

CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Organization Legal Name:	Rainforest Alliance, Inc.
Project Title:	Provide Technical Assistance to Strengthen Ivorian Cocoa Stakeholder Landscape Management Capacity to Foster Conservation
Grant Number:	CEPF-104314
CEPF Region:	Guinean Forests of West Africa
Strategic Direction:	2 Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice in the nine conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels
Grant Amount:	
Project Dates:	July 01, 2018 - August 31, 2020
Date of Report:	January 29, 2021

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

List each partner and explain how they were involved with the project.

Rainforest Alliance (RA) provided technical expertise in the development and creation the LMB and supported CEFCA in the implementation of the project. Centre d'Etudes, Formation, Conseils et Audits (CEFCA) was the main implementing partner and coordinated and organized the field work, convened workshops and meetings with project stakeholders and implemented the project action plans. Office Ivoirien des Parcs et Réserves (OIPR) is the agency in charge of Parks and Reserves and was crucial in the community environmental sensitizations on the importance of preserving and protecting Taï National Park. OIPR is also a member of the LMB executive committee. Société de Développement des Forêts (SODEFOR) is the agency in charge of the classified forests and their involvement in the project as it related to the Cavally forest and their contribution towards the development of the PLMP was vital. They are also members of the LMB executive committee. Coopérative Agricole Fraternité de Taï (CAFTA) is the umbrella cooperative that the partner farmers belong. The CAFTA management supported CEFCA in organizing farmers trainings, sensitizations and diversification activities.

CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Summarize the overall impact of your project, describing how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

Creation of the LMB: Through a collaborative approach, CEFCA, with the support of RA, brought together all the main actors in the Taï landscape

through the formation of the Landscape Management Board (LMB) and coordinated the development of the Participatory Landscape Management Plan (PLMP) which aims to protect the landscape's biodiversity and secure and improve the livelihoods of the communities. The involvement of the local government and national forest protection agencies was critical to the success of this process. Securing the buy-in of national institutions for our LMB approach ensured not only that the LMB would benefit from the expertise of the forest protection agencies, but also that the project activities, community messages and the entire project approach was adapted to the local context. Therefore, the Sub-prefect (local authority), OIPR and SODEFOR were consulted in the development of the PLMP and invited to all relevant events. Biodiversity conservation friendly practices and income diversification: Central to this project was the training of farmers on biodiversity friendly practices and the conservation of the natural ecosystem with the aim to change behavior of farmers and limit expansion and encroachment into protected areas. The training focused on agroforestry practices that establish and maintain forest tree species to support species richness, alternative income options, and habitat creation. These trainings were accompanied by other environmentally sound production practices that assist in the rejuvenation of ecosystem goods and services. Farmers were trained to understand the importance of biodiversity conservation and its linkages to agricultural sustainability. The project promoted agroforestry as well as the prevention of farm encroachment in protected areas. Farmers involved in the project whose farms are close to Taï National Park and the Cavally River, were sensitized, encouraged and supported to plant shade trees within their respective farms and on their borders with either the park or the river. A total of 481 shade tree seedlings were distributed to 27 farmers. A key part of this output is the restoration of forest areas through the shade tree planting leading to an increase of on-farm carbon stocks. In consultation with the communities, chicken rearing and beekeeping were the diversification activities chosen. Two chicken rearing farms were established in Daobly and Paule-Oula villages, while 10 beehives were installed in Port-Gentil village. A total of 82 farmers were trained on both diversification activities: 40 women and 10 men trained on chicken rearing and 3 women and 29 men trained on beekeeping. Strengthening partnerships in support of biodiversity friendly practices: By purposefully involving all the relevant local landscape actors in the constitution of the LMB, the project has ensured a solid foundation and an effective collaboration towards the achievement of its biodiversity conservation goals. The environmental awareness strategy of the project had a strong basis on the collaboration with OIPR and SODEFOR. The project built on the experience of both organizations and their connections with the local communities to organize its interventions. As the two government agencies responsible for Parks and Reserves and Forests, their involvement ensured a proper alignment of the project messages and interventions. With support from with these two agencies, the sensitization campaigns targeted all community members, including adults and children and used three communication means – sensitization posters displayed in the villages, sensitization meetings with the community members and radio broadcasts – the project ensured a wider reach of members within the communities. By the end of the project, an estimated 611 adults and 538 children from three local schools had been reached by these campaigns and by driving awareness in the communities. The project contributed to raising the knowledge of the communities on the importance of conserving the natural ecosystem and restoring tree cover on farms and reducing the pressure on the

surrounding forest. **Improve farmer income: Coopérative Agricole Fraternité de Taï (CAFTA) partnered in the project as an already certified cooperative working with the trading company Touton. The group was certified in 2017 with its 502 farmers. Unfortunately, during the project, the commercial relationship with Touton progressively deteriorated, and the group could not continue the certification cycle. Results from the final survey show that farmers have significantly increased the number of shade trees planted in their farms from 1 to about 15 as a result of this project. Survey of cocoa sales and average farmer income, however, remained unchanged. This could partly be attributed to two reasons: 1) The project could not support the cooperative CAFTA by building its capacity to train its farmer members on the good agricultural practices because of the decision of the regulation body (Conseil du Café-Cacao) to prohibit productivity increase activities. Farmers couldn't therefore increase their productivity (yield and production costs efficiency) and thus their income; and 2) In the course of the project, the relationship with the trading company Touton deteriorated, due to non payment of debts and breach of contract with CAFTA. CAFTA therefore lost its UTZ certification and the certification premiums associated with it – premiums which make up additional revenue for farmers from their cocoa sales. These two factors could explain why farmers say that their average income remained unchanged. This comes to confirm that a strategy of income diversification is needed for farmer resiliency.**

Planned Long-term Impacts – 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
Beyond the life of the project, 1757 hectares of farmland will be managed sustainably to reduce deforestation in adjacent Tai National Park and support reforestation by communities in the Tai-Cavally corridor.	The project organized a collaboration between the communities, the local government, the national forest protection agencies (OIPR and SODEFOR) and the private sector to foster conservation of forests and protected area in the landscape. 502 farmers were directly involved in the project activities on sustainable agriculture good practices, with about 1,500 hectares of cocoa farmland between them. The LMB (executive committee) has also been installed with representatives from all 6 communities (1,250 community members) and they have successfully developed a Participatory Landscape management Plan (PLMP) aimed at addressing critical issues of conservation within the landscape. The strong collaboration and joint effort of the key actors in the landscape and the willingness of the LMB executive committee to take the ownership of the implementation of the plan will certainly lead to the involvement and commitment of more farmers in the ecosystem and biodiversity conservation activities promoted by the LMB. Given this, we could say that at least 1,757 hectares of farmland will be managed sustainably beyond the lifetime of the project.

Planned Short-term Impacts – 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
By the end of the project, one CEFCA technician will have improved technical capacities on sustainable agriculture best practices	Mr. Kouassi is the CEFCA technician in charge of implementing activities on the field. He has a background in Agriculture. This project has allowed him to improve his technical capacity and gain extra knowledge in sustainable agricultural methods and best practices. He worked directly with the project consultants, experts and partners and has therefore benefitted from their expertise and knowledge on various topics. We can say that all through the lifetime of the project, Mr. Kouassi has continuously improved his knowledge in LMB implementation, landscape planning, management of

Describe the successes or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

Successes:

- **LMB: The process that led to the development of the LMB has been successfully and effectively carried out. Each of the 6 village committees are represented in the executive committee. Moreover, the national agencies in charge of the Taï National Park (OIPR) and of Classified Forests (SODEFOR) are represented in the executive committee. The local government representative is also a member of the executive committee and chairs the executive committee meetings. This is an important achievement because the decisions of the executive committee can be endorsed by the local government. Therefore, if strengthened and supported the appropriate way, this LMB can continue to oversee the land use management in the landscape even after the project's end.**
- **Gender and youth inclusive LMB: Women and youth are represented in the village committees and in the executive committee of the LMB. These vulnerable groups can therefore make their voices heard and be involved in decision-making processes.**
- **Development of a PLMP: The village committees and the executive committee developed a comprehensive and ambitious Landscape Management Plan. The process was participatory with several meetings and discussions to validate the document.**
- **Implementation of environmental awareness raising campaigns: A total number of 1,149 community members have been reached during the sensitization campaigns on the protection and preservation of our environment. People have been invited to attend the sessions, sensitization posters were printed and distributed within the communities and radio programs were developed and aired, targeting a broader audience within the Taï landscape communities.**
- **Implementation of biodiversity friendly practices: Farmers in the project have been sensitized, encouraged and supported to execute biodiversity friendly practices. Farmers were trained on composting and agroforestry. They have also been supported to obtain and plant shade trees in their respective farms. During the whole lifetime of the project, 10,346 shade tree seedlings have been distributed to the farmers involved.**
- **Creation of a buffer zone around the Cavally river and the Taï National Park: Only 10 farmers participating to our project were settled close to the Park or the Cavally River. Shade tree seedlings have been provided to them to create a buffer zone (a living hedge) between their cocoa farms and either the Cavally river or the Taï Park.**
- **Diversification activities: 82 farmers have been trained on beekeeping and chicken rearing as alternative sources of income. Pilot projects have been installed to support the theoretical training with practicing. Concerning chicken rearing, pilot farmers produced more than 300 chicken and chicks and earned a total of 797 euros by selling 128 chicken. About beekeeping, 4 beehives have been colonized by bees and the plans are to harvest the honey and sell it between December 2020 and February 2021.**
- **CEFCA capacity building on M&E: RA supported CEFCA in the design and implementation of the project's M&E system. CEFCA has therefore been able to conduct both the baseline and the final surveys and contributed to the results analyses and interpretations.**

· **Agroforestry and biodiversity conservation:** Farmers and community members have been sensitized on environmental awareness and biodiversity conservation. They have been provided with more than 10,000 shade tree seedlings and supported in planting them. The number of survival plantlets was 9,865 as of December 30th, 2020 (survival rate of 95%). If maintained, these trees will contribute to preserving and restoring High Conservation Values (Ecosystems and Biodiversity). Moreover, with the thriving agroforestry, farmers will contribute not only to climate change mitigation, but also to their cocoa farm yield and income increase.

Challenges:

· **Ban announced by the Conseil du Café-Cacao on productivity activities:** The CEPF project started in 2018, at the same moment when the Conseil du Café-cacao announced the decision to stop and ban all activities that contribute to increased cocoa productivity. The decision was sudden and a surprise for all the actors of the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire. This led the project management to revise the field interventions—cancelling activities like training on best agricultural practices and installing demonstration plots. The farmer field schools then focused on biodiversity conservation practices like agroforestry and composting.

· **Beekeeping and chicken rearing:** The implementation of these two activities have been challenging – with difficulties in finding a suitable place to install and carry out the beekeeping activity and the lack of collaboration and joint effort of the pilots' beneficiaries in the implementation of the pilot. There have been important lessons learned that will certainly be considered when designing new projects with diversification activities.

· **CAFTA loss of certification:** CAFTA (certified since 2017) lost its certification in October 2019. Their certificate expired at the end of September 2019 and they couldn't renew it because CAFTA was not fulfilling its commercial obligations and had accumulated debts with Touton, which led to Touton withdrawing their investment and support. The coop IMS was not operating anymore and RA had to cancel activities like bookkeeping, data recording plans, group action plans, etc.

· **Covid-19 pandemic:** See unexpected impacts, below.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Unexpected negative impacts: · **The decision by the Conseil du Café-Cacao (Côte d'Ivoire regulation body) requiring all the actors in the cocoa sector to stop all activities contributing to cocoa productivity increases:** The ban of the Conseil Café-Cacao on productivity activities modified the scope of work of the project. Consequently, farmers could not receive intensive training on yield and training modules needed to be modified. Cocoa demonstration plots could not be established for the same reason. This action had a negative impact on the project because training farmers on intensification (theory and practice) would have permitted the farmers to increase their yield and therefore their income. · **The Covid pandemic:** The Covid-19 restriction measures in Côte d'Ivoire were announced by the Government on March 17, 2020. From that date until end of June 2020, field visits were ceased by the project team and activities that required the assembly of more than 50 people could not be organized. From July 2020, the relative easing of restrictions allowed the project team to implement some activities, respecting the Government guidelines on social distancing and personal protective equipment. Unfortunately, Farmer Field School activities and sensitization campaigns had to be cancelled due to considerations for community and project staff safety. Fortunately, we were able to reallocate RA's travel budget,

with approval from CEPF, for the procurement of PPE to the 502 farmers involved in the project and their respective families, and for the distribution of educational posters on Covid-19 awareness in the 6 communities Thanks to this generous allowance from CEPF, we were also able to distribute critical PPE in the form of face masks to cocoa farmers and their families to prevent the spread of the virus in these rural communities. Through educational posters, we were also able to raise awareness about the dangers of Covid-19 and the recommended safety precautions.

PROJECT COMPONENTS AND PRODUCTS/DELIVERABLES

Describe the results from each product/deliverable:

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1	Partnership with CEFCA established to set up the LMB, improve farmer's income and reduce income variability through facilitating access to new markets whilst securing existing market agreements by enabling strong data recording and traceability.	1.1	A partnership with CEFCA established and monitored to provide technical advice on the creation of the LMB, as evidenced by signed agreement.	A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed with CEFCA to support CEFCA's team of technicians to implement activities related to the setting-up the LMB and micro-projects associated (beekeeping and chicken rearing). In the scope of this MoU, RA also oversaw the project M&E component.
1	Partnership with CEFCA established to set up the LMB, improve farmer's income and reduce income variability through facilitating access to new markets whilst securing existing market agreements by enabling strong data recording and traceability.	1.2	With the technical assistance from RA, 40 beehives led by women are established, as evidenced by photographs and signed farmer testimonies.	10 beehives were established and 32 farmers were involved in this project. At the beginning of the project a consultant was hired to train the farmers and help establish the hives and it was determined that the budget dedicated to this activity was not enough to establish 40 hives, so the scope was therefore reduced to 10. Out of the 32 farmers in this pilot group only three were women, as the women farmers gravitated towards the chicken rearing project rather than the beekeeping. In addition, there have been challenges with the colonization of the beehives. In December 2019, the project organized the visit of two Ghanaian farmers to train the pilot group on "bee capture techniques". Following this visit, 4 beehives were colonized. But unfortunately for unknown reasons, bees left 3 of them. Therefore, at the end of the project only 1 beehive was colonized.
1	Partnership with CEFCA established to	1.3	Technical assistance strategy to	An M&E plan, called the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) was set up to assess the project performance. A baseline study took place at

	set up the LMB, improve farmer's income and reduce income variability through facilitating access to new markets whilst securing existing market agreements by enabling strong data recording and traceability.		set up an M&E plan and IMS are established with the support of Rainforest Alliance M&E specialist, evidenced by signed group action, book-keeping plans, IMS document, managers' testimonies and gap analysis.	the beginning of the project to determine the characteristics of the farmers and their farms. At the end of the project, a final survey was conducted to compare and assess farmers and farm progress throughout the implementation of the project. Both surveys were conducted on a statistically representative sample of the farmers involved in this project. A survey report has been written showing some interesting results comparing agronomic and environmental practices in cocoa farms and on forest protection practices of farmers before and after the project (see Annex 1).
2	CEPF project management and monitoring for compliance.	2.1	Increased gender mainstreaming capacities of RA as demonstrated by the GTT	RA GTT's surveys (initial and final) showed a score decrease. The merger of Rainforest Alliance and UTZ in 2018 brought with it significant changes in our organizational strategy, vision and structure. Several policies are still being reviewed, merged or rewritten. The new gender policy and strategy needs revision and, although much progress has already been made, additional efforts need to be undertaken. We are working to mainstream gender in the way of work in the different departments of the organization, in their Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework and the training of staff.
2	CEPF project management and monitoring for compliance.	2.2	Increased technical capacities of CEFCA as per capacity reports	CEFCA's technical capacity has increased throughout the implementation of the project. RA built CEFCA's capacity in setting up an LMB and on developing a PLMP. RA has also strengthened CEFCA's project management capacity and enhanced their knowledge on the efficient implementation of a landscape project. RA also strengthened and improved the capacity of CEFCA's technician, Mr. Kouassi, on sustainable agriculture best practices – specifically on the topics of ecosystem conservation and agroforestry. See Annex 2.
2	CEPF project management and monitoring for compliance.	2.4	CEPF financial and programmatic reports are submitted online on time and	Overall, financial and programmatic reports were submitted online to CEPF on time. In a couple instances, extensions of a couple days were requested and approved for financial reports, due to the close in our accounting system.

			accurately, as evidenced by the corresponding reports.	
2	CEPF project management and monitoring for compliance.	2.5	Completion at project end of online report focusing on the project impacts.	The final completion report has been submitted online on time and accurately.

Describe and submit any tools, products or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

N/A

LESSONS LEARNED

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building.

Consider lessons that would inform:

- Project design process (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)
- Project implementation (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)
- Any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

Reflection on an exit strategy for landscape projects: This project term ended with a PLMP developed and ready to be implemented. Both the functioning of the LMB and the implementation of the plan need financial resources that the LMB does not currently have. And with the assumption that CEPF will not extend the project in the same landscape after its end, the project activities will stop at the same moment of the project’s end. This concern of continuation of activities by the LMB beyond the lifetime of the project has been expressed by some of the LMB members. We think it is important for the project to have an exit strategy that allows the beneficiaries to effectively take the ownership of the project during the project implementation and continue to implement the activities beyond the lifetime of the project. For this specific project, the idea could be to develop an approach, a mechanism, an activity that allows the LMB to be able to finance its activities on its own. This approach/mechanism/activity should start running by mid-time of the project so that the beneficiaries can get used to it and take ownership of it far before the close of the project. Selection of diversification activities in a landscape project: The selection of the diversification activities should consider market access for the products, the interest of the beneficiaries in the activity and the participants’ willingness to work together on a common project or separately. A study should be made at the beginning of the project identifying potential opportunities and challenges in the area, activities that communities are most interested in and how to address the collaboration issue between the beneficiaries. This will help identify diversification activities which

are adapted to the local context and which have a market. Possibility to have a project component that effectively addresses farmers livelihoods: In the rural communities where farmers are struggling to take care of their families, we cannot or rarely expect the environmental sensitization campaigns to be adopted on the short-term. A farmer with 2 hectares of dark forest remaining will immediately cut it if he has an opportunity to get more money to take care of his family. The farmer is aware about the importance of the environment, but he has to choose between a beautiful forest that earns him nothing and potentially a 2 hectare cocoa plantation that can bring him about 1,500 euros per year. We think that alternative, this farmer will be happy to keep this dark forest if it can bring him the same amount per year. The idea is to develop payment for ecosystem services which incentivize a farmer to keep maintain its High Conservation Values.

SUSTAINABILITY/REPLICATION

Summarize the successes or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated, including any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability.

Challenge: The LMB will have to take the ownership of the project beyond the lifetime of the project to continue to organize meetings and sensitizations, coordinate actions and implement activities. But this will not be possible without financial resources. The challenge is that we don't have an exit strategy in place to allow the LMB to pursue the activities when the project ends.
Success: Collaboration and joint effort of the key actors operating in the landscape is key for the project sustainability. The LMB approach effectively engages the crucial stakeholders in the landscape to ensure effective management and is an interesting model to replicate. However, there is a need for the project to have an exit strategy so that the LMB can work by its own financial means until new funding opportunities come.

SAFEGUARDS

If not listed as a separate project component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental or pest management safeguards.

None.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization or region as a result of CEPF investment.

Total additional funding (US\$)

Type of funding

Provide a breakdown of additional funding (counterpart funding and in-kind) by source, categorizing each contribution into one of the following categories:

- A. Project co-financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)
- B. Grantee and partner leveraging (other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF-funded project)
- C. Regional/portfolio leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)

INFORMATION SHARING AND CEPF POLICY

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our website, www.cepf.net, and may be publicized in our e-newsletter and other communications.

1. Please include your full contact details (name, organization, mailing address, telephone number, email address) below.

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