

	transparency and oversight			<p>Joint coordinated pressure from EU+MS, together with international partners, building on the strength of a TEI to add additional leverage and stronger spotlight.</p> <p>Strengthen the legal provisions already in force.</p> <p>Support civil society to play a key role in monitoring of the logging operations in particular in the Community Forests.</p>
People and the Organisation	Scarce interest and lack of capacity of local actors and communities	Medium	Medium	Awareness campaigns and capacity building will be systematically included in the different activities.

Lessons Learnt:

Despite the multidimensional nature of this project, encompassing biodiversity conservation, forest governance and exploitation, the main source of problems is constantly the same: overspread corruption and weak institutional setting, lack of accountability and political patronage at all levels.

On biodiversity conservation, we witnessed the weakness of the Liberian institutions to monitor and enforce existing legal frameworks and political commitment (mainly the FDA, but also the EPA and other line ministries and agencies involved). Efforts from other donors - Germany - in support of the conservation agenda have been jeopardised by misuse of funds and support has been put on hold. This programme will try to address this through policy dialogue, support to the Legality Verification System, support to the legal and regulatory framework and support to institutional reforms and strengthening of environmental regulations.

More scientific data and a stronger political dialogue with the national authorities will be needed if we want to ensure adequate levels of biodiversity protection and sustainable management and exploitation of forest resources.

Support in conservation must target alternative livelihoods if we are to ensure viability of wildlife populations that are de facto sources of protein (the main sometimes) for forest dwellers. Better economic opportunities linked to forest ecosystems conservation must be the options to consider. Many lessons can be drawn from the EU-funded Sustainable Wildlife Programme (SWM)⁵⁰, particularly from the Central African forest components of this programme which share many of the characteristics of Liberia. Isolated and/or periodic trainings alone do not help shaping an alternative use of resources if that is not provided or incentivised. The models of low impact logging, bringing about accurate forest management with adequate levels of exploitation that are currently under exploration, might shed a light on the future alternatives to 'business as usual' forest exploitation at Community Forestry. These are currently controlled by logging companies showing deficient planning, inefficient exploitation systems, poor respect of rules and neglecting recuperation of forest stocks.

On the side of forest exploitation and VPA implementation, progress has been slow and compliance challenges are still ongoing. However, the AVP has continued to be developed by the government of Liberia. Engagement has been limited despite coordinated EU / UK support to the full spectrum of institutions involved and other actors such as civil society and the private sector.

Integration of the VPA into the broader EU-Liberia dialogue on issues of transparency and accountability is progressing only recently, based on the VPA Independent Auditor's investigation on wrongdoing and faulty operations in timber exports. The regular policy dialogue with the government, notably through EU budget support operations, should be leveraged for the purpose of improving governance, but it needs, more than ever, a joint donor's effort.

The first 5 years of the VPA agreement implementation were dedicated to establishing the institutional structures to implement the agreement, followed by 3 more years where progress was much slower. Following up on the VPA process with the many stakeholders involved, including the civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector, requires a large amount of time and resources from the EU Delegation on a permanent basis. Despite these very clear challenges and disadvantages, the potential to bring about changes well beyond the sector justifies a renewed

⁵⁰ <https://www.swm-programme.info/>.