

Independent Office
of Evaluation



Investing in rural people

Republic of Liberia
Smallholder Tree Crop
Revitalization Support Project

PROJECT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION



Independent Office
of Evaluation



IFAD

Investing in rural people

Republic of Liberia

Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project

Project Performance Evaluation

March 2020

Report No. 5358-LR

Document of the International Fund for Agricultural Development

Photos of activities supported by the Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project

Front cover: Project interventions aimed at empowering women were challenged by the lack of women-owned cocoa and coffee plantations. The women of Sebehill Farmers' Cooperative, Kolahun District – support by the project – addressed this by forming an association which processes cocoa shells into soap.

Back cover: Members of the Sebehill Farmers' Cooperative, Kolahun District, standing in a rehabilitated cocoa crop. The support provided by the project to cocoa producer cooperatives allowed poor farmers to rehabilitate their cocoa and coffee crops, and to increase the quantity of cocoa produced and sold to market (left); A dryer built for Quapatamai Multipurpose Farmers' Cooperative Society, Salayea District (right).

©IFAD/James Gasana

This report is a product of staff of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD and the findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of IFAD Member States or the representatives to its Executive Board. The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IFAD concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The designations "developed" and "developing" countries are intended for statistical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

All rights reserved.

©2020 by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Preface

This report presents the findings of the project performance evaluation of the Liberia Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP), conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office of IFAD (IOE).

STCRSP was a unique rural development project opportunity and a key investment that addressed the country's needs in rehabilitating two strategic value chains – cocoa and coffee. The contribution of these value chains to the country's economic growth and the well-being of the rural population in producer counties was severely impaired by the devastating 14-year civil war. It was therefore an important first step to rehabilitate the value chains of these two crops. Hence the project's focus on cocoa and coffee tree crop revitalization and rural road rehabilitation in Lofa County, one of the country's most important cocoa-producing counties.

The project enhanced agricultural extension services, enabled the targeted poor cocoa and coffee growers to gain access to markets through their cooperatives and to be paid a better price, and supported the partnership between those cooperatives and a private sector cocoa buyer company. Its investment in rural road rehabilitation further improved access to markets, and this intervention was particularly successful where roads are close to international borders, as they boost cross-border trade.

However, the project lacked an effective operational strategy for gender and youth inclusiveness. Its road rehabilitation targets were considerably reduced, and consequently many farmers remained unreached and some districts were still cut off during the rainy season. Although the market power and influence of farmers' cooperatives were strengthened as a result of cocoa farm rehabilitation, the results remain fragile due to the role played by middle buyers, who offer competitive cocoa prices: this creates incentives to cooperative members for side-selling, which reduces the role of cooperatives as market intermediary and puts their financial viability in peril.

The project design focused on both production and marketing through a value-chain approach. However, the project worked with only one private sector partner and had limited success in implementing the value chain model. It addressed some of the value chain development aspects and mostly in the upstream end of the chain.

This project performance evaluation was led by Catrina Perch, Evaluation Officer, IOE, with important analytical contributions from James K. Gasana, senior evaluation consultant, and technical inputs by Dorsue Y. Smith, national consultant. Internal IOE peer reviewers Fabrizio Felloni, IOE Deputy Director, and Johanna Pennarz, IOE Lead Evaluation Officer, provided substantial comments on the draft report. Maria Cristina Spagnolo, IOE Evaluation Assistant, provided administrative support.

IOE is grateful to IFAD's West and Central Africa Division, the Government of Liberia, as well as in-country stakeholders and partners for their collaboration and useful contributions at various stages of the evaluation process. I hope that the results of this evaluation will be of use to help improve IFAD operations and to guide the Government's continuing support to development efforts for the rural poor in Liberia.



Oscar A. Garcia
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

Contents

Currency equivalent, weights and measures	ii
Abbreviations and acronyms	ii
Map of the project area	iii
Executive summary	v
IFAD Management's response	xii
I. Evaluation objectives, methodology and process	1
II. Project overview	3
A. National context	3
B. Project description	4
C. Project implementation	7
III. Main evaluation findings	12
A. Project performance and rural poverty impact	12
B. Rural poverty impact	23
C. Other performance criteria	27
D. Overall project achievement	32
E. Performance of partners	33
F. Assessment of the quality of the project completion report	36
IV. Conclusions and recommendations	37
A. Conclusions	37
B. Recommendations	38
Annexes	
I. Basic project data	39
II. Definition and rating of the evaluation criteria used by IOE	40
III. Rating comparison	42
IV. Approach paper	43
V. List of key people met	51
VI. Complementary data: programme financing	53
VII. Bibliography	55

Currency equivalent, weights and measures

Currency equivalent

Currency unit = Liberian Dollar (LRD)

US\$1.00 = LRD 160.809

Abbreviations and acronyms

AWPB	annual work plan and budget
CAC	county agricultural coordinator
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
DAO	district agriculture officer
EIRR	economic internal rate of return
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	foreign direct investment
GAP	good agricultural practice
GDP	gross domestic product
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
LAADCO	Liberia Assets and Agriculture Development Company
LASIP	Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MPW	Ministry of Public Works
NSC	National Steering Committee
PCR	project completion report
PIU	project implementation unit
PMU	project management unit
PPE	project performance evaluation
PPP	purchasing power parity
RIMS	results and impact management system
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
STCRSP	Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project
TCEP/TCEPII	Tree Crop Extension Projects (phases I –II respectively)
TOC	theory of change
USAID	United Nations Agency for International Development
YP	young professional

Map of the project area

Liberia

Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project

Project performance evaluation



The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IFAD concerning the delimitation of the frontiers or boundaries, or the authorities thereof.

IFAD Map compiled by IFAD | 01-10-2019

Executive summary

Background

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) has undertaken the project performance evaluation (PPE) of the Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support project (STCRSP) in the Republic of Liberia in 2019. The development objective of the project was to reduce post-conflict poverty and food insecurity, and improve the livelihoods and living conditions of rural communities. This was to be achieved through three specific objectives: (i) raise the quantity sold and price received by poor farmers through plantation rehabilitation; (ii) improve access to markets through road rehabilitation; and (iii) reinforce the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture and private providers, and strengthen farmer organizations. The project had four components: (i) coffee and cocoa revitalization; (ii) rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads; (iii) institutional capacity-building; and (iv) project management.
2. This PPE is the first evaluation conducted by IOE in Liberia. Its objectives were to: (i) assess the results of the project; and (ii) generate findings and recommendations for designing future projects and implementing ongoing operations in the country.

Methodology

3. The PPE follows the IFAD Evaluation Policy and the IFAD IOE Evaluation Manual (second edition). Data collection methods included desk research and review, interviews with various stakeholders and key informants (e.g. former project staff, project lead and implementation partner agencies, IFAD staff), focus group discussions with beneficiaries (e.g. cooperatives, women's groups); interviews with individual beneficiaries (e.g. farmers); and direct observations (e.g. plantations).
4. The evaluation also takes into account information provided by the project design documents, the project completion report, the supervision reports, and the project status reports with self-assessment ratings and data on the standard indicators in line with the IFAD's results and impact management system. It also reviewed and used the available impact studies.
5. The mission to Liberia took place from 8 to 18 April 2019. The evaluation team conducted interviews with the main stakeholders and partners of the project, both in the capital, Monrovia, and in Lofa County.
6. The first draft version of the evaluation report was subject to an internal quality control process in the form of a peer review. The observations of the peer review were used to prepare a revised draft report.

Project context

7. Poverty in Liberia is widespread. The 2016 household survey showed that 50.9 per cent of households were living below the national poverty line.¹ Between 2007 and 2014, the national headcount poverty rate dropped from 64 per cent to 54 per cent; however, due to rapid population growth, the total number of poor Liberians increased by 8 per cent.² Despite a nominal increase in recent years, Liberia's Human Development Index value of 0.427, compared to a sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.523, ranks the country 177th out of 188 countries and places it in the low human development category.

¹ Baffoe, J. & Mwasambili, R. (2018). 2018 African Economic Outlook – Liberia.

https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/country_notes/Liberia_country_note.pdf

² World Bank Group (2018). Republic of Liberia: From Growth to Development: Priorities for Sustainably Reducing Poverty and Achieving Middle-Income Status by 2030 Systematic Country Diagnostic.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/585371528125859387/pdf/LBR-SCD-draft-10-06012018.pdf>

8. The project activities were implemented in the six districts of Lofa County in the northernmost portion of the country. This county is the poorest in the country, with a poverty incidence of 76 per cent. At the time of project design, the county had a total of six districts.
9. The project targeted: (i) poor smallholders with less than two hectares of land and relying on subsistence farming; (ii) households headed by women; (iii) young people; and (iv) war-wounded and disabled people. In total, the number of beneficiaries targeted was 15,000 smallholder cocoa/coffee farmers who would benefit directly from support to productive activities related to tree crops.
10. **Relevance.** The project objectives were relevant to national policies and priorities at design and remained so during the lifetime of the project. In particular, the objectives addressed Liberia's priorities as described in the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme, specifically the priority on competitive value chains and market linkages. STCRSP remained relevant to the later-developed National Export Strategy for Cocoa (2014-2018).
11. The delivery model of improving farmers' access to markets through their cooperatives was relevant to cocoa as a global value chain commodity. It aims to bring about change through support to input supply, production, storage, processing and marketing, and was innovative in the Liberian context.
12. The overall targeting strategy was simple but not specific enough to cater for the needs of different groups. For example, although quotas were established for women and youth, the project design did not provide guidance on how to address gender and youth issues during implementation.
13. **Effectiveness.** The project rehabilitated 85 per cent of the targeted 15,000 hectares of cocoa and coffee farms. Its combined approach on delivering on cocoa farm rehabilitation, rural road rehabilitation and institution-building was effective. The project supported the partnership between the cooperatives and a private sector cocoa buyer company. This partnership enabled cocoa growers to have access to markets through their cooperatives and to be paid a better price. However, farmers found that the middlemen were paying them better prices and they started side-selling their cocoa beans as competition among buyers intensified.
14. The project rehabilitated 133.1 km of roads, i.e. 42.3 per cent of the original target and 86.7 per cent of the revised target. As the road targets were considerably reduced, many farmers remained unreached and some districts were still cut off during the rainy season. Nevertheless, the investment in rural roads has allowed increased access to markets and is particularly successful where roads are close to borders.
15. The project was also effective with regard to reinforcing the extension services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and private providers and in strengthening farmers' organizations. With regard to building the cooperatives' capacity, which is an ongoing process, the best-performing area is that of internal management (e.g. the functioning of the elected boards and the appointment of good management personnel through a competitive vetting process). The market power of cooperatives was increased but is still fragile. Farmers' participation in cocoa farm rehabilitation activities and cocoa bean production increases have contributed to the increased growth and influence of the cooperatives.
16. **Efficiency.** STCRSP's time lag from approval to effectiveness (7.1 months) is identical with the regional average for projects approved between 2011 and 2017³ and significantly better than the average for Liberia (based on three projects) of 15.6 months. The project put in place key internal controls (e.g. fuel cards, vehicle

³ Computation by the PPE team based on the IFAD database (Oracle Business Intelligence).

log movement sheets, operational cost controls) and operated with a high level of financial discipline.

17. The unit cost of US\$48,434 per km for the rehabilitation of rural roads was higher than the average for the Northern region (US\$36,000 – US\$40,000) as provided by the Ministry of Public Works. However, the unit cost per km road is contingent on the road width and the distance and topography of the location of the project implementation area. Many of the roads chosen required earthmoving and other road equipment and not just rehabilitation, leading to increased unit cost. The Project Completion Report performed a detailed economic analysis: the overall economic internal rate of return was estimated at 8.4 per cent, much lower than the ex ante internal rate of return provided in the President's report (32 per cent), due to higher costs than planned. The efficiency of the project was mixed. While disbursement rates were quite good, and the time lags compared favourably with regional averages, the budget overruns in certain components were charged to the IFAD loan.

Rural poverty impact

18. **Household income and assets.** The impact studies commissioned by the project found that the increase in income for STCRSP farmers was significantly larger (in year 2015/2016) than the increase observed by non-STCRSP farmers in Lofa County (39 per cent for STCRSP farmers against 6 per cent for non-STCRSP farmers). STCRSP farmers obtained similar revenues in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 seasons compared to the baseline study, but revenues during the 2015/2016 season were significantly higher. The impact studies showed that in many cases STCRSP farmers used increased income to invest in their children's education.
19. **Food security and agricultural productivity.** Using the number of meals consumed per day as a proxy for food security, the impact studies showed that there is no significant difference in food security between STCRSP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The project focused only on cocoa rehabilitation and promoted cocoa good agricultural practices (GAPs), and there were no clear spillover effects on the productivity of other components of the farming systems.
20. **Productivity increase.** As with income, productivity increased for both STCRSP farmers and non-STCRSP farmers during the project period. The fact that there was an increase for both beneficiary farmers and non-beneficiary farmers suggests that there were other factors besides cocoa rehabilitation that influenced cocoa production.
21. **Human and social capital and empowerment.** Using the cooperatives as an entry point, STCRSP laid the foundation for collective action. This was an important achievement in a post-conflict context. The cooperatives represented not only a collective enterprise formed by rural farmers, but also an association of people who are governed by defined bylaws, which promoted democratic and people-oriented enterprises.
22. Through the cooperatives, the project enabled the target beneficiaries to begin the transition from survival mode to recovered livelihoods. The backbone of the project's success was the investment in human capital and empowering the farmers to increase cocoa/coffee productivity and improve cocoa bean quality, and their cooperatives to provide cocoa marketing services to their membership. The training provided to young professionals and farmers was particularly important, as it related directly to cocoa farm rehabilitation.
23. **The roads contributed to improvements on other farm activities and village life in general.** Roads rehabilitated by the project offered many benefits to target areas, including reduced transportation costs, reduced travel time, reduced prices of basic commodities, reduced deterioration of quality of commodities during transportation, easier transport of the sick to health centres, and increased trade

exchange with neighbouring countries. The delivery of services to farmers increased. This included the improved mobility of the county agricultural coordinator and district agricultural officers.

24. **Institutions and policies.** STCRSP was not involved in policy development, but the lack of a regulatory framework impacted negatively. One of the main constraints to the development of the cocoa value chain in Liberia was the absence of a strategy and regulatory regime that supported smallholder farmers while creating viable interactions between respective upstream and downstream actors. Overall, the project did not have a significant impact on the policy and national strategy for the development of the entire cocoa and coffee value chains. However, it did play a role in institution-building.
25. **Sustainability.** The sustainability of the benefit streams generated by STCRSP varied by component and faces many challenges. The cooperatives were unable to ensure continued marketing services to their members. Their capacity to collect cocoa beans was already reduced by lack of adequate resources to pay cash to farmers when their produce was collected. This has encouraged side-selling to middlemen. There are important threats to the operational capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture's (MOA) local services because trained young professionals who worked on the project were not integrated by MOA when it ended. At the time of the evaluation, the roads were in reasonable working order but their long-term maintenance was not certain. However, many of the challenges currently faced will be addressed by the Tree Crops Extension Project II, a recently approved follow-on project, which plans to work with the same target group with similar objectives, and will continue supporting cocoa farm rehabilitation.
26. **Scaling up.** There has been no attempt to scale up results. The project did not have a theory of change, let alone a theory of change for scaling up its results. During implementation, MOA did not establish a platform for scaling up the results of the project. It did not use these results to inform cocoa value chain development policies or convince other organizations to adopt the project approaches. Yet, the potential for scaling up some of the results existed (e.g. the partnership between cooperatives and the private sector). More importantly perhaps was the need for using lessons in order to inform policy processes to regulate the sector; this has not (yet) taken place.
27. **Gender equality and women's empowerment.** Overall, there was limited attention to gender within the project, apart from establishing quotas. STCRSP did not properly consider that women generally have less access to land, low tenure security, less access to labour than men and that they can face higher production costs, thus hindering their ability to perform to the same level as men. Owning a cocoa farm was the main criterion for participating in the project, which largely deprived women of full project benefits, since they generally lack control over land in the traditional rural framework. Consequently, none of the targets for women's participation were met. The number of women reached by the project was only 19 per cent of the beneficiaries. Although there were no obstacles to their membership in the cooperatives, they were inadequately represented on the boards of these cooperatives (an average of 22 per cent of women on the boards).
28. **Natural resources management and the environment.** Rehabilitation of cocoa farms has helped contain deforestation. The current practice of growing cocoa/coffee trees under mature tree cover do not affect the existing vegetation structure on the farm, as they do not imply any removal of tree crops or shade trees. Consequently, STCRSP did not have any negative environmental or natural resources impact because its focus was on the revitalization of cocoa trees in existing farms and the rehabilitation of existing roads. There was no new land, forested or not, that has been put under cocoa cultivation with the project's support. The structural system of the agroforest on the beneficiaries' farms was not

greatly altered. Road rehabilitation activities did not have an impact on the environment, or on natural resources. The roads were not new, and the work consisted in rehabilitating existing roads.

29. **Adaptation to climate change.** Climate change risk was not analysed during the design phase of the project. The project did not undertake specific activities to raise the Lofa County cocoa sector's awareness of the negative impact of deforestation. However, the current cocoa/coffee production practices, under shade trees and with GAPs promoted by the project, contributed to enhanced resilience of cocoa to climate change. It is also worth noting that the project provided farmers with early-maturing cocoa varieties with a potential to enhance adaptation to climate change, although it remained at a very small scale.

Conclusions

30. **A challenging context.** STCRSP's main objective was to reduce post-conflict poverty and food insecurity and improve livelihoods. The target population was extremely poor, with very low levels of literacy and numeracy. Their contact with the wider economy and society was limited by lack of roads and services. In addition, the post-conflict environment had led to an economic and social breakdown. The Ebola outbreak, which erupted in the project county during project implementation, eroded important gains Liberia had made in reducing poverty and vulnerability. In such a context, it was a tall order to develop value chains, especially when such activities were to be implemented by revived cooperatives supported by county and district agricultural officers whose capacity for service delivery was barely established.
31. **Through its support to integrated value chains, STCRSP contributed to the increased bargaining power of smallholder farmers.** During the project period, the number of cocoa buyers increased – large and small, at both national and local levels. STCRSP promoted a new type of partnership for the farmers which focused on investing in lasting relations. The emergence of this type of partnership, coupled with more buyers, increased competition for cocoa from smallholders and ultimately strengthened the market position and bargaining power of smallholder farmers. However, the increased competition, in particular from middlemen, also posed challenges to the project and ultimately weakened the position of the cooperatives and the partnership with the private sector.
32. **STCRSP successfully contributed to improved livelihoods and enabled farmers to make the transition from survival mode to recovered livelihoods (although with no obvious impact on food security).** It applied a market-oriented approach to facilitate access of smallholder cocoa growers to markets and simultaneously supported cocoa farm rehabilitation, road rehabilitation and institutional capacity. This strategy allowed farmers to accelerate the rehabilitation of cocoa farms that had become unproductive after several years of war, increasing both productivity and quality. As a result of these efforts, the volume of cocoa went up. In achieving this outcome, STCRSP was helped by favourable global cocoa market prices up until 2016. This trend was therefore not unique to STCRSP farmers, but the percentage improvement was higher for STCRSP beneficiaries. However, the project focused mostly on cocoa rehabilitation and promoted cocoa GAPs, and there were no clear spillover effects on the other components of the farming systems. For this reason, the farmers did not gain any additional skills for increased productivity of food crops or livestock.
33. **The targeting strategy did not adequately capture all the intended target groups.** The project reached a total of 12,800 households, representing 85 per cent of the target; of these 10,314 were cocoa-farming households and 2,486 were coffee-farming households. Of the total outreach, 10,368 were male-headed households and 2,432 were female-headed households. The targeting strategy consisted of recruiting members of the cooperatives and those who were

in possession of one hectare of land. Hence, the quotas established for women and youth were not reached because the project design did not consider that in general these two groups had limited or no access to land planted with cocoa and lacked financial resources to buy it.

34. **STCRSP operated in a regulatory vacuum which negatively affected its success.** Liberia lacks a regulatory framework that can provide incentives to cocoa growers to increase productivity and improve cocoa produce, and to attract more private sector investment in cocoa value chain upgrading. The main aspects that an appropriate framework in the country's context should cover are: creating standards for quality seedlings to replace old cocoa trees; easing access of producers to inputs (e.g. seeds, seedlings, equipment, phytosanitary inputs); promoting easy access of youth and women to land for cocoa farming; improving access to finance for small-scale cocoa producers; and strengthening institutions for research and technology generation aimed at improving cocoa sector productivity and cocoa value chain upgrading.
35. **The focus was on upstream constraints, thus limiting downstream interventions to facilitation of contracts between cooperatives and only one private sector company.** This limited focus meant that STCRSP was not able to address constraints across the segments of the value chain and ultimately limited the project's impact. As a value chain project, STCRSP was therefore less successful.

Recommendations

36. **Recommendation 1. Future IFAD cocoa value chain development projects should focus on addressing constraints upstream and paying increased attention to downstream nodes.** Special attention should be paid to shortages of critical inputs (e.g. quality seedlings), poor storage and drying conditions, inadequate warehouse capacity and use, and the lack of motivation among cooperative members. Empowered cooperatives should focus on actions that build household resilience by equipping farmers with GAPs and opportunities to adjust farm management practices to better cope with economic and other risks. Downstream attention should focus on interventions that support farmers and their organizations to add value to their produce, and that promote an equitable share of benefits. Future projects should therefore support the cooperatives in:
(i) addressing constraints to credit; (ii) building managerial and organizational capacities and negotiations skills; and (iii) building the capacity of the cooperatives to better serve their members (e.g. inputs, extension, training, collection). Once the cooperatives have been strengthened sufficiently, future projects could consider supporting the formalization of a union of the cooperatives at county level in order for the cooperatives to sell directly on the international market.
37. **Recommendation 2. Any future project must address the problems relating to the policy and regulatory environment.** Based on its experience gained with STCRSP, IFAD is well positioned to feed lessons into newly established government institutions and processes. In addition, a number of other donors (e.g. the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development, GrowLiberia) have been testing different models in the tree crop sector, and there is now a need to consolidate this knowledge and ensure that experience informs the development of the sector. The newly established Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulator would be a natural entry point for IFAD. In addition, IFAD should support forums and other mechanisms that involve farmer unions, civil society and private sector organization in the cocoa policy processes.
38. **Recommendation 3. IFAD's projects should enhance support to the development of women's entrepreneurship in both upstream and downstream nodes of the cocoa value chain.** This could include support to the formation of female cooperatives, production of seedlings, drying of beans, and

transformation of by-products. Activities should focus on: (i) building bargaining skills; (ii) training women in technical and managerial skills and (iii) addressing constraints on access to credit. A similar focus should be applied for the inclusion of youth in cocoa value chain entrepreneurship.

IFAD Management's response¹

1. Management welcomes the project performance evaluation of the Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP) implemented in the Republic of Liberia and the good quality of the report.
2. Management agrees with IOE's overall assessment of the project's performance and is pleased to note that the report highlights that the combined approach on delivering cocoa farm rehabilitation, rural road rehabilitation and institution building was effective and that the project managed to increase production, facilitate market access and strengthen extension service delivery.
3. At the same time, Management recognizes that several cooperatives were unable to ensure continued marketing services to their members after the project closed, thereby questioning the sustainability. Management also agrees that there was a limited attention to gender within the project, which is crucial considering that women generally have less access to land and labour and may face higher production costs. Finally, budget overruns for certain components could have been managed better during the lifetime of the project.
4. Management appreciates the PPE recommendations, of which some are already being internalized and acted upon. Management's detailed view on the proposed recommendations are presented below:

(a) ***Recommendation 1. Future IFAD cocoa value chain development projects should focus on fixing constraints upstream and paying increased attention to downstream nodes.***

Agreed. Management agrees to the recommendation to work along the full value chain. In fact, the ongoing IFAD-financed Tree Crop Extension Project (TCEP) is currently establishing a national cocoa seed garden, which will provide improved planting material for the Liberian cocoa sector in the future. Concerning cocoa production, the portfolio will build on the good practices established under STCRSP but provide further emphasis on improving quality. The ongoing portfolio in the cocoa sector, i.e. TCEP in Nimba County and TCEP-II in Lofa County, will support the strengthening of cooperatives particularly with regard to their internal governance and negotiation skills. This will strengthen the bargaining power of the cooperatives vis-à-vis the private sector. Finally, the IFAD-financed Rural Community and Finance Project (RCFP) will provide support to the financial inclusion of the cocoa farmers.

(b) ***Recommendation 2. Any future project must address the problems relating to the policy and regulatory environment.***

Agreed. Management agrees on the general recommendation that IFAD should address issues related to the policy and regulatory environment in the cocoa sector. IFAD currently participates in relevant meetings related to the cocoa sector with the Government and the donor community although the lack of an IFAD Country Office is an obstacle to full participation. IFAD commits to feed lessons from the past and ongoing portfolio in the cocoa sector to the Liberia Agriculture Commodities Regulatory Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture in a systematic manner to inform policy. Management also commits to support the Government with information, and possibly support to study trips, in its ongoing discussions about the institutional set-up, which supports the cocoa sector in Liberia.

¹ The Programme Management Department sent the final Management's response to the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on 15 October 2019.

- (c) ***Recommendation 3. IFAD's projects should enhance support to the development of women's entrepreneurship in both upstream and downstream nodes of the cocoa-value chain.***

Agreed. Management fully agrees that the inclusion of women and youth should be mainstreamed in the IFAD-portfolio in Liberia. Management commits to use household methodologies such as the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) or similar measures to improve income, food and nutrition security of vulnerable people, including women and youth. Similarly, the IFAD-financed country programme will provide specific training for women in technical and managerial skills and facilitate financial inclusion through the RCFP.

5. Management thanks IOE for the productive process and is committed to internalize lessons learned and outcomes of this exercise to further improve the performance of IFAD-funded programmes in Liberia and elsewhere.

Republic of Liberia

Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project

Project Performance Evaluation

I. Evaluation objectives, methodology and process

1. **Background.** The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) has undertaken a project performance evaluation (PPE) of the Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP) to assess its results and impact and to generate findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in Liberia. In particular, the evaluation will be of relevance to the follow-on projects Tree Crop Extension Projects I and II (TCEP/TCEPII) approved in 2015 and 2018, respectively.
2. **Methodology.** The PPE follows the IFAD Evaluation policy and the IFAD IOE Evaluation Manual (second edition). It adopts a set of internationally recognized evaluation criteria and a six-point rating scale (annex III). The evaluation was based on a desk review of available data and documents¹ and a country mission including field visits.
3. Data collection methods included desk research and review, interviews with various stakeholders and key informants (e.g. former project staff, project lead and implementation partner agencies, IFAD staff), focus group discussion with beneficiaries (e.g. cooperatives, women's groups), interviews with individual beneficiaries (e.g. farmers), and direct observations (e.g. plantations).
4. **Process.** Following the desk review and the preparation of the approach paper, the PPE mission was undertaken from 8 to 18 April 2019. At the start of the mission, meetings were held in Monrovia with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the project implementation unit and the Liberia Assets and Agriculture Development Company (LAADCO) – the private sector company that had partnered with the project – and the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA). Between 9 and 13 April 2019, the PPE team travelled to Lofa County where the mission visited all seven districts (Voinjama, Kolahun, Salayea, Quardo Gboni, Zorzor, Foya, Vahun). Upon their return to Monrovia, the team met with the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Swedish embassy, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. (A list of key people met is provided in annex V.) A wrap-up meeting was held on 18 April 2019 at the MOA in Monrovia, where the PPE team presented the preliminary findings. Following the mission, further analysis of the data was conducted to generate findings and prepare the draft PPE report. The draft report was subjected to a peer review within IOE, after which it was shared with IFAD's West and Central Africa Division and the Government of Liberia for comments, which were taken into consideration when finalizing the report.
5. **Data availability and limitations.** Key data used for this evaluation included design documents, supervision mission reports, the Project Completion Report (PCR), project status reports with self-assessment ratings and data on the standard indicators in line with the IFAD's Results and Impact Management System (RIMS).² The PPE also reviewed and used the results of various impact studies, namely the cocoa rehabilitation in Liberia report – phase 1 (2016), the addendum to the report – phase 2 (2017), and the evaluation of road rehabilitation in the cocoa belt

¹ Including the project completion report, supervision mission reports, mid-term review report, and impact studies. See also annex VIII for bibliography.

² In 2003, IFAD established the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) to measure and report on three level of results (activities and outputs, outcomes, and impacts) based on common standard indicators. For the impact level, a standard questionnaire for household level survey was developed to capture data on household living standards and child malnutrition was also a mandatory indicator to be reported on, whether through anthropometric measurement to be conducted specifically for the project or existing data.

(2017). Due to the Ebola outbreak, a final mid-term report was not produced. The documents are in general informative and of good quality. However, there were challenges in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system: certain key data were not collected systematically (e.g. on yields, marketing, sales and transportation). Furthermore, certain processes were not documented, such as the selection of target beneficiaries. More details and comments on the quality of the project data are provided later in the report.

II. Project overview

A. National context

6. Liberia is situated on the west coast of Africa, bordered to the west by Sierra Leone, to the east by Côte d'Ivoire, to the north by Guinea, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It is a low-income, and food-deficit country and is classified as a fragile state.³ Over half (51 per cent) of the country's 4.5 million population resides in rural areas and about 42 per cent of the population is under the age of 15. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the population depends on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.⁴
7. Following the 1989–2003 conflict that devastated human, institutional and productive capacities and the 2006 inauguration of a democratically elected administration, Liberia began a decade-long period of recovery and stabilization that led to an average annual rate of gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.8 per cent between 2006 and 2013.⁵ Key drivers of this growth were institutional and policy reforms, enormous inflows of official development assistance⁶ and significant foreign direct investment (FDI) which amounted to over US\$16 billion and was targeted to the palm oil, iron ore, rubber and timber industries.⁷
8. Yet, even as the economy recovered, Liberia struggled to translate renewed growth into deep and sustainable poverty reduction. Between 2007 and 2014, the national headcount poverty rate dropped from 64 per cent to 54 per cent. However, due to rapid population growth, the total number of poor Liberians increased by 8 per cent. Urban areas benefited the most from the recovery, while rural poverty rates increased slightly during the period.⁸ In addition, due to substantial infrastructure and human capital deficits, the country experienced some of the worst economic and social indicators in the world. Despite a nominal increase in recent years, Liberia's Human Development Index value of 0.427, compared to a sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.523, ranks 177th out of 188 countries and places it in the low human development category.⁹
9. The twin shocks of the Ebola virus disease and falling prices for the key commodity exports of natural rubber and iron ore halted Liberia's steady economic recovery and reversed its growth trajectory beginning in 2014.¹⁰ Unemployment is high at between 80 and 85 per cent¹¹, with the large numbers of unemployed youth continuing to be a matter of serious concern; the gross national income per capita of US\$683 (2011 purchasing power parity [PPP] – US\$)¹² is more than four times lower than the sub-Saharan Africa average of US\$3,383 (2011 PPP US\$); poverty is pervasive, with close to 84 per cent of the population living on less than US\$1.25 a day; and with a Gini index of 36.5, substantial income inequality persists.¹³
10. **Agriculture.** The Liberian economy is undergoing a process of structural transformation, as the dominance of agriculture and mining gradually gives way to a rising services sector. The services sector expanded from 20 per cent of GDP in 2003 to 30 per cent in 2016 and employed 42 per cent of the labour force. Even though the share of the workforce employed in agriculture and mining has fallen

³ OECD iLibrary: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264302075-5-en.pdf?expires=1553600989&id=id&accname=ocid195767&checksum=D0D6A3D0FEADC3C0ECF6BF63B590E815>.

⁴ World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Aid flows rose to 39 per cent of GDP and aid per capita grew to \$124.4 (BTI 2016).

⁷ Paczynska 2016, Liberia rising? Foreign direct investment, persistent inequalities and political tensions

⁸ World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic, page 1.

⁹ UNDP 2016, Human Development Index.

¹⁰ GDP growth fell from 8.7 per cent in 2013 to 0.7 per cent in 2014 and 0 per cent in 2015, and is estimated to have rebounded by only 2.5 per cent in 2016.

¹¹ World Bank Economic Review 2016.

¹² UNDP 2016.

¹³ Republic of Liberia 2017, Zero Hunger Strategic Review Report, page 11.

sharply over the past three decades, an estimated 48.9 per cent of the workforce are smallholders who still remain employed in agriculture primary production. Although agriculture and fisheries represent a declining share of Liberia's GDP,¹⁴ these sectors continue to play an important role in economic growth, trade and employment dynamics.

11. Liberia's main agricultural products include rice, cassava, rubber, cocoa and palm oil. Rubber is the country's largest agricultural export, followed by cocoa; palm oil exports are modest but rising. Between 2006 and 2010, the agriculture sector attracted US\$2.7 billion in FDI, and in 2011, rubber and cocoa together comprised about 61 per cent of the total. While commercial agricultural concessions are highly productive, the rest of the agriculture sector struggles with low productivity, and most farmers barely produce enough food to meet their own consumption needs. Insecure land tenure, a lack of inputs, high pre-harvest and post-harvest losses due to inadequate facilities and technology, poor pest management, and the extremely limited use of fertilizer and other modern cultivation methods all contribute to the agriculture sector's low productivity. The sector remains dominated by traditional subsistence farming, with food crops such as rice and cassava prevailing. Some smallholder farmers also cultivate cash crops, including coffee and cocoa, although typically on a very modest scale. Most of these cash crops are cultivated in upland areas using labour-intensive techniques, with very limited use of improved inputs, machinery or modern production methods.
12. Several studies¹⁵ identify cocoa as one of the crops in Liberia with the highest potential for diversifying incomes for smallholder producers and accessing a market with strong growing demand. With a similarly ideal environment to countries such as Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria, where the markets are saturated with many competitors and have limited room for expansion, Liberia is identified as the next growth market for cocoa. Currently the sector is unstructured, with 90 per cent of cocoa being bought by informal traders and exported at average quality. Due to limited investments, Liberian cocoa farmers yield on average 200 kg per hectare; this is about 30 per cent of what is obtained in the neighbouring countries and only 20 per cent of its potential.¹⁶
13. The favourable natural environment is further aided by an upward trend, since 2000, of average global cocoa prices (in both nominal and real terms). On several occasions, average annual prices have pushed above US\$3,000/ton in real terms (US\$2,016), reflecting price levels not seen for two decades.¹⁷ However, 2016/17 was marked by a considerable price drop, which was largely caused by a surge in production as a result of favourable weather conditions in major producing countries.¹⁸

B. Project description

IFAD's position in the Liberian context and STCRSP

14. IFAD began its operations in Liberia in 1981. However, the two first projects were suspended due to the country's 1989 to 2003 civil war. After a 20-year suspension, IFAD restarted its activities in Liberia in 2009 with the approval of the Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project. While the first interventions focused on rice seed varieties and increasing smallholders' productivity, the focus of IFAD's interventions since 2009 has been on reducing post-conflict poverty and food insecurity and restoring capital lost, by rehabilitating agricultural infrastructure and rebuilding farmer's productive capacity. STCRSP was the fourth IFAD project in Liberia and endeavoured to consolidate and complement the ongoing operations by increasing

¹⁴ The share of the GDP declined over the 10-year period 2006–2016 from 63.8 per cent in 2006 to 37 per cent in 2016.

¹⁵ USAID 2015, Liberia market study for selected agricultural products, page 16; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017, Sector scan of the agricultural sector in Liberia, page 12.

¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017, Sector scan of the agricultural sector in Liberia, page 12.

¹⁷ Bymolt, R., Laven, A. & Tyszler, M. (2018). Demystifying the cocoa sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

¹⁸ Ibid, page 215.

long-term income for smallholder farmers. It did so by focusing on cocoa and coffee cash crops.

15. The **development objective** as stated in the President's report was to reduce post-conflict poverty and food insecurity, and improve the livelihoods and living conditions of rural communities. This was to be achieved through three **specific objectives**: (i) raise the quantity sold and price received by poor farmers through plantation rehabilitation; (ii) improve access to markets through road rehabilitation; and (iii) reinforce the extension services of the MOA and private providers, and strengthen farmer organizations.
16. **Project approach.** The project focused on both production and marketing through a value-chain and market-oriented approach. Specifically, STCRSP had four **components**: (i) coffee and cocoa revitalization; (ii) rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads; (iii) institutional capacity-building; and (iv) project management (covered under management and implementation arrangements).
17. **Component 1.** This component aimed to rehabilitate approximately 15,000 hectares of cocoa/coffee plantations, using a value chain model. The project envisaged piloting two approaches: (i) a private sector organic value chain model to be implemented by a private sector entity; and (ii) a conventional (not organic) value chain model to be implemented by three cooperatives.¹⁹ Important activities included farm rehabilitation accompanied by several types of training.
18. **Component 2.** In order to facilitate the access of smallholders to external assistance for their farming activities, as well as market access, STCRSP planned to rehabilitate 315 km of farm-to-market roads in Lofa. Rehabilitation of roads was considered key for the marketing of cocoa and coffee in that it would lower the transportation costs. Moreover, the roads would ease access to hospitals, schools and other social services. The rehabilitation of roads was also expected to create employment opportunities for men, youth and women.
19. **Component 3.** Interventions under this component sought to support the institutional development of the cooperatives and MOA at central, county and district levels. Activities focused on management and technical skills, including: (i) cooperative business plan development; (ii) good governance and management; (iii) financial management; (iv) good agricultural practices (GAPs); (v) coffee and cocoa farm rehabilitation; and (vi) post-harvest handling, processing and marketing; and (vii) coffee and cocoa quality control. Moreover, MOA was supported with equipment and staff.

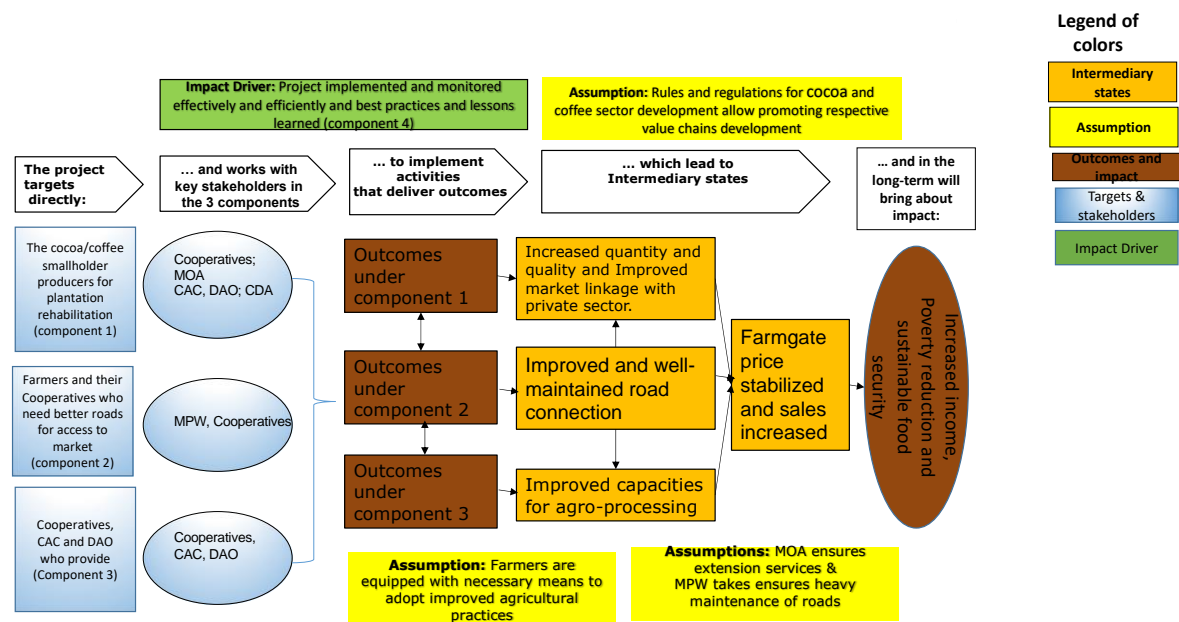
STCRSP theory of change

20. The key entry point for the **theory of change** was that the cooperatives would mobilize and motivate members to adopt improved agricultural practices. This in turn would lead to increased quantity and quality of cocoa and coffee production.
21. Another key aspect of the theory was the linkage with the private sector, which would ensure stable off-take of produce and stable farm gate prices. In turn, this would lead to increased incomes for the farmers and, through increased incomes, poverty reduction and sustainable food security.
22. Three important and distinct impact pathways can be identified. The first pathway is improved market linkage with the private sector. This pathway focuses on linking the target cooperatives to a private sector company that can provide a guaranteed market for farmers' cocoa and coffee products. The second impact pathway relates to improved capacities for agroprocessing. This pathway focuses on equipping the cooperatives with appropriate storage/processing infrastructure to address the problem of high post-harvest losses, which compromise household incomes. The third pathway is improved and well-maintained road connections. It focuses on

¹⁹ IFAD 2011, President's report, page 3.

improving access to markets through selected road rehabilitation in order to link farmers' cooperatives to established cocoa and coffee markets. The theory built on a number of assumptions. One important assumption was that the project would not be negatively affected by the regulatory vacuum for cocoa and coffee trade. A second assumption related to the MOA being able to ensure effective extension systems that facilitated regular training. Thirdly, it was assumed that the MPW would take over the heavy maintenance of the roads. Fourthly, it was assumed that farmers were equipped with the necessary means to adopt improved agricultural practices and had access to inputs. The implied theory of change is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1
Theory of change



Source: PPE team elaboration.

23. **Project area.** The project activities were implemented in Lofa County in the northernmost portion of Liberia bordering Sierra Leone (northern west) and Guinea (northern east). This was, and still is, the poorest county in Liberia (poverty incidence of 76 per cent²⁰). At the time of the design, the county had a total of six districts. However, Voinjama, one of the districts, was split in two (Voinjama and Quardu Gboni) during the early stages of project implementation and this had implications for the number of cooperatives targeted, which was subsequently increased to seven.
24. **Geographic target areas.** According to the design document, the targeting criteria at district level were: (i) social, poverty and demographic indicators to reach the most vulnerable communities; and (ii) complementarities with ongoing and planned government and donor initiatives.²¹
25. **Project target groups.** The project's target groups were: (i) poor smallholders with fewer than two hectares of land and relying on subsistence farming; (ii) households headed by women; (iii) young people; and (iv) the war-wounded and disabled. The most important targeting mechanisms included: (i) use of quotas for women and youth for each project activity (e.g. rehabilitation of tree crops and roads, strengthening/development of farmer-based cooperatives); (ii) MOA's

²⁰ World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic, page 17.

²¹ IFAD 2011, Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project Design Report, page 10.

capacity-building plan; (iii) self-targeting and participatory approach; (iv) gender mainstreaming, including training and sensitization.

26. **Targeting approach.** The project provided specific activities within the sub-components that were targeted for the different groups. For example, for youth, the project focused on: (i) job creation opportunities through tree crop and road rehabilitation; (ii) strengthening of youth involvement and leadership skills in farmer-based cooperatives; (iii) information and sensitization and advocacy; and (iv) youth consultation and participation. The number of beneficiaries targeted was 15,000 smallholder cocoa/coffee farmers who would benefit directly from support to tree crop productive activities. It was expected that an additional 280,000 people would directly or indirectly benefit from the infrastructure development.

C. Project implementation

27. **Time frame.** STCRSP became effective on 7 July 2011 and was completed on 30 September 2017.
28. **Project costs and financing.** The total project costs at approval were US\$24.95 million, of which the IFAD loan amounted to US\$16.9 million. The contribution of the Government was to be US\$2.0 million and that of the beneficiaries US\$0.923 million. In addition, the private sector cofinancing was estimated at US\$5.1 million. Table 1 provides information on funds at appraisal and the actual expenditures.
29. **Management and implementation arrangements.** The MOA was the supervising agency and chair of the National Steering Committee. Overall implementation of STCRSP was undertaken by the project implementation unit (PIU) established under the programme management unit (PMU) of the MOA. The PMU was a shared unit within the MOA and in charge of implementing all donor-funded projects in the agricultural area. The design document also envisaged a PIU based in the field, in Lofa, that was responsible for the implementation of activities. Other key implementing partners included the county agricultural coordinators (CACs) and the district agricultural officers (DAOs).
30. **Adjustments during implementation.** STCRSP implementation was disrupted by the Ebola outbreak, which seriously affected the cocoa and coffee farming communities in Lofa County. Lofa was the first region where the virus erupted before spreading to other counties. Primarily the implementation was slowed down as farmers could not gather in groups. Several changes were made to STCRSP design during project implementation, all of which affected the project's implementation and the resultant outcomes and impact.
31. At the time of STCRSP design, Lofa County had a total of six districts, and one cooperative was selected and supported by the project from each district. However, as mentioned previously, during the early stages of project implementation the District of Voinjama was split in two – Voinjama and Quardu Gboni and so it was decided to increase the number of cooperatives from six to seven. The change in the number of districts and cooperatives supported (from six to seven) reportedly had budgetary implications (see PCR, page 11), especially for component 1 (rehabilitation of plantations), component 2 (rehabilitation of roads) and component 3 (institutional capacity-building), but this budgetary increase is not apparent when comparing overall planned versus actual project costs (see table 1).²²

²² However, the rise in management costs may reflect this change as this included recruiting two additional capacity-building officers (see also section on relevance).

Table 1
Planned vs actual costs by component

<i>Components</i>	<i>Planned US\$ million</i>	<i>% of base costs</i>	<i>Actual US\$ million</i>	<i>% of actual total costs</i>
Revitalization of cocoa/coffee farms	7 420	30	5 653	27
Rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads	11 153	45	6 696	32
Institutional capacity-building	3 358	14	2 485	12
Project management	3 025	12	3 456	17
Balance of authorized allocation			895	
SDR/USD cumulative exchange loss			1 512	
Total	24 956		20 697	

Source: PCR and President's report.

32. Furthermore, the design planned to only strengthen three cooperatives in financial and institutional management, but the remaining four cooperatives complained about this and asked MOA and IFAD to include them in these activities. Therefore, capacity-building was extended to all seven cooperatives. The change led to a sizeable increase in the budget for activities such as technical assistance, studies and training (see annex VI).
33. Project design envisaged two private sector partners to link with the target cooperatives for marketing and capacity-strengthening (one organic and one non-organic value chain). However, the project only worked with one private sector partner. This was because: (i) most of the private sector companies that applied did not meet the contribution requirement (i.e. providing working capital to the cooperatives); and (ii) due to the low volume of produce at the time, compared to the high overhead costs, it was decided that STCRSP would work with just one partner (non-organic) until the volume had increased.
34. The design targeted a total 315 km of farm-to-market roads for rehabilitation. However due to increased costs per km²³ and the nature of the rehabilitation, which in some cases was more similar to construction, the target of farm-to-market roads was reduced to 210 km and finally to 153.5 km.
35. At design, it was recommended that the services for rehabilitation to Hifab be sourced to a consulting firm that was already working on roads in Lofa (funded by the Swedish International Development Agency [SIDA]). However, according to the PCR, the rates charged by Hifab were nine times higher than the available budget. Instead, STCRSP relied on local constructors and hired two local consulting engineers, in addition to the project engineer and the MPW resident engineer, to supervise them. As per the design, each participating farmer was supposed to pay US\$20 per year for routine maintenance of the rehabilitated roads. However, the farmers argued that this would be a discriminatory tax, as the roads were being used by numerous other stakeholders. The payment was subsequently abandoned.²⁴
36. Implementation progress and outputs by component are summarized in the subsequent paragraphs.
37. **Component 1: cocoa/coffee revitalization.** During project implementation, a total of 12,800 hectares of cocoa and coffee farms were rehabilitated (10,314 hectares of cocoa farms and 2,486 hectares of coffee farms) out of the 15,000 hectares targeted (85 per cent). The rehabilitation included under-brushing,

²³ As a result of quality specifications for the rehabilitated roads provided by the MPW, the costs for rehabilitation increased, on average, from US\$25,000 per km to US\$45,000 per km.

²⁴ IFAD 2018, PCR, page 10.

pruning, "sanitation" and de-shading. It was undertaken by 7,781 youths (155 per cent of target) 6,855 males and 926 females. Farmers received training in GAPs. This was aimed at reducing the incidence of pests and diseases and increasing yields. According to the PCR, all the farmers who benefited from farm rehabilitation also accessed and applied GAPs (85 per cent of the target).

38. STCRSP also contributed slightly to improving the quality of the increased produce by providing cooperatives with improved storage/bulking and drying facilities. A total of six central warehouses and 33 mini warehouses for storage/bulking of farmers' produce were constructed. The project also provided the cooperatives with sorting tables and supported the construction of 65 solar dryers (far less than 3,000 initially foreseen) for use by the cooperatives to improve the quality of the produce by removing (sorting) unwanted materials and flat beans and drying the produce in a protected environment. Farmers were also provided with mini solar dryers against payment of US\$20, but adoption rates at both central and farmer levels were low.²⁵
39. The cooperatives were to be linked to an established private sector company to guarantee the availability of a market for their produce. LAADCO was selected following a competitive process and was required to invest in the process of improving productivity and quality of the produce. This commitment was in the form of cash (pre-financing) and other investments (such as training and provision of equipment and seedlings).

Table 2

Achievement of physical targets

<i>Indicator (RIMS)</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>%</i>
Hectares under improved management practices	15 000	12 800	85
Youth hired	11 615	8 593	74
Number of processing facilities established (solar dryers)	3 000	65	2
Number of processing facilities functioning	3 000	53	1.8

Source: PCR.

40. **Component 2: rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads.** STCRSP rehabilitated 133.1 km of feeder roads (87 per cent of the revised target of 153.5 km). Interventions included both earthworks and structures (282 culverts of various types and 13 bridges). Rehabilitation works were carried out by local contractors following an equipment-based approach. This approach was meant to promote the development of local contractors. Different contractors were assigned to different types of work (structures and earthworks) on the same road. However, the approach contributed to a less-than-ideal technical quality and timely delivery/handover of the completed product.

Table 3

Achievement of physical targets

<i>Indicator (RIMS)</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>%</i>
% of km of roads passable all year	153.52 (revised)	133.1	87
Culverts constructed	180	279	155
Bridges constructed	45	12	27

Source: PCR.

²⁵ IFAD 2016, supervision mission report.

41. **Component 3: institutional capacity-building.** The main objective of this component was the institutional development of cooperatives and MOA at the county and district levels. Capacity-building was tackled from two perspectives: provision of the requisite equipment/assets and skills development training.
42. The project's approach was to improve the technical and management expertise of the cooperatives to provide services to their members. With regard to management, the cooperatives were trained in: (i) cooperative business plan development; (ii) good governance and management; (iii) financial management; (iv) effective M&E; and (v) computer use. For the technical skills development, the following trainings were provided: (i) GAPs; (ii) cocoa and coffee farm rehabilitation; (iii) post-harvest handling, processing and marketing; (iv) cocoa and coffee quality control; (v) construction and use of solar dryers; and (vi) road maintenance.
43. The seven cooperatives received vehicles and motorbikes to improve the mobility of the cooperative management teams and to enable the timely collection of produce from farms to warehouses. In addition to the warehouses and solar dryers, the project provided other equipment, including generators. Farm rehabilitation and road maintenance tools were supplied to sustain farm and road interventions. The private sector (LAADCO) also participated in building the capacity of some of the cooperatives. As well as some logistical support, the company also provided pre-financing, which enabled the cooperatives to pay the farmers for the produce.
44. The CDA, whose mandate includes registration and supervision of cooperatives' activities in the country, was also a beneficiary of project interventions. It received logistical support, office equipment, and skills enhancement. According to the PCR, this enhanced its ability to execute its mandate and it was able to work with the cooperatives to update its bylaws. It supervised general assembly meetings for the seven cooperatives. It audited four of the seven cooperatives. During project implementation, it conducted two technical awareness meetings with each of the seven cooperatives. The CDA also promoted information-sharing among cooperatives and facilitated the creation of a culture of smooth leadership transition, as stipulated in the cooperatives' by-laws and constitutions. All seven cooperatives secured legal registration and all have boards of governors that oversee the running of the cooperatives. Membership increased from 1,967 before the project to 9,324 after the project. This was largely driven by the project targeting approach of membership being a requirement in order to benefit from the project.
45. The project supported extension services by providing eight offices – one for the CAC and the other seven for the DAOs – and equipping them with computers, tables and chairs. The districts were further supported with the recruitment of 14 young professionals (YPs), two per district, attached to the seven district agricultural offices. They were provided with logistical support, laptops and Global Positioning System devices. An arrangement between the project and the Lofa County Community College led to the creation of an internship programme where a total of 14 interns worked with the cooperatives to enhance community engagement, commercialization activities, and rehabilitation of cocoa and coffee farms in the seven districts.

Table 4
Achievement of physical targets

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>%</i>
Cooperatives have a legal status and a board, 25% female members and 25% female in leadership positions	3	7	233*
Cooperatives are profitable and finance recurrent costs	3	1	33
80% of targeted cocoa and coffee farmers receive technical advice from the CAC and DAO at least once every quarter	Not reported		

*This output is reported as achieved in the PCR, but in terms of female membership and leadership, the project did not achieve the targets.
Source: PCR.

46. Important achievements were made in revitalizing plantations but less in terms of processing through the use of solar dryers, and the target was not achieved. Road rehabilitation targets were reduced twice and were achieved at 87 per cent. While all the cooperatives reportedly received legal status, only one is profitable. Technical advice through the extension service was not measured. Although it may have increased during the project period, it is facing serious constraints. For road works, many output targets were almost achieved. In terms of institution-building, this is an ongoing process.

III. Main evaluation findings

A. Project performance and rural poverty impact

Relevance

47. The assessment of relevance considers the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design and coherence in achieving its objectives.
48. **Relevance of objectives. The project objectives were relevant to national policies and priorities at design and remained so during the lifetime of the project.** The design was aligned with the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2008, which took the Millennium Development Goals into consideration and aimed to half hunger and extreme poverty by 2015. The design objectives also addressed Liberia's priorities as described in the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP). Specifically, priority 2, on competitive value chains and market linkages, and priority 3, on institutional development, were aligned with the project objectives. STRSCP also contributed to subprogramme 3 on Smallholder Tree Crops and Agroforestry Development. The project design stated that STCRSP contributed to programme 1 under the LASIP on Food and Nutrition Security but this was only in an indirect way through increased incomes. STCRSP remained relevant to the later developed National Export Strategy for Cocoa (2014–2018). STCRSP was also aligned with the three strategic objectives of the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) (2011), which emphasized access to inputs and skills, access to markets and improved organizational capacities, and access to MOA extension services.
49. **Relevance of design. The design was coherent and the delivery model appropriate, but lessons learned could have been better taken into account.** Overall the project design responded to favourable international market trends for the cocoa sector. It built on a market-oriented approach and reflected an effort to have a simple design with a limited number of interventions. The project was bold in its approach to involving the private sector to bring about change through support to input supply, production, storage, processing and marketing. This was innovative in the Liberian context although other donors were working simultaneously with similar models in other regions.²⁶ However, given the post-war situation of the country and limited in-country institutional and implementation capacity, the project could have more explicitly reflected on past challenges from Liberia and similar countries.²⁷ The design report (annex 3) highlighted a number of relevant lessons on: bottom-up approaches; alternative delivery systems; involvement of the private sector; M&E; simple design; gender equity and youth; and targeting. Some lessons were internalized (e.g. simple design, themes and involvement of the private sector), but STCRSP had some elements of a top-down approach with respect to targeting (see below) and provision of infrastructure.
50. **The design assumed that a pure market approach would be sufficient to increase the productivity and quality of cocoa.** However, the project operated in a regulatory vacuum, which ultimately negatively affected the relationship between the private sector, the cooperatives and farmers due to lack of clear rules and regulations – for example, on grading of cocoa. Despite the social and economic importance of the cocoa sector, Liberia lacks a regulatory framework that can provide incentives to cocoa growers to increase productivity and improve cocoa produce, and to attract more private sector investment in cocoa value chain upgrading. The main aspects mentioned in the interviews, which an appropriate framework in the country's context should cover, include creation of standards for

²⁶ For example, World Bank Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (2012–2019).

²⁷ The Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee (OSC) Issues Paper (30 September 2010) highlighted this issue.

seedling quality for the replacement of old cocoa trees, easing access of producers to inputs (seeds, seedlings, equipment, phytosanitary inputs), promoting easy access of youth and women to land for cocoa farming, improving access to finance for small-scale cocoa producers, and strengthening institutions for research and technology generation aimed at improving cocoa sector productivity and cocoa value chain upgrading.

51. **The role of capacity development was underestimated.** Although the project had a component devoted to institutional capacity development, it made up for only 13.5 per cent of the total resources and activities. Resources were mainly devoted to strengthening the cooperatives, but institutional capacity development was needed at all levels, including institutional capacity at MPW for roads.
52. **The overall targeting strategy was simple but did not fully capture the intended target groups.** The targeting strategy consisted of recruiting members of the cooperatives and those who were in possession of one hectare of land. In addition, quotas were established for women and youth, but the quotas were not accompanied with targeting strategies to ensure meaningful integration of these groups in the project. As the cooperatives were recruiting the new members, their interest was in working with the better-skilled and -abled farmers, regardless of how many hectares of land they owned.²⁸ Furthermore, appropriate inclusiveness of women and youth among the target groups became a challenge. The project design did not consider that in general these two groups had limited or no access to land planted with cocoa and lacked financial resources to buy it. Thus, while quotas were established at 25 per cent and 50 per cent for women and youth, respectively, only 19 per cent of women were reached and youth only constituted 11 per cent of the beneficiaries. Cocoa farming is traditionally considered a man's job and no strategies were established to integrate women into other parts of the value chain where they could play an important role (e.g. fermentation and drying). Most of the youth did not own land but expressed an interest in participating in farming activities; the lack of land effectively excluded them from the rehabilitation activities. However, some efforts were made to include youth in other ways (e.g. young professionals, maintenance of roads).
53. **There were some weaknesses in the agronomic approach to revitalization of cocoa plantations.** STCRSP provided seedlings (160 per hectare) and introduced a number of GAPs to help cocoa growers improve cocoa beans productivity. The GAPs were limited to cocoa tree tending (e.g. under-brushing, pruning, sanitation, de-shading) and did not emphasize the importance of farming systems that could achieve optimal economic outcomes while enhancing the resilience of cocoa trees against pests and diseases and climate change. However, cocoa is an understorey tree species and is generally cultivated under the shade of other tree species in a carefully thinned forest. In such an agroforest system, there are several options to manage cocoa with other crops and shade trees for better economic and environmental outcomes that could have had the added value of enhancing household food security (e.g. by intercropping with cassava). Given that nutrition was one of the ultimate project objectives, this is considered a missed opportunity.
54. Based on the above, relevance is rated **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

²⁸ According to a recent study undertaken in the United Republic of Tanzania (2017), people with disabilities encounter specific problems that affect their ability to participate in cocoa and coffee value chains. A key issue is their poor socio-economic status: statistically, people with disabilities are more likely to be illiterate and unemployed, and have less formal education and less access to support networks. These preconditions have a direct impact on their level of entrepreneurship and engagement in various economic activities, including agrobusiness.

Effectiveness

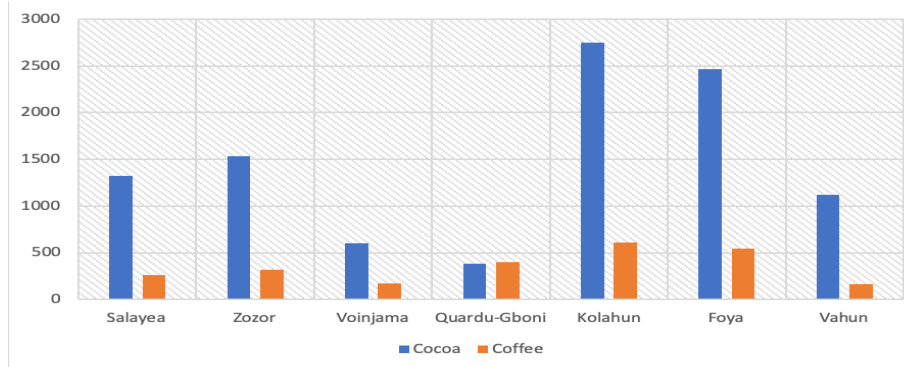
55. Effectiveness is the extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, taking into account their relative importance. This section analyses the effectiveness of the project according to its objectives and outcomes.

Specific objective 1: Raise the quantity sold, and price received, by poor farmers through plantation rehabilitation

56. **The rehabilitation of cocoa and coffee crops was effective. The quantity of cocoa produced increased and the quality improved slightly.** The project rehabilitated a total of 12,800 hectares of cocoa and coffee farms (10,314 hectares of cocoa farms and 2,486 hectares of coffee farms), i.e. 85 per cent of the targeted 15,000 hectares. The breakdown by crop, year and cooperative as presented in the PCR is illustrated in figure 2 below. As can be seen, the most important success in rehabilitation was with cocoa. The reason for this was that the prices for coffee beans were too low and therefore not attractive for producers. As a result, the focus of the project was almost entirely on cocoa.
57. The representatives of the cooperatives and beneficiary farmers interviewed by the evaluation team acknowledge having increased cocoa production through the adoption of GAPs, such as under-brushing, pruning, sanitation (i.e. removal of infected trees) and de-shading. The training of farmers in GAPs resulted in an increase in cocoa bean productivity. The PCR reported that in 2016, the yields reached 376 kg/hectare, which was 4.3 times the Lofa County baseline yield of 88 kg/hectare.²⁹ However, the data are not reliable because the baseline and impact studies on which they are based used different sampling methods. Despite the issues of data quality, the positive results in yield increases were confirmed to the evaluation team by the representatives of the cooperatives and the DAOs during the field visit.

Figure 2

Area of cocoa and coffee farms rehabilitated by cooperatives (hectares)



Source: PCR.

58. Although the training did result in positive yield improvements, there was less progress on the adoption of good practices for use of cocoa bean dryers. The uptake and use of the solar dryers were low, and farmers continued to use traditional methods for drying. Since traders do not grade the cocoa beans, there was little incentive for farmers to improve the quality of beans through improved drying techniques.³⁰ The farm gate price paid to farmers improved. The main reason for the improved price was the overall improved cocoa price on the global market, due in particular to the second conflict in Côte d’Ivoire which broke out in

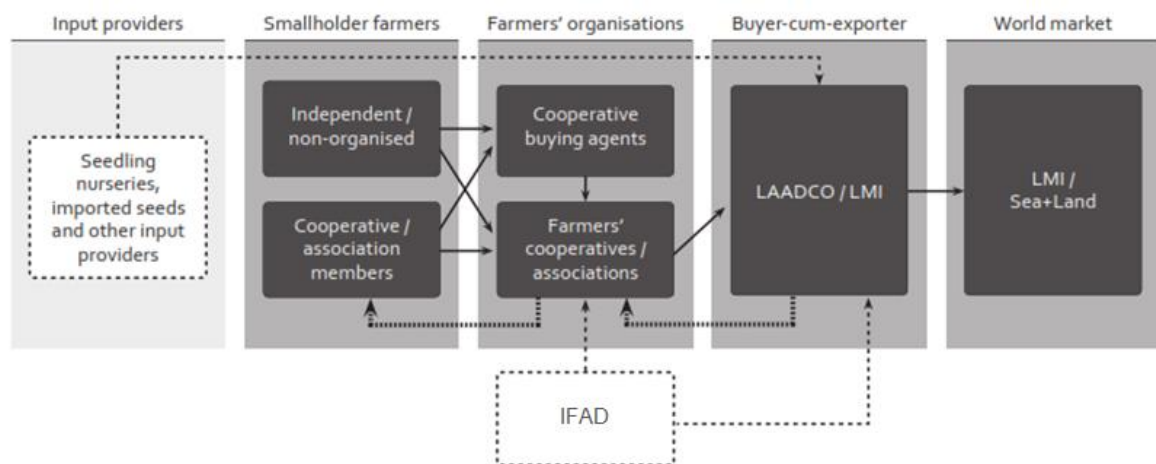
²⁹ However, despite the progress made, productivity remained lower than the levels in other cocoa-producing countries in West Africa (Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, and Nigeria) where the national averages range from 400 to 600 kg/hectare. Liberia’s cocoa results are comparable to those of Cameroon (300-400 kg/hectare).

³⁰ Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) 2017, Addendum to the report: Cocoa Rehabilitation in the Liberian Cocoa Belt, page 28.

2011³¹ (see also annex VI). The PCR reports that the farm gate cocoa prices increased from as low as US\$0.60/kg in 2012 to a range of about US\$1.7 to 1.85/kg in 2017. Over the same period, coffee prices also increased from US\$0.50/kg to about US\$1.75/kg. However, this information should be taken with some caution as it is based on a mini-survey (50 farmers) conducted as part of the PCR. In addition to the favourable external environment, STRCSP also contributed to improved quality of the cocoa beans, but given the low uptake of solar dryers, this contribution is likely to have been marginal through drying, cleaning and pre-grading.

59. **The project was effective in linking the cooperatives with a buyer company. However, its effectiveness in implementing the value chain model was low.** Arguably, the project’s approach was market-driven. It supported cocoa growers to produce cocoa beans that met market demand and facilitated the way for a private buyer, LAADCO, to connect to the cocoa producers’ cooperatives. Through incentives to increase productivity provided to the producers, the project laid a foundation for the cooperation between cooperatives and LAADCO. Figure 3 below illustrates the respective roles of the partners in what can be described as an output-driven integrated cocoa value chain. It shows that LAADCO buys cocoa from farmer’s cooperatives, which in turn buy from member farmers. Cooperatives buy directly from the farmers or through their own designated buying agents in surrounding villages. LAADCO establishes contractual agreements with cooperatives and hence only deals with farmers indirectly. It provides pre-financing, inputs and services to cooperatives, which in turn forward them to member farmers as represented by the thick dotted arrows from the right to the left in the figure. The pre-financing enables the cooperatives to pay cash to the farmers when their cocoa beans are collected.

Figure 3
Output-driven integrated cocoa value chain of LAADCO



Source: Adapted from Gun Eriksson Skoog – Cocoa in Post-Conflict Liberia 2016. *LMI refers to Liberia Marketing International, the largest exporter and mother company of LAADCO.

60. Through this model, STCRSP combined a “push” approach to enable farmers to produce more and better-quality cocoa beans, and a “pull” approach by presenting the increased production and quality of produce as an incentive to the private sector company. The push approach consisted of building farmers’ capacity to improve cocoa production, productivity and quality. The envisaged effect of the push-pull approach was to encourage farmers to produce more cocoa beans of good quality. To achieve this, the extension services of MOA, the CDA and LAADCO

³¹ UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa 2011, The Conflict in Côte d’Ivoire and its Effect on West African Countries: A Perspective from the Ground.
<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Issue%20Briefs/The%20Conflict%20in%20Cote%20d'Ivoire%20and%20its%20Effect%20on%20West%20African%20Countries%20a%20Perspective%20from%20the%20Ground.pdf>

participated in capacity-building for the cooperatives. In addition, the project committed LAADCO to provide logistical support to three cooperatives, as well as pre-financing facilities to all seven cooperatives, to enable them to pay cash to the farmers when their cocoa beans were collected. This was probably the strongest factor that encouraged farmers to sell their produce to the cooperatives as opposed to side-selling to middlemen.

61. The partnership with the private sector was innovative, as it allowed cocoa growers to have access to markets through their cooperatives and to be paid a better price. The selection of only one buyer company, LAADCO, was not a deliberate choice but happened since initially there were no other buyers who complied with the project's selection criteria in a competitive process.³² In addition, it was not easy to ensure the required productivity levels for more than one company.³³ As a result, contractual agreements between LAADCO and the cooperatives were established, creating conditions of a quasi-captive value chain.³⁴
62. The cooperatives found that LAADCO was using them to secure access to increased production from cocoa farmers. Indeed, LAADCO had been interested in the partnership, including investing in upgrading cocoa production processes, because of the important shortage of cocoa bean supply at the time STCRSP was starting. However, with time there were more cocoa buyers and more production, not only in Lofa, but also in other counties. The relationship weakened between cocoa producers and their cooperatives. The farmers found that the cooperatives were not paying them better than the middle-buyers and subsequently started side-selling their cocoa beans as competition among buyers intensified. For these reasons, the monopsonic relationship between LAADCO and the cooperatives did not last beyond the duration of the project, and the producers returned to the practices of side-selling, leaving little quantities for the cooperatives that do not have the means to pay cash to farmers when their produce is collected, as they used to do with LAADCO's pre-financing.
63. **The STCRSP focus was on the upstream constraints and mainly on increasing productivity.** The main focus of the project was on supporting upstream activities for the rehabilitation of cocoa farms, on facilitating the contracts between cooperatives and one private sector company, and limited provision of processing equipment and storage facilities. There was less emphasis on the involvement of farmers in segments further down the cocoa value chain, which ultimately led to the end of the collaboration between the private sector company and the cooperatives. The STCRSP design implied an integrated approach to working along the value chain upstream and downstream. STCRSP was to address key constraints along the chain such as input markets, farmers' and cooperatives' access to credit, gender and youth inclusiveness in different value chain segments, increased produce quality, an improved cocoa marketing system and the role of cooperatives themselves in that system. STCRSP addressed some of these aspects partially, and only in the upstream end of the chain. In reality, the project was implemented as if the various upgrading requirements were not interdependent and could be pursued in phases. Table 5 below illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses in the STCRSP approach to value chain development.

³² However, the project could have envisaged other ways of working with the private sector which could have increased the flexibility in the working arrangement: (i) establishing a framework contract between LAADCO and cooperatives which was revisited annually for adjustments; (ii) and allowing for other companies to be involved in certain segments of the value chain (e.g. cocoa production inputs) while keeping LAADCO as the main company.

³³ Interview with former Project Coordinator.

³⁴ In the captive value chains, small suppliers are dependent on one or a few buyers who often wield a great deal of power. See: Cattaneo et al. (2013). *Joining, Upgrading and Being Competitive in Global Value Chains – A Strategic Framework*. The World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6406. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/254001468336685890/pdf/wps6406.pdf>.

Table 5
Strengths and weakness of STCRSP approach to value chain

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Product and process upgrading	Product upgrading is the improvement of quality and/or quantity of production (production techniques, higher-value products). Process upgrading is the improvement of efficiency of the production process, access to new technologies, better organization to reduce production costs, certification, food safety or traceability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective in focus on upstream portions of the cocoa value chain • Improved yields through provision of training to farmers who adopted GAPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of critical inputs not adequately addressed. Many farmers wanted to plant more than the average 150/hectare distributed per household, but had limitations due to lack of access to affordable credit services. • Less progress in the post-harvest operations. Many farmers did not take up fermenting and drying of the cocoa beans properly despite the training organized by their cooperatives, resulting in frequent downgrading of beans when they were delivered by the cooperatives to LAADCO.
Functional upgrading	Adding new functions and activities to the target group (e.g. producers and their associations), such as processing, storage and packaging, to capture more value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity built of cooperatives • Storage capacity enhanced through provision of warehouses • Quality of cocoa improved through drying facilities used by cooperatives • One example of cooperative innovating in processing of cocoa shells into soap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehouses not multi-purpose and underused • No progress on marketing
Strengthening horizontal linkages	Improving linkages among stakeholders at the same functional level of the value chain (e.g. creation of cooperatives and federations, capacity-building of producer organizations) to improve their bargaining power to buy inputs and/or to sell outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperatives strengthened through increased membership and legal status • Increased bargaining power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership is part of targeting and does not reflect "real interest" of farmers • Increased side-selling to middlemen
Strengthening vertical linkages	Improving linkages among stakeholders at different functional levels of the value chain. This may include promoting formal/stable types of contracting, improving access to market information, creating multi-stakeholder platforms, improving physical access to markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkage with private sector company established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monopsonic relationship which did not last beyond the duration of STCRSP

Source: IFAD (2017). Adapted from Stocktaking of IFAD's Value Chain Portfolio. Mimeo, PTA-RME Desk.

Specific objective 2: Improve access to markets through road rehabilitation

64. **The project was effective in linking Lofa County's cocoa and coffee growers to markets through road rehabilitation, but it did not reach the planned target.** The project rehabilitated 133.1 km of roads, i.e. 42.3 per cent of the original target and 86.7 per cent of the revised target. The standard of the rehabilitated roads was generally good and compared well with other roads in similar conditions of terrain and climate in the country. However, as road targets

were considerably reduced, many farmers remained unreached and some districts were still cut off during the rainy season.

65. **STCRSP investment in rural roads has allowed increased access to markets and is particularly successful where roads are close to borders.** The supervision reports highlighted the issue of insufficient supervision of the contractors on a daily basis. The PIU was unable to ensure the management of contracts as required and had to count on MPW for this. However, MPW could not undertake the required daily control and was only able to carry out a quarterly control. Notwithstanding this issue, which certainly affected the performance of the project, all stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team unanimously stated the importance of STCRSP's contribution to improved access in Lofa County in general, and to improving farmers' access to markets in particular. Many observed that the effects on access to rural areas were immediately visible as soon as the rehabilitation activities were completed. The PCR reported that the volume of farmers' produce sold to LAADCO exhibited an increasing trend – from 269 tons in 2013 to 332 tons in 2015. The transportation costs were reduced by about 30 per cent to 50 per cent.

Specific objective 3: Reinforce the extension services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and private providers and strengthen farmers' organizations

66. **The project was effective in building the cooperatives' capacity but they needed continued capacity-building, particularly in value addition.** Based on ratings of the cooperatives' business potential in 2015 undertaken by an independent rating agency (Scopeinsight), the overall average rating was 2.95, equivalent to an almost maturing organization.³⁵ The best-performing area was that of internal management,³⁶ such as elected boards, and appointment of good management through a competitive vetting process. The worst performing areas were those of external risks³⁷ and markets.³⁸ This referred to lack of knowledge on emerging environmental climatic risks on cocoa/coffee-growing, such as global warming and changes in weather patterns. For example, there was a lack of mitigation strategies, such as resistant crops, diversification of incomes, and soil fertility management.³⁹
67. Cooperatives received low ratings on markets due to their limited knowledge of the market as well as inadequate mitigation measures on market risk (e.g. contracts, storage, and diversified off-takers). Low ratings were also given for transportation as it was found that the cooperatives had to wait for days for their cocoa/coffee to be picked up by partners. Another weak point under markets was the weak capacity of the cooperatives on value addition (e.g. transport, grading, processing, and packaging) and the limited knowledge of client demand regarding products and services.
68. Voinjama and Seberhill district cooperatives were the best-performing, with formalized policies to ensure monitoring of progress within the cooperative. Salayea and Foya Maliandoe cooperatives were the least-performing – the organizations were not fully aware of all the risks and the possible biological and

³⁵ The SCOPE Basic has a scoring system from 1 to 5: 1=very immature organization; 2=immature organization; 3=maturing organization; 4=professional organization; and 5=very professional organization.

³⁶ Organization's performance on legal compliance, governance, internal organization, business planning – all that is related to what goes on within the organization.

³⁷ Organization's management of external risks such as biological and environmental, weather- and climate-related risks (e.g. risk of diseases, contamination, soil erosion, floods, droughts, high/low temperatures).

³⁸ Organization's performance on market-related risks, customer relationship management, marketing strategies – everything that has to do with the organization's markets and downstream value chain actors.

³⁹ SCOPE basic assessments for the seven cooperatives.

marketing mitigation strategies that they could put in place.⁴⁰ All assessments, however, highlighted the need for continued capacity-building of the cooperatives.

69. **The market power of cooperatives was increased but remains fragile.** Farmers' participation in cocoa farm rehabilitation activities and cocoa bean production increases have contributed to the increased growth and influence of the cooperatives. The PCR noted that since LAADCO became linked to the cooperatives, a total of 1,223.22 tons of produce (1,147.36 tons of cocoa and 75.9 tons of coffee) were marketed through the company by the seven cooperatives.
70. In all districts visited by the evaluation team, many interviewees cited market access as a great challenge before STCRSP provided training to cooperative management teams and built cocoa/coffee storage infrastructures and equipment. However, after the project ended, the cooperatives' capacity for cocoa bean aggregation decreased, as they lacked the means to pre-finance cocoa beans at collection on the farm. Furthermore, their financial situation did not allow them to pay the salaries of their managers at the scales that the project was applying. These factors contributed to the increased side-selling of cocoa beans by farmers to middlemen, including to those from neighbouring countries. Despite the capacity-building effort invested by the project, the cooperatives had not yet adopted a common platform to form a county-level cooperative union so that they could use collective action to strengthen the position of cocoa smallholders in the market. Moreover, the cooperatives were not yet able to take on the processing and marketing functions themselves and they still lacked the bargaining power with downstream cocoa value chain actors. They also still lacked a voice in the national policy processes relating to the development of tree crop production.
71. **Warehouses for storage are underused.** Under "equipment", the cooperatives received vehicles and motorbikes. The project also constructed (or rehabilitated in some cases) and equipped 6 central warehouses and 33 mini-warehouses for bulking of farmers' produce, sorting tables, and 65 solar dryers. In addition, office equipment, including generators, was provided. However, most of the mini-warehouses visited by the evaluation team were under-used, and many were not used at all. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the warehouses were not designed and equipped as multi-purpose facilities. Second, the project applied a standard approach to all districts without considering whether other stakeholders in the area were already providing the same services. Third, the siting of some warehouses implied a cost for security, which the beneficiaries were unable/unwilling to cover; and fourth, side-selling to middlemen occurred, which reduced the need for storage.
72. **The project empowered Lofa County and district agricultural services, by providing training, infrastructure and equipment, but the back-up of central services of MOA remains weak.** STCRSP, by organizing the training of MOA staff at Lofa County and district levels, had familiarized them with the GAPS for cocoa farm rehabilitation, and enabled them to provide advice to farmers. During the field visits, the evaluation team heard numerous testimonies from those who had taken part in the trainings, confirming that they had been very useful.
73. The operational capacity of the county and district agricultural offices was enhanced by the training of 14 YPs, two per district, who were attached to the seven district agricultural offices and paid for by the project. They were appropriately equipped to undertake their assignments effectively. They played a critical role in providing tree crop advisory services, and in carrying out the M&E function for the project's interventions. However, it is worth mentioning that training outcomes could have been better had the project used the Farmer Field School model to train the YPs, who in turn could have used the same model to train farmers. The training of YPs and their engagement close to the beneficiary

⁴⁰ Supervision mission report 2016, paragraph 51.

communities was arguably a great success of the project and was one of the factors that enabled the project to achieve the rehabilitation of 12,800 hectares. Their contribution was unanimously recognized by the members of the cooperative boards, the farmers, and MOA county and district staff interviewed by the evaluation team. However, at the end of the project, the MOA did not integrate the YPs in its district services, which represented a considerable waste given the expectations of the producers to continue receiving support for the rehabilitation of the remaining parts of their cocoa groves.

74. The design of the project's institutional capacity-building did not include the active involvement of MOA to provide backstopping to the Lofa county and district services. Yet, in the national political and institutional setting, financial resources for county- and district-level agricultural extension services operations flow directly from MOA to the county and district agricultural offices. The overall responsibilities for agricultural extension service delivery are also located at MOA, while local implementation is delegated to the county- and district-level services. The processes supported by the project needed a stronger MOA leadership with the necessary commitment and strategy to make them succeed, and even use the experiences and the results to inform national cocoa development policy processes. Pro-active leadership would also have ensured a multi-stakeholder coordination function to identify the roles and functions of other actors such as MPW and CDA in the support of the project. Such coordination was particularly weak with MPW. One aspect of importance was the lack of agreement between MOA and MPW on how to ensure road maintenance after the end of the project.
75. **The construction and equipping of offices facilitated the work of MOA field officers during project implementation, but the offices are currently under-used.** With STCRSP's support, MOA's agricultural services in Lofa County were operational again after years of war. The support included the construction of offices and provision of equipment, and the logistical support, which proved to be the most useful because it allowed the realization of the supervision of the works of rehabilitation of the cocoa farms. The project also covered the cost of fuel for the transport provided to the extension staff. However, as the YPs were not integrated in the MOA services, today the infrastructure built by the project is over-dimensioned and under-used.
76. As to the overall effectiveness, the project achieved most of its planned targets on rehabilitation of cocoa areas, road rehabilitation (taking into account the revised target) and institutional capacity-building, and its results benefited to 12,800 farmers, who increased their cocoa production and were linked to markets. The Ebola crisis caused disruption of project activities and impaired the collection of the cocoa harvest as well as its transport from farm to cooperatives' warehouses. During the crisis period, many farmers had to keep their production, and this led to high post-harvest losses and quality degradation of the cocoa beans. When the cocoa buyers started to return, they were in such low numbers that farmers had no bargaining power and had to barter cocoa for rice.⁴¹
77. Effectiveness is rated **satisfactory (5)**, given that the project achieved most of its targets and operated in a very challenging environment. The evaluation notes that the relationships between cooperatives and LAADCO did not last beyond the duration of the project; however, this is assessed under sustainability.

Efficiency

78. Efficiency is a measure of how economically resources and inputs (such as funds, expertise and time) are translated into results. In this section, efficiency is discussed in relation to the following aspects; (i) timeliness; (ii) disbursement

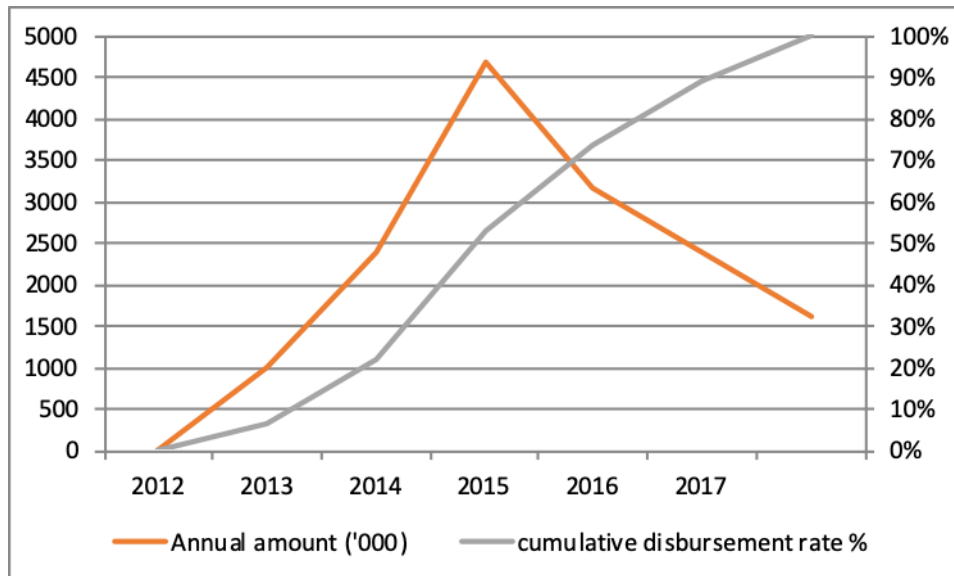
⁴¹ Ebola disrupted the collection of the cocoa harvest at the farm level as well as transport for shipping, leading to post-harvest losses and affecting smallholders' access to imported rice. See: FAO (2016). Impact of Ebola virus disease outbreak on market chains and trade of agricultural products in West Africa. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5641e.pdf>.

performance; (iii) project management; (iv) financial management; (v) cost per beneficiary; (vi) unit costs; and (vii) economic and financial impacts.

79. **Timeliness.** STCRSP's time lag from approval to effectiveness (7.1 months) is identical with the regional average for projects approved between 2011 and 2017⁴² and significantly better than the average for Liberia (based on three projects) of 15.6 months. As for effectiveness to first disbursement, STCRSP compared favourably, with 11.2 months compared to the regional average of 14.9 months, and significantly better than the average for Liberia of 23.7 months. STCRSP fared worse than the regional average for the time lag from signature to effectiveness, with 6.2 months against 4.1 months. The project completed on time (30 September 2017).
80. **Disbursement performance.** The first disbursement occurred in November 2011 and a 53 per cent execution rate was reached three years into project implementation, in 2014. Thereafter, disbursement started to decline. According to the project documentation, there were several reasons for the decline, including the Ebola outbreak, which slowed down implementation, as farmers and groups were unable to meet and maintenance could not be undertaken. As of November 2016, the disbursement rate was 100 per cent. In actual terms, the disbursement of the IFAD loan has therefore been successful.

Figure 4

IFAD loan: annual amounts disbursed and cumulative disbursement rate (2012–2017)



Source: IFAD Flexcube data.

81. An exchange rate loss between US\$ and Special Drawing Rights (SDR) of about US\$1.5 million was incurred due to the denomination of the loan in SDR. In total, IFAD has disbursed US\$15.3 million against a loan amount at design of US\$16.8 million.
82. The table in annex VI shows that the cumulative disbursement according to categories shows an overrun on technical assistance, studies and training. The PCR refers to the need to include clauses in contracts with implementing partners that stipulate that payments are tagged to progressive achievement of performance milestones. The category on salaries, allowances and operating costs also overran slightly.
83. The PCR notes (paragraph 124) that IFAD incurred overruns for component 1: Revitalization of cocoa and coffee. Farm labour, which was to be a beneficiary

⁴² Computation by the PPE team based on the IFAD database (Oracle Business Intelligence).

contribution, was also added to the IFAD loan. In addition, the cash contribution to the routine road maintenance (US\$20/farmer/year) was not paid. These contributions had been anticipated as beneficiary contributions. There were also some unforeseen costs related to power sawmills and overhead contributions to the private sector partner.

84. **Project and financial management.** Project management costs rose from 12 per cent to 18 per cent. The increment in project management cost was due to: ⁴³ (i) the high cost of operating activities due to inflation; (ii) the cost of utilities such as electricity, security, rent of office space, which at project design was to be part of the Government contribution; (iii) additional project staff (two field accountants, two additional institutional capacity-building officers,⁴⁴ one mechanic/driver) who were not initially budgeted at project design but were hired due to implementation challenges at field level; and (iv) the project's contribution to the running costs of the PMU MOA management (e.g. salaries, fuel, communication costs), something that was not considered during the project design and costing.
85. In Liberia, the PIU had overall responsibility for all IFAD projects/programmes. This was considered an effective way of coordinating project/programme implementation. However, the PCR found (paragraph 128) that there was a risk of overloading the project director as the project portfolio expanded. The PIU reported to the PMU, which was responsible for coordinating all projects/programmes under the MOA. In addition, STCRSP had a County PIU in Voinjama headed by the project engineer. It was considered beneficial given the focus on rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads. However, the PCR observed that giving the engineer the responsibility of heading the office meant that other components received less attention. In total, the PIU (central and Lofa-based) included 26 staff, and there was very low staff turnover rate during project implementation.
86. Overall the PIU executed its mandate ably. STCRSP finances were well accounted for during the period of its implementation. The project put in place key internal controls (e.g. fuel cards, vehicle log movement sheets, operational cost controls) and operated with a high level of financial control discipline. Some issues were highlighted in earlier supervision reports (2014/2015) relating to procurement and compliance with procurement, rated 3 in 2015 and 2016. Initially the financial controller was carrying out the procurement function, which was perceived as a conflict of interest and was later rectified. It also took some years before the project developed a procurement plan; although a procurement management information system was installed, it remained under-used due to limited skills of some staff in Microsoft Word and Excel.
87. **Cost per beneficiary.** The design report does not explicitly mention a target number of beneficiaries, but it refers to 15,000 hectares being revitalized and each household receiving support for 1 hectare (i.e. 76,500 beneficiaries⁴⁵). The PCR also provides targets for youth employment. In the end, partly due to the SDR/US\$ exchange loss, the cost per beneficiary remained almost the same as at appraisal: US\$280 per beneficiary (against US\$283). In total, the project reportedly reached 73,873 beneficiaries⁴⁶ against an appraisal target of 88,115.

⁴³ Based on interviews with the financial comptroller.

⁴⁴ This may be a reflection of increased geographic scope as well as an increase in the number of cooperatives receiving this type of support.

⁴⁵ Applying an average of 5.1 family members to a household.

⁴⁶ Comprised of a total of 65 280 beneficiaries of farm rehabilitations (12 800 households, assuming an average rural household size of 5.1), 7 781 youth who provided labour for farm rehabilitation, and 812 youth who provided labour for road rehabilitation.

Table 6

Number of planned targeted beneficiaries against actual numbers

	<i>Appraisal Report estimate</i>	<i>PCR estimate</i>
Number of beneficiaries		
Farm rehabilitation	76 500	65 280
Youth employment (farm rehabilitation)	5 000	7 781
Youth employment (road brushing)	6 615	812
Total	88 115	73 873
Total project costs	24 956	20 697
Cost per beneficiary household (US\$)	283	280

Source: Appraisal Report; PCR.

88. **Unit cost.** Based on a rough calculation⁴⁷ of unit cost for the rehabilitation of roads, the average was US\$48,434 per km. This is higher than the average for the Northern region (US\$36,000 – US\$40,000) as provided by MPW. It is also higher than the average for the SIDA-funded Liberian Feeder Roads Project phase II in Lofa, which was US\$33,000/km. However, the unit cost per km of road is contingent on the road width and the distance and topography of the location of the project implementation area.
89. The unit cost per km of road with a width of 4.5 metres is between US\$36,000 and US\$38,000.00 inclusive of the structures, while that of a 6 metre road width is between US\$45,000 and US\$48,000 inclusive of the structures. In the case of STCRSP, many of the roads chosen involved reconstruction, which involved earthmoving and other road equipment and not rehabilitation, leading to an increased unit cost. Additionally, some of the roads were in hilly terrain (steep slopes and serpentine horizontal alignment), which required extensive drainage and earthworks which added to the high cost per km.⁴⁸
90. **Economic returns.** The PCR performed a detailed economic analysis in which it also calculated the economic internal rate of return (EIRR) and the net present value. The overall EIRR was estimated at 8.4 per cent, while the net present value of the net benefits stream, discounted at 7 per cent, is about US\$11.1 million. The EIRR is much lower than the ex-ante IRR of 32 per cent given in the President's report, which was initially used to justify the project.
91. In light of the above, the efficiency of the project was mixed. While disbursement rates were quite good, and the time lags compared favourably with regional averages, the budget overruns in certain components were charged to the IFAD loan. Unit costs for the roads were higher than national averages and the other donor-funded projects, and the EIRR at completion was low. Given the circumstances, the performance was reasonable. Therefore, the PPE rates efficiency as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

B. Rural poverty impact

92. Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred, or are expected to occur, in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions. The impact domains considered in the PPE are: (i) household income and net assets; (ii) food security and agricultural productivity; (iii) human and social capital and empowerment; and (iv) institutions and policies.

⁴⁷ Cumulative disbursement US\$6,446,693 for 133.1 km of roads. The project engineers provided a figure of US\$45,000 per average unit of road.

⁴⁸ IFAD 2016 supervision mission report, page 13.

93. **Impact data.** In 2014, a baseline study was carried out in Lofa to measure key indicators at household level in project and non-project communities. Following this study, three impact studies were published between 2016 and 2017. Surveys for these were conducted independently from the baseline survey, using a different questionnaire and sampling strategy, but where possible key indicators were compared. Two of the studies focused on the cocoa rehabilitation interventions, and as such addressed, in particular, the characteristics of cocoa producers and their on-farm activities related to cocoa production. The third study focused on road rehabilitation. All studies applied a mixed-methods methodology but with an emphasis on quantitative surveys. Surveys were undertaken for a sample of 2,281 farmers in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties, of which 25 per cent of the sample were the treatment group. This PPE found some limitations: in particular, the study on road rehabilitation, where many variables were applied (e.g. change in travel costs to community access road from homestead; change in travel costs to secondary road from homestead), but with effects not reported consistently across the variables. The findings of the impact studies should be interpreted with caution as they were mainly based on recall methods in the absence of any better alternatives. In addition to these data, the PCR undertook a mini-survey of 50 farmers. The following sections are principally based on these documents.

Household income and assets

94. **Target beneficiary income from cocoa increased.** This holds true for farmers who participated in the cocoa rehabilitation project as well as those who did not, but the increase for STCRSP farmers was significantly higher (in year 2015/2016) than the increase observed by non-STCRSP farmers in Lofa County (+39 per cent for STCRSP farmers against +6 per cent for non-STCRSP farmers). This shows that STCRSP farmers and non-beneficiaries were helped by the generally favourable context of the global cocoa market but that STCRSP activities had an additional impact.

Table 7

Comparison of cocoa income with baseline study

<i>Cocoa income (US\$ per farmer)</i>	<i>STCRSP farmers</i>	<i>Control farmers</i>
Baseline study	184	167
2013/14	158	103***
2014/15	213	134***
2015/16	288***	183

Significance levels (p): * <0.1; ** < 0.05; *** < 0.01

Source: Royal Tropical Institute, Central Agricultural Research Institute 2017, addendum to the report Cocoa Rehabilitation in the Liberian Cocoa Belt.

95. STCRSP farmers obtained similar revenues in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 seasons compared to the baseline study, but revenues during the 2015/2016 season were significantly higher compared to the baseline study. For non-STCRSP farmers, the cocoa revenues in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 season were significantly lower than measured in the baseline study. However, the cocoa revenues in 2015/2016 were similar to the revenues measured at baseline.
96. **There is no significant effect of cocoa rehabilitation on household goods and assets.** With regard to acquisition of assets resulting from increased revenue from increased cocoa yields, farmers reported that they had used the additional income to build better-quality, plastered, houses, including zinc roofs and inside bathrooms, and also to buy goods such as new mattresses. However, overall the study found that there was no statistically significant effect on household assets

between the beneficiary and non-beneficiary households, except for the value of farm tools.⁴⁹

97. The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) impact study (2017) found that the total value of household goods and assets in Lofa County was strongly influenced by the characteristics of the head of household (gender and formal education). Illness within the household had a strong negative effect on the value of household goods and assets. It is likely that the Ebola virus epidemic (2014/2015) negatively affected household-level outcomes of agricultural interventions such as STCRSP. The study of the rehabilitation of roads indicated that the effect of road rehabilitation on household income remained ambiguous, noting that while the reduction in travel time had a positive effect on quantities of cocoa sold, there was no significant effect on cocoa revenues.

Food security and agricultural productivity

98. **There is no evidence of project impact on food security and overall farm agricultural productivity.** Using the number of meals consumed per day as a proxy for food security, the above impact study conducted by KIT (2017) showed that there was no significant difference in food security between STCRSP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. From what was observable in the field, the project focused only on cocoa rehabilitation and promoted cocoa GAPs, and there were no clear spillover effects on the other components of the farming systems. For this reason, the farmers did not gain any additional skills for increased productivity of food crops or livestock. While the design report highlighted the very low farming yield levels, especially for food crops, the project was not designed to address this situation. Although the KIT impact study concluded that cocoa rehabilitation indirectly contributed to food security, it does not provide data showing how such an improvement was one of the priority areas for use of additional income in the household in the same way as it does for health, housing and education. The PCR mini-survey found that 17 per cent of the respondents had not experienced a hungry season during the period 2015-2017, whereas the rest of the respondents had experienced some degree of hunger over the same period. The PCR suggested that this may be an effect of the Ebola epidemic of 2015, which first erupted in Lofa. The epidemic disrupted the collection of the cocoa harvest at the farm level as well as transport for shipping, leading to post-harvest losses and affecting smallholders' access to imported rice.⁵⁰
99. **Productivity increased.** As with income, productivity increased for both STCRSP farmers and non-STCRSP farmers during the project period. Again, the increase for STCRSP farmers was 60 per cent (from 131.2 kg per farmer at baseline to 211.8 kg per farmer in 2015/16) as compared a 33 per cent ⁵¹ increase for non-STCRSP farmers (from 119.5 kg per farmer at baseline to 159.9 kg per farmer). The fact that there was an increase for both beneficiary farmers and non-beneficiary farmers suggests that there were other factors besides cocoa rehabilitation that also influenced cocoa production.⁵² For example, the STRCSP farmers had larger farms (average 1.28 hectares) than the control group (0.98 hectares) and were therefore starting from a higher level.

⁴⁹ KIT study 2016.

⁵⁰ FAO 2016, Impact of Ebola virus disease outbreak on market chains and trade of agricultural products trade in West Africa. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5641e.pdf>.

⁵¹ This figure was computed using the impact data but recalculating the percentage increase, as there was a mistake in the calculation in the report.

⁵² Source: Royal Tropical Institute, Central Agricultural Research Institute 2017 addendum to the report Cocoa Rehabilitation in the Liberian Cocoa Belt, page 16.

Table 8
Comparison of cocoa production with baseline study findings

<i>Cocoa production (kg per farmer)</i>	<i>STCRSP farmers</i>	<i>Control farmers</i>
Baseline study	131.2	119.5
2013/14	144.2	105.8*
2014/15	173.0***	132.3*
2015/16	211.8***	159.9***

Significance levels (p): * <0.1; ** < 0.05; *** < 0.01

Source: Royal Tropical Institute, Central Agricultural Research Institute 2017, addendum to the report Cocoa Rehabilitation in the Liberian Cocoa Belt.

Human and social capital and empowerment

100. **Using the cooperatives as an entry point, STCRSP enabled the target beneficiaries to begin the transition from survival mode to recovered livelihoods.** The backbone of the project's success was the investment in human capital and empowering the farmers to increase cocoa/coffee productivity and cocoa bean quality, and their cooperatives to provide cocoa marketing services to their membership. YPs and farmer training were particularly important as they related directly to cocoa farm rehabilitation.
101. **The roads contributed to improvements in other farm activities (produce) and village life in general.** Roads rehabilitated by the project offer many benefits to target areas, including reduced transportation costs, reduced travel time, reduced prices of basic commodities, reduced deterioration of quality of commodities during transportation, and increased trade exchange with neighbouring countries. Delivery of services to farmers increased. This includes the improved mobility of CACs and DAOs, easier transport of the sick to health centres, and improved access to social services.⁵³
102. Apart from cocoa farm rehabilitation activities, communities gained knowledge in road maintenance, as they participated in road rehabilitation activities and the youths received training on road maintenance. The use of this knowledge increased community ownership of the road rehabilitation outcomes and the communities' interest in keeping the roads in good condition.
103. **The project laid the foundation for collective action through its support to cooperatives, but the cooperatives are not financially viable.** Promoting cooperatives was an important achievement in a post-conflict context. The cooperatives represented not only a collective enterprise formed by rural farmers, but also an association of people who are governed by defined bylaws, which promoted democratic and people-oriented enterprises. The impact of this process on social capital contributed to enhanced cooperation (e.g. voluntary work on road maintenance) and collective trust at the local level. The seven cooperatives boasted an increase in membership of 374 per cent. As part of the capacity-building support, the project, in collaboration with CDA, supervised eleven General Assemblies since its inception in 2013 to ensure information-sharing among cooperative members and create a smooth leadership transition according to by-laws and constitutions. Training was conducted on both managerial and technical issues. However, the cooperatives were still weak from strategic, managerial and financial standpoint. As a result, they are not able to generate profits and serve their members and they are therefore not a successful business case (only one out of seven cooperatives was financially viable when the project ended).
104. **Linkages between the cooperatives and their associated farmers were observed to be generally weak,** which was illustrated by the negligible overall

⁵³ Based on focus group interviews and supervision mission report 2016, page 31.

recovery rate of 0.3 per cent of total advances which were repaid to cooperatives. Moreover, most farmers were not selling their produce through the cooperatives because the immediate revenues from side-selling exceeded the perceived benefits of cooperative membership, particularly as cooperatives did not sanction side-selling (supervision mission report 2017, para 54).

Institutions and policies

105. With regard to strengthening its key national partner institutions (MOA and CDA) in their respective missions relating the national cocoa and coffee sector development for MOA, or cooperative development for CDA, the project did not implement any institutional support activity at national level. With regard to MOA, capacity-strengthening was limited to the Lofa County extension services to enable them to provide extension services to the target cocoa and coffee farmers and their cooperatives as already described.
106. With regard to policies, it should be recalled that one of the main constraints to the development of the cocoa value chain in Liberia was the lack of a strategy and regulatory measures to support smallholder farmers, while creating viable interactions between respective upstream and downstream actors. In spite of this, the project did not support ongoing or new policy or regulatory framework processes in relation to the development of the cocoa or coffee sector. The private sector actors met by the evaluation team highlighted that a regulatory framework was necessary to improve the way the cocoa chain was functioning. One example mentioned of measures needed to secure Liberia's position in export markets is formalizing the standards system. Another example is the need for specific regulations to ensure that contractual relations between the cocoa buyer and the producers or producer organizations are equitable and protect one party against another party from breaking their contractual commitments.
107. Overall, STCRSP did not have a significant impact on the policy and national strategy for the development of the entire cocoa and coffee value chains but it did play a role in institution-building.
108. **Rural poverty impact.** The impact of the project on cocoa productivity and household incomes is clear. The project impact on food security was only indirect and has not been measured systematically. The project contributed to building human and social capital and to improving the management of the natural capital. There was no effort to work on the regulatory framework, which negatively impacted the project. The rating for rural poverty impact is therefore **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

C. Other performance criteria

Sustainability

109. Ensuring post-project sustainability remains a challenge for many development interventions in Liberia. In the case of STCRSP, the sustainability of the benefit streams generated varied by component, but many will depend on the continued support of the follow-on project recently adopted (TCEPII).
110. **While the continuation of tree-cropping practices is likely, sustainability remains fragile on several levels.** According to the project documentation, most farmers associated crop rehabilitation and replanting with increased production, and proper fermentation and grading with higher value (supervision report 2017, paragraph 114). Also, according to the KIT study of 2016, 88 per cent of the beneficiaries were willing to continue the practices on their own as these improved the quality of cocoa and consequently increased their income. While not well documented, reportedly there was a consistent and spontaneous process of adoption of the treatments/practices to additional hectares, unaided by the project. However, the progress made remains fragile because producers still face challenges that include the inadequate supply of good-quality seedlings, lack of rural finance

systems to support the replacement of the old unproductive trees, the inability of cooperatives to pre-finance cocoa beans at harvest, and the lack of standards applying to Liberia's cocoa value to ensure good prices. However, many of these challenges will be addressed by TCEPII, a recently approved follow-on project, which plans to work with the same target group with similar objectives, and will continue supporting cocoa farm rehabilitation.

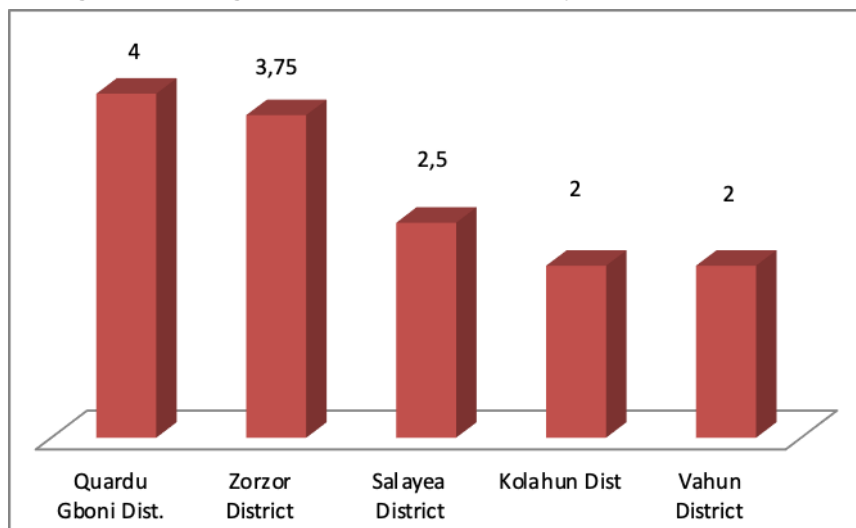
111. **The cooperatives were unable to ensure continued marketing services to their members.** Their capacity to collect cocoa beans was already reduced by the lack of adequate resources to pay cash to farmers when their produce was collected. This has encouraged side-selling to middlemen. Importantly, all the cooperatives discontinued working with LAADCO but struggled to find satisfactory agreements with other private sector companies. This was because few companies were willing to pay for inputs or provide pre-financing. On a positive note, the project is likely to have increased the capacity of the cooperatives to negotiate, and opportunities were still being explored with the private sector.
112. **There are important threats to the operational capacity of MOA's local services** because trained YPs who worked on the project were not integrated by MOA when the project ended. The agricultural officers also lacked adequate budgets to ensure their mobility and to allow them to provide on-the-ground advice to farmers. The current average of one extension officer for every 1,000 to 5,000 farmers in the districts⁵⁴ clearly does not meet the need.
113. **At the time of the evaluation, the roads were in reasonable working order, but their long-term maintenance was not certain.** Findings from the asset verification exercise⁵⁵ conducted during the PPE field visit, 11 roads out of 29 showed an overall average rating of maintenance of 3.09 (i.e. reasonable working order). As can be seen in figure 5 below, there were differences in the maintenance according to the districts. The evaluation team observed that the roads in Quardu-Gboni and Zorzor Districts were in full working order and were well maintained, whereas roads in Kolahun and Vahun districts showed partial damage and were only partly maintained. In Salayea District, the roads were slightly better maintained. There were different reasons for the variation in maintenance and not all the roads were completed in the same year, but most of the roads were completed in 2015. In Quardu Gboni District, the maintenance had been taken over by the Feeder Roads Alternative and Maintenance Programme, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
114. In all other cases, the community was responsible for maintenance in the form of unpaid "road gangs". They had few tools and had received limited training. While some road maintenance had taken place, over time the maintenance will become more challenging as rehabilitated roads attract increased traffic, including the heavy timber and other trucks, during the rainy season and will not be sustainable through this arrangement. The cooperatives had no resources to allocate to this activity. In principle, MPW was responsible for the maintenance of feeder roads but it is restricted by limited funds, human resources and logistics. A road maintenance fund was established in 2016 but is still not functioning. It should be noted that this is a challenge that was being faced by other donors as well (e.g. the Liberian Swedish Feeder Roads Project).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Feed the Future 2017, Liberia Desk Study of Extension and Advisory Services - Developing Local Extension Capacity project, page 28.

⁵⁵ This exercise is not comparable to a quantitative survey but aimed primarily at spot-checking whether the infrastructure existed and its conditions.

⁵⁶ In fact, SIDA has agreed to take on the maintenance of existing roads against reducing targets for rehabilitation of roads in their expansion project (interview with Swedish Embassy staff).

Figure 5
Average asset rating* of rehabilitation of roads by district



* A rating system was used to assess the current condition of rehabilitated roads. 4=full working order and maintained; 3=reasonable working order; 2=poor/partial damage, partly maintained; 1=not working or not maintained.
Source: PCR.

115. In light of the above analysis, sustainability is rated **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

Innovation and scaling up

116. **Innovation.** IFAD defines innovation as “a process that adds value or solves a problem in new ways”. In order to qualify as an innovation, a product, idea or approach needs to be new to its context, useful and cost-effective in relation to a goal, and able to “stick” after pilot-testing.⁵⁷
117. The partnership between cooperatives and the private sector was innovative in the Liberian context, in which contractual arrangements in integrated value chains were only nascent. It contributed to diversifying the cocoa market and increasing competition. This diversification has led to increased bargaining power of smallholders. It has also allowed for cooperatives to re-enter as market actors. However, the collaboration with the private sector entity has been discontinued, but new opportunities are being pursued.
118. The PCR highlighted the dissemination of good practices from Sao Tome through demonstration farms as innovative. The adoption of solar dryers and other practices by the beneficiary farmers were also found to be innovative. This evaluation notes that although these are good practices, they cannot be considered innovations as the use of solar dryers was already practised in the project area.
119. Based on the above, innovation is rated moderately **satisfactory (4)**.
120. **Scaling up.** There has been no attempt to scale up results. The project did not have a theory of change, let alone a theory of change for scaling up its results. During implementation, MOA did not establish a platform for scaling up the project. It did not use these results to inform cocoa value chain development policies or to convince other organizations to adopt the project approaches. However, the potential for scaling up some of the results existed (e.g. the partnership between cooperatives and the private sector). More importantly perhaps was the need to use lessons in order to inform policy processes to regulate the sector; this did not take place.

⁵⁷ IFAD 2007, Innovation Strategy, page 4.

121. The successor project to STCRSP is TCEPII, which adopts and expands on many of the more successful elements of STCRSP. TCEPII is planned to cost US\$47.6 million over six years and is financed by IFAD, the Government of Liberia, the private sector and beneficiaries. These financing arrangements are the same as for STCRSP. Hence, TCEPII is considered an extension or replication of STCRSP rather than a scaling-up as defined by IFAD.⁵⁸ Government contribution is 5.2 per cent of total funding and is limited to financing of taxes and duties on imported goods, and value-added tax. A financing gap of US\$16.2 million is identified in the project design. Approximately half of this is supposed to cover climate change adaptation. The document states that cofinancing opportunities will be explored and, if not secured, will be provided through the country's next Performance-based Allocation System allocation.
122. In light of the above analysis, scaling up is rated moderately **unsatisfactory (3)**.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

123. STCRSP specifically targeted women and youth. The design document referred to the target group including at least 25 per cent women. In addition to the quotas, training in mainstreaming gender, as well as advocacy/sensitization relating to targeting, gender equality and women's empowerment, was planned for key staff among the project implementing partners, the CAC, the DAO and extension workers. Two key strategies – sensitization and mainstreaming – were identified to ensure that the targets were achieved.
124. **Overall, limited attention was given to gender within the project, apart from establishing quotas.** Primarily this was because the chosen value chain (cocoa) was one in which women traditionally played less of a role, and the design did not provide a vision of how to include women in other segments of the value chain (e.g. fermentation and drying) where they could potentially play an important role. (In Liberia, women tend to contribute greater amounts of labour to food crop production, particularly vegetables.)⁵⁹ In addition, STCRSP did not properly consider that women generally have less access to land, low tenure security, less access to labour than men, and that they can face higher production costs, thus hindering their ability to perform to the same level as men. As a result, participation in the project depended on owning a cocoa farm, which largely deprived women of full project benefits, since they generally lack control over land in the traditional rural framework. The use of the Gender Action Learning System, at the level of the cooperatives and with its membership, was suggested for consideration at design but later discarded due to lack of funds for its implementation.
125. Supervision mission reports and the PCR point to a lack of resources allocated for gender mainstreaming in the annual work plan and budget (AWPB) (supervision mission report page 207, paragraph 87) and noted that there was no special training conducted (PCR page 119). This was generally confirmed by the field visits.
126. **None of the targets for women's participation were met.** The number of women reached by the project was only 19 per cent of the beneficiaries. Although there were no obstacles to their membership in the cooperatives, they were inadequately represented on the boards of these cooperatives (an average of 22 per cent of women on the boards). Overall, their level of active participation was unclear except for one cooperative, which was chaired by a woman. Economic empowerment and participation in rural institutions is, therefore, considered low and there is no indication that the project reduced workloads or ensured better

⁵⁸ "Expanding, adapting and supporting successful policies, programmes and knowledge, so that they can leverage resources and partners to deliver larger results for a greater number of rural poor in a sustainable way" (IFAD operational framework for scaling up results, 2015).

⁵⁹ Feed the Future Working paper 2016, Integrating food and nutrition within agricultural extension services, Liberia Landscape Analysis, page 17.

distribution of economic and social benefits between men and women. Finally, only 11 per cent of the PIU staff were women; however, two female staff members held important positions with a high level of decision-making.

127. In light of the above, gender equality and women's empowerment is rated **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

Natural resources management and the environment

128. STCRSP did not have any negative environmental or natural resources impact because its focus was on the revitalization of cocoa trees in existing farms and the rehabilitation of existing roads.
129. Cocoa is an under-storey species, which is planted on farms in partially shaded conditions under the strata of taller crops, shrubs and trees that were selected from the original forest and which provide the necessary shade at all stages of cocoa tree growth. From a natural resources and environmental viewpoint, the cocoa farm, as an agroforest, provides not only economic benefits but also ecosystem services as far as water, soil, forest and associated fauna conservation are concerned.
130. No new land was put under cocoa cultivation with the project's support. The structural system of the agroforest on the beneficiaries' farms was not greatly altered. During the field visit, the evaluation team observed that essential ecological functions of agroforests were preserved. Pruning should restore the quality of the soil, as organic matter was left on the ground for decomposition. The cooperatives' representatives met by the evaluation team strongly argued for extending cocoa planting into new areas instead of conducting rehabilitation operations. There was a lack of awareness of the fact that such an expansion, if carried out, could lead to deforestation and environmental degradation.
131. Road rehabilitation activities did not have an impact on the environment, or on natural resources. The roads were not new, and the work consisted in rehabilitating existing roads. It should also be added that the rehabilitated roads did not lead to new population settlements, or to displacement of people from pre-existing settlements.
132. The performance on natural resources management and the environment is rated **satisfactory (5)**.

Adaptation to climate change

133. Climate change risk was not analysed during the design phase of the project. The President's report referred to climate change in only one place, "STCRSP is in line with the IFAD climate change policy". This does not sufficiently underscore the role played by climate change on the sustainable cocoa production trajectory choices, taking into account the anticipated impacts of climate change on the resilience of cocoa production systems. The project did not undertake specific activities to raise the Lofa County cocoa sector's awareness of the negative impact of deforestation. Of course, at the time the project was designed, sensitivity to climate issues in the cocoa sector was still low compared to the period after the Cocoa and Forests Initiative (2017) which culminated at the Conference of Parties (COP23) and the declaration on no deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.⁶⁰
134. With regard to climate risk for cocoa and coffee, Götz Schroth et al⁶¹ (2015) conducted an in-depth study of the impact of climate change on the two crops in

⁶⁰ Cocoa & Forests Initiative <https://www.worldcocoaoundation.org/initiative/cocoa-forests-initiative/>.

⁶¹ Schroth G, Läderach P, Martínez-Valle AI & Bunn C. 2015. Climate vulnerability and adaptation of the smallholder cocoa and coffee value chains in Liberia. Working Paper No. 134. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security; IFAD. Copenhagen, Denmark. Available online at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272576499_Climate_vulnerability_and_adaptation_of_the_smallholder_cocoa_and_coffee_value_chains_in_Liberia_CCAFS_Working_Paper_No_134.

West Africa in general, and in Liberia in particular, with focus on projects financed by IFAD and the World Bank in Liberia. They noted that increased maximum temperatures during the dry season could become an important stress factor in some areas in West Africa, especially where cocoa and coffee are grown with little or no shade. With regard to Liberia, they concluded from their analysis that climatic conditions will remain suitable for growing cocoa and coffee in the current cocoa counties of Nimba, Lofa and Bong, until and beyond the 2050s, provided that some safeguards are in place.

135. One of the safeguards is to avoid further deforestation to establish new cocoa/coffee groves. The evaluation team observed from discussions with cooperative representatives that there were increasing voices in favour of establishing cocoa on new areas instead of rehabilitating old cocoa groves. The argument is that young landless people without a clear claim to existing farmland have no other livelihood alternative. This will require an effort to build awareness on the risk of such solutions, and to continue supporting rehabilitation of old cocoa groves.
136. Overall, it can be inferred from field observations by the evaluation team that rehabilitation of cocoa farms has helped to contain deforestation. This can be viewed as first step of any future effort to put in place sustainable farming systems in which tree crops are important. The current cocoa/coffee production practices, under shade trees and with GAPs promoted by the project, contribute to enhanced resilience of cocoa to climate change. They do not affect the existing vegetation structure on the farm, as they do not imply any removal of tree crops or shade trees. Furthermore, within the West Africa cocoa belt, Liberia is among the least vulnerable areas.⁶² It is also worth noting that the project provided farmers with early-maturing cocoa varieties with a potential to enhance adaptation to climate change, although it remained at a very small scale.
137. The performance on adaptation to climate change is therefore rated **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

D. Overall project achievement

138. Overall, the project was well implemented and effective in achieving its targets and objectives. It had a satisfactory implementation rate, despite the difficult working conditions in the rainy season and the interruption due to the Ebola epidemic. The components on cocoa farms and roads rehabilitation had impacts on the target cocoa farmers, who increased cocoa bean production and improved quality, and consequently obtained a higher price for their produce. With road rehabilitation and capacity-building of farmers and extension officers, it was possible to reach farmers who otherwise would not be served by the market.
139. In addition to rehabilitation of roads, another measure undertaken by the project to link farmers to markets was the collaboration established with their cooperatives and the facilitation of contractual relationships between them and LAADCO. The cooperatives were a good strategic pathway to reach the target farmers and the cooperatives continued their activities after the end of the project; however, their partnership with LAADCO ended at project completion.
140. With regard to institutional capacity-building, the project supported MOA's Lofa county and district extension services to be more operational as far as advising cocoa producers was concerned. Their higher performance as compared to staff in other counties who had not had similar support was one of the factors that increased cocoa production. However, MOA did not integrate the trained YPs at the

⁶² Götz Schroth et. al (2016). Vulnerability to climate change of cocoa in West Africa: Patterns, opportunities and limits to adaptation. *Science of The Total Environment*, Vol. 556, 15 June 2016, Pages 231-241. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969716304508>.

end of the project, and this represented a considerable setback to addressing the needs of the farmers as far as advisory services are concerned.

141. Considering the analysis above and taking into account the ratings on other criteria, efficiency and gender in particular, the overall achievement of the project is rated **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

Key points

- The objectives of STRCSP were coherent and relevant to the Liberian policy context and aligned with IFAD's COSOP. The design was simple but could have better reflected the objective of food security and had elements of a top-down approach in the targeting strategy. STRCSP was effective in rehabilitating 12,800 hectares, and outreach was about 84 per cent.
- Farm gate price paid to farmers improved. This was principally driven by overall favourable global market prices but also by marginal improvements in the quality of the beans.
- The project was effective in linking the cooperatives with a buyer company. However, as more buyers entered the market the farmers started to side-sell their produce. The project linked Lofa County's cocoa and coffee growers to markets through road rehabilitation, but it did not reach the planned target of length of roads.
- The impact on cocoa productivity and incomes are clear. There is no evidence of project impact on food security. There was no clear evidence of increase in assets. The project contributed to building human and social capital and institutions, but it is an ongoing process and the cooperatives are still not financially viable. There was no effort to work on the regulatory framework, which negatively impacted the project.
- Sustainability is fragile at several levels, but certain benefits may be sustained through the IFAD follow-on project TCEPII.
- The strategy of cocoa and coffee farm rehabilitation used by the project for improved livelihoods has helped to contain deforestation in Lofa. Overall, the project paid limited attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, and none of the targets for women's participation were met.

E. Performance of partners

Performance of IFAD

142. **The performance of IFAD was positive overall.** The project design was sound although there were some missed opportunities to better ensure food security and target women and youth.
143. **Supervision missions and implementation support were regularly undertaken⁶³ and had a good mix of experts, but some issues remained unresolved.** The missions were undertaken at least once a year and, except for two (in 2013), comprised a good mix of various specialists, including technical expertise (e.g. rural institutions, gender/targeting, infrastructure, tree crops) and management and fiduciary expertise (e.g. financial, M&E). The reports are comprehensive and raise important issues. However, M&E and gender/targeting issues remained unresolved throughout the project. The PCR also highlighted that while supervision missions were generally appreciated, some staff members expressed the need for greater technical implementation support to enable them to work on some of the recommendations put forth by the supervision missions. IFAD could also have done more to support the Government (e.g. in acquiring skills in M&E).

⁶³ The PCR reports 12 missions between 2012 and 2017. The mission in April-May 2015 was the mid-term review but no IFAD staff or international staff participated due to the Ebola travel ban, and the report remains in draft form. Two of the missions listed (May 2014 and August 2016) refer to visits by the Director of the West and Central Africa Division and the President, respectively. The last mission in 2017 refers to the Project Completion Review mission.

144. **IFAD exercised flexibility when having to face issues deviating from the original design** (e.g. number of cooperatives supported, road maintenance fees), including the Ebola outbreak.
145. **IFAD facilitated exchange visits of STCRSP to Sierra Leone and São Tomé and Príncipe, an effort that was appreciated but not properly consolidated.** IFAD facilitated exchange visits to both Sierra Leone and São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) for project staff and beneficiaries. Specifically, during the second year, a learning route to STP, composed of nine project stakeholders from eight implementing institutions, was organized to facilitate cross-learning with an IFAD-supported ongoing project. The objective was for the STCRSP team to build knowledge on cocoa and coffee value chain development. The participants in the team appreciated these exchanges. The visit to STP was reciprocated by the STP project team, which provided on-site training in Lofa; the training was highly appreciated, as confirmed by the PPE mission. A manual on cocoa rehabilitation based on the training provided by the STP project team was to be printed and distributed under the responsibility of both IFAD and the PIU. However, this was not done, and several supervision missions continued to reiterate the need to disseminate the manual and highlighted the limited adoption of demonstration site trainings (PCR paragraph 133).
146. In light of the above, the performance of IFAD is rated **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

Performance of the Government

147. **Compliance with the financing agreement and fiduciary management were overall between moderately satisfactory and satisfactory.** The main covenant that was not complied with was the timely submission of the AWPB.
148. **The Government's contribution was only 36 per cent of what had been planned at design.** The Government's contribution to STCRSP was in the form of duty/tax exemptions on investment expenditures. It appears that there were challenges regarding how to capture taxes foregone and that this remained an issue up until the end of the project.⁶⁴
149. **Some important recommendations were not followed up.** The supervision missions made recommendations regarding gender,⁶⁵ documenting the targeting process, and the grading process, but limited action was taken to address these issues.
150. **While the project worked with decentralized service providers of MOA (central), it did not provide adequate backstopping.** As per design, the project was integrated within the MOA's Lofa County services, at county and district levels. Therefore, it collaborated very closely with these services in all aspects of implementation. The capacity of these institutions was identified as a factor that would hamper effective implementation early on, and efforts were made to strengthen the capacity of the CAC and DAO to enable them to undertake their functions within the framework of the project, through the provision of office infrastructure, motorbikes and training. While the PCR found that, overall, CAC and DAO provided M&E and extension services to the beneficiaries, MOA (central level) could have been more involved in the technical supervision of project implementation. This was particularly crucial, given the state of the extension

⁶⁴ In 2014, the supervision report (paragraph 77) recommended that the contribution be recorded in the project accounts as goods procured. The 2017 supervision report (paragraph 99) found that despite support provided on how to capture taxes foregone on all contracts, this was not systematically done.

⁶⁵ Supervision mission 2015; January–February 2016; supervision mission February 2017. For example the 2017 supervision mission report (paragraph 87) notes: the PIU has not followed the previous mission recommendation to capitalize on the example of the women's leadership and inclusive participation set by the Seberhill cooperative and an opportunity for others to learn from their journey and success. The recommendation to facilitate exchange visits was not pursued. Contrary to previous mission recommendations, there was no allocation of resources to gender mainstreaming in the AWPB and no technical gender training conducted at any level.

services at county and district levels, where extension officers cover between 1,000 and 4,000 farmers and are limited in their mobility.

151. **Efforts were made to coordinate with MPW, but challenges were encountered.** The design report (2011, appendix 2) highlighted the role of the resident engineer (MPW based in Lofa) in: (i) selecting the roads; (ii) working with the selected contractors; (iii) developing a maintenance system with the STCRSP engineer; (iv) conducting site visits; (v) updating a database of roads in the county; and (vi) providing quarterly reports to the PMU on activity progress and associated indicators. However, due to the scarce capacity of the resident engineer in terms of human resources and logistics, Central MPW started monitoring the road works in Lofa County in 2016. The agreement with the PIU was that the resident engineer in Lofa county would pay regular visits along with the PIU engineers, while the Central MPW would visit the sites every two months. However, the arrangement was not fully effective. The issue of the road maintenance system also remained unresolved.
152. The existing Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee served as the National Steering Committee. It was a ministerial committee chaired by MOA and included farmer representatives and various private sector representatives. The committee was to provide guidance on any high-level policy matters that occurred during project implementation prior to seeing IFAD intervention. As intended, the committee met twice a year to approve the AWPB and project implementation reports, and discussed between four and eight projects. However, it was not able to resolve issues proactively related to the coordination with MPW on road rehabilitation.
153. **Monitoring and evaluation.** The implementation of the M&E system involved the two PIUs, implementing partners, CAC, DAOs and YPs. The performance indicators were aligned with the IFAD RIMS and COSOP indicators. A RIMS-compliant baseline survey was conducted in 2014 and was useful. Notwithstanding this, the M&E did not have a clear data collection system and database to make project monitoring more effective and support project management decisions. These weaknesses were reported in successive supervision missions but were not adequately addressed. The 2017 supervision mission noted that the PIU had not systematically collected data on productivity changes, and on adoption and spillover effects of rehabilitation at farm level, adding that it had relied on reported tonnage and value of commercialization of farm production by the cooperatives. Some planned impact studies were not carried out, but others were (e.g. three impact studies by KIT/CAR⁶⁶ on rehabilitation of plantations and roads). There is little reference to these studies, and they appear to be underused in supervision mission reports and the PCR. The supervision missions recommended that additional studies be conducted (e.g. farmers' sales/marketing and the use of solar dryers), but this was not followed up.
154. The shortcomings of the M&E system highlighted in the PCR include: (i) delays in the development of data collection templates which in the end were only used for a limited period of time in the case of cooperatives; (ii) lack of incentive and sufficient skill at the community level to collect the data properly, routinely or professionally; (iii) inadequate staff and resources to perform validation of rehabilitation; and (iv) the lack of full automation of the databases for M&E. As a result, the M&E system was used mainly for monitoring activities and outputs rather than higher-level results. A requirement to do so would have been a project theory of change, which had not been prepared. It should be noted that while M&E is principally a government responsibility, IFAD could have done more to support staff with training and technical assistance.

⁶⁶ Central Agricultural Research Institute.

155. In light of the above, the performance of the Government is rated **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

F. Assessment of the quality of the project completion report

156. **Scope.** In particular, an effort was made to provide detailed information and critical analyses on the project's effectiveness, efficiency and, to a certain extent, its impact. It could have been more analytical under "other performance criteria". Scope is rated **satisfactory (5)**.

157. **Quality.** Overall, the PCR is of good quality. There was an effort to conduct a good mini-survey to allow the status of performance of the project with regards to impact to be established. The data obtained were analysed and presented. The PPE's rating of quality is **satisfactory (5)**.

158. **Lessons.** The elements provided in the PCR are more a description of issues; lessons are not distilled from those issues. In light of this, the rating is **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

159. **Candour.** The PCR provides a balanced description and analysis of the project and its implementation. The PPE's rating of candour is **satisfactory (5)**.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

160. **A challenging context.** STCRSP's main objective was to reduce post-conflict poverty and food insecurity and improve livelihoods. It was a difficult project context. The target population was extremely poor, with very low levels of literacy and numeracy. Their contact with the wider economy and society was limited by lack of roads and services. In addition, the post-conflict environment had led to an economic and social breakdown. In addition, the Ebola outbreak, which erupted in the project county during project implementation, eroded important gains Liberia had made in reducing poverty and vulnerability. In such a context, it was a tall order to develop value chains, especially when such activities were to be implemented by revived cooperatives supported by county and district agricultural officers whose capacity for service delivery was barely established.
161. **Through its support to integrated value chains, STCRSP contributed to increased bargaining power of smallholder farmers.** During the project period, the number of cocoa buyers increased – large and small, at both national and local levels. STCRSP promoted a new type of partnership for the farmers, which focused on investing in lasting relations. The emergence of this type of partnership, coupled with more buyers, increased competition for cocoa from smallholders. This ultimately strengthened the market position and bargaining power of smallholder farmers. However, the increased competition, in particular from middlemen, also posed challenges to the project and ultimately weakened the position of the cooperatives and the partnership with the private sector.
162. **STCRSP successfully contributed to improved livelihoods and enabled farmers to make the transition from survival mode to recovered livelihoods (although with no obvious impact on food security).** It applied a market-oriented approach to facilitate access of smallholder cocoa growers to markets and simultaneously supporting cocoa farm rehabilitation, road rehabilitation and institutional capacity. This strategy allowed farmers to accelerate the rehabilitation of cocoa farms that had become unproductive after several years of war, increasing both productivity and quality. As a result of these efforts, the volume of cocoa went up. In achieving this outcome, STCRSP was helped by favourable global cocoa market prices up until 2016. This trend was therefore not unique to STCRSP farmers, but the percentage improvement was higher for STCRSP beneficiaries.
163. However, the project did not make a significant difference in food security between its target group and the non-beneficiaries. It focused mostly on cocoa rehabilitation and promoted cocoa GAPs, and there were no clear spillover effects on the other components of the farming systems.
164. **The targeting strategy did not adequately capture all the intended target groups.** The project reached a total of 12,800 households, representing 85 per cent of the target; of these 10,314 were cocoa-farming households and 2,486 were coffee-farming households. Of the total outreach, 10,368 were male-headed households and 2,432 were female-headed households. The targeting strategy consisted of recruiting members of the cooperatives and those who were in possession of one hectare of land. Hence, the quotas established for women and youth were not reached because the project design did not consider that in general these two groups had limited or no access to land planted with cocoa and lacked financial resources to buy it.
165. **STCRSP operated in a regulatory vacuum which negatively affected its success.** Liberia lacks a regulatory framework that can provide incentives to cocoa growers to increase productivity and improve cocoa produce, and to attract more private sector investment in cocoa value chain upgrading. The main aspects that an

appropriate framework in the country's context should cover are: creating standards for quality seedlings to replace old cocoa trees; easing access of producers to inputs (seeds, seedlings, equipment, phytosanitary inputs); promoting easy access of youth and women to land for cocoa farming; improving access to finance for small-scale cocoa producers; and strengthening institutions for research and technology generation aimed at improving cocoa sector productivity and cocoa value chain upgrading.

166. **The focus was on upstream constraints, thus limiting downstream interventions to facilitation of contracts between cooperatives and only one private sector company.** This limited focus meant that STCRSP was not able to address constraints across the segments of the value chain and ultimately limited the project's impact. As a value chain project, STCRSP was therefore less successful.

B. Recommendations

167. The following recommendations are made in relation to the IFAD follow-up cocoa farm rehabilitation projects in Liberia.
168. **Recommendation 1. Future IFAD cocoa value chain development projects should focus on addressing constraints upstream and pay increased attention to nodes downstream of the value chain.** Special attention should be paid to shortages of critical inputs (e.g. quality seedlings), poor storage and drying conditions, inadequate warehouse capacity and use, and lack of motivation among cooperative members. Empowered cooperatives should focus on actions that build household resilience by equipping farmers with GAPs and opportunities to adjust farm management practices to better cope with economic and other risks. Downstream attention should focus on interventions that support farmers and their organizations to add value to their produce, and that promote an equitable share of benefits. Future projects should therefore support the cooperatives in: (i) addressing constraints to credit; (ii) building managerial and organizational capacities and negotiation skills; and (iii) building the capacity of the cooperatives to better serve their members (e.g. inputs, extension, training, collection). Once the cooperatives have been strengthened sufficiently, future projects could consider supporting the formalization of a union of the cooperatives at county level in order for the cooperatives to sell directly on the international market.
169. **Recommendation 2. Any future project must address the problems relating to the policy and regulatory environment.** Based on the experience gained with STCRSP, IFAD is well positioned to feed lessons into newly established government institutions and processes. In addition, a number of other donors (e.g. World Bank, USAID, GrowLiberia) have been testing different models in the tree crop sector and there is now a need to consolidate this knowledge and ensure that experience informs the development of the sector. The newly established Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulator would be a natural entry point for IFAD. In addition, IFAD should support forums and other mechanisms that involve farmer unions, civil society and private sector organizations in the cocoa policy processes.
170. **Recommendation 3. IFAD's projects should enhance support to the development of women's entrepreneurship in both upstream and downstream nodes of the cocoa value chain.** This could include support to the formation of women's cooperatives, production of seedlings, drying of beans, and transformation of by-products. Activities should focus on: (i) building bargaining skills; (ii) training women in technical and managerial skills; and (iii) addressing constraints on access to credit. A similar focus should also be applied for the inclusion of youth in cocoa value chain entrepreneurship.

Basic project data

			<i>Approval (US\$ m)</i>		<i>Actual (US\$ m)</i>	
Region	West and Central Africa	Total project costs	24.96		20.70	
Country	Liberia	IFAD loan and percentage of total	16.88		16.47	
Loan number	I-852-LR	Borrower	2.02		0.72	
Type of project (subsector)	Rural Development	Cofinancier 1	5.13		3.21	
Financing type	Loan	Cofinancier 2				
Lending terms*	Highly Concessional	Cofinancier 3				
Date of approval	13-Dec-2011	Cofinancier 4				
Date of loan signature	10-Jan-2012	Beneficiaries	0.92		0	
Date of effectiveness	13-Jul-2012	Other sources				
Loan amendments	0	Number of beneficiaries			73 873 (Direct)	
Loan closure extensions	N/A					
Country programme managers	Jakob Tuborgh Ndaya Beltchika Hubert Boirard	Loan closing date	31-Mar-2018			
Regional director(s)	Lisandro Martin Ides de Willebois	Mid-term review			05-May-2015	
Project completion report reviewer	Catrina Perch	IFAD loan disbursement at project completion (%)			98%	
Project completion report quality control panel	Johanna Pennarz Hansdeep Khaira	Date of the project completion report			30-Sep-2017	

Source: PSRs; Oracle Business Intelligence; Project Completion Report.

Definition and rating of the evaluation criteria used by IOE

Criteria	Definition *	Mandatory	To be rated
Rural poverty impact	Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions. <i>Four impact domains</i>	X	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household income and net assets: Household income provides a means of assessing the flow of economic benefits accruing to an individual or group, whereas assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of economic value. The analysis must include an assessment of trends in equality over time. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and social capital and empowerment: Human and social capital and empowerment include an assessment of the changes that have occurred in the empowerment of individuals, the quality of grass-roots organizations and institutions, the poor's individual and collective capacity, and in particular, the extent to which specific groups such as youth are included or excluded from the development process. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food security and agricultural productivity: Changes in food security relate to availability, stability, affordability and access to food and stability of access, whereas changes in agricultural productivity are measured in terms of yields; nutrition relates to the nutritional value of food and child malnutrition. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and policies: The criterion relating to institutions and policies is designed to assess changes in the quality and performance of institutions, policies and the regulatory framework that influence the lives of the poor. 		No
Project performance	Project performance is an average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.	X	Yes
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design and coherence in achieving its objectives. An assessment should also be made of whether objectives and design address inequality, for example, by assessing the relevance of targeting strategies adopted.	X	Yes
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.	X	Yes
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.	X	Yes
Sustainability of benefits	The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.	X	Yes
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	The extent to which IFAD interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision making; work load balance and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods.	X	Yes
Innovation	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction.	X	Yes
Scaling up	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have been (or are likely to be) scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and others agencies.	X	Yes
Environment and natural resources management	The extent to which IFAD development interventions contribute to resilient livelihoods and ecosystems. The focus is on the use and management of the natural environment, including natural resources defined as raw materials used for socio-economic and cultural purposes, and ecosystems and biodiversity - with the goods and services they provide.	X	Yes
Adaptation to climate change	The contribution of the project to reducing the negative impacts of climate change through dedicated adaptation or risk reduction measures.	X	Yes

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Definition</i> *	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>To be rated</i>
Overall project achievement	This provides an overarching assessment of the intervention, drawing upon the analysis and ratings for rural poverty impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, gender equality and women's empowerment, innovation, scaling up, as well as environment and natural resources management, and adaptation to climate change.	X	Yes
Performance of partners			
• IFAD	This criterion assesses the contribution of partners to project design, execution, monitoring and reporting, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation. The performance of each partner will be assessed on an individual basis with a view to the partner's expected role and responsibility in the project life cycle.	X	Yes
• Government		X	Yes

* These definitions build on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management; the Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation agreed with the Evaluation Committee in September 2003; the first edition of the Evaluation Manual discussed with the Evaluation Committee in December 2008; and further discussions with the Evaluation Committee in November 2010 on IOE's evaluation criteria and key questions.

Rating comparison^a

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Programme Management Department rating</i>	<i>Project Performance Evaluation rating</i>	<i>Rating disconnect</i>
Rural poverty impact	4	4	0
Project performance			
Relevance	5	4	-1
Effectiveness	5	5	0
Efficiency	4	4	0
Sustainability of benefits	3	3	0
Project performance^b	4	4	0
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	3	3	0
Innovation	5	4	-1
Scaling up	5	3	-2
Environment and natural resources management	5	5	0
Adaptation to climate change	N/A	4	-
Overall project achievement^c	4	4	0
Performance of partners^d			
IFAD	5	4	-1
Government	5	4	-1
Average net disconnect			-0.5

^a Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.p. = not provided; n.a. = not applicable.

^b Arithmetic average of ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.

^c This is not an average of ratings of individual evaluation criteria but an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the rating for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, rural poverty impact, gender, innovation, scaling up, environment and natural resources management, and adaptation to climate change.

^d The rating for partners' performance is not a component of the overall project achievement rating.

Ratings of the Project Completion Report quality

	<i>PMD rating</i>	<i>IOE rating</i>	<i>Net disconnect</i>
Scope		5	
Quality (methods, data, participatory process)		5	
Lessons		4	
Candour		5	
Overall rating of the Project Completion Report		5	

Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.a. = not applicable.

Approach paper

I. Introduction

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IOE) will undertake a project performance evaluation (PPE) of the IFAD-financed Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalisation Support Project (STCRSP) in Liberia. The main objectives of the PPE are to: (i) provide an independent assessment of the results achieved by the project, and (ii) generate findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in the country.
2. This approach paper presents the overall scope and design of the PPE. It also outlines the evaluation objectives, methodology, process and timeframe of the PPE. It identifies certain key areas and issues that will be assessed in the PPE. Additionally, the Paper presents the project's theory of change, as constructed by the evaluation team

II. Project overview

3. **National context:** Liberia is situated on the west coast of Africa, bordered to the west by Sierra Leone, to the east by Côte d'Ivoire, to the north by Guinea and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It is a least-developed, low income, and food-deficit country and is classified as a fragile state.¹ Over half (51 per cent) of the country's 4.5 million population resides in rural areas and about 42 per cent of the population are under the age of 15. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the population depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.²
4. Following the 1989 – 2003 conflict that devastated human, institutional and productive capacities and the 2006 inauguration of a democratically elected administration, Liberia began a decade-long period of recovery and stabilization that led to an average annual rate of gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.8 per cent between 2006 and 2013.³ Key drivers of this growth were institutional and policy reforms, enormous inflows of official development assistance⁴ and significant foreign direct investment (FDI) which amounted to over US\$16 billion and was targeted to the palm oil, iron ore, rubber and timber industries.⁵
5. Yet, even as the economy recovered, Liberia struggled to translate renewed growth into deep sustainable poverty reduction. Between 2007 and 2014, the national headcount poverty rate dropped from 64 per cent to 54 per cent. However, due to rapid population growth, the total number of poor Liberians increased by 8 per cent. Urban areas benefitted the most from the recovery, while rural poverty rates increased slightly during the period.⁶ In addition, due to substantial infrastructure and human capital deficits the country experienced some of the worst economic and social indicators in the world. Despite a nominal increase in recent years, Liberia's Human Development Index value of 0.427, compared to a sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.523, ranks the country 177th out of 188 countries and places it into the low human development category.⁷
6. The twin shocks of the Ebola virus disease and falling prices for the key commodity exports of natural rubber and iron ore halted Liberia's steady economic recovery and reversed its growth trajectory beginning 2014.⁸ Unemployment is high at

¹ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264302075-5-en.pdf?expires=1553600989&id=id&accname=ocid195767&checksum=D0D6A3D0FEADC3C0ECF6BF63B590E815>

² World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Aid flows rose to 39 per cent of GDP and aid per capita grew to \$124.4 (BTI 2016).

⁵ Paczynska 2016, Liberia rising? Foreign direct investment, persistent inequalities and political tensions.

⁶ World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic, page 1.

⁷ UNDP 2016, Human Development Index.

⁸ GDP growth fell from 8.7 per cent in 2013 to 0.7 per cent in 2014 and 0 per cent in 2015, and is estimated to have rebounded by only 2.5 per cent in 2016.

between 80 and 85 per cent (World Bank Economic Review 2016), with the large numbers of unemployed youth continuing to be a matter of serious concern; the gross national income per capita of US\$683 (2011 PPP US\$) (UNDP 2016) is over four times lower than the sub-Saharan Africa average of US\$3,383 (2011 PPP US\$); poverty is pervasive, with close to 84 per cent of the population living on less than US\$1.25 a day; and with a Gini index of 36.5, substantial income inequality persists.⁹

7. **Agriculture.** The Liberian economy is currently undergoing a process of structural transformation, as the dominance of agriculture and mining gradually gives way to a rising services sector. The services sector expanded from 20 per cent of GDP in 2003 to 30 per cent in 2016 and employed 42 per cent of the labour force. Even though the share of the workforce employed in agriculture and mining has fallen sharply over the past three decades, an estimated 48.9 per cent of the workforce smallholders remains employed in agriculture primary production.
8. Though agriculture and fisheries represent a declining share of Liberia's GDP,¹⁰ these sectors continue to play an important role in economic growth, trade and employment dynamics. Liberia's main agricultural products include rice, cassava, rubber, cocoa and palm oil. Rubber is the country's largest agricultural export, followed by cocoa, and palm oil exports are modest but rising. Between 2006 and 2010, the agricultural sector attracted US\$2.7 billion in FDI, and in 2011, rubber and cocoa together comprised about 61 per cent of the total.
9. While commercial agricultural concessions are highly productive, the rest of the agricultural sector struggles with low productivity, and most farmers barely produce enough food to meet their own consumption needs. Insecure land tenure, a lack of inputs, high pre-harvest and postharvest losses due to inadequate facilities and technology, poor pest management, and the extremely limited use of fertilizer and other modern cultivation methods all contribute to the agricultural sector's low productivity. The sector remains dominated by traditional subsistence farming, with food crops such as rice and cassava prevailing. Some smallholder farmers also cultivate cash crops, including coffee and cocoa, though typically on a very modest scale. Most of these cash crops are cultivated in upland areas using labour-intensive techniques, with very limited use of improved inputs, machinery, or modern production methods.

IFAD's position in the Liberian context and STCRSP

10. IFAD began its operations in Liberia in 1981, however the two first projects were suspended due to the country's civil war from 1989 to 2003. After a 20-year suspension IFAD restarted its activities in Liberia in 2009 with the approval of the Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project. Whilst the first interventions focused on rice seed varieties and increasing smallholder's productivity The focus of IFAD's interventions post 2009 has been on reducing post-conflict poverty and food insecurity and restoring capital lost by rehabilitating agricultural infrastructure and rebuilding farmer's productive capacity. STCRSP was the fourth IFAD project in Liberia and endeavoured to consolidate and complement the on-going operations by increasing long-term income for smallholder farmers. It did so by focusing on cocoa and coffee cash crops.
11. The **development objective** as stated in the President's report was to reduce post-conflict poverty and food insecurity and improve the livelihoods and living conditions of rural communities. This was to be achieved through three **specific objectives**: (i) raise the quantity sold and price received by poor farmers through plantation rehabilitation; (ii) improve access to markets through road rehabilitation; and (iii) reinforce the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture and private providers, and strengthen farmer organizations.

⁹ Republic of Liberia 2017, Zero Hunger Strategic Review Report, page 11.

¹⁰ GDP declined over the ten-year period 2006-2016 from 63.8 per cent in 2006 to 37 per cent in 2016.

12. **Project approach.** The project focused on both production and marketing through a value-chain and market-oriented approach. Specifically, STCRSP had four components: (1) coffee and cocoa revitalisation; (2) rehabilitation of farm to market roads; (3) institutional capacity; and (4) project management (covered under management and implementation arrangements).
13. **Component 1.** This component aimed at rehabilitating approximately 15,000 hectares of cocoa/coffee plantations using a value chain model. The project envisaged piloting two approaches: (i) a private sector organic value chain model to be implemented by a private sector entity; and (ii) a conventional (not organic) value chain model to be implemented by three cooperatives.¹¹ In the event the project opted to work with only one private sector company this was due to the fact that most private sector companies did not meet the contribution requirement (providing working capital to the cooperatives) and the low volume of produce available at the time (as compared to the high overhead costs).¹² Important activities included farm rehabilitation accompanied with different trainings.
14. **Component 2.** About 315 km of farm to market roads were to be rehabilitated in Lofa to facilitate the access of smallholders to external assistance for their farming activities, as well as increase their market access. This target was reduced to 153.5 km at midterm and by the end of the project 133.1 km were rehabilitated. Rehabilitation of roads was considered key for the marketing of cocoa and coffee in that it would lower the transportation costs. Moreover, the roads would ease access to hospitals and schools and other social services. The rehabilitation of roads was also going to create employment opportunities for men, youth and women.
15. **Component 3.** Interventions under this component sought to support the institutional development of the cooperatives and Ministry of Agriculture at central, county and district levels. Activities focused on both management and technical skills including: (i) cooperative business plan development; (ii) good governance and management; (iii) financial management; and (iv) good agricultural practices; (v) coffee and cocoa farm rehabilitation; (vi) post-harvest handling, processing and marketing; coffee and cocoa quality control, etc. Moreover, MOA was supported with equipment and staff.
16. **Management and implementation arrangements.** The Ministry of Agriculture was the supervising agency and chair of the National Steering Committee (NSC). Overall implementation of STCRSP was undertaken by the Project Coordination Unit established under the Programme Management Unit (PMU) of MOA. The PMU was a shared unit within the MOA in charge of implementing all donor-funded projects in the agricultural area, notably IFAD funded Agricultural Sector Rehabilitation project. In addition, the design document envisaged a PMU based in the field in Lofa responsible for the implementation of activities. Other key implementing partners included the county agricultural coordinators and the district agricultural coordinators.

¹¹ IFAD 2011, President's report, page 3.

¹² IFAD 2018, PCR, page 10.

Table 1
Planned vs actual costs by component

Components	Planned US\$ million	% of Base costs	Actual US\$ million	% of actual total costs
Revitalisation of cocoa/coffee Farms	7 420	29.7	5 653	30.9
Rehabilitation of farm to market roads	11 153	44.7	6 696	36.6
Institutional capacity building	3 358	13.5	2 485	13.5
Project management	3 025	12.1	3 456	18.8
Total	24 956		18 290	

Source: PCR and President's report .

17. **Project area.** The project activities were implemented in the county of Lofa in the northernmost portion of Liberia bordering Sierra Leone (northern west) and guinea (northern east). This was and still is the poorest county in Liberia (poverty incidence of 76 per cent).¹³ At the time of the design, the county had a total of six districts. During the early stages of project implementation Voinjama, one of the districts was split in two (Voinjama and Quardu Gboni) this had implications for the number of cooperatives targeted which was subsequently increased to seven. The design document described the targeting criteria at district level as: (a) social, poverty and demographic indicators to reach the most vulnerable communities; and (b) complementarities with on-going and planned Government and donor initiatives.¹⁴
18. **Project target group.** The targeting focused on: (i) poor smallholders with less than two hectares of land and relying on subsistence farming; (ii) households headed by women; (iii) young people; and (iv) war-wounded and disabled. The most important targeting mechanisms included: (i) use of quotas for women and youth for each project activities (tree crop and road rehabilitation, farmer based cooperatives' strengthening/development); (ii) MOA's capacity-building plan; (iii) self-targeting and participatory approach; (iv) gender mainstreaming, including training and sensitisation.
19. In some cases, specific activities under the sub-components were designed for the specific groups. For example, for the youth, the project focussed on: (i) job creation opportunities through tree crop and road rehabilitation; (ii) strengthening of youth involvement and leadership skills in farmer-based cooperatives; (iii) information and sensitisation and advocacy; and (iv) youth consultation and participation. The target for the number of beneficiaries was 15,000 smallholder cocoa/coffee farmers who would benefit directly from support to tree crops productive activities. It was expected that additional 280,000 people would directly or indirectly benefit from infrastructure development.
20. **Project costs and financing.** The total project costs at approval were US\$24.95 million of which the IFAD loan amounted to US\$16.9 million. The contribution of the government was to be US\$2.0 million and that of the beneficiaries US\$0.923 million. In addition, the private sector co-financing was estimated at US\$5.1 million. The table presented in annex IV provides information on funds at appraisal and the actual expenditures.
21. **Time frame.** The STCRSP became effective on 7 July 2011 and was completed 30 September 2017.

¹³ World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic, page 17.

¹⁴ IFAD 2011, Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalisation Support Project, page 10.

III. Evaluation objectives and scope

22. **The objectives of the PPE** are to: (i) assess the results of the project on the basis of the standard evaluation criteria; and, (ii) generate findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in Liberia.
23. **The scope of the PPE** has been identified based on the following criteria: (i) areas identified through a desk review – the PPE will review additional evidence and propose a complete list of consolidated ratings; (ii) selected issues of strategic importance for IFAD in Liberia; and (iii) limitations set by the available time and budget – the PPE will be selective in focussing on key issues where value can be added, given the limited time and budget.
24. Analysis in the PPE will be assisted by **the theory of change (TOC)** (see annex III). The TOC shows the causal pathway from project activities to project impacts and the changes that should take place in the intermediary stage i.e. between project outcomes and impact. External factors which influence change along the major impact pathways i.e. assumptions on which the project has no control are also taken into account. These changes were identified on the basis of a desk review. The TOC will be adjusted after consultations with project stakeholders during the country visit.
25. The PPE exercise will be undertaken in accordance with IFAD's Evaluation Policy⁴ and the IFAD Evaluation Manual (second edition, 2015). The PPE will evaluate the project performance with regard to the standard evaluation criteria. These criteria are detailed in annex I.

IV. Key issues for further analysis

26. **Institutional issues.** The project worked with a host of institutions, including government institutions, cooperatives, service providers and the private sector. Many of these institutions were trained by the project, as they did not have the required experience and expertise. The project's effectiveness and sustainability of its benefits depended to a large extent on the quality of these institutions, and in turn the service they provided to the end beneficiaries. The PCR raise concerns about the lack of sustainability at several levels. For example, sustainability of MOA institutions at county and district level is fragile. The cooperatives which relied on managers paid by the project are finding it difficult to provide services to their members. Road maintenance by trained road gangs are not structured enough to maintain feeder roads The PPE will assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the implementation arrangements whilst considering the fragile context.
27. **Market linkages and value addition.** Improving incomes and thereby food security of farmers was the development goal of the project. This was to be achieved through increasing production and quality and linking farmers with markets. Specifically, market linkages were to be created for cocoa and coffee producers through private sector players and increased access to roads. The PPE will assess the extent to which market access and any value addition were effective in helping farmers achieve better (and fair) farm gate prices. As part of this assessment the PPE will look at the relative weight of the value chain approach versus providing market linkages in the project.
28. **Targeting.** The groups that were identified for a particular focus include poor smallholders with less than two hectares of land and relying on subsistence farming, households headed by women, young people, and the war-wounded and disabled. The PPE will assess the results achieved under each category of target group. In particular, it will assess the extent to which women were included in the value chains. Another important focus will be youth and the extent to which the project fostered creation of employment. Capacities of youth were expected to be built by the project through training as contractors for supervising the rehabilitation

of tree crops and roads. The PPE will assess the current status of youth beneficiaries in the project areas, especially with regard to the sustainability of their incomes that were generated from their direct involvement with the project. In addition, for women and the disabled the implications for the project activities on their workload will be assessed.

V. Analytical framework and methodology

29. **Information and data collection.** The first phase of the PPE is the desk review which will cover a variety of project-related documents, including annual project status reports (along with project supervision ratings), mid-term review, supervision reports, and the PCR prepared at the end of a project jointly with the government, which also includes a set of ratings. The Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) includes a menu of indicators used to measure and report on the performance of IFAD projects – at activity, output and impact level – and these are used for effectiveness and impact criteria. In this regard, M&E data will be important. A rapid review of the available data indicates that the availability and quality of the existing data may not be of adequate quality. For example, while a baseline survey was carried out it was done in 2014 several years after the project initiated. A planned mid-term survey had to be abandoned due to the Ebola outbreak and a mid-term report was never finalised. The project completion review highlights that the project could have benefitted from assessments on project impacts on youth; studies on yield and qualitative studies on marketing, sales and transportation.
30. The PPE will crosscheck findings from the PCR and triangulate data and information from different sources; in order to obtain further information, interviews will be conducted both at IFAD headquarters and in the country. During the in-country work, additional primary and secondary data will be collected in order to reach an independent assessment of performance and results.
31. Data collection methods by the PPE mission will mostly include qualitative techniques. The methods deployed will consist of individual and group interviews with project stakeholders, beneficiaries and other key informants and resource persons, and direct observations.
32. The theory of change annexed in this Paper has highlighted assumptions that would have been crucial to attaining the desired outputs and outcomes. The PPE will investigate whether these assumptions were valid, and if not, then what the impeding factors were. This will help the evaluation answer the "why" questions underpinning the results.
33. **Selection of sites for field visit.** The PPE will attempt to visit at least four out of six districts covered under the project. In the interest of time, sites will be chosen based on consideration of distance and an attempt will be made to give preference to sites where there has been a multiplicity of interventions. Thus, an informed decision on areas to be visited will be taken based on: the team's logistical exigencies, the number of beneficiaries in each area (preference to areas with more beneficiaries) and the need to cover a diverse range of stakeholders. The gamut of project stakeholders – cooperatives, MOA staff at central and county and district level, private sector, service providers and implementing partners will be visited. The PPE mission will also visit feeder road sites that were rehabilitated under the project. In Monrovia, the mission will meet with the relevant development partners.
34. **Rating system.** In line with the practice adopted in many other international financial institutions and United Nations organizations, IOE uses a six-point rating

system to score the project performance on a set of standard criteria¹⁵, where 6 is the highest score ("highly satisfactory") and 1 is the lowest ("highly unsatisfactory").

35. **Stakeholders' participation.** In compliance with the IOE Evaluation Policy, the main project stakeholders will be involved throughout the PPE. This will ensure that the key concerns of the stakeholders are taken into account, that the evaluators fully understand the context in which the project was implemented, and that opportunities and constraints faced by the implementing institutions are identified. Regular interaction and communication will be established with IFAD and the Government. Formal and informal opportunities will be explored during the process

VI. Process and timeline

36. Following a desk review of the PCR and other key project documents, the PPE will undertake following steps.
37. **Country work.** The PPE mission is tentatively scheduled from 8 to 18 April 2019. It will interact with representatives from the government and other institutions, beneficiaries and key informants, in Monrovia and in the field. At the end of the mission, a wrap-up meeting will be held in Monrovia to summarize the preliminary findings and discuss key strategic and operational issues. The IFAD country programme manager for Liberia is expected to participate in the wrap-up meeting through Skype.
38. **Report drafting.** The draft report will be prepared based on results from the desk review, field visit and feedback from the stakeholders, including from the wrap-up meeting.
39. **Quality assurance.** The draft report will be submitted for an internal (IOE) peer review for quality assurance before sharing with other relevant parties.
40. **Comments by regional division and the Government.** The draft PPE report will be shared simultaneously with the West and Central Africa Division (WCA) and the Government of Liberia for factual review and comments. IOE will finalize the report following receipt of comments by WCA and the Government and prepare the audit trail.
41. **IFAD Management response.** A written management response on the final PPE report will be prepared by the Programme Management Department. This will be included in the PPE report, when published.
42. **Communication and dissemination.** The final report will be disseminated among key stakeholders and the evaluation report published by IOE, both online and in print.

¹⁵ These include: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact, women's empowerment and gender equality, sustainability, innovation, scaling up, environment and natural resource management, adaptation to climate change, IFAD and government performance and overall project performance.

Table 2
Tentative timetable for the PPE process

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activities</i>
January-March 2019	Desk review and preparation of approach paper
8 – 18 April 2019	Mission to Liberia
April 2019	Preparation of draft PPE report
2nd week of May 2019	Report sent for IOE peer review
4th week of May 2019	Draft PPE report sent to WCA and Government for comment
3rd week of June 2019	Comments received from WCA and government
End July 2019	Final report and audit trail sent for IFAD management response
October 2019	Publication and dissemination

VII. Evaluation team

43. The team will consist of Ms. Catrina Perch, IOE Evaluation Officer and lead evaluator for this PPE, and Mr. James Gasana, IOE senior consultant. Mr. Gasana will prepare the draft evaluation report, with the overall responsibility for the execution and quality of the evaluation resting with Ms. Perch. Ms. Cristina Spagnolo, IOE Evaluation Assistant, will provide administrative support.

VIII. Background documents

44. The key background documents for the exercise will include the following:

Project specific documents

IFAD President's Report (2011)
 Design Report (2011)
 Supervision mission reports and aide memoires.
 Project completion report (2017)

Other

IFAD (2011). IFAD Evaluation Policy.
 IFAD (2015). Evaluation Manual – Second Edition
 Various IFAD Policies and Strategies, in particular, Strategic Frameworks ,
 Targeting strategy, the Policy on Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment.
 World Bank 2018, Systematic Country Diagnostic.
 Republic of Liberia 2017, Zero hunger Strategic Review report.
 Paczynska 2016, Liberia rising? Foreign direct investment, persistent inequalities
 and political tensions
 UNDP 2016, Human Development Index
<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264302075-5-en.pdf?expires=1553600989&id=id&accname=ocid195767&checksum=D0D6A3D0FEADC3C0ECF6BF63B590E815>

List of key people met

Ministry of Agriculture

H.E. Dr. Morgan S. Flomo, Minister

Robert K. Fagans, Sr, Deputy Minister for Planning and Development

Programme Management Unit, Ministry of Agriculture

Raymond O. Ogunti, Director, Programme Management Unit

Zephaniah J. Smith, Internal Auditor

Pricilla Thomas, Financial Controller, Project Implementation Unit

Princetta Clinton-Varmah, former Project Director, Project Implementation Unit

Allen Bohr James, Agronomist

Emmanuel Vahr, Project Coordinator

Benedict T. Stephen Sr, Civil Engineer Consultant

World Bank/Ministry of Agriculture, Programme Management Unit

Emmanuel Johnson Nimbuen, Project Coordinator (Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalisation Support Project)

Ministry of Public Works

H.E. Mr Benjamin G. Banto Jr, Deputy Minister/ Rural Development

Jackie A. Bernard, Assistant minister Feeder Roads

Sumoiwuo Z. Harris, Consultant Rural Roads, Department of Rural Development & Community Services

Michael T. Yennego, Director Rural Housing

Alibaba K. Ipalcolo, Chief of Feeder Roads

Cooperative Development Agency

Regina Sokan Teah, Registrar General

Boston Clarke, Comptroller

J. McCanens Mulbah, Director of Audit

Harris B. Wennie, Deputy Registrar

Vester V. Saytee, Director

Edward D. Neah, Administrative Assistant

FAO

Mariatou Njie, FAO Representative in Liberia

GrowLiberia

YoQuai V. Lavala, Team Leader

Katinka Harsanyi, Consultant

Embassy of Sweden

Elisabeth Hårleman, Counsellor, Head of Development Cooperation

Private sector

Sophia A. Koffie, General Manager, Wienco

Korley Armal, Director, LAADCO

Foya Cooperative

Amara Samulea

Sabehill and Guma Mende Co-operative

Fofie A. Nyeh,

Tetejay Sesay

Yarmuyan S. Bantor

Armah Tanlallay

Marmadee Taulallaly

Moibah Dorlleh

Kenmoiba Sheriff
Farra Kargoma
Samuka J. Konne
Mohammed kajory
Boakai K. Bandor
Patrick S. Momeh
Bangalee F. Sesay
John J. Formba

Voinjama and Quardu Gboni Cooperative

Patrick F. Foma
John Kpadeh Sumo
James Tarnue
James Z. Karbbar
Marmadee M. Dukulu
Sekou Sherriff

Salayee and Zorzor Cooperative

Benjamin Pewee
Dormajo D. Kollie
D Moluba Parker
Kioamue Flomo Sr
Daniel D. Miller
Pafae Monuene

District Agricultural Officers

Wolawu Gayflor (Zorzor)
Francis Woiwor Snr, (Quardo Gboni)

List of participants at the wrap-up meeting

Jackie A Bernard, Assistant Minister Roads, Ministry of Public Works
Alibababa K. Kpokajo, Ministry of Public Works
Summino Z. Harris, Consultant, Ministry of Public Works
Raymond O. Ogunti, Director, Programme Management Unit, Ministry of Agriculture
Randolph R. Kolleh, Special Assistant to Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
Famafa Sasay, Senior Analyst, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
Priscilla N. Thomas, Financial Controller, Project Implementation Unit/Project Management Unit
Emmanuel G. Vah Project Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture
Jakob Tuborgh, IFAD Country Programme Manager (Via Skype)
Catrina Perch, Evaluation Specialist, IOE/IFAD
James K. Gasana, Senior Consultant, IOE/IFAD
Dorsue Smith, Infrastructure Consultant, IOE/IFAD

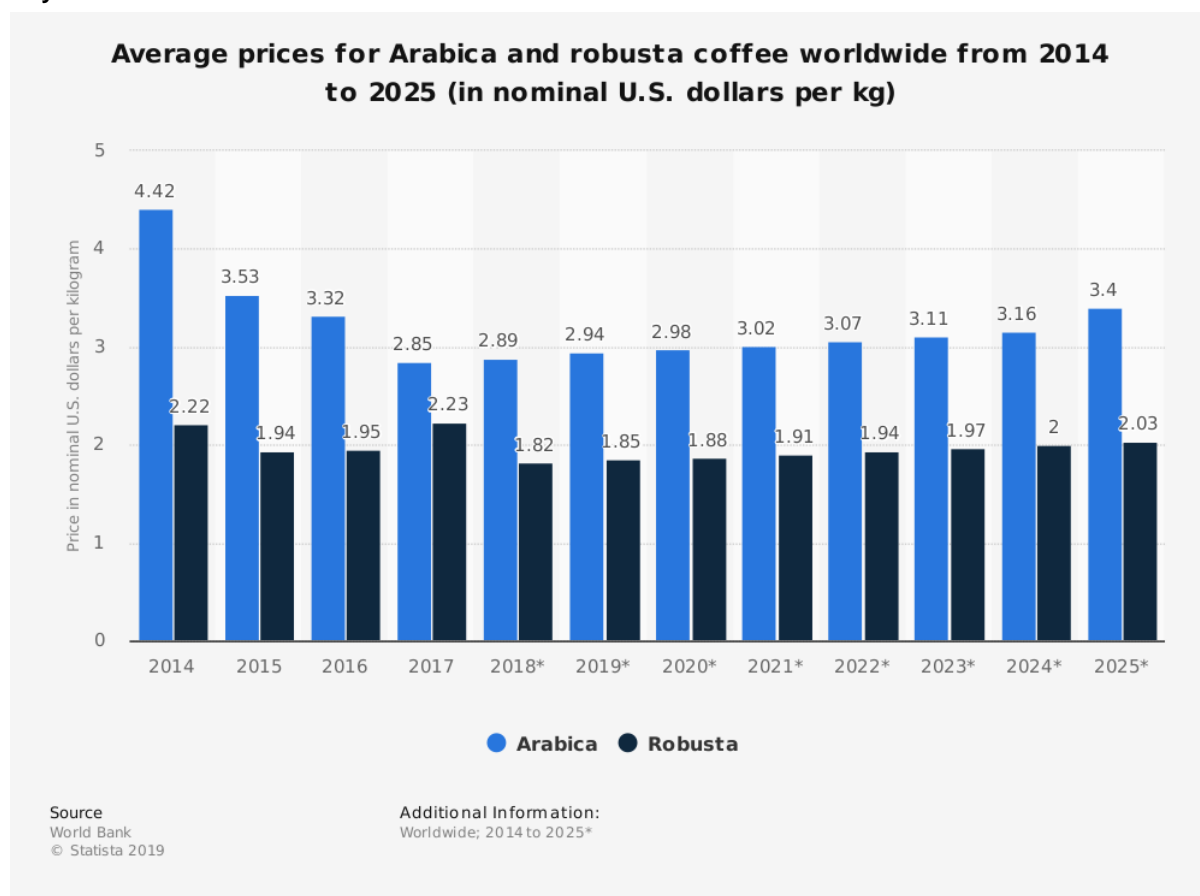
Complementary data: programme financing

Table 1

Expenditure category	Original	Reallocation	% change	Disbursed	% Disbursed against revised amount	% Disbursed of original allocation
Civil works	5 350 000	4 700 000		4 426 473	94 %	83%
Vehicle, equipment & Goods	1 250 000	1 250 000		1 053 918	84%	84%
Technical Assistance, Studies & training	1 140 000	2 840 000		2 591 734	91%	227%
Salaries, Allowances and Operating Cost	1 710 000	1 710 000		1 807 803	106 %	106%
Unallocated	1 050 000					
Balance of initial advance				460 847		
	10 500 000	10 500 000		10 340 774	98%	98%

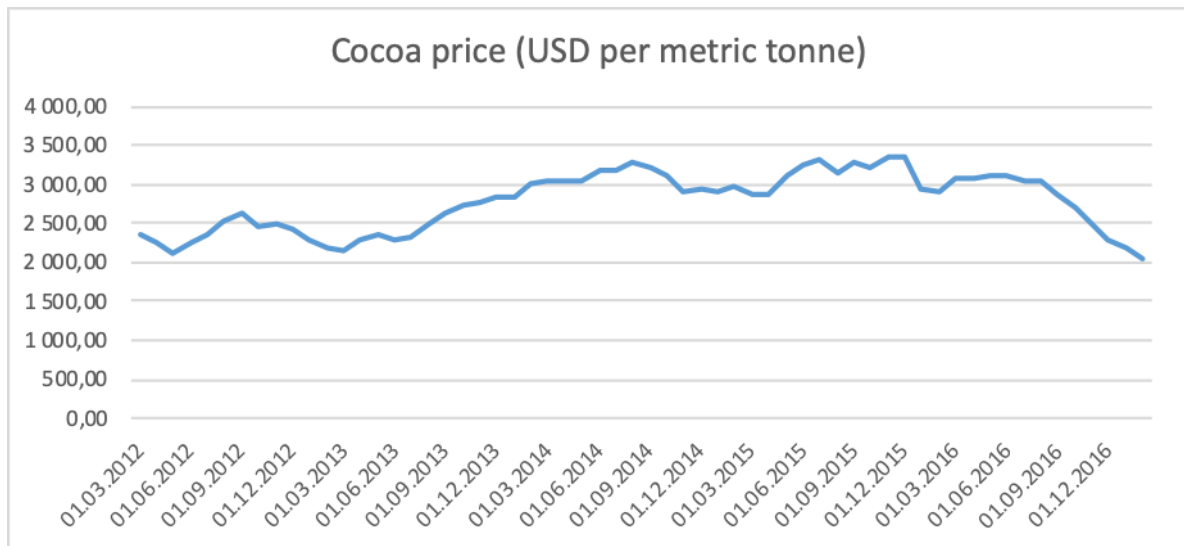
Source: PCR.

Figure 1
Key statistical data on cocoa and coffee



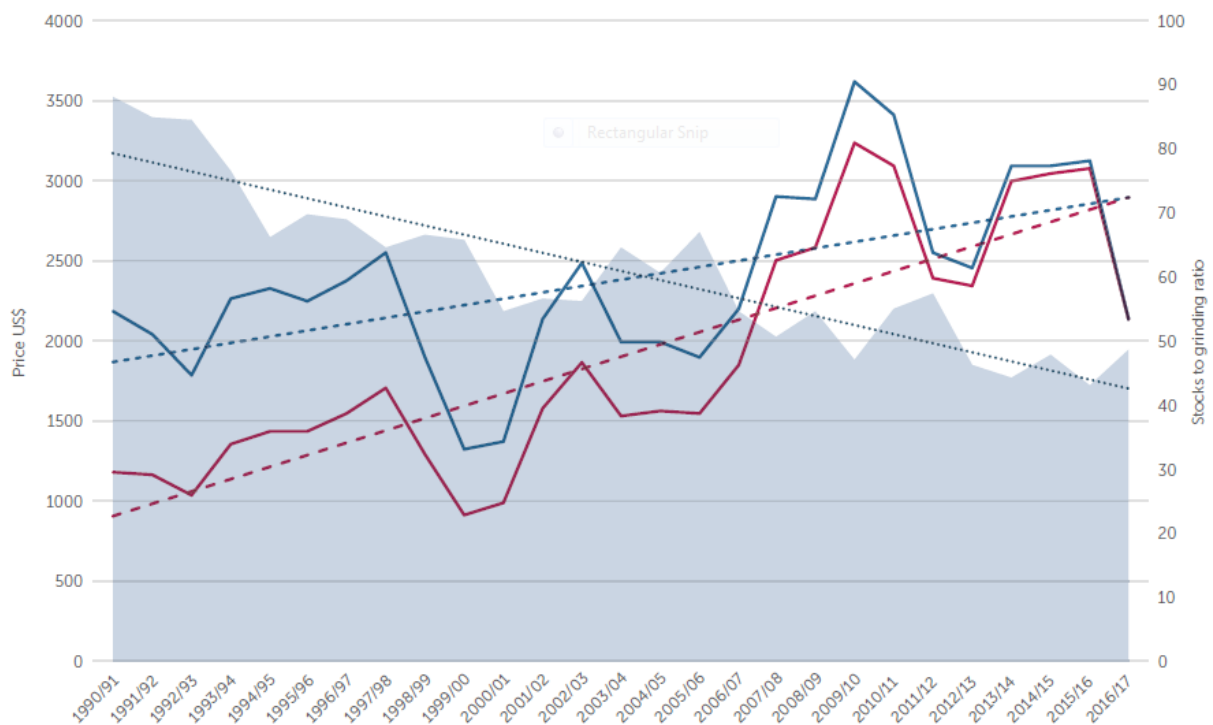
Source: World Bank, 2019.

Figure 2
International cocoa price 2012-2016 (ICCO, 2017)



Source: Bymolt, R., Laven, A., Tyszler, M. (2018). Demystifying the cocoa sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Chapter 11, Cocoa marketing and prices. The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT).

Figure 3
International cocoa price 2012-2016 (ICCO, 2017)



Source: Bymolt, R., Laven, A., Tyszler, M. (2018). Demystifying the cocoa sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Chapter 11, Cocoa marketing and prices. The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT).

Bibliography

- Baffoe, J. & Mwasambili, R. (2018). 2018 African Economic Outlook – Liberia.
- Bymolt, R., Laven, A. & Tyszler, M. (2018). Demystifying the cocoa sector in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire.
- Cattaneo et al (2013). Joining, Upgrading and Being Competitive in Global Value Chains - A Strategic Framework”. The World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6406. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/254001468336685890/pdf/wps6406.pdf>.
- Feed the Future (2016). Working paper: Integrating food and nutrition within agricultural extension services, Liberia Landscape Analysis.
- Feed the Future (2017). Liberia Desk Study of Extension and Advisory Services - Developing Local Extension Capacity Project.
- Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (1996). Production Year Book. FAO, Rome, Italy. <http://www.fao.org/3/w1358e/w1358e14.htm>.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2016). Impact of Ebola virus disease outbreak on market chains and trade of agricultural products in West Africa. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5641e.pdf>
- GIZ and ENDEV (2016). EnDev Liberia cocoa sector activities. Strategic directions. <https://www.renewables-liberia.info/index.php/projects-new/documents/solar-lantern-1/20-enddev-liberia-solar-dryers-for-cocoa-farming-2016/file>.
- Götz Schroth et. al. (2015). Climate vulnerability and adaptation of the smallholder cocoa and coffee value chains in Liberia. CCAFS Working Paper No. 134. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272576499_Climate_vulnerability_and_adaptation_of_the_smallholder_cocoa_and_coffee_value_chains_in_Liberia_CCAFS_Working_Paper_No_134.
- Götz Schroth et. al. (2016). Vulnerability to climate change of cocoa in West Africa: Patterns, opportunities and limits to adaptation. Science of The Total Environment, Vol. 556, 15 June 2016, Pages 231-241. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969716304508>.
- IFAD (2007). Innovation Strategy.
- IFAD (2010). Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee Issues Paper.
- IFAD (2011). The Republic of Liberia Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP). Project Design Report.
- IFAD (2011). President’s Report Proposed loan to the Republic of Liberia for the - Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project.
- IFAD (2014). How to do - Commodity value chain development projects: Sustainable inclusion of smallholders in agricultural value chains. <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40311826/How+to+do+commodity+value+chain+development+projects.pdf>.
- IFAD (2015). Operational framework for scaling up results.
- IFAD (2017). Concept Note on: Republic of Liberia: Tree Crops Extension Project - II (TCEP-II).
- IFAD (2018). Resilient and Low Carbon Tree Crop Extension Project II. Concept Note – Green Climate Fund. https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/893456/19890_-_Resilient_and_Low_Carbon_Tree_Crop_Extension_Project_II.pdf/a952fa02-8b2b-4139-9c3c-75d358108311.
- IFAD. Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project supervision missions reports.

- Mitchell, J. and Coles C. eds. (2011). Markets and Rural Poverty - Upgrading in Value Chains. Overseas Development Institute and International Development Research Centre. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6455.pdf>.
- Ministry of Gender and Development, Liberia (2012). Gender-aware Programs and Women's roles in agricultural Value Chains - A Policy Memorandum.
- OECD iLibrary: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264302075-5-en.pdf?expires=1553600989&id=id&accname=ocid195767&checksum=D0D6A3D0FEADC3C0ECF6BF63B590E815>.
- Peña de la, I. and Garrett, J. (2018). Nutrition-sensitive value chains - A guide for project design. Vol. I. IFAD. <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/40805038>
- Paczynska A. (2016). Liberia rising? Foreign direct investment, persistent inequalities and political tensions.
- Republic of Liberia (2014). National Export Strategy - Cocoa Export Strategy 2014-2018. http://moci.gov.lr/doc/Liberia_National_Cocoa_Export_Strategy2014_2018.pdf.
- Republic of Liberia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017). Sector scan of the agricultural sector in Liberia.
- Republic of Liberia (2017). Zero Hunger Strategic Review Report
- Republic of Liberia (2018). Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP). Project Completion Report. Main Report and Appendices.
- Royal Tropical Institute (2016). Cocoa rehabilitation in Liberia – Draft report.
- Royal Tropical Institute (2017). Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Project (STCRSP PIU) - Evaluation study of Road Rehabilitation in the Liberian Cocoa Belt.
- Royal Tropical Institute & Central Agricultural Research Institute (2017). Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Project (STCRSP PIU). Addendum to the report: "Cocoa Rehabilitation in the Liberian Cocoa Belt". IFAD.
- Schroth G., Läderach P., Martínez-Valle A.I. & Bunn C. (2015). Climate vulnerability and adaptation of the smallholder cocoa and coffee value chains in Liberia. Working Paper No. 134. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security; IFAD. Copenhagen, Denmark. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272576499_Climate_vulnerability_and_adaptation_of_the_smallholder_cocoa_and_coffee_value_chains_in_Liberia_CCAFS_Working_Paper_No_134.
- Schroth G. et. al (2016). Vulnerability to climate change of cocoa in West Africa: Patterns, opportunities and limits to adaptation. Science of The Total Environment, Vol. 556, 15 June 2016, Pages 231-241. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969716304508>.
- Sjauw-Koen-Fa A.R; Blok, V.; and Omtac, S.W.F. (2016). Critical Success Factors for Smallholder Inclusion in High Value-Adding Supply Chains by Food & Agribusiness Multinational Enterprises. International Food and Agribusiness Management Review Volume 19 Issue 1, 2016. <https://www.ifama.org/resources/Documents/v19i1/520150029.pdf>.
- Skog, G.E. (2016). Cocoa in Post-Conflict Liberia - The Role of Institutions for the Development of Inclusive Agricultural Markets. The Nordic Africa Institute Uppsala. <http://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1043544/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.
- UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa (2011). The Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and its Effect on West African Countries: A Perspective from the Ground. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Issue%20Briefs/The%20Conflict%20in>

[%20Cote%20d'Ivoire%20and%20its%20Effect%20on%20West%20African%20Countries%20a%20Perspective%20from%20the%20Ground.pdf](#)

UNDP (2016). Human Development Index.

USAID (2015). Liberia market study for selected agricultural products.

USAID (2017). Liberia: Desk Study of Extension and Advisory Services - Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Project. https://www.digitalgreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Liberia_Desk-Study.pdf.

Wessel, M. & Foluke Quist-Wessel, P.M. (2015). Cocoa production in West Africa - a review and analysis of recent developments. *NJAS-Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences* 74–75(2015) 1–7.

World Bank Group (2016). World Bank Economic Review 2016.

World Bank Group (2018). Republic of Liberia: From Growth to Development: Priorities for Sustainably Reducing Poverty and Achieving Middle-Income Status by 2030 Systematic Country Diagnostic.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/585371528125859387/pdf/LBR-SCD-draft-10-06012018.pdf>.

World Bank Group (2018). Liberia Systematic Country Diagnostic.



**Independent Office
of Evaluation**



Investing in rural people

Independent Office of Evaluation
International Fund for Agricultural Development
Via Paolo di Dono, 44 - 00142 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 54591 - Fax: +39 06 5043463
E-mail: evaluation@ifad.org
www.ifad.org/evaluation
 www.twitter.com/IFADeval
 www.youtube.com/IFADevaluation



IFAD internal printing services