-Media Impact's outreach program plays a significant role in raising the profile of STEWARD project outcomes, including by national authorities. However, the practice/policy feedback loops that would bring results and best practices to national and regional attention are not being implemented by IPs.

#### **Are training and technical assistance being delivered as intended in the face of changing priorities and funding sources? (Evaluation Question 4)**

STEWARD III uses four separate funding streams, each with its own criteria for the use of funds and reporting requirements. It does not disaggregate reporting by funding stream, so changes in finance and priorities are obscured in implementation. However, this approach does allow implementers to integrate biodiversity conservation, adaptation, and climate mitigation into a single conceptual framework.

The main challenge for integration in STEWARD is that it is operating almost exclusively through cooperative agreements between the USFS-IP and the IPs (technically these are project sub-agreements) and has limited leverage on IPs to adapt to changing requirements that may involve work outside of the terms of the agreements.

Reporting provided to the Evaluation Team was incomplete and general. Since reporting will be determined by the terms of the cooperative agreement, it may be unrealistic to expect IPs to provide detailed reports broken down by specific earmark requirements.

The Evaluation Team observed isolated instances of conflict between objectives, e.g., the conflict between biodiversity and the use of non-native trees for reforestation discussed in more detail under Study Question 5. What the team did observe was a pattern of selective focus on a limited set of the sub-IR objectives, to the exclusion of others, suggesting a path of least resistance in the face of the changing priorities and funding sources. In particular, progress was observed on explicit climate adaptation planning, but a substantial amount of work is under way that contributes to resilience through improvements in management and reduction to threats to forests (e.g., community forestry, wildfire management, and improvements in sustainable livelihoods). Some progress was observed on climate mitigation, but for a very small sample of the STEWARD program area. On the other hand, livelihood activities were widespread, but, as discussed in Study Question 5, they were not closely tied to the project objectives.

Ideally, combining funding streams can produce a holistic approach, such as ecosystem-based adaptation. This could have emerged within STEWARD through a collaborative learning and adaptation framework and strong knowledge management tools.

STEWARD has nevertheless produced some beneficial effects. For example, the linkages that are being established between formal community forest management and water availability appear to resonate very strongly (recalling work done by WWF at Outamba-Kilimi NP in the 1980s under the Wildlife and Human Needs Program). Community co-management of public lands and community forestry are powerful tools for the integration of biodiversity, climate adaptation, and forest carbon mitigation.

The implementation of the water, sanitation and health (WASH) component, with distinctly different operational requirements, in the final year will bring some change. Staff is prepared and is developing strategies to make the transition. Although time is a major constraint in achieving results, STEWARD has an important opportunity to demonstrate how WASH inputs can be amplified and strengthened by integration with biodiversity, climate adaptation, and climate mitigation activities.

## **To what extent have STEWARD's livelihood interventions contributed to the achievement of the project goals? (Evaluation Question 5)**

***Only limited causal links can be established between the livelihood interventions, improved livelihoods, and improved biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management.***

A major underlying assumption of STEWARD is that rural poverty drives environmental degradation, and that raising living standards would contribute to the achievement of the project goal. That goal is to enhance economic opportunity, peace-building and well-being through the sustainable management of forest landscapes in targeted priority zones. It is too soon to tell what the full impact of STEWARD III is on economic opportunity, peace-building, and well-being. However, it is clear that sustainable livelihood activities being implemented by the project are well advanced and some show strong receptivity by communities. STEWARD Program beneficiaries generally claimed that they were abandoning destructive practices such as swidden<sup>2</sup> agriculture and fire-based honey harvesting, and taking up sedentary practices such as rice-fish farming instead.

**Rebound effects were widely reported.** Informants commonly reported that where they abandoned destructive practices, others who were not project beneficiaries were replacing them. This suggests that improved economic opportunities may paradoxically increase pressure on forest resources, either by encouraging people to do more of what works well, or by attracting others to fill the gaps created when community members take up more sustainable practices. This is not being monitored. Additionally, livelihood activities were not consistently deployed across sites, and this might limit the full participation of communities who think that they are only being given the “stick and not the carrot” to protect biodiversity.

One reason noted for the widespread reporting of replacement workers taking-up abandoned harmful practices was the small number of STEWARD Program beneficiaries relative to non-beneficiaries in the target communities.

**Linkages between livelihoods and biodiversity** conservation were mostly theoretical, and hard data are not available. However, focus groups and key informants report that some livelihood activities, particularly honey production and VLSAs, have a positive impact. Linkages between livelihood strategies and Intermediate Results including biodiversity, climate adaptation, mitigation goals however are often poorly understood or ignored altogether (as contrasted with other project activities such as forest management and fire management, where the linkages are better understood). For example:

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<sup>2</sup> **Swidden** farming, also known as shifting cultivation or milpa in Latin America, is conventionally defined as “an **agricultural** system in which temporary clearings are cropped for fewer years than they are allowed to remain fallow” (<http://www.cfc.umt.edu/rattan/pdfs/Swidden%20agriculture.pdf>)

- A study undertaken on the economic potential for non-timber forest product value chains did not take into account availability of stocks nor did it make reference to the need for a stock assessment to understand what could be sustainably produced.
- Wetlands are being successfully developed for fish-rice farming, without any reference to potential impacts on biodiversity from wetland development.
- Village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) have proven among the most popular interventions of STEWARD. Hypothetically, this gives participating women an alternative to exploitation of forest resources (e.g., charcoal making) when fast cash is needed. However, the VSLA activity is being expanded without a clear understanding of this linkage. Further, no project wide safeguards been put in place against financing activities detrimental to biodiversity. On two separate occasions, focus group members from VSLAs participated who were not in any other way linked to a field-based STEWARD activity, illustrating a split between VSLA interests and participation in STEWARD objectives more broadly.
- Disease transmission from the free range rearing of pigs (which have been provided as livelihood alternatives by the project) in PZ2 might result in health problems for both residents and other domesticated animals (and possibly wildlife).
- Market gardening and honey production are generating income for communities in PZ2. Women dominate market gardening, in particular. Although market gardening is in common practice in these communities, its inclusion in the STEWARD livelihood activities was applauded in the target communities as an economic growth opportunity. Key informants in other communities without market garden activity recommended its extension to their communities. Unless the linkage to biodiversity threats is better defined, it is not clear that extension would contribute to project goals.

At the field level, rice-fish farming, a laudable enterprise in a poverty prone region, was observed to be adopted by individuals rather than groups. Individual rice-fish farmers spend virtually all day and all night guarding their stock from potential thieves. If the development of rice-fish paddies were based on communal effort i.e. a number of farmers on the same landscape or site, then the guarding effort would be rotated, thereby reducing the stress on individual entrepreneurs. However, for the community effort to be sustainable, land tenure would have to be agreed with landlords through local conventions.

Two exotic tree species identified in the literature as being invasive in Africa are being cultivated under STEWARD III; *Acacia mangium*, and *Acacia auriculiformis* (Richardson and Rejmánek 2011). This is apparently a legacy from earlier ICRAF projects, including the USAID funded LAMIL. Because of their drought resistance, *Acacia* species are being used in intercropping as part of climate adaptation strategies elsewhere in Africa. However, they appear never to have been identified as potential risks in the project Initial Environmental Examinations nor are they addressed in STEWARD's project Environmental management and Mitigation Plan. The assumption is that if, after 20 years of introductions, they still need to be planted, then they must not be invasive. This ignores some basic features of invasion biology. Lag time between initial introduction and biological invasion is well documented in invasive plants (Crooks and Soule, 1999), with lag times of as long as 50 years observed (Kowarik, 1995). Lag time may depend on many factors, including the time to build propagule pressure (the Allee effect) and external triggers that lead to expansion of populations, such as disturbance caused by extreme weather events. The implications of such a development should be taken into account in a biodiversity project.

Although the 2013 Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Desktop Study did identify invasive species in general as a direct threat to biodiversity, it did not link this risk to these species, and did not link the risk to climate change. This is despite a growing body of literature that identifies potential linkages (Hellman et al, 2008). Understanding of the potential linkages between climate change and biological invasion is reflected in the emerging best practices of ecosystem-based adaptation (Burgiel and Muir, 2010).

Conservation agriculture, which is characterized by minimal tillage, use of soil cover, and intercropping is being introduced into PZI. CARE has conducted Farmer Field Schools in eight communities in PZI. It has introduced conservation agriculture into three communities. As practiced by CARE it also excludes fallow and burning of crop residues. CARE is promoting corn, which is not a common food item in PZI.

The evaluation team observed that conservation agriculture was one of the livelihood interventions least supported by STEWARD communities. This is consistent with studies that document poor uptake of the practices in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Giller et. al. 2009), attributing a bad match with local conditions. The

evaluation team saw no evidence of analysis of initial conditions upon which to determine the suitability of such practices, suggesting they may have used “off the shelf” solutions due to time or budgetary constraints.

Seven activities came out clearly in focus groups as the most widespread activities in PZI. They include VSLAs, fire management, beekeeping, community forestry, non-timber forest products, and agroforestry. Key informant interviews confirmed the most appreciated activities.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Program Success to Date

STEWARD IPs have produced some noteworthy results that make important contributions to environment and sustainable development. These include:

- Very strong uptake from communities to the Village Savings and Loan Associations, which have galvanized women in the communities to set their own development agendas.
- Strong support for and sensitization to the issue of fire management, which will be of growing concern if dry seasons become hotter and more protracted.
- Linking community forest management to perennial concerns about water supply appears to reinforce support for forest conservation.
- Innovation in measurement of above ground biomass using affordable techniques that will help to streamline REDD+ project preparation and monitoring, reporting, and verification.
- Overcoming a decade-long impasse to produce a tripartite management agreement for the Nimba massif, opening the way for cooperation in the management of this high-value landscape.
- An effective and wide-reaching outreach program using radio to engage the wider public in a dialogue on STEWARD issues.
- A model for land tenure mapping with potential to be scaled up.

Other developments are underway, that, if realized, would contribute significantly to the STEWARD legacy. These include:

- There is potential to leverage STEWARD project design work to support a major PES activity now under development in PZI, with more time and resources available to make headway, the ICRAF PRODEV project.
- FFI is exploring the potential to develop a formal biodiversity offset arrangement with extractive industries operating in the Nimba region. Although long term financial support for Nimba is in the work plan, the extent to which this would be attributed to STEWARD is unclear because it is a long-term goal of FFI. Attribution may depend upon the extent to which progress can be made before the termination of STEWARD. At the same time, Bioclimate is exploring the potential interests on the part of extractive industries operating in proximity to PZI for support for a fund to support PBS activities. Given the inevitability of ongoing and intensified resource extraction, direct engagement with industry on offsets is probably one of the best available options for sustainable finance to protect biodiversity in the region.

### Constraints to Program Success

#### *Design and Program Coherence*

STEWARD III is not configured to optimally manage a program involving multiple funding streams, each with specific and unique requirements in terms of management and reporting. Specifically, adaptive management in response to the complex requirements of STEWARD’s financing, especially in changing circumstances, requires a degree of coordination difficult to obtain with the present arrangement based on independent cooperative

agreements (as sub-agreements of the project). Moreover, this distributed structure is difficult to manage for quality control and compliance. For example, agroforestry may not be compatible with biodiversity policy if it is using potentially invasive species.

Only 21.4% of the respondents indicated their involvement in training needs assessment, and this also corresponds with the view among stakeholders that most activities implemented by the partners had been pre-planned.

### **Quality Control**

The absence of quality control is reflected in apparently inconsistent findings in STEWARD products. There are, for example, inconsistencies between the USFS's analysis of the environmental condition of the Outamba area of OKNP in 2013 and the 2014 report on land cover and land use prepared by Alan Mills Consulting, the former describing the area as severely degraded and the latter describing the area as relatively intact.

STEWARD's GIS Protocol Manual is supposed to provide guidance on data interoperability consistent with Federal geographic data and ISO standards. It presents a much abbreviated version of the mandated ISO standards, primarily in the form of discovery metadata, including keywords. STEWARD's protocol doesn't appear to address quality attributes, which would greatly enhance interoperability. This is important in integrating STEWARD data products with other US government data initiatives, e.g., USGS, NASA, and NOAA data products. Where the manual does reference ISO, it appears to reference the wrong ISO standards; references in the manual are not clear but appear to point to ISO 9001, a management standard, rather than ISO/TC 211 data standards.

The Evaluation Team also observed that some livelihoods and agricultural intensification interventions seemed to flow from preconceived ideas rather than solid analysis of the local context conducted during project preparation.

### **Capacity Building**

Although the need to build capacity in local, national, and regional institutions is a recurrent theme throughout STEWARD documentation, STEWARD III has not undertaken a comprehensive mapping of institutions or a capacity needs assessment. The one area where there was a clear mandate to build capacity, the Mano River Union, was not adequately engaged by the project leadership during the first two years of the project, resulting in strained relations and lost time, if not lost opportunity.

Efforts have been instituted to engage under the incoming leadership of STEWARD. As a result, GIS training has been undertaken and plans are in motion to transfer the STEWARD GIS unit to the Mano River Union. Support for the Mano River Union should not however be piecemeal, but should be undertaken through a coherent strategy.

Exchange visits carried out by the STEWARD Program could be more strategically employed to influence conception and development of the desired policies and programs in the Mano River Union countries. For example, STEWARD could support cross border visits with those responsible for developing legislation and policy in support of small and medium sized forest enterprises to countries where policies and practice are more advanced. Such policy should encourage internal and external investors. This could mean involving directors responsible for the commercialization of non-timber forest products at the levels of the central and decentralized State forestry administrations of the MRU countries.

### **Adaptive Management**

Adaptive management involves a degree of coordination difficult to obtain with the present arrangement of several independent cooperative agreements. Consequently, the work program is slow to adapt to changing realities in the field. In particular, the Evaluation Team observed extensive logging operations on the Sierra Leone side of PZI. The logging, which is taking place in community forests, is intensive, unregulated, and almost certainly unsustainable. It undermines forest restoration and re-forestation efforts. STEWARD Implementing Partners appear however to be sticking to their scripts, and there is no evidence that anyone is stepping back to see the big picture and developing a strategy to address this.

Although forest policy harmonization, forest management capacity building, forest governance and forest benefit sharing have been desired outcomes of STEWARD since the design phase, there has been no apparent effort to address this gaping hole. The incoming STEWARD Director is aware of this gap and will require support to develop measures that can be accomplished within the remaining time for this phase.

## Gender Issues

The Evaluation Team took pains to ensure a gender balance within focus groups and among key informants. There is a very low rate of literacy among women in the region because boys have historically been disproportionately favored for education over girls. As a result, women are dependent upon men for certain skills. This means that the women-dominated VSLAs often require a man in a leadership position, exposing these groups to potential risk of loss of control (it was reported that one man is secretary for five STEWARD Program VSLAs, indicating the scale of the problem. It is only a matter of time before the concentration of power and the potential for corruption leads to conflict). Financial literacy is being introduced, which will help, but the imbalance requires a targeted focus on women's literacy. In general, women play a secondary role in most decision-making processes, and this is reflected in the training provided. IPs are aware of the issue and are taking measures to ensure gender balance in training and governance processes. Communication and outreach in STEWARD were observed to be gender sensitive; for example, radio broadcast times were set to maximize the availability of women.

The Evaluation Team identified a range of management issues that constrain progress in implementing STEWARD as it undertook a transect walk in the operational area and consulted with management of STEWARD III in Freetown and in Washington.

Inconsistent policies between IPs were observed. Particularly, differences in *per diem* payments between IPs were reported to create problems involving participation of joint meetings of staff and representatives from different programs within STEWARD III. In general, recipients are quick to note inconsistent treatment in any benefit distribution in STEWARD. This breeds suspicion and discontent. This is noted also in the discussion in Study Question 2 above.

## Regional Contingencies

This report has avoided dwelling on the current Ebola epidemic that has spread, during the course of this evaluation, across the program area. The reality is that, as of August 2014 the epidemic shows no sign of abating. The international staff has been relocated, though some have elected to "shelter in place". This represents a major disruption to STEWARD, and with one year remaining to complete the work, indicates that a strategy focused on analysis rather than fieldwork may be the only available option.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 2 (Page 13) provides a summary of recommendations.

STEWARD IPs should focus on a limited set of interventions and develop clear plans to scale them up. VSLAs showed particular promise, but they must be more explicitly linked to core project goals. Fire management also showed promise, especially if further diagnostic work can be undertaken to understand and manage the differing needs and practices of pastoralists and farmers.

STEWARD must do a better job of reporting against earmarks to ensure compliance with rules governing the uses of the earmarks.

Work should commence immediately to address the unregulated commercial logging in PZ1. This should include a review of forest regulations. Sierra Leone's MAFFS indicates a strong need for support in legal and regulatory review.

Some interventions should be abandoned as unlikely to scale up by the conclusion of the project. The impact of the Ebola crisis on the work plan may make this a foregone conclusion. These include the development of a value chain for non-timber forest products (with the exception of honey production, which is well advanced), and land tenure mapping/property rights documentation (for which the approach, while important, will produce material too late in the project cycle to contribute to project objectives). Conservation agriculture investments should also be reviewed to determine the potential for widespread adoption and what results can realistically be achieved within the remaining time.

Related to the above, it is still possible to make a major advance by working with and through the MRU. The poor implementation capacity of the MRU has been noted. However, rather than looking at this as a liability, it should be viewed as an opportunity for a partnership that will address MRU needs. This could begin with an analysis of MRU's institutional capacity to address biodiversity, climate adaptation, and climate mitigation. Using the Capital

City Forum format developed by PCI Media Impact for high level engagements about forests, livelihoods, ecosystem services and climate change has the potential for high impact, if well-coordinated. Examples include Parliamentary forums, local authority forums, and a very high level forum with the heads of state during the next MRU meeting in April 2015. Specific areas where progress can be made are:

- Collaborating to produce a legal review of the environment and natural resource legislation of the member States, implementing the recommendations of the Abidjan Declaration on the Harmonization of Policies and Laws Pertaining to the Protection of Biodiversity of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (March 2014). STEWARD should draw upon both USAID and USFS experience in the implementation of the Liberian Forest Initiative.
- STEWARD should work with the Mano River Union to lay the foundation for REDD+ plus readiness programs in MRU countries and begin to establish the regulatory framework that would sustain the REDD+ process in each country, building upon Bioclimate's experience.

STEWARD should undertake a series of management reforms to improve the efficiency of the program.

- It should improve quality control while investing in regional scientific and technical capacity, either through advisors or a panel, drawing upon academic and research institutions in MRU countries.
- All relevant data collected by the project, and data analysis, should be shared with both academic institutions and relevant government agencies in STEWARD countries, and with appropriate regional bodies such as MRU and ECOWAS. Wherever possible, presentations should be given by scientists conducting research at these institutions.

The findings identify several areas where STEWARD has potential to leverage other investments in the region. These include:

- ICRAF's PRODEV payment for ecosystem services program in PZ1, including engagement via Bioclimate.
- Environmental and social responsibility on the part of mining operations in PZ2, through engagement on best practices and support for biodiversity offsets, including through the engagement of FFI.
- Continuation of efforts to contribute STEWARD lessons to the EU REDD+ readiness activity in Sierra Leone and to work on REDD+ capacity building with and through this project.
- STEWARD has produced significant land use and land cover data, but it is incomplete. Collaboration with USAID Liberia's PROSPER project to combine data sets would help to advance the production of a coherent regional land use record.

STEWARD needs to engage with other projects working to address similar goals in the region. These include USAID Liberia's PROSPER, the Mano River Union's Forest Ecosystem Project, and the GEF funded International Water Resources Management project. A Capital City Forum might provide a framework for a professional and technical exchange through which synergies can be identified.

At the conclusion of the project, STEWARD should review the effectiveness of the project design and the performance of the IPs. It is important to note that the IPs can only be held accountable for the cooperative agreement; it is not helpful to consider whether the project made the appropriate selection of implementing partners until it addresses the more fundamental question of whether it asked for the right inputs from the partners selected and whether it was able to manage the arrangement in an efficient and effective way.

### **Recommendations to USAID/West Africa after STEWARD III**

Several issues have been identified concerning program design. Partnerships, teaming arrangements, and funding instruments cannot easily be amended mid-project, or within the last year of the project. STEWARD does provide some important lessons for future program design. When using earmarked funds with very specific requirements, USAID should carefully evaluate its choice of instruments. Implementation through a series of sub-agreements or grants under contract may not provide the degree of direction required to ensure results. Accountability would be better served through a single cooperative agreement or contract.

USAID/West Africa should conduct an impact evaluation of the biodiversity benefits of STEWARD III and other relevant programs that link livelihood and sustainable landscape interventions, drawing upon baseline data collected by the Forest Service and IPs and other relevant sources.

For any further programming, USAID should undertake institutional mapping and capacity needs assessments in preparation for further programming, drawing upon USAID human and institutional capacity development policy.

The regional fire data collected by the Forest Service will be an important asset for climate adaptation and low emissions development work in the region going forward and steps should be taken to ensure that knowledge of this resource is widely disseminated. It was surprising to see that the Forest Service was not more directly involved in fire management work, given its preeminence in the world of wildfire science and management. This is a missed opportunity.

Branding policies should be reviewed for future PAPA activities. The Evaluation Team observed that IPs had sometimes not acknowledged USAID, and were branding outputs as their own rather than as STEWARD products. Measures were instituted in the project for coherent STEWARD branding, but this is still not in compliance with ADS 320.

For the future, investments in the Upper Guinea forest ecosystem should be based upon a clearer strategy for addressing biodiversity in the context of forest fragmentation. It is worth noting that PZI was not among the forest and aquatic ecosystem priority areas identified by Conservation International in its 1999 conservation priority-setting workshop<sup>3</sup>. Priority was given to major tracts of lowland forest such as the Gola (Sierra Leone and Liberia) and the Sapo/Grebo/Taï complex (Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire), and to important upland areas. These included the Fouta Djallon mountain area of Guinea, the Loma and Tingi Mountains of Sierra Leone, the Kambui Hills of Sierra Leone and associated Lofa-Mano National Forests of Liberia, Mount Nimba, the Wologisi range of Liberia and the Ziama massif of Guinea. In addition to significantly less fragmented forests (in most cases) these sites are regionally important "water towers" - the source for trans-boundary water basins of the region. Integrated management of these upland areas and their associated basins would have the additional benefit of capturing important endemic species of the highlands of the region, which are documented for Mt Nimba, but less well understood for other highland areas in the region.

A threat reduction assessment may reveal additional transboundary pressure on the forests; for example, the time series on deforestation available through the Global Forest Watch ([globalforestwatch.org](http://globalforestwatch.org)) shows a progressive increase in deforestation within Outamba Kilimi National Park along its northern boundary, which is the Guinea border.

Beyond that, it is difficult to recommend particular sites within the STEWARD III landscapes for additional work because the answer depends upon the specific problems to be addressed. STEWARD's priority zones will be increasingly vulnerable to climate change. A much more focused approach to climate vulnerability across the region may shed additional light on the best options for preventing deforestation and conserving biodiversity.

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<sup>3</sup> The site that came to be known as PZI was identified as one of five priority sites by Saxen et al (2008). These sites were selected to have the maximum probability of success. Priority was given to sites where qualified partners were active, that qualify for USAID earmarks, that are amenable to interventions that combine conservation and sustainable livelihoods, that are recognized biodiversity conservation priorities, that are transboundary and where there is a documented need for transboundary conservation, and where there are favorable prospects for replication and scaling up to other sites and landscapes. Other priority sites identified included Lake Piso (Liberia), the Ghana Northern Savanna Biodiversity Conservation Project, the CARE Community-based Dense Forest Management Initiative (Ghana), and the Gola/Lofa/Mano extension of the Gola Forest program (Sierra Leone and Liberia).

**Table 1: Recommendations**

<b>Recommendations to USFS-IP</b>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Project Management	STEWARD III efforts are diffuse, and for a variety of reasons many will not scale as intended	<p>IPs should focus on a limited set of interventions and develop clear plans to scale them up. Some interventions should be assessed for continued relevance as pilots and for scaling potential, dropped if they cannot produce significant results by the close of the project. This is especially relevant in light of the Ebola virus epidemic.</p> <p>The NTFP value chain activity conducted by CARE in conjunction with IRAG will not scale up before the end of the project and should be terminated.</p> <p>Conservation agriculture activities without strong evidence of sustainability by the conclusion of the project should be terminated.</p> <p>Leverage additional investments to extend the impact of STEWARD, including EU's REDD+ readiness program in Sierra Leone, the ICRAF PRODEV PES project under development in the region, and ongoing discussions concerning biodiversity offsets by FFI and Bioclimate</p>
	VSLA activities, while successful, are not linked to Intermediate Results	VSLA activities should be better linked with core project objectives, e.g., through guidelines for inappropriate investments.
	There is insufficient time to use additional land tenure maps.	Important contributions made by the land tenure mapping system used in STEWARD should be integrated into future land use planning projects and transferred to the MRU.
	STEWARD needs a coherent strategy for capacity building	STEWARD should undertake institutional capacity assessment for MRU as a first step in MRU engagement.
	STEWARD should be more engaged with other projects with similar goals	STEWARD should engage with the MRU Forest Ecosystem Project coming on line, and the GEF Funded MRU Ecosystem Conservation and International Waters Project, to share lessons learned and identify possible synergies.
	National legislation in MRU states is not yet harmonized	Work should commence immediately to undertake a legal review of environment and natural resource legislation of the MRU member states, with harmonization of forestry regulations in order to address the transboundary "leakage" of logging pressure as a top priority.
		STEWARD should consider contributing to high-level events to influence decision-makers and build high-level consensus,

such as the annual MRU meeting

STEWARD should collaborate with MRU to advance national legislation and regional support for REDD+

STEWARD should consistently produce technical reports and policy analysis in English and French versions, and ensure effective communication in all MRU official languages

Knowledge Management

The potential for human/ wildlife interactions should be addressed.

Training of communities in managing human/wildlife interactions is recommended. Specialized organizations with the capacity to provide training exist in the Mano River Union countries, including MIKE (Monitoring of the Illegal Killing of Elephants) and the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG). This will require close coordination with relevant government authorities. If this cannot be developed and scaled before the conclusion of the project STEWARD could explore integration into the behavior change communication activity.

Strong potential for duplication of effort was noted in data collection activities

Effort should be made to improve the coordination of data standards and collection activities, and local institutions should be used as data repositories.

Knowledge Management

Local capacity for data collection was underutilized resulting in missed opportunities for capacity building

Where external experts are engaged in data collection, capacity building can be reinforced through the use of local counterpart researchers. Visiting international scientists and technical experts should go to local academic institutions to share their methodologies, data, and findings.

Copies of all raw data and data analysis should be provided both to academic institutions and to cognizant government agencies.

Inconsistencies were observed between STEWARD products

Improve quality control through vetting of products by a scientific and technical advisor panel involving national experts, through a Chief Technical Officer, or through technical advisors

Review data products to ensure that data standards are compliant with requirements for interoperability specified by the Federal geographic data and ISO standards including ISO/TC 211, to ensure interoperability and ensure usefulness of STEWARD data products by other forest and land use management activities.

Insufficient time or resources to fully address challenges identified

Leverage additional investments to extend the impact of STEWARD, including EU's REDD+ readiness program in Sierra Leone, the ICRAF PRODEV PES project under development, and ongoing discussions concerning biodiversity offsets being undertaken by FFI and Bioclimate

	New leadership has inadequate time to effectively implement WASH	USAID/West Africa should consider an extension to STEWARD III to give new leadership the opportunity to consolidate efforts and achieve results in priority areas.
Administration	Some STEWARD products were branded as products of Implementing Partners	Review branding policies for STEWARD products and for future PAPA activities.
	STEWARD is not compliant with biodiversity code	A “climate smart” weed risk assessment is advisable for <i>Acacia mangium</i> and <i>A. auriculiformis</i> . Possible sources include the USDA APHIS Center for Plant Health Science and Technology and the laboratory of Dr. Joseph di Tomaso at the Department of Plant Sciences, University of California, Davis. Hilda Diaz-Soltero, the USDA Forest Service representative to the National Invasive Species Council, can advise the USFS-IP. Guidance provided from the assessment on continued use and/or mitigation efforts should be incorporated into both present and future programming.
Policy	It is not possible to determine the impacts of STEWARD on biodiversity	STEWARD should conduct a rapid assessment of Chimpanzee populations as an indicator species in the PZs drawing upon data available from previous work undertaken by and ongoing work of the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation

**Recommendations to USAID**

Project Design	STEWARD's design is complex, with multiple sub-agreements and funding streams involving earmarks.	Complex design with multiple partners operating under separate sub-agreements requires a greater level of effort in project coordination. Assistance vehicles can impose limitations on the ability of USAID or its proxy to guide project implementation. Care must be taken to ensure suitability in the selection of vehicle for long-term projects under dynamic conditions, especially when multiple vehicles are being used to achieve a common objective.
	STEWARD legacy should inform future project design	Earmark requirements must flow down to sub-agreements, and be fully reflected in work plans and deliverables.
	Some potential environmental impacts were not captured in project design	Where multiple vehicles are used, data standards and services should be specified to ensure interoperability and consistency with US government policy.
	STEWARD does not have a coherent strategy for capacity building	USAID should make good use of the investment in fire data in future project planning related to sustainable landscapes and low-emissions development.
		Note should be taken for future Initial Environmental Examinations and Section 117/118/119 assessments of potential risks from species introductions, especially in the context of a changing climate

Development Hypothesis for IR I	Assumptions that rural poverty drives resource degradation should be tested.	<p>USAID should require institutional mapping and capacity needs assessments as part of project design, drawing upon USAID human and institutional capacity development policy, for projects with capacity building requirements</p> <p>Conduct a literature review, and if appropriate, an impact evaluation of the biodiversity benefits of livelihood interventions and their underlying assumptions. This could be STEWARD specific, or could consider several biodiversity projects using livelihoods as a threat-mitigating strategy. Results would also benefit REDD+.</p>
Project management	Some STEWARD products were branded as products of Implementing Partners	Review branding policies for future PAPA activities.
Future site locations	Biodiversity and climate change investments need to be focused for maximum impact	The management of key Upper Guinea Forest ecosystem tracts can be linked through a transboundary water basin approach, since most high priority biodiversity sites are uplands. This will help to link biodiversity to ecosystem services in the context of a changing climate.

# ANNEXES

## **ANNEX I: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK**

### **A. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE**

This external evaluation comes at the chronological mid-point of the third phase of STEWARD. The intended audience for this evaluation, USAID/West Africa, USFS and STEWARD implementers, need to decide on whether there are any critical mid-course program changes needed to ensure sustainability of the program. In addition, the evaluation is needed to help these stakeholders better understand the initial results and contributions of the project and to help re-focus and strengthen its implementation. Thus, the evaluation seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Determine whether the STEWARD implementers understand and are meeting the expected targets and outcomes agreed to in the Performance Monitoring Plan;
2. Determine why these targets were met or not met
3. Provide suggestions on programmatic changes that might be necessary
4. Identify best practices and share learning.
5. Determine if project activities are sustainable at the local, national and regional levels.

The timing of this evaluation is propitious for making mid-term changes in STEWARD implementation. Therefore, the evaluation should produce a set of specific recommendations for USAID that might be necessary for mid-course corrections to the project.

### **B. EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

The Evaluation Team should focus its evaluation around the following questions:

1. How effectively has STEWARD engaged project beneficiaries at the local, national and regional levels to build a coalition that supports the project goal and associated objectives?
  - a. Do pilot project activities influence national policies, which in turn are adopted at the regional level via MRU?
  - b. Are these adopted policies then scaled up throughout the region?
2. How effective is the STEWARD implementation methodology through the project partners?
  - a. Are the partners an appropriate technical mix to ensure project implementation and expected results?
3. Has STEWARD developed a sustainability plan that incorporates successful project activities with the full suite of local, national and regional stakeholders? Are there activities that can be scaled up based on project results to date?
4. How has the inclusion of funding earmarks over the course of the project affected implementation? How have the climate change and water, sanitation and hygiene activities been integrated in the program implementation, while maintaining the original conservation objective?
5. Given the importance of improved livelihoods for communities in the project goal statement, the development statement, and one of the main project objectives, to what extent, how, and at what level has STEWARD facilitated the improved livelihoods of communities? Please explain why or why not and suggest necessary programmatic changes.

### **III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

This evaluation is a mid-term performance evaluation proposed to be conducted in all four program countries, namely, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. Given the purpose and nature of the evaluation questions a good mix of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis would be useful. The Evaluation Team will use the following general methodology to conduct the evaluation:

**Document Review:** Team members will review the STEWARD Program Description, Performance Monitoring Plan, semi-annual and annual reports, and other relevant documents. The team will use this method to assess Questions 1-5.

**Data Analysis:** Team members will assess STEWARD performance in target stakeholders (communities, MRU, government agencies, donors) to examine the program's success in setting up sustainable systems. The team will use this method to answer Questions 1, 3 and 5.

**Focus Group Discussion and/or Key Informant Interviews:** the team will conduct focus group discussions and/or key informant interviews with regional organizations, national and local government staff, donors and private sector (e.g., mining companies) and with a representative number of project beneficiaries (male; female; youth) at the community level. The team will use this method to answer questions 1-3, and 5.

**Key Informant Interviews with Implementing Partners:** the team will conduct key informant interviews with all implementing partners that focus on PZ1, PZ2 and crosscutting activities. The team will use this method to answer all questions.

The evaluators are expected to re-examine these proposed methods and make suggestions as to their modification or inclusion of other relevant ones. Data will be disaggregated by gender and age, where appropriate.

The Evaluation Team will conduct a representative number of project site visits in each country in order to: (a) Pose the overarching evaluation questions; (b) Ground-truth results reporting from a representative sample of targeted communities and local governments assisted by STEWARD in all four countries; and (c) Explore in detail STEWARD's contribution to forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

Staff from the USAID/West Africa Environment Office and the STEWARD team will assist in organizing logistics for all site visits for the Evaluation Team. STEWARD staff will accompany the Evaluation Team as requested.

#### **IV. COMPOSITION OF EVALUATION TEAM**

The Evaluation Team shall consist of three professionals with at least seven years of experience in biodiversity conservation and natural resource management programming in low-income countries, particularly in West Africa, in addition to a Team leader with minimum 10 years of relevant experience. The team shall also include a translator/interpreter, if team members are not bilingual in French and English. The Team Leader must be fluent in both languages.

The required areas of subject matter expertise that should be represented on the team correspond roughly to the technical foci and implementation context of the project being evaluated:

- 1) Biodiversity and forest conservation implementation models in low-income countries;
- 2) Implementation of livelihoods programs linked to natural resource management and biodiversity conservation objectives;
- 3) Knowledge of alternative enterprise development (including carbon markets, incentive programs such as PES) and capacity to support sustainable models in conservation programs.
- 4) Country level policies, programs and regulations related to WASH, environment and climate change;
- 5) USAID-specific biodiversity, climate change and water and sanitation sector programming issues including funding regulations and requirements, earmark guidance and standard results reporting.

All team members must have proven ability to interact with people from different social and economic backgrounds, and possess excellent writing and presentation skills. The team will have combined skills and experience in rapid appraisal methodologies (interviews, focus groups, etc.), institutional analysis, and strong knowledge of West Africa's regional stakeholders and political processes. All team members must be willing and able to travel to remote zones. The Team composition is suggested as follows:

I. Team Leader – the team leader will serve as the primary point of contact between the USAID/West Africa Mission and the Evaluation Team. The candidate must:

- Be able to communicate effectively in strong written and spoken English and French with senior U.S. and host country officials and other leaders;

- Have strong evaluation experience;
  - Have a proven track record in terms of leadership, coordination, and evaluation delivery for development projects and programs;
  - Have excellent writing/organizational skills and proven ability to deliver a quality written product (Evaluation Report and PowerPoint).
  - Have a strong understanding of West Africa’s environmental sector. In addition, the Team Leader should offer substantial expertise in two or three required subject matter expertise areas listed above. The Team Leader will have primary responsibility for ensuring the final deliverables are completed in a timely manner and are responsive to the scope of work and Mission comments.
2. Additional Technical Expertise – To complement the technical expertise of the team leader, at a minimum, it is expected that these individuals from West African region will contribute particular subject matter expertise in West African policies, programs and regulations related to environmental sector.
  3. Translator/Interpreter – on as need basis, a minimum 3 years of experience with direct interpretations from French to English and English to French. Experience relating to the environment sector and terminology is mandatory.

## V. USAID/WA MGMT

The USAID/West Africa point of contact for this evaluation will be Nicodeme Tchamou, AOR for STEWARD program.

Illustrative: Time Frame USAID anticipates the total combined Level of Effort (LOE) required for this evaluation to be 145 days, beginning on or about July 1, 2014. The following provides a timeline for the Evaluation assuming a six-day work week: Proposal with an early start date would be favorably evaluated.

Estimated Start Date	Activity	Working Days	Location
Offeror to propose	Preparation – Selection of site visit locations and preliminary specification of planned interviews. In-brief with USAID/West Africa staff and evaluation team members (in person in Ghana). Document review. Finalization of evaluation methodological approach and field schedule. Development of questionnaires and/or other tools to be used in conducting surveys and fieldwork.	8 days	Virtual
	Field Work and Data Analysis - Interviews and analysis of performance data. The team may split into two groups at different stages of fieldwork.	22 days	Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Liberia
	Initial synthesis – In-country teamwork culminating in delivery of Detailed Evaluation Report Outline and draft PowerPoint presentation for review by Evaluation Committee. Additional meetings and interviews may also be scheduled to validate findings. Debrief STEWARD in Freetown and USAID/WA in Accra.	5 days	Ghana and Sierra Leone
	Revision and refinement – In response to comments from Evaluation Committee, team will incorporate feedback and other input into finalized PowerPoint presentation and initial full report draft. Presentation to USAID/West Africa and other stakeholders.	5 days	Ghana
	Final report production – Completion and delivery of final evaluation report based on Mission feedback.	5 days	Virtual

## VI. DELIVERABLES

The Evaluation Team will be responsible for producing the following deliverables:

- Revised evaluation approach and draft schedule of field activities (prior to field work)
- Draft and final questionnaire(s) to be used during interviews/stakeholder meetings (prior to field work)
- In country in- brief with USAID/West Africa before commencing fieldwork and data analysis.
- Detailed Evaluation Report Outline with bulleted response to evaluation questions and Draft PowerPoint Briefing (at the end of the synthesis phase)
- Debrief STEWARD at the end of field work and data analysis in Sierra Leone.
- Debrief USAID/West Africa in Accra, Ghana.
- Finalized PowerPoint De-briefing and initial full report draft (before evaluation team departs Ghana) [USAID/WA mission will provide its comments within 15 calendar days of receipt].
- Final Evaluation Report following standard reporting format and branding guidelines (within 10 calendar days of receiving Mission comments on draft report).

The evaluation report should follow the quality standards of the USAID Evaluation Policy Appendix I (<http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/policy>) reproduced below:

- The evaluation report should represent a thoughtful, well-researched and well organized effort to objectively evaluate what worked in the project, what did not and why.
- Evaluation reports shall address all evaluation questions included in the scope of work.
- The evaluation report should include the scope of work as an annex. All modifications to the scope of work, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology, or timeline need to be agreed upon in writing by the technical officer.
- Evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the evaluation such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides will be included in an Annex in the final report.
- Evaluation findings will assess outcomes and impact on males and females.
- Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.).
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence, and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay or the compilation of people's opinions. Findings should be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- Sources of information need to be properly identified and listed in an annex.
- Recommendations need to be supported by a specific set of findings.
- Recommendations should be action-oriented, practical, and specific, with defined responsibility for the action.

An illustrative outline of the Evaluation Report is provided below:

**Executive Summary** The Executive Summary will state the STEWARD objectives; purpose of the evaluation; study method; findings; conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for remaining STEWARD implementation.

### Table of Contents

**Introduction** The context of what is evaluated including the relevant history (three phases of implementation), service characteristics, demography, socioeconomic and basic political arrangements.

### Body of the Paper

State the purpose of and questions for the evaluation and provide a brief description of the project. Ensure to provide evidence, findings and analysis of the responses to the evaluation questions. Conclusions drawn from the analysis of findings stated succinctly.

Recommendations for STEWARD mid-course corrections

**Appendices** shall include:

1. Evaluation statement of work
2. List of project targets and results
3. List of documents reviewed
4. List of individuals and agencies contacted
5. Schedule of activities in an Excel format
6. Evaluation Team composition
7. Details on evaluation methodology including questionnaires

Data collected through this evaluation will become the property of USAID. All reports are to be submitted in English in both electronic and hard copies. The Team will provide 5 printed copies each of the Draft and Final Evaluation Reports and 5 printed copies each of the PowerPoint presentation.

The Final Evaluation Report should not exceed 30 pages in length in its body, not including title page; Table of Contents; List of Acronyms; usage of space for tables, graphs, charts, or pictures; and/ or any material deemed important and included as Annexes.

The Final Evaluation Report and PowerPoint addressing the Mission's comments should be submitted in both Word and PDF formats. Once the PDF format has been approved by the Mission, the Team will submit the Final Evaluation Report to the Development Experience Clearinghouse.

## ANNEX II: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

Question	Data Collection Method	Data collection instrument	Sample questions on the instrument	Data source
Q.1	Desktop Review	Bibliography	n/a	Project documents and data sources, including remote sensing
Q.1	Data quality review	Project reports	n/a	Project documents and data sources
Q.1	Semi-structured interviews	Questionnaire	Are program interventions on track to achieve goals, and if not, why not? What adjustments have been made?	Implementing partners, STEWARD personnel
Q.2	Desktop review	Bibliography	n/a	Project documents
Q.2	Semi-structured interviews	Questionnaire	How do implementing partners share knowledge and collaborate?	Implementing partners, STEWARD staff
Q.3	Desktop review	Bibliography	n/a	Project documents, documents of target institutions such as the Mano River Union and national ministries
Q.3	Semi-structured interviews	Questionnaire	How has STEWARD influenced policies in your institution? Please give concrete examples. Is decentralized comanagement, e.g., through forest management committees, supported by governments and are they scalable?	Mano River Union officials, ministry officials

<b>Question</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Data collection instrument</b>	<b>Sample questions on the instrument</b>	<b>Data source</b>
Q.4	Semi-structured interviews	Questionnaire	Has training/TA been affected by changing budget priorities? Please give concrete examples.	Implementing partners, STEWARD staff
Q.4	Desktop Review	Bibliography	n/a	Project documents and data sources, including training records, budget documents; comparison of annual work plans, PMP, against project development hypothesis and design
Q.5	Review of monitoring and baseline data, including data quality review	Annotated bibliography	n/a	Project baseline and monitoring data
Q.5	Focus Group	Questionnaire	Have livelihoods improved? How has this affected your use of forest resources?	Community members, community forest conservation committees, coop members, local staff from implementing partners (not together)
Q.5	Semi-structured interviews	Questionnaire	How has the forest changed since before STEWARD came? How has your household welfare changed since before STEWARD came? Is there a connection?	Community members, land management staff (e.g., forestry authorities)
Q.5	Desktop Review	Bibliography	n/a	Project documents and data sources

## ANNEX III: EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

This evaluation was conducted through a combination of desktop review and participative diagnostic process involving key informant interviews and site visits. It is heavily focused on program delivery at the community level. The structuring phase took place June 16-17 at the USAID Regional Mission for West Africa in Accra, where the Team Leader and Technical Advisor met with the TOCOR, Mr. Nicodeme Tchamou, and other key USAID personnel including Jody Stallings, REA and Collins Osaе, Mission M&E Specialist to refine the methodology.

The STEWARD MTE did not attempt to collect quantitative data to compare with baseline data to measure change as a result of project implementation, for two reasons:

1. Due to delays in project implementation, there was no more than 18 months of project activity, which is insufficient to measure change
2. Baseline data was not available to the evaluation team.

The evaluation work was divided into two components:

1. The transect. During the data collection phase, the evaluation team conducted a transect of STEWARD communities in PZ1 and PZ2 to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews, and take direct observations. Over a one-month period between June 16 and July 16, 2014, the Evaluation Team visited 36 out of 58 communities in three countries – Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. 13 focus group meetings were held, and 26 formal key informant interviews, covering local and regional authorities, program staff, and community members, were conducted during the transect. We did not visit communities that were satellites of communities with major STEWARD participation (2 cases, one in PZ1 and one in PZ2), communities new to STEWARD, and communities with very limited STEWARD participation. We did not visit one Guinean community in PZ2 because it was inaccessible in rainy season.

The objectives of the transect were twofold:

- c. To validate reporting of work on the ground in the priority zones and to understand the context of the project activities. This consisted of site inspections and interviews with project staff from Implementing Partners.
- d. To assess the sustainability of the activities through the degree of participation, buy-in, and perceived benefit by communities. This consisted of focus group discussions with communities, and with key informant interviews with community members and local government authorities.

The team reviewed over 120 documents, including all available project reporting, background information on project antecedents and project design processes, and outputs of the project. In particular, the outputs were compared with the Project management Plan.

A debrief of the preliminary findings of the evaluation was presented to stakeholders at a meeting convened at the Mano River Union headquarters in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The analysis and judgment phases were conducted through team meetings in Freetown between July 16 and 22, 2014. The reporting was conducted through a presentation to USAID in Accra on July 25, 2014.

Limitations:

1. Mobility. The evaluation was conducted during rainy season in West Africa, which can have severe impacts on mobility and access to communities, and an emerging major Ebola epidemic in the STEWARD range states, which also affected mobility of the team – which for example did not travel to Conakry to consult with the USAID mission there.
2. Lack of access to documents and key informants. There was no central document repository or knowledge management mechanism for STEWARD III. Neither USAID, the US Forest Service International Program, or the STEWARD III Project Office had a complete set of documents. Several key deliverables were reported on but evidently by Implementing Partners, which resulted in a several week delay in concluding the evaluation. The evaluation team also did not have a complete, accurate, and up to date list of contacts for the IPs, which resulted in lost time making contact. Finally, the IPs were not

uniformly responsive to queries and information collection sometimes required USAID intervention. In particular, FFI was slow to respond and did not furnish requested documents when it did respond. Due to the absence of a centralized document repository and information gaps, an additional four weeks was required to track down information and validate deliverables.

3. The evaluation design was poorly matched with a project of this complexity, which involved looking at the performance across six loosely confederated projects under separate cooperative agreements; insufficient time was apportioned to evaluation of the management of the program relative to stakeholder consultation.

## DATA SOURCES

The core team, consisting of team leader/policy specialist, biodiversity expert, and community forestry expert, all of whom were from the region, supported by a technical advisor, relied upon the following data sources during this evaluation: existing documents; key informant interviews; and focus group discussions with stakeholder groups, NGOs, district government officials, village leaders, and ordinary community members.

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

### Document Review

The process of assembling and reviewing key documents began about May 20, 2014. A wide variety of documents were collected, the most important of which were project planning documents, reporting documents from Implementing Partners, and the Project management Plan.

### Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews and meetings began on May 26, 2014. The persons seen individually or in groups included US Forest Service International Program Staff, the Project Director, Implementing Partner representatives (field representatives in person, and in some cases, telephone interviews with international program staff), USAID staff involved in the evolution of STEWARD, local government officials, and Mano River Union officials. USAID personnel were interviewed in Freetown and Monrovia; the project did not meet with USAID in Conakry due to health advisories. We did not attempt to contact USAID focal points in Côte d'Ivoire due to the limited scope of project involvement there. The evaluation team met with field staff of government authorities in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire; in addition, we met with the Director of Forestry in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security of the government of Sierra Leone.

26 formal key informant interviews, covering local and regional authorities, program staff, and community members, were conducted during the transect.

### Focus Groups

The aim of the focus group discussions was to assess the sustainability of the activities through the degree of participation, buy-in, and perceived benefit by communities. Over a one-month period between June 16 and July 16, 2014, the Evaluation Team visited 36 out of 58 communities in three countries – Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. 13 focus group meetings were held, and. We did not visit communities that were satellites of communities with major STEWARD participation (2 cases, one in PZ1 and one in PZ2), communities new to STEWARD, and communities with very limited STEWARD participation. We did not visit one Guinean community in PZ2 because it was inaccessible in rainy season.

## **ANNEX IV: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

### **BASIC QUESTIONS TO TARGET GROUPS**

#### **Pertaining to Relevance of the STEWARD Program**

The relevance of the STEWARD Program will concern its design, i.e. the extent to which the envisaged objectives respond correctly to the identified problems or real needs: i.e. is the Program adequately provisioned (capacity et al.) to resolve the participatory identified problems of the right target of stakeholders? In addition to documentary analysis, asking questions to some stakeholder focus groups will assess the relevance. These are presented further below.

Relevance will also examine (a) the complementarity and (b) the coherence between activities that have so far been implemented.

The quality of the logical framework will be examined: the clarity and internal consistency of the global objectives of the Program and the Intermediate Results of the sub-projects will be assessed to ensure that the Program / sub-projects are still relevant in the view of the needs of the target stakeholders (local populations, local technical services, national and regional administrative services and authorities) in the STEWARD Program range States.

#### **Pertaining to the Effectiveness of the STEWARD Program**

The effectiveness i.e. the extent to which the objective of the STEWARD Program is achieved (percent) or expected results have been obtained will be assessed by the value added of the Program. In this regards, the indicators in the PMP representing each of the four Intermediate Results will be assessed to report their percentage level of attainment. This will require M&E reports from the STEWARD Program

#### **Concerning the Efficiency of the STEWARD Program**

This concerns the extent to which the use of resources to produce the Intermediate Results was achieved at reasonable cost. Assessments will be made of the relationship between different activities, resources expended, and expected results. This measurement will be both quantitative and qualitative, and will include aspects of time management and budget. The aim is to find out whether similar results could be obtained by other means, at lower cost and in the same time frame.

### **GUIDE QUESTIONS BY TARGET GROUP TO ADDRESS RELEVANCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE STEWARD PROGRAM**

#### **Program Partners, Donors, Other International NGOs etc.**

1. What can you tell us about this project?
2. According to you, what is the most important success of the project (if any)?
3. Would you cite other important achievements?
4. Did you find weaknesses in the project?
5. Which are the areas that still need support?
6. Is the project focused on the priorities Guinea, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, the MRU, and did it effectively select the beneficiaries and the areas of intervention?
7. Is the project's approach adapted to the realities of beneficiaries and partners
8. Are there any achievements or activities that have a high probability to persist once the project is completed?
9. How has STEWARD influenced policies in your institution? Please give concrete examples. Do governments, e.g., through forest management committees, support decentralized co-management?
10. Are program interventions on track to achieve goals, and if not, why not? What adjustments have been made?

11. Can you tell us about the lessons that can be learned from this project? Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **Implementing partners, Technical services of the State and local NGOs**

1. Can you describe the history of this project and your functional partnership with the project?
2. What the project has brought you?
3. What was your contribution to the project?  
At the global level: what in your opinion is the most important success of the project (if any)?
4. Can you narrate other important achievements?  
Did you find weaknesses in the project?
5. Is the project focused on the priorities of the country, the MRU, including the choice of the right beneficiaries and intervention areas?
6. Is the project approach adapted to the realities of the beneficiaries and partners?
7. Are you working with other groups, partners and institutions through this project?
8. Will there be any achievements or activities that have a high probability to persist at the end of the project?
9. Can you narrate some lessons that can be learned from the project?
10. Has training/TA been affected by changing budget priorities? Please give concrete examples.
11. How do implementing partners share knowledge and collaborate?
12. How has the forest changed since STEWARD was initiated?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add / share?

### **Target Beneficiaries**

1. Can you describe the history of your relationship or partnership with this project?  
Tell us about your social and ecological environment before and after your collaboration with the STEWARD Program.
2. Were there other projects like STEWARD in the past? What did you learn from them?
3. Are you working with other groups, partners and institutions through this project?
4. What has the STEWARD project brought to you?
5. What is it that is not satisfactory about the STEWARD project? / What are your points of disagreement with the project?
6. How has the forest changed since before STEWARD came? How has your household welfare changed since before STEWARD came? Is there a connection?
7. Have livelihoods improved? How has this affected your use of forest resources?
8. What will remain in all that you are doing after the project ends?
9. Can you tell us about the lessons that can be learned from this project?
10. Is there anything else you will like to add?

### **Other Guide Questions**

1. What is your level of involvement in the project?
2. Which activities did you implement in the project?
3. In which activities did you not participate? Why?
4. Did have you learned individually and collectively from the project?

5. What did you benefit in terms of livelihood?
6. What could the project have brought to you?
7. Which are the areas that still need support, especially at the level of populations?

## ANNEX V: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### Documents reviewed

- Abidjan Declaration on the Harmonization of Policies and Laws Pertaining To the Protection of Biodiversity of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. (2014, March 27).
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- Bioclimate (2014a). Carbon stocks and regeneration potential in a West African Forest-Savannah Mosaic landscape. STEWARD Programme Report.
- Bioclimate (2014b). STEWARD Community PES Initial monitoring reports for Kansema and Sumata. STEWARD Programme Report.
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## Individuals and Agencies Contacted

### **N'ZEREKORE STAFF BRIEF (AUDER)**

**PZ2/Guinea**

**June 20th 2014**

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**Telephone  
Contact**

**Function/Observations**

Francis Haba	224-622302929	Coordinator/Manager AUDER
Faya Malaya Quendene	224-622985774	Communication Officer PCI Media Impact
Barry Abdourahaman	224-664422769	AUDER Accountant
Nyankoye Loeimeni Touaro	224-664544505	M&E Officer
Ibrahima Soumahoro	224-666745126	Technical Assistant
Mohamed Keita	224-657526839	Translator

### **FOCUS GROUP - THUO**

**PZ2/Guinea**

**June 25th 2014**

Emanuel Gamamy (M)		Community Forest Mgmt
Emanuel Gbérégbé (M)		Fire Mgmt Committee
Billy Zogbé (M)		Community Forest Mgmt
Serry Galé (F)		Rice-Aquaculture
Tonhou Touré (F)		Vegetable Gardening
Cé Zomy (M)		Rice-Aquaculture
Khoué Dor (M)		Sheep/Small animal Husbandry
Missan Gamamy		Community Forest Mgmt
Gono Zogbé		Sheep/Small animal Husbandry
Ghianlé Zolou		Fire Mgmt Committee
Emanuel I Gamamy		Community Forest Mgmt
Mamein Galé		Vegetable gardening Group
Beikor Zomy		Tree Nurseries/Afforestation
Kpakala Zomy		Tree Nurseries/Afforestation

### **FOCUS GROUP - SARENGBARA**

**PZ2/Guinea**

**June 25th 2014**

Foromo Zogbila		Community Forest Mgmt
Rogbé Gbeimy		Community Forest Mgmt
Diry Camara		VSLA/Vegetable Gardening
Marcelin		Fire Mgmt Committee
Solange Gami		VSLA/Vegetable Gardening
Emmanuel Ghata		Rice-Aquaculture
Francis Camara		Rice-Aquaculture
Gnanama Souolé		Fire Mgmt Committee
Gbato Gamamy		Beekeeping Group
Antoine Souomy		Beekeeping Group
Bagota		Tree Nurseries/Afforestation
Bonan Doré		Community Forest Mgmt

Yaramô Touré  
Léyié Zogbila

Tree Nurseries/Afforestation  
VSLA/Vegetable Gardening

**FOCUS GROUP -  
BOSSOU**

**PZ2/Guinea**

**June 25th 2014**

Barakoura Bonimy (M)  
Léyié Goulé (M)  
Elise Traoré (F)

Community Forest Mgmt  
Community Forest Mgmt  
VSLA Group/Vegetable  
Gardening

Gaspard Goumy  
Frédéric Guèmy (M)  
Douo Malé  
Bouan Sangaré  
Gnanama Kanilé

Tree Nurseries/Afforestation  
Tree Nurseries/Afforestation  
Beekeeping Group  
Rice-Aquaculture  
VSLA Group/Vegetable  
Gardening

Goupou Goumy  
Doun Camara  
Antoine Traoré (M)  
Bouna Zogbila

Fire Mgmt Committee  
Community Forest Mgmt  
Rice-Aquaculture  
Fire Mgmt Committee

**FOCUS GROUP -  
DOROMOU**

**PZ2/Guinea**

**June 26th 2014**

Mamadou Likala Troure (M)  
Mawa Zomialo (F)  
Seny Doré (M)  
Toseny Gbènèbara (F)  
Mariame Doré (F)

224-628600932

Forest Mgmt (Treasurer)  
Vegetable Gardening (President)  
Vegetable gardening Group  
VSLA Group President  
Vegetable Gardening/Vice  
President

Tokpa Molmou (M)  
Vassy Gbèlèhara (F)  
Abou Traoré (M)  
Digué Molmou (M)  
Paul Saoulomou (M)  
Souanan Dounamou (F)  
Lama Doré (M)

224-621930175

Tree Nursery/Forest Mgmt  
VSLA Group  
Nursery/President  
Small Livestock Husbandry  
Small Livestock Husbandry  
Community Forest Mgmt  
Community Forest  
Mgmt/President  
Nursery Work  
Community Forest Mgmt

Michel Dounamou (M)  
Yaramo Mohara (M)

**FOCUS GROUP -  
GBAPLEU**

**PZ2/C' d'Ivoire**

**June 26th 2014**

Keïba Makeusseu (M)  
Déahou Doh Jeannette (F)  
Ouégraogo Josephine (F)

225-09349824

Village Head  
Rice-Aquaculture  
VSLA Group/Chairlady

Koulai Rosh (M)		VSLA Group
Gomé Doueu Rasmus (M)		Village Sub-Chief
Yéhi Adèle (F)		VSLA Group
Minkapeu Marie Laure (F)		VSLA Group
Gomé Boya (M)		Community Forest Mgmt
Soumahoro Ibrahim (M)		Dioula Youth President
Zéké Zoh Vincent (M)		Fire Mgmt Committee
Soumahoro Maimouna (F)		VSLA Group
Koné Karidjatou (F)		VSLA Group

**MADINA-OULA STAFF BRIEF**

**PZI/Guinea**

**July 5th 2014**

Martin Luther Kourouma	224-628299237	Technical Coordinator PZI/CARE STEWARD
Maimounata Baldé Sall	224-628925794	Team Leader VSLA
Fodé Dramé	224-622258691	Field Agent CARE
Abdoulayé Lamarana Touré	224-622897107	Field Agent CARE
François Mamy	224-621021027	Communication Officer PCI Media Impact
Essivi Lokpo	224-622795828	Finance Officer
Ansmama Baba Turrey	232-76857856	Assistant Coordinator PZI CARE STEWARD
Moustafa Cissé	224-622897307	Field Agent CARE
Kanté Aboubakar	224-621170606	Security Officer STEWARD

**FOCUS GROUP - MADINA-OULA**

**PZI/Guinea**

**July 7th 2014**

Mamadou-ba Camara (M)	224-628919636	Vegetable gardening Group
Mamadama Soumah (F)		Vegetable gardening Group
Th Mamadou Diallo (M)		Fire Mgmt Committee
Hawa Tamisso (F)		Fire Mgmt Committee
Mamadama Camara (F)	224-628382550	Fire Mgmt Committee
Rouguiatou Sylla (F)		Fire Mgmt Committee
Mamadou Djouma Bah (M)		Beekeeping Group
Kadiatou Camara (F)	224-628263436	Beekeeping Group
Amadou Bangoura (M)	224-628919655	Agroforestry
Mohammed Condé (M)	224-622923934	Agroforestry
Fodé Soumah (M)	224-628920809	VSLA Group
Mamaissata Qolfoé (F)	224-623118565	VSLA Group

**FOCUS GROUP - KANSEMA**

**PZI/Guinea**

**July 7th 2014**

Karim Fofana (M)		Agroforestry/Plantation
Maciré Camara (F)		Agroforestry/Plantation/ VSLA

Abou Bangoura (M)	Community Forest Mgmt
Mamata Sylla (F)	Community Forest Mgmt
Salifou Camara (M)	Community Forest Plantation/Mgt
Fanta Bangoura (F)	Community Forest Plantation/Mgt
Moussa Sylla (M)	Beekeeping Group
Yaya Camara (F)	Beekeeping Group
Omar Camara (M)	VSLA Group
Mamata Soumah (F)	NTPF Group
Fodé Sory Soumah (M)	Fire Mgmt Committee
Ousmane Bangoura (M)	Fire Mgmt Committee

**FOCUS GROUP -  
BADET KANTY**

**PZI/Guinea**

**July 8th 2014**

Souleymane Camara (M)	224-628920069	Community Forest Mgmt
Mouctar Kaba (M)		Secretary of VSLA Group
N'Fanly Bangoura (M)	224-620681879	Community Forest Mgmt
El-Hadj Morlaye Camara (M)	224-628430487	President of Forest Mgt Committee
Kémoko Sylla (M)		Beekeeping Group
Hawa Sory Camara (F)	224-628496318	Community Forest Mgmt
Mamadama Gow Bangoura (F)		Vegetable gardening Group
Mamadama Camara (F)		Vegetable gardening Group
Salématou Camara (F)		Vegetable gardening Group
Kadiatou Bangoura (F)		VSLA Group
Fatoumata Camara (F)		Community Forest Mgmt
Abdou Sylla (M)	224-620043546	District Admin/Forestry group
Naby Sylla (M)		VSLA Group
Kadiatou Camara (F)		Beekeeping Group

**FOCUS GROUP -  
BERTHEA**

**PZI/Guinea**

**July 9th 2014**

Boubacar Barry (M)	224-622524956	NTPF Group
Fatou Mâra (F)	224-666438598	NTPF Group
Yaro Tella Barry (F)	224-662137157	Community Forest Mgmt
Abdoul Baldé (M)	224-664314853	Community Forest Mgmt
Mamadou Oury Barry (M)	224-666841995	VSLA Group
Salimatou Barry (F)		VSLA Group
Noumou Kéita (F)		VSLA Group
Ousmane Barry (M)	224-666922478	VSLA Group

**FINTONIA STAFF BRIEF**

**PZI/Sierra  
Leone**

**July 10th 2014**

Asmana Baba Turrey	232-76857856	Assistant Coordinator PZI CARE/STEWARD
Gbessay ES Momoh	232-76653048	Coordinator Bioclimate
Abdul K Dumbaye	232-76643546	PCI Media Impact PZI S/Leone Officer
Edward MS Kamgbo	232-76312770	CARE Admin Officer
Dauda K Sumai	232-79004427	Bioclimate Admin/Finance Officer
Fatmata T Kamara	232-77787919	CARE Field Agent
Joseph Momoh	232-78225774	CSSL/CARE Biodiv Officer
Richard Sambolah	231-886444697	Member STEWARD III MTE
Aiah Lebbie	232-78615158	Member STEWARD III MTE
Martin Nganje	237-50880968	Team Lead STEWARD III MTE

**FOCUS GROUP -  
KORTOR**

**PZI/S. Leone**

**July 11th 2014**

Mohamed Suma (M)	No Network	NTFP Group, Vegetable Gardening Group
Adama Suma (F)	No Network	NTFP Group
Ibrahim Kamara (M)	No Network	Fire Mgmt Committee
Muna Suma (M)	No Network	Fire Mgmt Committee
Kadiatu Bangura (F)	No Network	VSLA Group
Mohamed Suma II (M)	No Network	Forest Mgmt Committee
Mohamed Suma I (M)	No Network	Forest Mgmt Committee
Adama Sillah (F)	No Network	NTFP Group
Foday M. Kamara (M)	No Network	NTFP Group
Abdoulai Kamara (M)	No Network	VSLA Group
Maseroy Suma (F)	No Network	Women Group Gardening
Lansana Kamara (M)	No Network	Fire Mgmt Committee
Mohamed Sumah (M)	No Network	FMC/Bioclimate Survey

**FOCUS GROUP -  
SUMATA**

**PZI/S Leone**

**July 12th 2014**

Alhaji Osman Kamara (M)	No Network	Forest Mgmt Committee Chair
Foday Sumah (M)	No Network	Beekeeping Group
Mohamed Bangura (M)	No Network	Forest Fire Control Group
Mohamed Sumah (M)	No Network	Beekeeping Group
Sorie SK Kamara (M)	No Network	Fire Mgmt Committee
Nanah Sumah (F)	No Network	VSLA Group
Kadiatou Kamara (F)	No Network	Fire Mgmt Committee
Salimatu Sumah (F)	No Network	NTFP Group
Soieba Kamara (M)	No Network	VSLA Group
Mohamed L. Kamara (M)	No Network	Community Forest Mgmt Committee

**FOCUS GROUP -  
SANYA****PZI/S. Leone****July 13th 2014**Balla Bangura (BBC) - (M)  
Sheku Yansaneh (M)  
Balla Bangura (M)

224-628236527

*Forest Mgmt Committee Chair  
Fire Mgmt Committee  
Conservation Ag/ Farmer Field  
School*Mabinty Kamara (F)  
Kaïdiatu Mansarey (F)

224-628878885

*Vegetable Gardening/President  
Conservation Ag/ Farmer Field  
School*Fanta Kamara (F)  
Aïssata Sesay (F)  
Mabinty Police Bangura (F)*VSLA Group/Chairlady  
NTFP Group  
Conservation Ag/ Farmer Field  
School*Kaïdiatu Sesay (F)  
Maferreh Sillah (F)  
Foday T Kamara (M)*NTFP Group  
VSLA Group  
Fire Mgmt Committee***FOCUS GROUP -  
SAMAYA****PZI/S. Leone****July 14th 2014**Tejan Bangura (M)  
Karim Kamara (M)  
Alie Conteh (M)  
Foday Mamadou Sesay (M)  
Yayah Dumbuya (M)  
Lansana Syllah (M)  
N'Madama Kamara (F)  
N'Balia Kamara (F)

232-78688450

*Community Forest Mgmt  
Fire Mgmt Committee  
Fire Mgmt Committee  
Beekeeping Group  
Beekeeping Group  
Agroforestry Group  
VSLA Group  
Women Market Gardening  
Group/Chair*Fasineh Kamara (M)  
Fatmata Bangura (F)  
Aminata Bangura (F)

232-78356024

*Fire Mgmt Committee  
FFS/Conservation Agriculture  
Women Market Gardening  
Group/Chair*Mabinty Kargbo (F)  
N'Mah Sillah (F)  
Morlai Kamara (M)

232-76745220

*Fire Mgmt Committee/Chairlady  
Agroforestry Group  
FFS/Conservation Agriculture*

## Additional Key Informants

Location	Date		Name	Telephone	Function
Washington	06.03.14	USAID Africa Bureau	Tim Resch	1-202-712-4453	Bureau Environmental Advisor
Washington	06.03.14	USAID Africa Bureau	Tegan Blaine	1-202-712-0943	Senior Climate Change Advisor
Washington	06.03.14	USAID Africa Bureau	Alex Apotsos		Climate Change Advisor
Washington	06.03.14	USAID Africa Bureau	P.K. Sundareshwar	1-650-484-3731	AAAS Fellow - Climate Change
Washington	06.04.14	USFS-IP	Jennifer Peterson	1-202-644-4600	Africa Program Coordinator
Washington	06.04.15	USFS-IP	Christopher Soriano	1-202-644-4601	Africa Program Specialist
Washington	06.04.16	USFS-IP	Annie Nagy	1-202-644-4602	Africa Program Specialist
Washington	06.11.14	Tetra Tech (ex USFS-IP)	Matthew Edwardson	1-703-387-2110	International Development/ENRM
Washington	06.11.14	PCI Media Impact	Sean Southey	1-347-276-1354	President
Washington	06.11.14	PCI Media Impact	Christine Bailey	1-212-687-3366	Global Program Director
Washington	06.16.14	STEWARD	Destina Samani	232-79595407	Director
Washington	06.18.14	USAID Forests and Biodiversity	Diane Russell	1-202-712-1129	Senior Social Scientist
Monrovia	06.18.14	USAID - Liberia	Dr. Jennifer Talbot	231-(0)776777000	Washington: USDA Forestry Adviser
Guinea PZ2	06.26.14	CNOP-G N'Zérékoré	Tokpa Doré	224-664383574	Regional Technical Coordinator
Guinea PZ2	06.26.14	PCI-Media Impact	Faya Mayala	224-622985774	Comm/ PCI-Media Officer PZ2
Guinea PZ2	06.27.14	AUDER	Francis Haba	224-622302929	Coordinator AUDER
Guinea PZ2	06.27.14	Government / Forestry	Gnèmou Siako Nwogoua		Chief of Section Forestry, Lola
Guinea PZ2	06.27.14	FAUNA & FLORA International	Gondo Gbanyangbe	224-622478893	Coordinator FFI Guinea-F/STEWARD
S/Leone PZ1	07.01.14	Mano River Union Secretariat	Simeon Moribah	232-(0)76822740	Deputy Secretary General MRU
S/Leone PZ1	07.01.14	Mano River Union Secretariat	Linda Koroma	232-33347923	Deputy Secretary General MRU
S/Leone PZ1	07.02.14	STEWARD / PCI-Media Impact	Darius Barrolle	232-76462584	Team Lead STEWARD Comm
S/Leone PZ1	07.02.14	STEWARD /CARE International	Asmare Ayele		CARE Country Director - S/Leone
S/Leone PZ1	07.02.14	STEWARD / Thomson Reuters	Kofi Panyin Yarboi	232-(0)79365202	GIS Analyst STEWARD /Thomson Reuters
S/Leone PZ1	07.05.14	CARE / Makeni Office	Andrew Katta	232-76604213	CARE Tech Coordinator F/Security
Guinea PZ1	07.06.14	CARE / STEWARD PZ1	Martin Kourouma	224-628299237	Coordinator PZ1
Guinea PZ1	07.06.14	PRIDE	Mme. Maimounata Baldé Sall	224-628925794	Team Leader VSLA - PZ1
Guinea PZ1	07.06.14	IRAG- Insitut de Recherche Ag	Michel Gbonamou	224-628679576	STEWARD Consultant
Guinea PZ1	07.12.14	CARE/STEWARD PZ1	Asmana Baba Turey	232-76857856	Assistant Coordinator PZ1
Guinea PZ1	07.13.14	Bioclimate	Gbessay ES Momoh	232-76653048	Coordinator Bio-C West Africa

Guinea PZ I	07.14.14	Government/ Biodiversity	Kamara Kalie	232-88247751	Park Manager Outamba-Kilimi
Accra	06.16.14	USAID - West Africa	Nicodeme Tchamou	233-(0)302741857	Regional NRM & Climate Change Advisor
Accra	06.16.14	USAID - West Africa	Dr. Jody Stallings	233-(0)302741857	Regional Environment Advisor
Accra	06.16.14	USAID - West Africa	Collins Osae	233-(0)302741315	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist
Accra	06.16.14	USAID - West Africa	Alex Deprez	233-(0)302741000	Regional Mission Director
Freetown	07.16.14	STEWARD Management	Destina Samani	232-79546077	Regional Coordinator STEWARD
Freetown	07.17.14	STEWARD Pol/ Management	Emmanuel Moutondo	232-79535049	Regional Policy Officer STEWARD
Monrovia	06.19.14	PROSPER Liberia (Former Staff)	Dr. Samuel Koffa	231-(0)886592329	Independent Consultant
Skype	07.19.14	Cornell U.	David Bluhm		Ph.D. Student, soil science
Freetown	07.21.14	MAFFS / Sierra Leone	William Bangoura	232-76673455	Director of Forestry
Freetown	07.21.14	MAFFS / Sierra Leone	Mrs. Kate Garnett		Assistant Director of Forestry
Freetown	07.22.14	STEWARD/MRU	Emmanuel Moutondo	232-79535049	Policy Officer STEWARD Program
Freetown	07.22.14	STEWARD/PCI-Media Impact	Ewoku Andrew	232-76340819	PCI-Media Impact Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	CARE/STEWARD PZ I	Asmana Baba Turey	232-76857856	Assistant Coordinator PZ I
Freetown	07.22.14	CARE	Andrew Katta	232-76604213	CARE Tech Coordinator F/Security
Freetown	07.22.14	STEWARD	Destina Samani	232-79595407	Director
Freetown	07.22.14	MRU	Koffi Kouman	232-78776813	MRU Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	MRU	Linda Koroma	232-33347923	Deputy Secretary General MRU
Freetown	07.22.14	MRU	Dr. Alpha Amadou Baldeh	232-78142930	Program Officer - MRU
Freetown	07.22.14	STEWARD	Kemoh Daramy	232-76619149	STEWARD Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	STEWARD	Patrick James	232-78784809	STEWARD Officer
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Freetown	07.22.14	STEWARD	Abdul K. Massaly	232-76661023	Program Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	MRU	Abdoulaye D.	232-88326262	MRU Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	MRU	Ahmed T. Diallo	232-78322823	MRU Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	MRU	Nyaibor Ngomba	232-76610618	MRU Officer
Freetown	07.22.14	ex-STEWARD	Foday S. Kanu	232-76738542	
telephone	8.12.14	Bioclimate	Willie McGhee	44 (0)131 664 3700	Executive Director
telephone	8.25.14	Fauna and Flora International	Adam Henson	1-202-375-7766	Technical Director, FFI/US

## ANNEX VI: DETAILED REVIEW OF PROJECT TARGETS AND RESULTS

Intermediate Results	Workplan elements	Loc	Results	Evidence
<b>IR.1. Biodiverse ecosystems conserved in target areas through improved management</b>				
I.1. Biodiversity conservation and/or NRM knowledge and skills increased in communities in target areas	I.1.1 Start community-based biodiversity monitoring program in Sumata and Kansema (Bioclimate)	PZ1	Training of local monitoring teams by Bioclimate, restricted to their pilot PES communities, initial biodiversity monitoring at village sites (Kotor and Fintonia). Tacugama Chimpanzee Society developed and implemented the first phase of the Biodiversity Monitoring and Evaluation Program. Bioclimate produced training materials.	Direct observation Key informant interviews Document review
	I.1.2 Promote conservation agriculture and best agricultural practices (CARE)	PZ1	Efforts under way by CARE (but note caveats in narrative), including demonstrations, training in conservation agriculture, Innovative attempt to develop biochar alternative to slash and burn	Direct observation Key informant interviews Focus group discussions Documentation
	I.1.3 Strengthen the technical and organizational capacities of communities (AUDER)	PZ2	Progress appears to be made through training in PZ2, and technical assistance by FFI to AUDER, but no evidence was observed of a baseline against which to measure progress.	Focus group discussions Key informant interviews
I.2. Community-level Governance: Biodiversity conservation and/or NRM governance strengthened through participatory planning and zoning agreements	I.2.1 Develop land management plan and NRM policies at the community level for Sumata and Kansema (Bioclimate)	PZ1	Land tenure assessment completed for two villages, participatory mapping used to produce maps of village land, and community land management planning initiated.  In addition, Bioclimate, Thomson Reuters, and the STEWARD program collaborated on a policy review of community forests and land tenure policy in Sierra Leone, which has been shared in draft with MAFF.	Key informant interviews Documentation review

<b>Intermediate Results</b>	<b>Workplan elements</b>	<b>Loc</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
	1.2.2 Promoting and documenting property rights in communities (Thomson Reuters)	PZI	Two community land tenure maps have been produced; two more are planned. It is not clear that they will be completed in time to be used at the field level.	Key informant interviews, documentation review
	1.2.3 Sourcing GIS data and mapping activities that promote biodiversity conservation (Thomson Reuters)	All	Significant progress has been made in some areas to create land use/land cover maps and work is continuing; however, this does not appear to be well integrated with the work of field-oriented I.P.s	Document review Key informant interviews
1.3 Livelihoods: economic opportunities linked to biodiversity conservation and/or NRM increased (AUDER, PZ2)	1.3.1 Complete socioeconomic evaluation of target sites and broader region (Bioclimate)	PZI	Bioclimate undertook a participatory socioeconomic evaluation of the two pilot sites for the PES program, which provides important baseline documentation	Document review
	1.3.2 Coordinate with CARE to complete conservation agriculture, non-timber forest products and village savings and loan activities (Bioclimate)	PZ2	Significant activity was noted in beekeeping, including support from communities. Conservation agriculture plots were observed, but there was little indication that they would be sustainable. Non-timber forest product work is not in evidence.	Document review Direct observation Key informant interviews Focus groups
	1.3.3 Identify and assess key value chain development NTFPs (CARE)	PZI	Preliminary market assessment work has been done; this is inadequate and incomplete because it is not supported by stock assessments. It is questionable that training can be accomplished in the remaining time. Note caveats in the narrative	Document review Key informant interviews
	1.3.4 Train farmers in value-chain development (CARE)	PZI	There is no evidence that stock assessments have been undertaken for target species that would support the development of a value chain	Document review Key informant interviews

Intermediate Results	Workplan elements	Loc	Results	Evidence
	I.3.5. Establish and strengthen VSLAs (CARE)	PZ1	Very strong progress is being made in implementing VSLAs, and CARE is planning on scaling this work to other (non-STEWARD) areas. The evaluation team did not find strong connections between VSLAs and the biodiversity target of the IR	Document review Focus groups Key informant interviews
	I.3.6 Promote rice/fish and vegetable production in wetland (AUDER)	PZ2	Implementation is under way in PZ2; income generation is taking place. The correlation of livelihood generation with biodiversity conservation, a fundamental assumption of the project, will need to be tested over time. No evidence could be found that direct impacts of agricultural development in wetlands on biodiversity was taken into account.	Direct observation Key informant interviews Focus groups
I.4 National-level and transboundary knowledge and capacity - Biodiversity and/or NRM knowledge and capacity increased in Mano River Union countries	I.4.1 Support district/local level understanding of community forests and the role that they play in NRM (Bioclimate)	PZ1	This activity was initially to develop a forest oversight committee made up of FMCs from the PZ. It was cancelled because FMCs were not yet well enough developed.	Key informant interviews
	I.4.2 Sourcing GIS data and mapping activities that promote biodiversity conservation at national and transboundary levels (Thomson Reuters)	All	Engagement with and through MRU was stalled until recent change in leadership due to inaction on the part of STEWARD. The establishment of national GIS nodes, and training in GIS at MRU has commenced, and plans are in place to transfer the GIS functions to MRU. National data centers have been established in each MRU country and training is being given.	Key informant interviews

Intermediate Results	Workplan elements	Loc	Results	Evidence
	1.4.3 Strengthen the technical and organizational capacities of national organizations		No work has been undertaken in this area through the MRU to date, though some briefing notes have been prepared for MRU. Plans are now underway. Some capacity-building efforts have taken place through the engagement of FFI with national governments in the Nimba region. FFI reports that it has a management effectiveness assessment tool, has undertaken a management plan for the East Nimba Nature Reserve, and has assessed the Simandou rail corridor, but these have not been made available to the evaluation team or the project.	Key informant interviews Document review
1.5 National and transboundary level governance. Biodiversity conservation and/or NRM governance strengthened through laws, policies, strategies, and agreements at national and/or transboundary levels	1.5.1 Identify transboundary threats related to NRM and develop appropriate measures to minimize risks (CARE)	PZ1	CARE has conducted a consultative process for PZ1 on transboundary threats, which identified bushfires, illegal logging, and hunting/poaching as the issues of major concern. Discussions on transboundary issues including uncontrolled logging in PZ1, but the process of developing a transboundary agreement ("convention") is stalled. Informants interviewed by the evaluation team indicate that unregulated and possibly illegal logging is caused by is the disparity in regulations and enforcement capacities between Sierra Leone and Guinea. See discussion in the narrative.	Document review Key informant interviews Direct observation
	1.5.2 Organize a tripartite steering committee and transboundary tri-national meeting for Mt Nimba (FFI)	PZ2	The steering committee has been established and has met five times; the transboundary tri-national meeting has taken place	Document review Key informant interviews

Intermediate Results	Workplan elements	Loc	Results	Evidence
	1.5.3 Operational transboundary cross-sectoral environmental governance platform for Mt Nimba (FFI)	PZ2	<p>A tripartite management framework agreement has been signed.</p> <p>There are contradictory reports concerning the status of the management plan for the East Nimba Nature Reserve that FFI is undertaking in cooperation with ArcelorMittal. FFI has not responded to multiple requests for a status report or if available a copy of the document, although it has furnished a briefing note dated Oct 2013 on the Proposed Management Plan Methodology for the Mount Nimba Massif. Nor has it responded to requests for additional information on the management effectiveness assessment tool.</p>	Document review
	1.5.4 Harmonize policy and legislation on NRM and biodiversity conservation in MRU member countries (FFI)	PZ2	<p>FFI hired an international policy expert, Mr. Emmanuel Moutondo, to undertake this work. However, early in the project cycle, a decision was taken by the interim Director, Stephanie Otis, to absorb this function into the STEWARD Secretariat. However, as discussed in 1.4.2, the cooperation between STEWARD and the MRU stalled during the tenure of Jan Broekhuis as Director, and discussions have recently commenced on completion of this workplan element</p> <p>Moutondo has produced a briefing note to the MRU on the challenges of extractive industries which makes some very preliminary steps in the direction of harmonization.</p>	Key informant interviews

**IR 2. Climate Change Adaptation: resilience to projected adverse effects of climate change improved**

2.1. Community-level knowledge of projected climate changes and adaptation strategies increased in communities and local government in target area	2.1.1 Identify local institutions, assess their current capacity, and develop a capacity building plan to augment their ability to carry out NRM and adapt to climate change (Bioclimate)	PZI	Bioclimate produced a land tenure analysis addressing local capacity and identifying a strategy in Feb 2013.	Document review Key informant interviews
	2.1.2 Build capacity of local institutions to carry out BMPs designed to reduce deforestation, improve NRM, and improve rural livelihoods (Bioclimate)	PZI	The focus in PZI has been on fire management as a basic driver of deforestation. Bioclimate has undertaken training of selected communities on land use planning and fire management, and has collaborated with CARE to scale this effort up within PZI. This effort has been well-received within the communities.	Document review Focus groups Key informant interviews
	2.1.3 Coordinate with CARE to standardize methodologies related to land-use planning and fire management for PZI (Bioclimate)	PZI	Reports indicate this is complete	Document review
	2.1.4 Train/refresh community groups on agroforestry, silviculture, NRM and apiculture (CARE)	PZI	Training and assistance to community groups is well advanced in both PZs. Awareness of biodiversity linkages by communities is limited	Key informant interviews Document review Focus groups
	2.1.5 Scale up successful and high potential biodiversity/environmentally friendly initiatives (CARE)	PZI	Options for scaling up are limited for wetland rice/fish production; strong uptake of beekeeping was observed and is being scaled up. The potential for scaling up vegetable gardens is strong in those areas with access to markets. NTFPs appear to be a missed opportunity.	Focus groups Key informant interviews Document review
	2.1.6 Strengthen forest co-management planning and implementation (CARE)	PZI	The evaluation team verified that forest co-management work is being implemented in the Kuru Hills, PZI.	Document review Key informant interviews

	2.1.7 Expand community managed forest areas (CARE)	PZ1	Two community forests expanded and three new community forests identified	Document review
	2.1.8 Promote sustainable livelihoods (CARE)	PZ1	Substantial sustainable livelihood efforts are under way. They are poorly connected to climate adaptation, and analysis of climate impacts on livelihoods, including guidance on promoting resilience, communities is not in evidence.	Focus groups Key informant interviews
	2.1.9 Support the establishment of community forests and agroforestry plantations (AUDER)	PZ2	Substantial effort is underway in community forestry including support for the establishment and training of community forest management committees and community fire management committees	Key informant interviews Focus groups Document review
2.2 National-level knowledge and capacity. Knowledge of projected climate changes and adaptation strategies increase in national government agencies in STEWARD countries.	2.2.1 Develop educational resources for national-level policy makers (FFI)	PZ2	FFI indicated that it had produced policy briefs but was unable to produce them. Forest Service produced a draft desktop vulnerability and adaptation study has been produced, but I.P.s, the MRU, and government officials are unaware of it.	Document review Key informant interviews
	2.2.2 Source GIS data and mapping activities that promote climate change adaptation (Thomson Reuters)	All	Land use and land cover change mapping is well advanced; GIS data compiled is available for climate adaptation planning, but does not include information from downscaled climate models. Additional hydrological studies that are expected to take into account climate change projections have not yet been done.	Document review Key informant interviews

<b>IR 3. Climate Change Mitigation: Greenhouse gas emissions reduced in target ecosystems</b>				
3.1 Community-Level Knowledge & Capacity - improved knowledge for low-emissions development in target areas. Target area emissions inventories produced, target area fire inventories produced.	3.1.1 Check boundaries of the project area and land use cover mapping for new PES community forest sites (Bioclimate)	PZI	Two new PES community forests were added to the project. There have been delays in developing a PES scheme due to a poor fit between community capacities, expectations, and the approach initially proposed. It has been proposed by the I.P., Bioclimate, that this effort and the lessons learned from it, be folded into a larger PES program being developed by ICRAF entitled BIODEV.	Key informant interviews document review
	3.1.2 Rapid assessment of biomass stock and identify threats and activities to reduce deforestation and degradation (Bioclimate)	PZI	Bioclimate has produced a biomass stock assessment using an innovative remote sensing technology involving satellite based side-aperture radar. This development has not yet been shared with the STEWARD program partners.	Document review Key informant interviews
	3.1.3 Extend Community Forest Monitoring System to new sites and reinforce community training (Bioclimate)	PZI	Bioclimate is developing participatory land-use and land tenure maps with its target communities. They were further refined by USGS and with support from Thomson Reuters. Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary used these maps in training STEWARD staff and community residents in an ongoing camera trap scheme in Bioclimate communities.  Through Bioclimate, the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana conducted training at targeted communities of measuring, reporting, and monitoring of forest carbon.	Document review Key informant interviews

**IR 3. Climate Change Mitigation: Greenhouse gas emissions reduced in target ecosystems**

<p>3.2 Community-level governance. Low-emissions development plans and actions developed.</p>	<p>3.2.1 Design locally appropriate and approved benefit-sharing mechanism (Bioclimate)</p>	<p>PZI</p> <p>Bioclimate had initially produced a scoping study for Plan Vivo Community PES certification based upon data it has collected and a literature review. A more detailed and quantified socioeconomic analysis was also undertaken for two PES pilot sites.</p> <p>Benefit-sharing is stalled due to complexities in negotiation with communities. The PES scheme as presented raised unrealistic expectations on the part of the communities creating an impasse on development of the PES program. Bioclimate has therefore refocused discussions to a cash-transfer model to a performance-based model with “in kind” payments, the nature of which is to be determined by the community, in lieu of consideration of direct cash transfers. This side-steps the issue of community governance and capacity building in financial management consistent with CBNRM principles.</p> <p>ICRAF has invited Bioclimate to participate in a larger PES scheme under Plan Vivo planned for Outamba Kilimi NP and environs by ICRAF through its BIODEV project; Bioclimate proposes to redirect efforts under STEWARD to project preparation for this activity.</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>
	<p>3.2.2 Source funds for PES certificates/Register project PIN with the Plan Vivo foundation and prepare for certificate sales (Bioclimate)</p>	<p>PZI</p> <p>Due to issues described in 3.2.1, Bioclimate has pivoted its approach to a performance-based approach system linked to climate mitigation benefits. Bioclimate proposes to link this to the ICRAF PES program under development at Outamba Kilimi NP.</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p>

<b>IR 3. Climate Change Mitigation: Greenhouse gas emissions reduced in target ecosystems</b>				
	3.2.3 Increase carbon stock in the project area (AUDER)	PZ2	AUDER has been actively developing agroforestry plantations; detailed reports are not yet available or have not been provided	Direct observation Key informant interviews
3.3 National level knowledge and capacity - improved knowledge for low emissions development at the national level.	3.3.1 Hold MRU PES workshop (Bioclimate/USFS)	PZ1	This has not taken place; discussions are underway with the EU REDD program about working with and through this much larger program to contribute to national capacity building. A policy brief from other Bioclimate project in Cameroon has been shared with EU REDD and MAFF officials in Sierra Leone.	Document review Key informant interviews
	3.3.2 Conduct feasibility study on integrating PES into OKNP (Bioclimate)	PZ1	This will be facilitated through cooperation with ICRAF.	Key informant interviews

<b>IR 3. Climate Change Mitigation: Greenhouse gas emissions reduced in target ecosystems</b>				
	3.3.3 Sourcing GIS data and mapping activities that promote climate change mitigation (Thomson Reuters)	All	<p>GIS capabilities for national level low emissions strategies have been developed. The USFS has obtained processed and georeferenced fire detection data from the MODIS satellite from 2001 to 2013 for all of West Africa. The USFS is using the data to show the seasonality and number of fires in the priority zones and around the 10 community forests, the 4 target communities, and the protected areas. They plan to use the fire interpretations in conjunction with biodiversity interpretations as well as the report on fire forces (suppression forces) created in PZ1. They are searching for supplemental funding to conduct the analysis for PZ2.</p> <p>Bioclimate has produced a biomass stock assessment using an innovative remote sensing technology involving satellite based side-aperture radar; it is not clear if or how this data will be integrated with the GIS land use/land cover data holdings of the project soon to be transferred to the MRU</p>	Key informant interviews
3.4 National Level Governance - improved national policies and plans for low-emissions development	(Cross referenced to 0.1.1.1) Develop and implement a communications strategy		<p>The communications strategy is developed and is well advanced in implementation.</p> <p>STEWARD has produced briefing notes on the REDD+ Agenda and Implications for Mano River Union member countries (Oct 2013), Contextualizing the Policy Discourse on Green Economy Transition for the Mano River Union Countries (March 2013), and a Brief on the Challenges of Extractive Industries in the MRU Countries (undated).</p>	<p>Direct observation</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Document reviews</p>

<b>IR 3. Climate Change Mitigation: Greenhouse gas emissions reduced in target ecosystems</b>				
	(Cross referenced to 0.1.12) Increase knowledge and skills for IRI 2 3 and 4, at national and transboundary level through radio drama		56% of people interviewed are regular listeners to the STEWARD program's radio drama and indicate increased awareness of the importance of forest conservation for biodiversity and climate change; this is supported through the project's own detailed monitoring	Document review Key informant interviews
	(Cross referenced to 0.1.13) Increase knowledge and skills ... through learning exchanges		Learning exchanges have been conducted and the results have been monitored. Evidence collected by the project support increase in knowledge through participation.  Capital City forums were reported by informants as filling an important need for information exchange not otherwise available.	Document review
<b>IR 4. Water - access to adequate supplies of clean water improved in target areas.</b>				
4.1 Knowledge and capacity. Knowledge for designing climate resilient water supply systems increased in target areas.			[Work has not been initiated]	
4.2 Climate-resilient water supply - climate change resilient water supply systems (institutions, governance, and infrastructure developed in target areas.			[Work has not been initiated]; work undertaken in IR 2 has produced improved understanding at the community level of linkages between sustainable forest management and water availability/water quality.	
4.3 National level governance - water management strengthened through laws, policies, strategies, agreements at national and transboundary levels.			[Work has not been initiated]	

## ANNEX VII: SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Date	Location	Activities	Personnel
9-Jun-14	Virtual/Washington	Desktop Study/DC Mtgs With USAID, USFS	Team leader and technical advisor
10-Jun-14	Virtual/Washington	Desktop Study/DC Mtgs With USAID, USFS	Team leader and technical advisor
11-Jun-14	Virtual/Washington	Desktop Study/DC Mtgs With USAID, USFS	Team leader and technical advisor
12-Jun-14	Virtual/Washington	Desktop Study/DC Mtgs With USAID, USFS	Team leader and technical advisor
13-Jun-14	Virtual/Washington	Desktop Study/DC Mtgs With USAID, USFS	Team leader and technical advisor
14-Jun-14	Douala and Washington	Travel	Team leader and technical advisor
15-Jun-14	Accra, Ghana	Travel	Team leader and technical advisor
16-Jun-14	Accra, Ghana	In - Brief	Team leader and technical advisor
17-Jun-14	Monrovia, Liberia	Team Orientation	Full team and technical advisor
18-Jun-14	Monrovia, Liberia	Team Orientation, USAID Liberia Meeting	Full team and technical advisor
19-Jun-14	N'zerekore, Guinea	Travel, Orientation	Team Leader and team
20-Jun-14	N'zerekore, Guinea	Meeting With PZ 2 Staff	Team Leader and team
21-Jun-14	N'Zerekore Environs	Key Informant Interviews, Site Visits	Team Leader and team
22-Jun-14	N'Zerekore Environs	Key Informant Interviews, Site Visits	Team Leader and team
23-Jun-14	N'Zerekore Environs	Key Informant Interviews, Site Visits	Team Leader and team
24-Jun-14	N'Zerekore Environs	Key Informant Interviews, Site Visits	Team Leader and team
25-Jun-14	Thuo, Sarengara, and Bossou, Guinea	Focus Group Meetings	Team Leader and team
26-Jun-14	Doromou, Guinea and Gbapleu, Côte d'Ivoire	Focus Group Meetings, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
27-Jun-14	N'Zerekore Environs	Site Visits	Team Leader and team
28-Jun-14	N'Zerekore Environs	Site Visits	Team Leader and team
29-Jun-14	N'zerekore, Guinea	Day Off	Team Leader and team
30-Jun-14	N'zerekore-Monrovia	Travel	Team Leader and team
1-Jul-14	Monrovia, Liberia	Compilation of Findings	Team Leader and team
2-Jul-14	Monrovia-Freetown	Travel	Team Leader and team

3-Jul-14	Freetown Sierra Leone	Meeting With STEWARD Staff	Team Leader and team
4-Jul-14	Freetown - Madina-Oula	Travel	Team Leader and team
5-Jul-14	Madina-Oula, Guinea	Meeting With PZ I Staff	Team Leader and team
6-Jul-14	Madina-Oula, Guinea	(Day Off)	Team Leader and team
7-Jul-14	Madina-Oula and Kansema, Guinea	Focus Group Meetings, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
8-Jul-14	Badet Kanty, Guinea	Focus Group Meeting, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
9-Jul-14	Berthea, Guiea	Focus Group Meeting, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
10-Jul-14	Fintonia, Sierra Leone	Meeting With PZ I Staff	Team Leader and team
11-Jul-14	Kotor, Sierra Leone	Focus Group Meeting, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
12-Jul-14	Sumata, Sierra Leone	Focus Group Meeting, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
13-Jul-14	Sanya and Samaya, Sierra Leone	Focus Group Meetings, Key Informant Interviews	Team Leader and team
14-Jul-14	Fintonia, Sierra Leone	Site Inspections	Team Leader and team
15-Jul-14	Makeni, Sierra Leone	Meeting With Officials, Travel	Team Leader and team
16-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Compilation of Findings, Meet With IPs, STEWARD	Team Leader and team
17-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Compilation of Findings, Meet With IPs, STEWARD	Team Leader and team
18-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Compilation of Findings, Meeting With MAFF	Team Leader and team
19-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Compilation of Findings	Full team and technical advisor
20-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	(Day Off)	
21-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Compilation of Findings, Prepare Briefing	Full team and technical advisor
22-Jul-14	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Briefing, Consultation With Stakeholders, MRU	Full team and technical advisor
23-Jul-14	Accra, Ghana	Compilation of Report	Team leader and technical advisor
24-Jul-14	Accra, Ghana	Compilation of Report	Team leader and technical advisor
25-Jul-14	Accra, Ghana	Debrief Mission	Team leader and technical advisor
26-Jul-14	Accra, Ghana	(Day Off)	Team leader and technical advisor
27-Jul-14	Accra, Ghana	Delivery of Draft Report	Team leader and technical advisor
28-Jul-14	Accra, Ghana	Travel To Home Station	Technical advisor

29-Jul-14 Accra, Ghana

Travel To Home Station

Team Leader

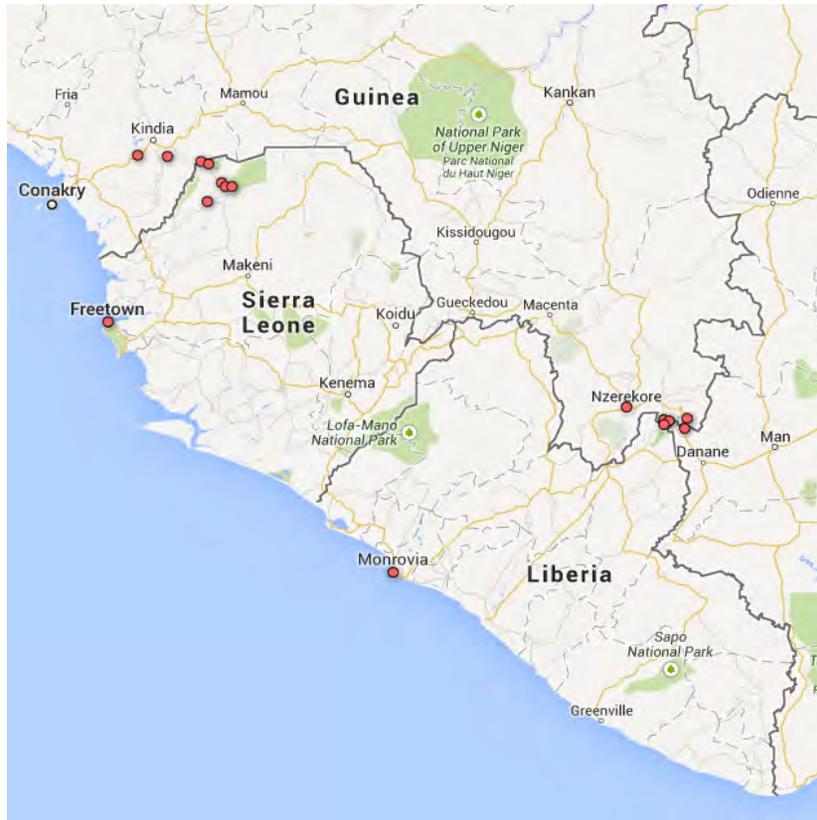


Figure 3: Sites Visited

## ANNEX VIII: EVALUATION TEAM

### Evaluation Team Leader (Key Personnel)

**Martin Nganje, PhD.** Dr. Nganje is an expert in tropical forest and biodiversity conservation and management. His expertise includes forestry and rural sector policy development, project design, implementation, and evaluation, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes. His regional experience has addressed REDD readiness, fire management, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based natural resources management. Nganje served in West Africa for the International Union for Conservation of Nature from 2004-2013, first as Coordinator for Protected Areas, Forests and Arid Zones, and then as Senior Forestry Program Officer for West and Central Africa. More recently he has worked as an independent consultant on the Forest and Farm Facility in Liberia. Nganje, a native of Cameroon, is proficient in French and English. He holds a Master of Science degree in Forest Resource Management from the University of Edinburgh (UK), and a PhD in Management from California Coast University (USA), with a concentration in forest management.

### Evaluation Team Members

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Expert was **Aiah R. Lebbie, PhD.** Dr. Lebbie is the head of the Department of Biological Sciences at Njala University in Sierra Leone. He worked from 2005-2013 as the Liberia Country Director and Regional Technical Coordinator for the Environmental Foundation for Africa. His experience as an international consultant includes work environmental impacts and refugee operations in the Sahel and in the DRC, work on biodiversity and non-timber forest products in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire, work on landscapes and livelihood strategies in Liberia, work with environmental impacts of artisanal logging in Liberia, and on watershed ecosystem services in Sierra Leone. Lebbie also supported the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Sierra Leone under the UNDP, and conducted biodiversity assessments in the Cote d'Ivoire. Lebbie, a Sierra Leone national, holds a Master of Science degree in Conservation Biology, and a PhD in forestry from the University of Wisconsin.

The Forestry and Community Based Natural Resources Management Expert was **Richard S. Sambolah.** **Sambolah**, a citizen of Liberia, has more than 20 years of experience in community forestry, agroforestry, and forest landscape restoration. He worked for the Forestry Development Authority of Liberia from 1977 to 2002, managing its reforestation projects between 1996 and 2002. From 2002 to 2014 he worked as a program officer for Fauna and Flora International in Liberia. While with FFI he participated in biomonitoring teams, established community forestry projects in the buffer zone of Sapo National Park, and coordinated its Cultural Values in Conservation Program. He was a founder and acting Executive Director of the NGO Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment in 2011-and 2012, and remains active in that organization. Sambolah received a BSc in Forestry from the University of Liberia, and an advanced certificate in Social and Community Forestry from the University of Oxford.

### Technical Advisor

**John Waugh** is Integra's Environment and Natural Resources Practice Manager. He has worked on CBNRM issues for over thirty years and has significant monitoring and evaluation experience, including the design of a system for monitoring management effectiveness for a regional network of protected areas, the evaluation of a World Bank/GEF regional biodiversity project, and internal program evaluation for IUCN. He has extensive knowledge of USAID policies and programs, experience in the region spanning 30 years, and current experience in REDD+ readiness, community benefit sharing mechanisms, and community climate adaptation. Waugh worked in PZI for more than 3 years (1985-1988) as WWF Project Manager for Outamba-Kilimi National Park, Executive Secretary for the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, and as a US Peace Corps Volunteer.

## ANNEX IX: COMMUNITY FORESTRY ACTIVITIES

The level of improvement of each Forest Management committee was also reviewed in relationship to the stages of community forestry approach. The results of this review are reflected in the table below:

N°	Forest / Village	Date of Creation	Surface (ha)	Level of progress on Community Forestry approach						Intervention already
				Forest and demarcated	Land Contract Signed	Statute and Rules of Procedure established	Agreement available	Management plan developed		
Community Forests of Sierra Leone										
1	CF Sumata	2010	60	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high-value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
2	CF Sanya	2010	340	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation apiaries	
3	CF Fintonia	2011	TBD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
4	CF Kotor	2011	TBD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
5	CF Komoyah	2011	TBD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
6	CF Samayah	2011	TBD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
7	CF Fond khorì	2011	TBD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
8	CF Yanah	2011	TBD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No		
9	CF Yamba	2013	TBD	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	- Fire belt	
Community Forests of Guinea										
10	Kanssèma	2010	649	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
11	Badet Kanty	2010	810	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
12	CF Sékoussoriyah	2010	117	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries	
13	C F Kholba	2010	570	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees;	

N°	Forest / Village	Date of Creation	Surface (ha)	Level of progress on Community Forestry approach					Intervention already
				Forest and demarcated	Land Contract Signed	Statute and Rules of Procedure established	Agreement available	Management plan developed	
									- Fire belt - Installation of apiaries
14	Beyen –Beyen	2010	366	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries
15	Kagbelen	2011	169	Yes	No	No	No	No	- Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt - Installation of apiaries
16	Madina Oula	2011	116	Yes	No	No	No	No	Enrichment with high value trees; - Fire belt
17	Famayah	2013	TBD	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Fire belt
18	Kébéguiyah	2013	TBD	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Fire belt

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