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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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Decentralised Evaluation of GROW Liberia, Phase 1 – a Swedish-funded Market Systems Development project in agricultural value chains in Liberia 2013–2020

Final Report

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**Final Report
December 2020**

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAER: Adopt, Adapt, Expand and Respond

ASI: Adam Smith International

DCED: Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

FTE: Full Time Equivalent

GAP: Good Agricultural Practices

GoL: Government of Liberia

LACRA: Liberian Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Agency

LASIP: Liberia Agricultural Sector Investment Plan

LRA: Liberian Revenue Authority

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MFDP: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning

MoA: Ministry of Agricultural, Liberia

MOCI: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

MRM: Monitoring and Result Management

MSA: Market system analyses

MSD: Market System Development

NAIDAL: National Agro-Input Dealers Association of Liberia

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NIC: National Investment Council

PA: Partnership Agreements

PAPD: Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development of 2018

PIP: Partnership Implementation Plans

Sida: Swedish International Development Agency

ToC: Theory of change

ToR: Terms of Reference

VC: Village Coordinator

Preface

This Decentralised Evaluation of the Sida-supported GROW Liberia, phase 1 was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Liberia. The evaluation took place from January 2019 to December 2020 and was conducted by:

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Christina Paabøl Thomsen managed the review process at NIRAS. Ted Kliet provided the quality assurance. Christian Österlind, Åsa Bjällås and Kasper Nielsen managed the evaluation on behalf of the Embassy of Sweden, Liberia.

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank all of those who participated in the evaluation and especially the Embassy and the GROW team for their oversight and assistance. The team would also like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture in Liberia, especially Mr. Titoe, for valuable support.

Executive Summary

The evaluation of GROW Phase I (referred to as GROW) was planned to take place prior to the end of the programme but its start coincided with the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. This called for the postponement of the exercise which took place at the end of the year during a 2-year extension period that should contribute to the preparation of Phase II. The purpose of the evaluation is *“to provide the Embassy, Sida and their partners an understanding of what has been achieved while also informing design of a follow up phase of the programme with recommendations and input for the next phase of GROW Liberia”*. The evaluation is therefore summative and formative. It addresses relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact.

GROW is a market system development programme working with agricultural value chains. It is implemented by Adam Smith International, which was recruited through a tender process to design and implement the programme. A key parameter for the evaluation’s end-users was to explore the extent to which GROW has contributed to stimulating systemic change. As GROW intends to keep working with two value chains in the next phase, namely cocoa and vegetables, these were purposefully selected. The evaluation reconstructed the theory of change of the programme, linking it to the Adopt, Adapt, Expand and Respond (AAER) systemic change framework. Effectiveness was associated with “Adopt”, sustainability of outcomes with “Adapt” and impact with “Expand and Respond”. The evaluation used qualitative data collection methods combined with an analysis of monitoring and evaluation data. It relied on a blended approach of remote interviews led by the international team with stakeholders in Monrovia and field interviews led by the in-country team in Lofa, Nimba and Bong. Data collection took place from 19th October to 2nd November 2020. The evaluation team met with 141 persons, of which 117 were market actors in the vegetables and cocoa sectors with women representing 28% of market actors met. One third of these actors were farmers, among which 36% were female farmers. Actors met represent 55% of businesses, cooperatives, donors and government actors that engage with GROW.

Key findings

Relevance: looked at three aspects, notably relevance to i) Sida’s country strategy in Liberia and Sida priorities in terms of gender and environmental considerations, ii) national and private sector priorities, and iii) smallholder farmer priorities. The evaluation assesses that GROW is aligned to the two strategies for Sweden’s development cooperation with Liberia in place at the time of design and during implementation. It responds to Sida’s priorities in terms of gender equality which has been systematically pursued since 2018. Attention to environmental consideration is recognised with regard to deforestation risks linked to cocoa development, but has come in late in the programme and is not yet integrated. GROW is also aligned with

national priorities of the Government of Liberia in its selection of value chains, market orientation and pro-poor approach. The process of the market system analyses that were undertaken included consultations with private and public sector representatives as well as farmers in view of defining market constraints facing the private sector and smallholder farmers. This has helped shape interventions that address a set of these constraints that had potential for success.

Effectiveness and Sustainability: examined results at i) output level looking at tactics, interventions and partnerships GROW pursued to drive adoption and adaptation and ii) outcome level assessing results achieved by GROW's partners in terms of adoption of upgrades introduced and the likelihood of their sustainability through adaptation. The evaluation finds that GROW has been effective in piloting relevant systemic interventions particularly since 2018 when implementation became more systematic. It has managed to navigate its way in a thin market, testing the grounds and changing course as needed even though some challenges persist, for instance in attracting new entrants into agro-distribution, addressing the vegetables output market, reducing dependency on cocoa production and ensuring the fulfilment of trade agreements geared to the international market. GROW has fulfilled its role as facilitator focusing on ownership to establish a strong basis for adoption and potential adaptation. In the absence of support functions, GROW engaged in a justifiable and measured level of direct support as recommended by the midterm evaluation (2017). Its partnership approach has been effective in the selection and retention of partners who are willing and committed. This approach is seen to be adequate, even if larger scale may not be immediately attained. The evaluation found that partners have generally adopted improvements introduced by GROW including government partners who have become open to policy visions driven by GROW. A few of GROW's partners have adapted improvements and there is preliminary indication that some upgrades are being considered for adaptation. GROW has a well-established monitoring and result management system that heavily relies on quantitative methods and that tracks partners' performance and Logframe indicators including DCED common indicators and gender-disaggregated data. However, a number of Logframe indicators are not sufficiently specific or informative, and a plan for assessing systemic change is not yet developed. A key challenge during implementation has been the short timeframe of various extensions which lead to a shorter-term vision of what can be done. Sida's inability to be more flexible stems from procurement rules pertaining to private companies, which partly prompted considerations for institutionalising GROW as a local not for profit entity.

Impact: looked at i) whether and how actors in the wider market system reacted to the systemic interventions pursued by GROW's partners and ii) changes that happened at the level of smallholder farmers. At the level of the wider market system, the evaluation finds that it is premature to capture such change. This is so because implementation effectively started in 2018 and other market actors are not yet fully aware of what GROW's partners are doing to drive crowding-in and a wider response in the market system, especially when support functions are lagging. There are however some signals that indicate potential for crowding-in and response in the cocoa sector. For smallholder

farmers, male and female farmers benefited from GROW's contribution to improving access to products, services and particularly new knowledge. This resulted in improved capacities and business performance. However, work needs to be done to ensure better affordability, promote incentives and strengthen capacities to ensure consistent quality cocoa in line with GROW's vision.

Core elements of proposed recommendations

In preparation of the design phase, during the extension phase:

1. Ensure that the “transfer” of local staff from GROW to a newly created entity is accompanied by a handing-over of legal ownership of procedures, manuals, systems, tools and branding material put in place by Adam Smith International for GROW I to the legal entity of GROW II, and if possible of other assets
2. Conduct an assessment of the smallholder market for agro-inputs to generate interest and help potential entrants assess the business case for investing in the role of agro-input distributor for smallholder customers.
3. Prioritise the fulfilment of existing trade agreements for the export of quality cocoa by facilitating dialogue to jointly identify constraints and find ways of addressing them including incentives for farmers to sell to cooperatives.
4. Capitalise on the already established linkage with an interested international buyer to build a business case for positioning Liberia in the premium cocoa market.

During the design phase:

5. Ensure that international technical assistance is integrated into the design of GROW II to accompany the newly formed entity and guide strategic choices.
6. Ensure that the MRM framework and indicators are revised to be more informative for decision making and specific about what change is intended, for whom and at what level of the result chain, and that a plan with qualitative methods for assessing systemic change is developed.
7. Continue to work with the agro-input distribution model and focus on attracting new entrants to the agro-input distributor role.
8. Prioritise renewing interventions to address the systemic dynamics that constrain the output market system in competing with imported vegetables by introducing new business models that disrupt the status quo.
9. Continue to promote premium cocoa through facilitating market linkages and incentives for actors to embed services in backward linkages, building relations, while focusing on certification with higher potential for larger volume of premium cocoa, and making the case to exporters and the Government of Liberia.
10. Ensure that environmental considerations are integrated particularly deforestation risk, and a stronger orientation for organic and socially responsible production.
11. Ensure interventions that explore opportunities for diversification for cocoa producers as additional income generating activities to better manage risks.
12. Ensure that interventions continue strengthening the institutional capacities of cooperatives to reinforce their role as key actors in the market system.
13. Ensure that considerations to further qualify the technical capacities of women in post-harvesting functions that are crucial for the quality of cocoa are strengthened.

1 Introduction

1.1 EVALUATION CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

The evaluation of GROW Phase I (referred to as GROW hereafter) was commissioned at a time when the programme was coming to an end in June 2020 but was then granted a 2-year extension to ensure a smooth transition into Phase II¹. The outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic put a halt to the planned evaluation exercise due to take place at the end of Phase I. It resumed during the extension period when the pandemic was more managed but still prevalent. To adapt to the situation, the evaluation revised its methodology and methods to what is possible and ethical in a context of a pandemic.

The purpose of the evaluation according to the Terms of Reference (ToR, Annex 1) is

“to provide the Embassy, Sida and their partners an understanding of what has been achieved while also informing design of a follow up phase of the programme with recommendations and input for the next phase of GROW Liberia”.

More specifically, the objectives are twofold, namely:

1. To assess results achieved in terms of systemic change that took place in the markets of two selected value chains (cocoa and vegetables) and validate results in relation to poverty reduction
2. To provide recommendations based on findings as input for the preparation of the upcoming phase

The evaluation reports starts by introducing the key features of the programme and its interventions within cocoa and vegetables as the two selected value chains. It then presents the main elements of its methodology which are elaborated in more details in the inception report (Annex 2). The report then moves on to presenting key findings, conclusions and recommendations based on assessments made for each selected value chain. The evaluation does not include rubber, oil palm and agro-processing in line with its scope. It addresses relevance, effectiveness and sustainability as well as impact, with focus on the last three criteria as agreed during the inception phase. The evaluation does not cover the efficiency criterion of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as this is not part of the ToR.

¹ See Chapter 2 for a description of the key features of GROW.

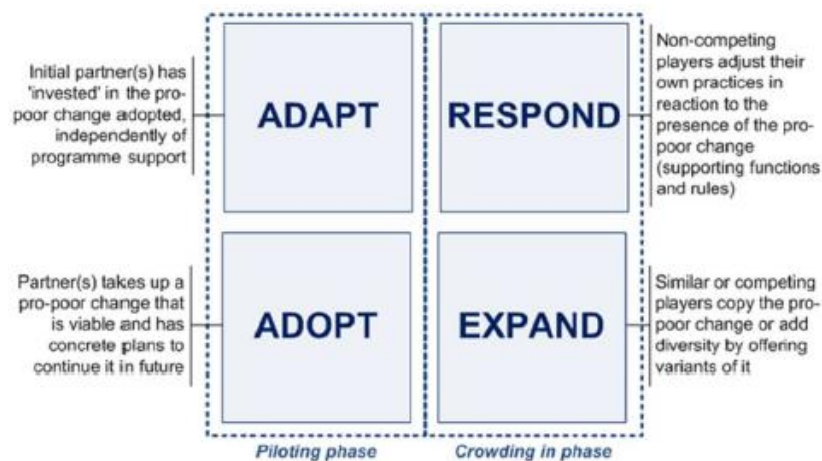
1.2 METHODOLOGY

This section presents key methodological elements of the evaluation, namely main methodological considerations, data collection methods, and key constraints. The methodology and methods are articulated in more details in Annex 2.

Methodological considerations. Reflecting the ToR and discussions during kick-off and inception meetings, the following key considerations are highlighted:

- **Focus on systemic change** driven by the wish of end users to continue working with a market system development (MSD) approach² in Phase II and in acknowledgement of the fact that market system change was not systematically tracked over the life of the programme. It was agreed that the Adopt, Adapt, Expand and Respond (AAER) systemic change framework³ will be used in line with the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) guidelines.

Figure 1 AAER Systemic Change Framework



- **The target group** was differentiated into two categories, namely i) the direct target group comprising market actors that GROW partners with including businesses, cooperatives and government actors (market system dimension), and ii) the ultimate target group which consists of smallholder farmers, i.e. the clients or cooperative members of GROW's partners (poverty dimension).
- **Reconstruction of GROW's theory of change (ToC)** to differentiate results achieved by GROW (output level), GROW partners (outcome level) and beyond in the wider market system and for smallholder farmers (impact level). GROW operates and updates its sector ToCs but there is no overall updated ToC for the

² See Chapter 2 for a brief introduction to the MSD approach.

³ The Springfield Centre (2014): Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: a framework for managing and measuring systemic change processes, Briefing paper.

programme in which the sector ToCs are embedded⁴. The reconstruction of the ToC was based on sector ToCs and feedback from GROW (p. 18 of Annex 2). The evaluation aligned elements of the AAER framework into the reconstructed ToC to serve as the basis for the assessment of results achieved.

- **Evaluation criteria and questions** called for a focus on effectiveness, impact and sustainability of outcomes achieved. The latter was integrated into the assessment of effectiveness as sustainability is a fundamental intention of desired systemic outcomes (the Adapt dimension). Evaluation criteria were clearly delineated by target group, where effectiveness and sustainability addressed results achieved by the direct target group (outcome level) and impact results achieved for the ultimate target group and other actors in the wider market system.
- **Value chain selection** was done purposefully in view of generating learning on the two value chains the programme intends to continue with in Phase II. The choice of using a case study approach for the two value chains instead of pursuing a light touch approach to cover all four value chains was also based on considerations of optimising resources and time vis à vis deliverables.
- **Site selection** was based on ensuring the best coverage possible of key stakeholders in the two value chains within the evaluation timeframe. Having adopted a more focused case study approach, this allowed the team to cover all key sites, namely Bong, Nimba and Lofa in addition to stakeholders in Monrovia.
- **Stakeholder selection** was carried out in line with set criteria for the different types of stakeholders (Table 10 in Annex 2). For partners, it focused on identifying an illustrative sample of partners based on their functions and performance with purposeful selection of female-led businesses/cooperatives within the selected categories of partners. For farmers, criteria were set including female farmers, but access and availability was the predominant consideration.

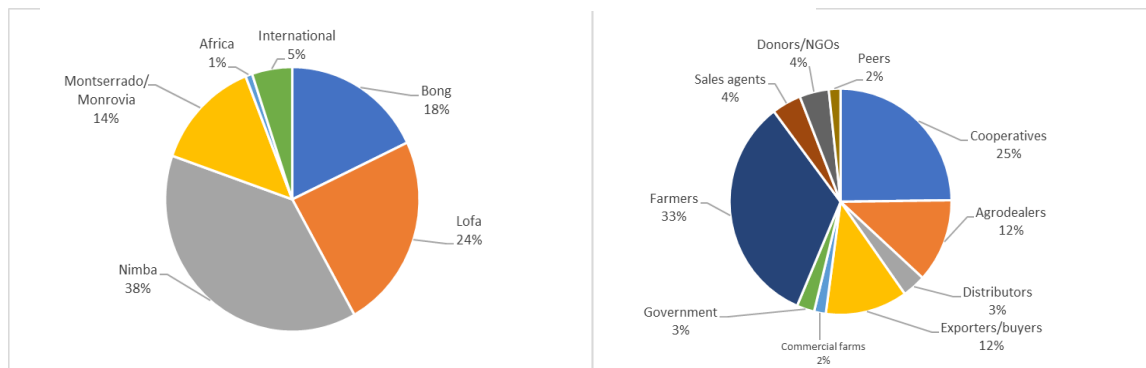
Data collection. Data collection relied on a blended interview approach (remote and face to face) and mix of qualitative methods comprising i) in-depth documentary review, ii) kick off, inception and debriefing meetings with end-users of the evaluation, iii) a mix of remote interviews with key stakeholders based in Monrovia led by the international team and on-site interviews with key stakeholders in the field led by the in-country team using semi-structured interview guides tailored to the different types of stakeholders. This included Sida and GROW staff and an illustrative sample of partners, key informants and farmers in smaller groups to ensure social distancing needed in view of the covid-19 pandemic.

Data collection primarily took place over two weeks from 19th October to 2nd November 2020. The evaluation team met with a total of 141 persons including GROW staff (20), Sida (4) and 117 key stakeholders in the market system of cocoa and vegetables. On average 28% of the 117 market actors met were women. One third of

⁴ According to GROW, it was agreed with Sida to work with sector ToCs.

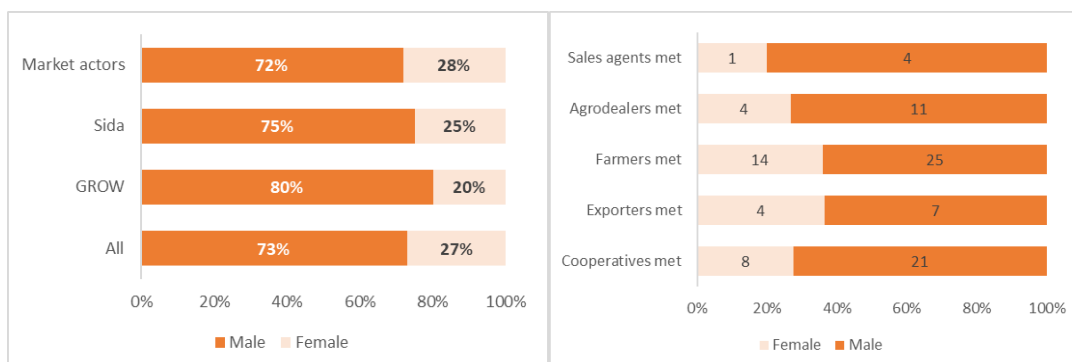
market actors met were farmers, among which 36% were female farmers. Actors met cover an illustrative sample of 38 GROW partners, which represents 55% of businesses, cooperatives and government actors that engage with GROW. The evaluation included key targeted sites, namely Nimba, Lofa and Bong as well as key stakeholders in Monrovia (including the market in Montserrado) and international buyers. A profile of stakeholders met is presented below.

Figure 2 Overview of stakeholders met by typology and geography



⁵ Source: List of persons met (team compilation)

Figure 3 Gender profile of stakeholders met, and market actors targeted by GROW



Source: List of persons met (team compilation)

Key methodological limitations. The main constraints faced by the evaluation team can be summarised as follows:

- The implementation of the evaluation during the covid-19 pandemic. First, this had implications for the international team in terms of travel and mobility in country. Should travel had taken place, the team members travelling internationally would have had to stay in Monrovia in line with NIRAS' risk assessment of the situation and protocols. Both scenarios meant that the international team was unable to get own observations from field visits. Regular debriefing with the in-country team and photo uploading helped compensate for this challenge. Second, it had implications on the time available for the in-country team to identify peers and get a sense of

⁵ The category Africa refers to persons met from the distributor's home country office in Sierra Leone.

whether change is happening in the wider market system. This is because the team's manpower was reduced from five to two persons in the field and partly explains why findings on what competitors are doing are not extensive.

- Difficulties in access to government actors meant that the evaluation could not integrate the perspective of key government actors as strongly as intended.
- Avoiding selection bias at the level of farmer selection, which was guided by criteria. However, partners did the final selection with a likely bias for selecting the best performers. This was brought to the attention of GROW and corrective measures were taken.

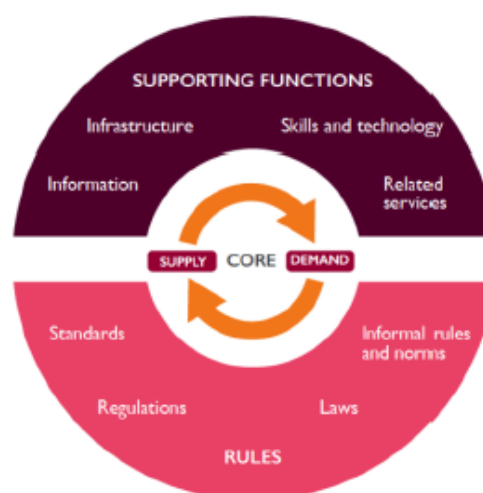
Despite these limitations, the evaluation has been able to establish an adequate informational basis for drawing findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

2 The Evaluated Intervention

2.1 SNAPSHOT OF THE PROGRAMME

GROW is a market system development (MSD) programme working with agricultural value chains with a total budget of around SEK 200 million. A market system is comprised of three dimensions. As depicted in the figure below, these include i) the core value chain where the exchange of goods and services take place, ii) support functions which provides structures or services that affect the performance of the core value chain, and iii) rules and regulations that govern and affect the core value chain.

Figure 4 The Market System



GROW is the only MSD programme in Liberia. It is implemented by Adam Smith International (ASI) who was recruited through a tender process in 2012 to implement the programme for the period 2013-2018. Previously designed as the “Support to the development of markets and value chains in agriculture in Liberia 2013-2018”, GROW works as a facilitator of systemic change engaging with partners in the private sector, cooperatives and government to address the underlying causes of underperformance in the market system of targeted agricultural value chains. Its overall purpose is to promote pro-poor economic growth⁶. As an MSD programme, it does not work directly with farmers. The expectation is that better performing market systems will benefit

⁶ Initially, the programme was designed to also address peace and stability with focus on youth, but this was not pursued further.

smallholder farmers in a more sustainable manner than direct, time-bound interventions at the farmer level.

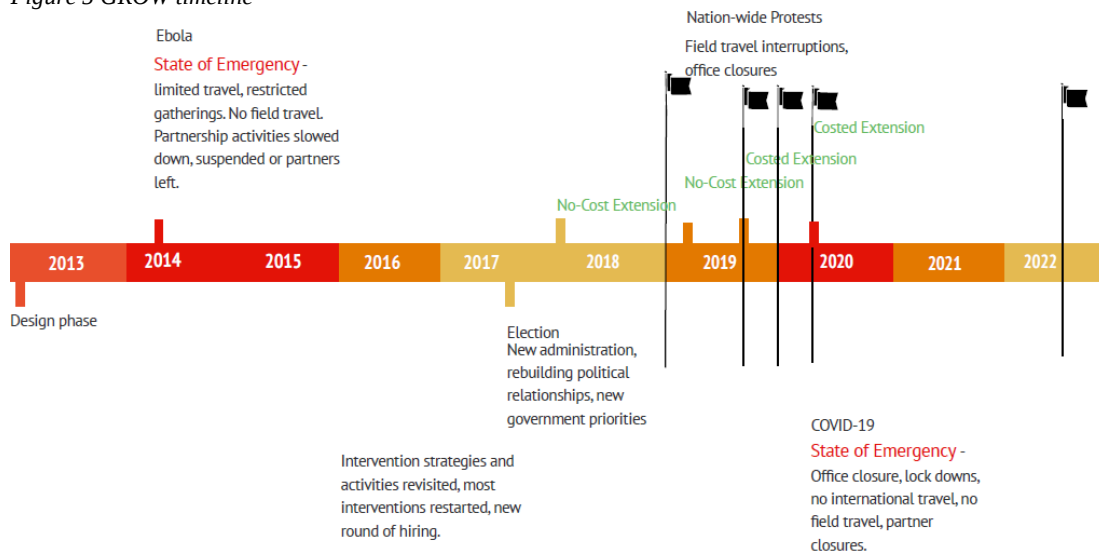
Since 2016, GROW has been working with various value chains as follows:

- In 2016, it worked with four value chains: rubber, oil palm, vegetables and cocoa
- In 2017, it started experimenting with agro-processing as it phased out of palm oil⁷
- Since 2018, GROW has been working with cocoa and vegetables and exited rubber and agro-processing in 2019.

According to the GROW team, the midterm review of 2017 contributed greatly to shaping the direction of the programme as it stands today.

The start of the programme coincided with the outbreak of the Ebola crisis in 2014-2015, which led to a slow start and various extensions. Programme implementation has become more stable and intensified since 2018 after the current management team was fully in place. The implementation timeline of GROW is presented in the chart below. It indicates the delayed start of the programme and its various extensions which pushed the end period of the programme several times, as shown by the black flags.

Figure 5 GROW timeline



Source: GROW

2.2 OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS IN COCOA

The work on cocoa has been consolidated in the last two years with an overall vision of transforming and marketing high quality Liberian cocoa produced through

⁷ GROW considers agro-processing as a value chain. The evaluation team does not understand agro-processing to be a value chain but rather a post-harvest segment of the value chain.

cooperatives with focus on export potential to the premium cocoa market. The three interventions in the cocoa sector focus on the following:

- **Intervention 1:** Higher quantity and quality of cocoa production, where GROW partnered with cooperatives, commercial farms and licensed buying companies. The focus of this intervention is the cooperative toolkit, where Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) represent a significant part. The toolkit also promotes the use of transparency, traceability, finance and organisational management tools. This intervention introduced the village coordinator (VC) model for rolling out GAP training to farmers. VCs are farmers that are selected by the cooperative according to criteria set by the programme to roll out the training in farming communities.
- **Intervention 2:** Better selling and financing terms in view of improving supply chain investment and linkages with local and international exporters/buyers. The intention of this intervention is to improve relations between cooperatives and exporters/buyers. The core element of this intervention comprises trade agreements, some with options of pre-financing.
- **Intervention 3:** A more attractive market addressing cocoa governance. This focuses on contributing to the promotion of industry coordination, regulation and a common vision for cocoa development through the national cocoa platform led by the Ministry of Agricultural (MoA) and financed by the European Union⁸.

GROW partnered directly with a range of market actors covering 15 cooperatives in Bong (1), Lofa (9) and Nimba (5) as well as exporters/buyers (13) who are mainly Monrovia based. It has also collaborated with other Monrovia based actors such as government institutions and other donors through the cocoa platform. In the cocoa sector, GROW has been liaising with four international potential buyers/actors.

2.3 OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS IN VEGETABLES

Interventions in the vegetables sector has seen many iterations over time focusing in the last two years on stimulating change in the agro-inputs market system. This is in response to the constraints facing smallholder farmers notably the absence of distributors interested in servicing smaller clients and of a sub-distribution network that is qualified and closer to them. The three interventions introduced by GROW are mutually reinforcing and comprise the following:

⁸ The platform includes key government actors like the Liberian Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Agency (LACRA), the Cooperation Development Agency, the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the National Investment Commission as well as a range of donors working in the cocoa sector. It has a secretariat led by the Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH/Solidaridad.

- **Intervention 1:** Establishing agro-input distribution in Liberia by encouraging distributors to target smallholder farmers and strengthening their capacity to manage a commercially viable distribution network through agro-dealers that service smallholder farmers. This intervention primarily entails the identification of interested distributors in Liberia and in the region and support their operational, marketing, and financial management capacities as well as embedding advisory services alongside with sales of agro-inputs.
- **Intervention 2:** Professionalising and upskilling agro-input dealers in terms of operational and financial management, marketing and sales strategies as well as the provision of agronomical advisory services as an embedded service to farmers. This intervention introduced the sales agent model as a sales tactic that increases outreach and sales to farmers, while providing them with information and advisory services. Sales agents are farmers generally working on a commission base/part time basis with agro-dealers.
- **Intervention 3:** Agro-inputs duty waiver and policy intended to eliminate import duties as an incentive to increase the stock and flow of agro-inputs in country through the port of Monrovia and eventually reduce prices for farmers. Many agro-dealers selling inputs to farmers currently procure agro-inputs from neighbouring countries.

GROW works directly with a range of market actors including one distributor based in Monrovia (previously two), 19 agro-dealers in Bong (8), Nimba (5), Montserrado (5) and Lofa (1), the national agro-input dealers association of Liberia (NAIDAL) and government or other actors in the MoA technical committee⁹ dealing with the duty waiver.

⁹ The technical committee is composed of the Ministry of Agriculture, Liberia Revenue Authority, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, National Investment Commission, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, National Agro-Inputs Dealers Association of Liberia, Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity (USAID project), Solidaridad, and one commercial actor (recent addition).

3 Findings

3.1 RELEVANCE

EQ 1. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of its target group and to Sida strategies?

Relevance in the context of the evaluation is defined in relation to three key aspects presented below, namely:

- Relevance to Sida strategies and priorities in terms of gender equality and environment considerations
- Relevance to national and to private sector priorities
- Relevance to smallholder farmer priorities

3.1.1 Sida priorities

Alignment to Sida strategies. GROW is aligned to Sida's country strategies in the design and implementation phases of the programme. The design process of GROW started in 2012 and kicked off in the inception phase in 2013 to produce a programme document for the period 2014-2018. At the time, the Strategy for Development Cooperation with Liberia, 2008-2013 was in place¹⁰. GROW contributed to the focus area on "*agricultural development and business, including regional and international trade*", particularly the objectives dealing with more productive and income generating employment for poor women and men, improved conditions for women in business and increased business activities in trade. GROW has maintained its relevance to the current Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation with Liberia, 2016-2020, contributing to "*better opportunities and tools to enable poor people to improve their living conditions*" by improving conditions for inclusive and sustainable economic development that focuses on small-scale and sustainable farming.

Alignment to other Sida priorities. GROW has been including gender considerations more systematically since 2018 and recognises the importance of environmental considerations, particularly in the cocoa sector, even if these are not yet fully integrated:

¹⁰ There is a gap in the period 2014-2015 (Ebola crisis) before the current strategy came into being.

- Gender equality.** The initial intention of the programme was to target smallholder farmers with focus on women and youth¹¹. As a result, GROW developed a gender and youth strategy in 2016. However, the integration of women in the programme did not go beyond collecting gender disaggregated data at the time. While the intention to ensure outreach to women materialised in the choice of the vegetables sector, where a majority of smallholder farmers are women, gender considerations were not a driver for the selection of the cocoa sector. Nevertheless, the last two years have witnessed a stronger focus on gender equality considerations. Targeted qualitative studies (e.g. role of women in the cocoa value chain, analysis on the link between female participation and the overall performance of farmers, businesses and markets) were undertaken to better understand and integrate women in the programme in view of making markets work better for women. This increased attention was partly prompted by monitoring and result management (MRM) data that showed low female participation and partly by dedicated technical support provided by the international gender advisor, who has recently been complemented by a national gender advisor, and a technical director that has prioritised the gender agenda in programming. These factors have contributed to stronger efforts to mainstreaming gender considerations more systematically since 2018. The translation of these efforts into results have to be weighed however against the challenges of a conservative context where gender roles are pre-defined and female illiteracy is high¹² particularly in rural areas, something which has an impact on the extent to which the programme can reinforce the role of women. In addition to targeting women in key functions in the programme (e.g. village coordinators, sales agents) and in other structures (e.g. gender focal points in cooperatives), gender considerations have been shaping the design of impact assessments and data collection tools as well as other programme activities (e.g. media communication).
- Environmental considerations.** GROW recognises the importance of environmental considerations, particularly in the cocoa sector, but attention to these matters have come in late in the programme and such considerations are not yet integrated. The risk of deforestation in relation to cocoa development is real. However, it has been given little attention until recently in relation to GROW's vision of promoting premium cocoa which links up closely with the need to address environmental issues and have stronger focus on organic production. An environmental review is currently planned and is meant to improve actions for conservation, biodiversity and environmental considerations including a review of indicators. In the vegetables sector, considerations are mainly taken in the form of compliance with approved agro-chemical products and practices such as separate collection bins. Organic vegetable production and the use of organic fertilisers are not yet seen as pertinent to the demands of the local market. An initial collaboration

¹¹ Focus on youth was dropped as the peace and stability dimension of the programme was abandoned.

¹² According to UNESCO (2017), the female literacy rate is 34% compared to 63% for men.

with a distributor of organic inputs was sought but was not pursued further within vegetables but may prove relevant for the cocoa sector.

3.1.2 Government and private sector priorities

This section assesses the relevance of the programme to national priorities, including the selection of value chains, and whether interventions were informed by solid analysis of market constraints in targeted value chains and consultations with private sector actors.

Government priorities. The analysis and process leading up to the selection of value chains is in alignment with government priorities. The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) confirmed its involvement in the selection of the value chains of the programme in line with national priorities. Cocoa and horticulture (including vegetables) are two of the seven priority value chains in the Liberia Agricultural Sector Investment Plan II, 2018-2022 (LASIP II). Sustainable production and productivity, particularly enhancing crop production and quality of cocoa is a national priority (Component 2/sub-component 2). Women's participation is emphasised in the vegetables sector in relation to access to food and nutrition (component 1/sub-component 4) and the vegetables value chain is linked to sustainable use and management of natural resources (component 1/sub-component 6). The pro-poor dimension of GROW also aligns with the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development of 2018 (PAPD, Pillar 2). Furthermore, GROW in its Market System Development approach resonates with the priorities of the Liberia Rising Vision 2030 in terms of its market orientation and focus on private sector development in agriculture.

Private sector priorities. The design of specific interventions was informed by analyses of market constraints in selected value chains and consultations with key informants from the private and public sectors. Market system analyses (MSAs) were conducted to identify constraints in the market system for cocoa and vegetables. MSAs helped shape the design of interventions. During implementation, an increase in interest by private sector actors to partner with GROW has emerged. This is reflected by the growing number of such partners in 2020, suggesting that GROW interventions are pertinent to the private sector.

3.1.3 Smallholder farmers priorities

MSAs addressed constraints facing smallholder farmers and interventions were designed to address a set of these constraints that had potential for success. Smallholder farmers are the ultimate target group of GROW. The choice of interventions is meant to bring knowledge, products, services and opportunities closer to them and to make the market system work better for them through better relations and linkages. The evaluation team did not see the lists of persons consulted during the MSAs process. However, GROW confirmed that farmer interviews including women were conducted. This fed into the design of interventions.

Overall assessment on relevance: GROW is relevant to the priorities of Sida and the Government of Liberia as reflected in Sida and national strategies and plans, also with regards to the selection of value chains. For Sida priorities, this includes attention to integrating gender equality considerations which have been systematically pursued since 2018. While environment is recognised to be important, attention to it particularly with regards to deforestation risks linked to cocoa development has come in late in the programme and is not yet integrated. The development of MSAs ensured the inclusion of private and public sector representatives as well as farmers in defining market constraints facing the private sector and smallholder farmers, shaping interventions that address a set of these constraints that had potential for success.

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

EQ 2. To what extent did the project contribute to market system change? If so, how and for whom? If not, why not?

EQ3. How well did the M&E system deliver robust and useful information to assess progress towards the achievement of outcomes and to generate learning as a basis for adapting the project during implementation?

The effectiveness and sustainability of the programme are assessed in terms of results achieved at output and outcome levels. Output level results are those achieved by GROW as facilitator of systemic change. Outcome level results are those that materialised at the level of GROW's partners. These are centred around the Adopt and Adapt dimensions of the AAER framework as described in Chapter 1. It is worth noting that the effectiveness and sustainability criteria are examined simultaneously to reflect the integrated feature of sustainability in systemic change. In that context, the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes is addressed in terms of adaptation of improvements introduced by GROW. Results in the wider market system and for smallholder farmers are dealt with under impact in section 3.3.

3.2.1 Results delivered by GROW as facilitator

This section looks at results at output level by assessing interventions and partnerships pursued as well as tactics used by GROW to drive adoption and potential adaptation by partners. Actual adoption and adaptation by partners are examined in section 3.2.2.

Interventions pursued. GROW has been effective in piloting relevant systemic interventions in a thin market like Liberia, testing the grounds and changing course to interventions that are feasible and that have potential for success. The market in Liberia is characterised by a limited number and diversity of roles actors play in a market as well as a limited number and diversity of actors who are filling in various roles. A substantial amount of effort has been invested in seeking partnerships and refining the partnership and intervention approaches to heighten the likelihood of success. While

interventions in the cocoa and vegetables sectors each contain three initiatives as described in sections 2.2 and 2.3 above, their elements are extensive and address a variety of constraints that reinforce each other. Results achieved at output level are commendable taking into the account that interventions were consolidated and effectively pursued since 2018.

In vegetables, GROW has been able to identify adequate interventions to address systemic constraints in the core value chain and the regulatory dimension of the market system. This was based on analysis that considers potential for growth for smallholder farmers and systemic constraints that hamper this potential in the input and output markets. Interventions in the output market however were abandoned because they did not produce desired results and sufficient traction, even though improvements in that market remain a critical constraint to the growth of the vegetables sector. Efforts were since consolidated more strongly on the establishment of an agro-input distribution network that reaches smallholder farmers. Concurrently, GROW succeeded in convincing policy makers to put in place a duty waiver on import duties. This is meant to encourage distributors and other businesses to import agricultural related inputs via the port of Monrovia. The intention is to prompt the substitution of agro-inputs bought across the border. These are subsidised and thus cheaper, but many have instructions in French rather than English and thereby imposing risks of improper use. The assumption and justification of the reduction of import duties is that it will trickle down in the form of lower prices to farmers thereby contributing to their access to more affordable agro-inputs in-country.

GROW's interventions in the vegetables sector resulted in the following:

- The entry of a new distributor from the region into Liberia. GROW actively sought and facilitated the process as local importers are and remain geared toward servicing large government and donor contracts rather than smallholder farmers.
- Partnerships with a network of currently 19 agro-dealers. The intention is to strengthen the retail segment in the agro-distribution chain to be more efficient and responsive to smallholder farmer needs.
- A WhatsApp and Messenger groups of agro-dealers that are meant to disseminate information and promote networking to ensure farmers are referred to other agro-dealers that have a given product sought in the event the agro-dealer does not have it in stock.
- Accounting and sales records as well as innovative marketing strategies (e.g. radio advertisement) at the level of agro-dealer businesses.
- Embedded advisory services provided by agro-dealers (trained by GROW) in view of strengthening relations between agro-dealers and farmers.
- A sales agent model that ensures outreach to smallholder farmers, including female farmers particularly through female sales agents. The intention is to improve access to information via advisory services (trained by agro-dealers) and access to agro-inputs and information on of proper use.
- The approval and renewal of the duty waiver, which legally requires annual renewal.

In cocoa, GROW has been effective in selecting interventions that address system constraints in the core value chain and influence the policy environment. Interventions were geared towards generating results for its partners, namely exporters/buyers, cooperatives and farmers, contributing to greater sector coordination and shaping the policy vision for cocoa development in Liberia. While the initial focus was on improving the quality of bulk cocoa, a stronger orientation toward the premium export market emerged overtime as a result of a better understanding of the market including the comparative advantage of Liberia vis à vis its cocoa producing neighbours (e.g. less rigid regulatory setup that is desired by some international buyers) and export opportunities (demand for fine flavour and new origins). GROW has been focusing on improving the quality and increasing the quantity of cocoa, while also addressing issues linked to financing terms, a major constraint in the sector, as well as supporting cooperatives in their ability to manage their business, fulfil their roles as aggregators and provide training to members. Concurrently, it has been active in the national cocoa platform.

GROW's interventions in the cocoa sector produced the following outputs:

- Partnership with 15 cooperatives, three commercial farms (one phased out), 13 exporters/buyers and four international potential buyers.
- A cooperative toolkit that integrates various aspects for strengthening the capacities of cooperatives, for instance in strategies, business management and planning tools.
- Tools for assessing the quality of cocoa
- Training on GAP
- Trained tree crop officers within cooperatives
- A village coordinator (VC) model that rolls out GAP training to smallholder farmers including female farmers with 50% of VCs trained and delivering GAP training being women.
- A gender focal point within cooperatives.
- Trade agreements between selected exporters/buyers and cooperatives, some with pre-financing agreements, that clearly set out the terms of the agreement and roles and responsibilities in view of building trust and nurturing better relations.
- Research and policy briefs as well as other communication materials, especially focused on the premium cocoa market disseminated through various channels.
- Scoping missions organised for interested potential international buyers.
- Participation of a selection of partners in an international trade fair for cocoa.
- A directory of contacts with exporters, commercial farms and cooperatives that includes information about their performance as well as contacts to international buyers.
- A memorandum of understanding with the Liberian Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Agency (LACRA) to help it develop an investment case for future market regulation and its capacity to implement it.
- Leadership of two working groups within the national cocoa platform, namely the sustainable production and quality control working group and the investment promotion and regulation working group

Partnership landscape. GROW developed an effective approach for the selection and retention of partners, working its way around this key challenge in a thin market like Liberia even if this is happening at the expense of scale considerations. The identification of relevant partners who are interested and committed to pilot interventions is key for a programme like GROW. This has been a central challenge in a context where the MSD approach is not known, organisations are used to receiving grants and materials from donor programmes and NGOs, the market is small and distorted as a result of long history of humanitarian assistance and market concentration, capacities are weak and information is scanty. While initially highly selective, GROW capitalised on lessons learned to change its strategy over time. In addition to a few cases of testing some partnerships for a short period of time, it adopted a two-tier sequenced approach for mobilising private sector actors and cooperatives as follows:

- Casting a wider net to engage as many partners as possible and identify those who are interested and willing. Interviews reveal that incentives for partners to pilot interventions with GROW were mainly driven by commercial considerations and better positioning in the market (private sector), interest in receiving technical assistance and upgrading business skills (cooperatives), co-sharing investments (cooperatives and private sector), and capitalising on GROW's knowledge of and network in the cocoa sector in Liberia (international buyers).
- Retaining partners who demonstrated commitment to pursue new business models and dedicate time and resources to achieving milestones set in partnership agreements (PAs for businesses) and partnership implementation plans (PIPs for cooperatives)¹³. To ascertain commitment, GROW and partner contributions are clearly stated in PAs and PIPs. Some are financial (e.g. purchasing a laptop to run the accounting software procured by GROW), some are non-financial (staff time), some a mix of both. The partnership process is dynamic, sequenced (vegetables) and differentiated (cocoa). Retention hinges on performance in the vegetables sector as the selection process is phased to retain the most performing partners overtime. In the cocoa sector, PIPs are differentiated to the different capacities of partners. To be able to monitor that, GROW developed a three-tier performance system to classify its partners as top, modest and low performers.

This selection approach implies a potential fall out of some partners and hence the total number of partners in line with the sequenced approach adopted to retain those working on improving performance (e.g. the number of agro-dealers fell from 48 to 19). This means that scale considerations, which are a key feature for instigating wider systemic change, may be difficult to integrate in the current approach. However, the evaluation

¹³ Not all partners have agreements in the cocoa sector. These include one commercial farm, four exporters/buyers and all four international buyers.

team assesses that it is an adequate approach in the context of a small and thin market like Liberia. The approach ensures better consolidation of GROW's efforts, enhances ownership and heightens the potential for success by demonstrating results. This is more likely to drive the adoption and potential adaptation of changes being introduced, as a basis for driving future crowding-in.

With regard to the selection of government partners, apart from MoA as the key government counterpart, with whom Sweden has an agreement on the implementation of the programme, government actors are generally not targeted per se but interact with GROW in existing fora such as the technical committee and the cocoa platform.

Tactics used. GROW has used tactics that are grounded in facilitation principles focusing on ownership of the improvements introduced by partners for adoption as a basis for potential adaptation. In line with its mandate¹⁴, GROW has played a facilitation role, but this has been challenging in the local context where support functions are almost absent. The midterm review of 2017 concluded that it would be justifiable given the nature of the market and the limited choice and capacity of actors in Liberia for GROW to undertake more direct support. As the planned grant facility did not prove to be pertinent given little capacity among actors to apply, absorb and use grant funding, the latter was transformed into a flexible fund facility with Sida's approval. This has allowed GROW to provide partners with technical assistance (e.g. training on recordkeeping) and to finance some initial costs that are seen as strategic for driving adoption and adaptation (e.g. to pilot radio advertisement for agro-dealers).

In the last two years, focus has been on driving adoption and ownership for the remaining period of the programme that was meant to end mid-2020 (now extended to 2022). While efforts were kept in mind to encourage crowding-in, a clear and targeted strategy for driving crowding-in in the given timeframe was not an immediate priority given focus on driving adoption and potential adaptation. GROW has invested substantial effort and made well measured choices in terms of tactics used to prompt adoption by partners. These comprise:

- The partner selection process continues into a partnership based on performance to ensure motivation and to drive adoption.
- Financial and/or non-financial contributions to promote and establish stronger ownership of changes introduced.
- Differentiated/sequenced approach for the uptake of new models and improvements in knowledge and skills (technical and business related) to ensure they are responsive to different types and levels of development of partners.
- Co-sharing investments to encourage adoption.

¹⁴ ToR for a facilitator to design and implement a programme for support to the development of markets and value chains in agriculture in Liberia (2012).

- Financing specific activities that are seen as pivotal for strategies put in place to demonstrate results (e.g. radio advertisements).
- Facilitating linkages and networks locally and internationally (e.g. network of agro-dealers for referrals, linkages to international exporters).
- Introducing incentives to prompt better performance and adoption (e.g. competitions for agro-dealers and non-monetary rewards).
- Introducing trade agreements (some with pre-financing) for product aggregation, distribution and export (cocoa).

The evaluation team recognises that focus on ownership in tactics used for driving adoption are in view of building a strong basis for prompting potential adaptation. In addition, GROW through its interventions and monitoring of performance has been able to demonstrate to partners the usefulness and relevance of the upgrades introduced (see section 3.2.2). This increases the likelihood that partners keep investing fully or partially in the upgrades or a version of them. Furthermore, GROW has been instrumental in building a momentum around policy visions and the roadmap for cocoa development. The issue of positioning Liberia as an international supplier of premium cocoa for instance was not part of Liberia's policy discussions before the idea was promoted by GROW. While discussions are still ongoing, GROW has established a good basis for government to be oriented in this direction.

Organisation and management. Programme organisation and management in the post-Ebola period have been adequate for ensuring delivery of results but GROW. However, it was challenged by uncertainties about the timeframe of the programme, which is linked to the procurement modality of contracting a private company as implementer.

In terms of the team, initial difficulties were faced in mobilising international staff to Liberia and local staff that were versed with the MSD approach. Strategies were developed to recruit competent international staff. The composition of GROW's management team has been adequate and stable since 2017, which has allowed it to be more efficient and effective, abandoning under-performing interventions to give more attention to what is getting better traction. The current management team is well-versed with MSD. GROW has invested in developing the capacity of Liberian staff on MSD. The organisation of the overall team ensures that field-based staff have regular contact with partners to accompany and drive results at their level. Moreover, interactions between the communications and policy team have been fruitful in terms of influencing perceptions and attitudes when it came to advocacy efforts to promote policy change. It is worth noting that with increasing focus on gender equality, GROW's recruitment policy has also become more gender aware since 2018.

In terms of delivery of results, the delayed kick-start of implementation prompted various short-term extensions of the programme to ensure the needed time for transition into Phase II. Given that the programme is implemented by a private company, procurement rules have constituted a main hindrance for the possibility of longer-term

extensions. The latter would have required a new procurement round to maintain compliance with public procurement rules, which would not guarantee the continuation of ASI as the implementer. This has imposed challenges for the management team in terms of establishing a longer-term vision of what can be done and achieved. It explains the decisions and tactics adopted to focus on the delivery of results in a shorter timeframe. In addition, the short extensions meant that staff retention was difficult as they sought more stable job opportunities.

The contracting modality through a procurement process of a private operator did not allow Sida to provide the flexibility it is used to granting its implementing partners. This modality is therefore not a favoured choice for Phase II. The current extension is expected to explore options. One of these options is the formalisation of GROW's local team into an NGO, a trust, or not-for-profit organisation in Liberia. This is in view of capitalising on the resources, knowledge and experiences accumulated over time and allowing the local structure of GROW II to receive funding from other parties. The intention is appreciated. However, the evaluation team wishes to note that the choice of an NGO as a future structure in the context of Liberia may not be adequate. This is because NGOs are associated with grants and free material support. A key challenge for GROW was to explain to market actors that it does not provide such support. Associating GROW with an institutional form that signals the opposite of its approach may send confusing signals to market actors.

3.2.2 Results for GROW partners and sustainability potential

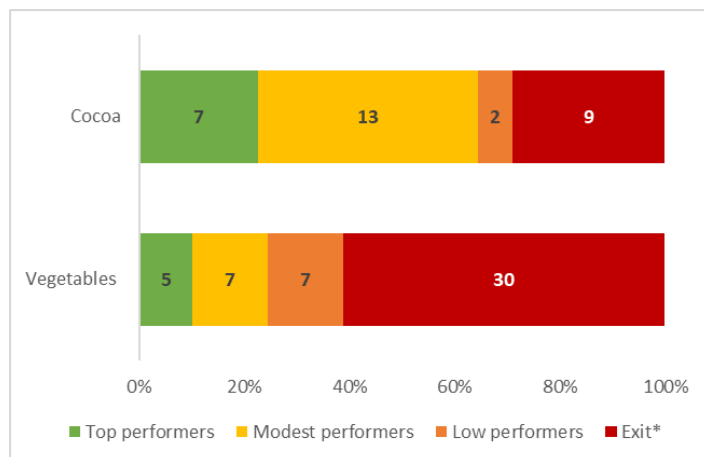
This section provides findings on results achieved at the level of GROW's partners. It looks at results at outcome level by assessing the adoption of upgrades introduced by GROW including the changes it brought to them, as well as the likelihood of their sustainability through the potential adaptation of these upgrades or iterations of them. It also highlights key challenges facing adoption and adaptation for partners.

Adopting upgrades introduced by GROW. Overall, private sector partners and cooperatives have adopted upgrades introduced by GROW while government partners have become open to policy visions and actions driven by GROW.

Private sector actors who are still in partnership with GROW have adopted the upgrades introduced by GROW. This refers to 19 agro-dealers and 22 partners in the cocoa sector comprising cooperatives, commercial farms, licensed buyers and exporters. The level of adoption differs by sector and performance of partners as indicated in the chart below. In vegetables and in line with the strategy of casting a wider net, 48 agro-dealers had signed up for a partnership with GROW but eventually did not adopt the upgrades due to low commitment and performance. While this may seem alarming, as noted above, it ensures the retention of the most willing and interested, thereby paving the way for greater ownership for adoption and potential for adaptation. One partner distributor exited the partnership to attend to more lucrative markets but had adopted the marketing upgrades introduced by GROW. This is to say that performance and exit

may inform about the level of adoption but do not necessarily mean non-adoption. In cocoa, most partners have adopted the improvements introduced by GROW. Those who are no longer partners were low performers.

Figure 6 Overview of partner performance in vegetables and cocoa



Source: GROW list of partners; *8 classified as low performers in cocoa, but partnership dates in the list indicate closure of partnership

In vegetables, results can be seen at the level of the input distributor and agro-dealers:

- The distributor whose operations run in Guinea and Sierra Leone registered and established an office in Liberia with the support of GROW. The company formed a sub-distribution network with three agro-dealers who are partners with GROW. Part of its contribution was to invest in a shop and a warehouse, which materialised. The setup of an accounting, inventory and customer tracking system was pursued, but this was envisaged given that the company is part of a regional setup that has systems in place. The company made use of the duty waiver that GROW has been lobbying for, indicating synergy between interventions. However, the evaluation team understands that a possible non-renewal of the waiver would not affect its intent to stay in Liberia. The company has already diversified its portfolio to government contracts. This is both an advantage for its continued presence in Liberia but also poses a risk overtime if its attention is diverted away from the initial intention of servicing smaller customers like smallholder farmers as its client base, underlining the need to encourage new entrants.
- Agro-dealers are adopting the range of business, financial and marketing activities that GROW introduced. The most useful improvements are reported to be those linked to business management including greater awareness of expenses, sources of income and profits generated. According to interviews, this information has contributed to shaping decision making for some agro-dealer businesses, for instance in managing their costs, stocking inventory, waiting to make new investments until they have sufficient liquidity. In addition, marketing strategies that GROW supported (e.g. radio advertisements) have had a return in the form of increased sales, demonstrating the relevance of such strategies to the operations of agro-dealers. Similarly, the sales agent model and advisory services provided have contributed to attracting and retaining new customers including female customers.

Interviewed agro-dealers expressed their intention to continue with the models but highlighted challenges in doing so (see challenges below).

In cocoa, results are manifested primarily at the level of cooperatives and exporters/buyers¹⁵:

- Cooperatives have adopted the GAP training model introduced by GROW including the training modules and the VC approach for rolling it out to farmers¹⁶. Interviews indicate that cooperatives have been motivated by the demonstrated effect of GAP on increased producer capacity and yields. They intend to continue with the model. It is however unclear whether they have yet the capacity to do so. In addition, some challenges were noted in relation to the sustainability of the VCs (see challenges below). In terms of business management, cooperatives now have accounting and sales records. GROW provided cooperatives with basic tools for traceability and transparency and for assessing the quality of cocoa. Cooperatives intend to continue using these tools. This is relevant in view of the trade agreements that GROW help facilitate between some cooperatives and exporters/buyers. While these are seen as good improvements that help build better trading relations, some interviewed cooperatives were reticent about continuing with the agreements, as they assess that pre-determined prices have been below market prices at the time of harvest.
- Some exporters/buyers concluded trade agreements, some with pre-financing, with selected cooperatives. The intention of building better relations with cooperatives is well-placed and desired. However, interviewed exporters experienced difficulties in the fulfilment of the agreements, including delays in delivery, insufficient quantity and unsatisfactory cocoa quality. While there is a wish to continue with such agreements, there was reticence particularly in relation to the pre-financing component. This is driven by the experience of cooperatives not being able to meet the terms of the agreements, thereby affecting the exporters' ability to meet their own commitments with international buyers.
- One international buyer expressed its readiness to invest in Liberia if the right partners are committed.

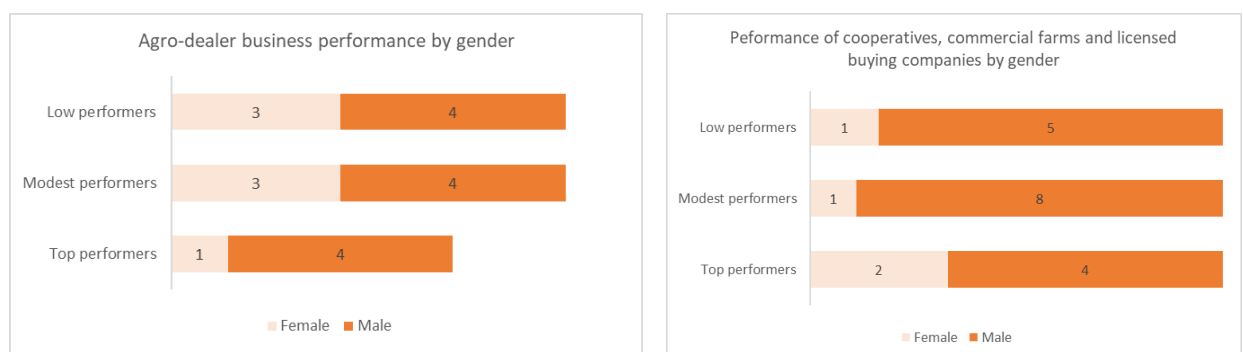
As for the public sector, interviews confirm the reported openness of key government partners to work towards the vision of positioning Liberia in the international premium cocoa market that GROW introduced. Similarly, consulted government actors have worked on the renewal of the duty waiver over two rounds through the efforts of the technical committee.

¹⁵ The commercial farm that the evaluation team met with was a new partner and therefore it is too early to inform about results.

¹⁶ Interviews indicate that other donors are also providing GAP training to farmers through cooperatives.

With regard to results for female-led business partners, the evaluation team notes that GROW partnered with three female-led cooperatives (20% of total cooperatives) and seven female-led agro-dealer businesses (37% of agro-dealers). This year, it has expanded its portfolio to one female-led licensed buying company¹⁷ even though this was based on joint partnership interests rather than gender considerations. All commercial farms and cocoa exporters are male-led companies. The performance of female-led businesses as they are classified in GROW lists indicates that a few are top performers and adopters of improvements introduced by GROW (see figure 7). With the exception of one top performer within vegetables, female-led agro-input businesses are doing as well as their male counterparts. In cocoa, there are fewer female partners, but female-led cooperatives are doing as well as male-led cooperatives in the top performing category. The disaggregation of partners by male/female-led business is helpful in tracing the performance of female-led businesses as market actors that GROW partners with and whose performance, relations and influence in the market system it can affect¹⁸. Such performance data could help GROW detect a potential need for tailoring the approach to better strengthen the business performance for female-led businesses partnering with GROW.

Figure 7 Gender profile of performance of GROW partners (male/female-led businesses)



Source: GROW list of partners

While not directly linked to female-led businesses, the evaluation notes that within partner businesses, the training and inclusion of female village coordinators and sales agents has contributed to valuing the business relevance and community leadership potential of women.

Adapting upgrades introduced by GROW. A few of GROW's partners have adapted some improvements. It is a preliminary indication that some upgrades are likely to be

¹⁷ This information is based on the list provided by GROW. The team met with an exporter and a license buying company that are classified as male-led businesses but are managed by women. The classification would benefit from a clearer definition of 'female/male-led', whether it is owned or managed by a man/woman, to make women in decision making positions in businesses more visible.

¹⁸ What Works: Gender Equality by Design. Iris Bohnet, (2016)

adapted, such as independent private investments made and plans to continue with improvements introduced by GROW.

In vegetables, adaptation of improvements and the likelihood that it may happen are identified among the input distributor, agro-dealers and government actors as follows.

- The distributor expects to stay in Liberia as noted above, has invested in new marketing materials and increased the volume of its imports that service smallholder farmers. However, the adaptation of the sub-distribution model is more challenging. It would be difficult to do without investments in staff to ensure that agro-dealers are monitored in the same manner that GROW monitors them today. It is worth noting that a distributor that is no longer a partner had adapted and expanded the marketing channels that were set up with GROW.
- Agro-dealers have sustained or are likely to sustain and adapt upgrades introduced by GROW. All agro-dealers (19) have plans and set targets for the coming two years, but this is still monitoring by GROW during the extension period. Most (15) have adapted and expanded the sales agent model, and some invested in radio advertisement piloted with GROW. There are examples of agro-dealers expanding and diversifying their business (e.g. new outlet, aggregating vegetables).
- The technical committee has exhibited strong leadership and forward-looking plans¹⁹ to assess the impacts of the duty waiver to pursue its continuation through a ministerial exemption that would not require annual renewal. In addition, it has become open to other ways to influence policies affecting the inputs sector.

In cocoa, cooperatives, exporters/buyers and government have shown some indication of adaptation as follows:

- Cooperatives have plans to continue with GAP training and the VC model, but it is not certain they have the capacity to do so. They have adapted their strategies for the 2020-21 season to appropriately position themselves for the premium market. Six cooperatives are taking initial steps towards certification and working towards satisfying the requirements for premium cocoa.
- A few exporters/buyers have invested in equipment (e.g. purchase of a truck for the transport of cocoa) or plan to make investments (e.g. fermentation facility).
- GROW introduced one international actor that promote linkages to the premium cocoa market to some of its partners. This actor has now entered into partnership with ten of GROW's partners.
- Government actors in the cocoa platform are still consolidating a unified vision for cocoa in Liberia and it is difficult at this point to gauge the likelihood of adaptation.

Challenges to adoption and adaptation. Tactics used to drive adoption and adaptation have been effective, but the sustainability of improvements introduced by GROW faces some challenges.

¹⁹ It has however not yet secured funding for the impact assessment.

For vegetables, at the level of the distributor, agro-dealers and government actors the following is noted:

- For the distributor and agro-dealers, a lack of growth in output market opportunities is felt, as it represents a constraint for the growth of the market for inputs.
- For the distributor, the expansion of its portfolio to government contracts poses a potential risk of diversion overtime to larger markets in Liberia away from smallholders as its client base.
- For agro-dealers, there is still some preference for purchasing agro-inputs from neighbouring countries. Consulted farmers and agro-dealers reported that the distributor's products are too expensive, something which may work against the adaptation of the model. In addition, sales agents experience a challenge in providing advisory services that do not necessarily result in increased sales and commissions. The turnover of sales agents who are paid on commission is reported to be frequent and requires efforts from agro-dealers to find and train new sales agents. The sales agent model has however been a success as it has increased demand for advisory services. However, given the limited number of sales agents compared to the areas that need to be covered, they are unable to meet these growing needs particularly because the activity diverts time away from their own farming activities.
- For government actors, the expectation that the duty waiver would immediately translate into a reduction in prices to smallholders may not have been realistic but may be a reason for the future non-renewal or ministerial exemption of the waiver.

For cocoa, the team notes the following challenges:

- Cooperatives still face weak technical and financial capacities which limit investments in infrastructure and technical advice to produce quality cocoa of consistent high quality, which is a requirement for the international market.
- Cooperatives lack liquidity. Prefinancing is a good model for addressing this challenge but its likelihood for adaptation is currently low given the difficulties in the fulfilment of trade agreements. This requires closer attention to the matter or finding other alternatives.
- Linked to the above, weak relations between farmers and cooperative undermine the ability of the cooperatives to aggregate produce and meet the terms and conditions of trade agreements (due to continued side selling) and jeopardise the adaptation of the model.
- Pre-fixing of prices in the agreements that are lower than market prices is acting as a disincentive against the future adaptation of the model.
- The high cost of capital hinders investments by the private sector in needed infrastructure.
- There is uncertainty by partners in investing in certification due to its cost and foreseen return on investment.
- The financial sustainability of the national cocoa platform funded by the European Union hinges on future funding. There is currently no exit strategy as to how the cocoa platform will continue once funding runs out.

3.2.3 Monitoring, learning and adaptability

This section looks at the relevance and effectiveness of the MRM system in generating data that is useful for informing about systemic change and for learning and adaptability. Although the MRM system uses DCED guidance and standards as a reference point, the evaluation was not asked to review compliance with DCED control points. However, it draws on these standards in its analysis. It should be noted that GROW updated its manual including Logframe indicators in April 2020. The evaluation uses the initial version that coincides with the period of the evaluation as its reference point and will refer to the new manual where relevant.

M&E system and data. GROW has an MRM manual, framework, plans, indicators, systems and tools for data collection but the utility of some Logframe indicators can be questioned in relation to capturing elements of systemic change and informing decision making. The programme operates with a two-tiered system. One geared towards generating Logframe indicators and one that monitors the performance of partners. These two can be complementary but are not strongly interlinked. Gender disaggregated data is generated in both systems. This has been recently complemented by qualitative studies.

The logframe follows the DCED format and output, outcome and impact definitions. This means that market system change is placed at the level of outputs rather than outcomes. In the current setup, outputs are meant to track what happens at the level of partners, outcomes what happens at the level of smallholder farmers as the ultimate beneficiaries as a direct result of interventions and impact tracks the three DCED common indicators.

Table 1 GROW Logframe indicators

Level	Logframe indicator
Impact: poverty reduction	Net additional income (USD)
	Total number of beneficiaries with increased income
	Net additional employment
Outcome: Enterprise performance	Total number of targeted beneficiaries adopting to new opportunities
	Total number of targeted beneficiaries with access to new opportunities
Output: Market system change	Value of private and public sector investment leveraged
	Total number of business innovations and regulatory reforms
	Total number of market actors

There are systems and tools in place to generate logframe data. Data collection methods are quantitative and include impact assessments and post-activity assessments. Data is regularly collected to keep track of output indicators and partners' performance. Indicators are defined. However, the team notes the following:

Output indicators

- Output indicators are meant to inform about what happened at the level of partners according to DCED standards. Current output indicators do not inform much about what partners did and what happened as a result (e.g. increased knowledge, increased sales). GROW has this information as part of its partner monitoring system but it is not reflected in the Logframe in a way that informs about partners' business performance.
- Output indicators track direct and indirect actors or activities in one indicator (e.g. investments leveraged by indirect market actors that GROW has not partnered with directly). This could be misleading, and it may claim attribution from other projects that are not linked to GROW's interventions²⁰. Should these investments be a response to or an expansion of GROW's intervention, they may indicate crowding-in in the case of investments made, but this would need to be established. DCED's recommended control point 4.2 encourages that systemic change be assessed at market system and beneficiary level. The absence of a plan to assess systemic change (recommended control point 4.1) makes it difficult to capture such change in the current Logframe and beyond even though AAER is used as reference in the MRM manual. Within the current Logframe, a differentiation of direct and indirect actors and activities could help better inform about what GROW's partners are doing (adopting and adapting) and what other actors do in response to that.
- Compiling some indicators like the number of business innovations does not inform much about the types of innovations piloted with partners. The nature of this indicator informs about what happened at the activity level, not the output level. However, the Logframe does not include this level in the current format.

Outcome indicators

- In line with DCED, the programme reports on the ultimate target group under outcomes. The evaluation team views that outcomes should reflect change that happened at the level of partners but acknowledges the consistency needed when following DCED standards.
- The team notes that the use of AAER terminology for farmers may be confusing since in the AAER framework, adoption and adaptation are meant for partners.
- While the differentiation between "access to" and "use of" is appreciated, the use of the term "opportunities" is understandable but not specific enough to be informative (e.g. how does it inform about uptake and use of inputs).

Impact indicators

- The evaluation team understands the importance of being aligned to DCED's common indicators, also given that it is a priority for Sida. However, the team questions whether net additional employment measured as full time equivalent (FTE) jobs is the most adequate way of reflecting the reality on the ground,

²⁰ This was also noted in the midterm review.

especially if gender considerations are to be accounted for. Unpaid household labour is not monetised as this is an extensive task. However, it is not established whether women have the same opportunities as men to be hired as daily labourers. In that sense, the indicator could be gender-biased and alternative means of valuing female employment could mitigate this bias.

- There is also an assumption that higher yields directly lead to income increases which may not fully hold
- While recognising DCED definitions, the evaluation wishes to question the methodological adequacy and relevance of aggregating individuals (men, women) and small firms in a single indicator.

Partner performance monitoring is extensive and done for each sector. It includes a comprehensive database that tracks key performance indicators (e.g. number of farmers trained, sales and customer data), a training data base, organisational checklists, and spot checks and assessments. Field data collection is done regularly according to seasonality. Beyond this system, partners are also ranked according to their performance in three tiers; top, modest and low. These indicators are reported to be the ones that are used to track trends and inform decision making, coupled with some post-activity assessments. Logframe indicators are mainly used to report on the programme. While the Logframe is meant to report about changes at partner level (output level in the current format), data collected at partner level is not used in Logframe indicators to inform about the performance of partners, even though it is used to inform about outreach to the ultimate target group (e.g. number of people trained).

Learning and adaptation. GROW uses its data on partner performance and feedback from the field through rapid impact studies to guide its decisions and make needed adjustments to its strategies and interventions. Logframe indicators do not strongly contribute to that process. Through regular contact with partners and seasonal contact with farmers, GROW has gathered data that has been useful to inform its discussions about the direction of the programme and the need to continue or abandon certain interventions or change course. Significant attention has been given to adjusting strategies, tactics and interventions over time depending on progress made. This includes for instance the change in the partnership approach, setting a percentage for female representation in key functions, and abandoning the output market in vegetables. Iterative learning is ensured through regular team meetings and monitoring of partners.

Overall assessment on effectiveness: GROW has been effective in piloting relevant systemic interventions in a thin market, testing the grounds and changing course to ensure interventions are feasible and have potential for success. It has developed an effective approach for the selection and retention of partners. While this is happening at the expense of attaining larger scale, the approach is justified. GROW has used tactics that are grounded in facilitation principles focusing on ownership to establish a strong basis for adoption and potential adaptation, although some challenges remain to be addressed. In the absence of support functions in the market system,

GROW engaged in a justifiable level of direct support in the form of technical assistance and financing initial costs that are strategic for the adoption of improvements introduced. Overall, partners have adopted upgrades introduced by GROW including government partners who have become open to policy visions driven by GROW. A few of GROW's partners have adapted improvements and there is preliminary indication that some upgrades are being considered for adaptation. Programme organisation and management in the post-Ebola period have been adequate for ensuring delivery of results. However, continued uncertainties about the timeframe of the programme prompted more focus on shorter term visions and results. GROW has a well-established two-tiered MRM system, one part tracking Logframe indicators including DCED common indicators, and the other tracking partner performance. But both parts are not strongly linked in a manner where Logframe indicators inform about partner performance. A number of Logframe indicators are not sufficiently specific or informative. GROW mainly relies on the collection of quantitative data. Its MRM system does not strongly include the use of qualitative approaches and methods to assess systemic change within or beyond the Logframe. Data on partner performance and rapid post-activity monitoring have been most helpful in informing decision making. Gender-disaggregated data has also been used to inform decisions for promoting the participation of women.

3.3 IMPACT

EQ4. What change happened in the wider market system?

EQ 5. What change did the project bring about to smallholders?

3.3.1 Change in wider market system

This section strives to look at how actors in the wider market, namely competitors/peers and non-competitors reacted to the systemic interventions pursued by GROW partners. In the language of the AAER framework, it assesses the Expand and Respond dimensions. As noted, it was not possible for the evaluation team to undertake extensive field visits. Therefore, the findings below are based on a limited number of interviews with peers and observed changes in the behaviour of other market actors as reported by GROW partners and other consulted stakeholders.

Crowding-in of competitors. Given that interventions started to operate systematically since 2018, and that the programme strategy has been focused on the Adopt dimension, it is premature to expect that change at the level of partners has become known by competitors to drive crowding-in. The two peers that the team met with did not know what other competitors are doing.

However, there are indications of potential for crowding-in in the cocoa sector namely in relation to the following:

- The top performing exporter succeeded in accessing the premium market and this may have influence on competitors and members of the export association who started expressing interest in accessing this market.
- The increase in number of commercial farms, cooperatives and licensed buying companies seeking partnership with GROW indicates an interest in the improvements introduced by GROW.
- Farmers interviewed reported that other farmers, not members of cooperatives supported by GROW, were applying GAP like pruning and post-harvest handling that they learned from them. This could indicate a wider response of improvements introduced by GROW, even though other actors also provide GAP training.

Response of non-competing market actors. In line with crowding-in, it is premature to expect a response from wider market actors to the improvements introduced by GROW. There is still very little response, especially when support functions are not established. However, the following indicative and initial responses can be noted:

- The typology and number of members of the technical committee and of the cocoa platform are beginning to shift with the addition of private sector actors. A commercial farm was included in the technical committee. The cocoa platform now includes the national exporters association. According to MoA, there are plans to bring in representatives of the farmers' association and the bankers' association.
- There has been increased awareness of Liberia as a potential source of quality cocoa. This has attracted a range of international buyers to investigate possibilities. International buyers in the premium cocoa market are mainly interested in certified cocoa or fine flavoured cocoa. Interviewed international actors underline the importance of national stakeholders in the cocoa to be aware of the relevance and importance of the story behind the cocoa for these markets, of organic certification or fair trade, and of the social and environmental responsibility that goes with it including the women's economic empowerment.

3.3.2 Change for smallholder farmers

This section reports on the impact of GROW on smallholder farmers in terms of:

- Access to better products, services and opportunities
- Performance and capacity
- Change for women

Change in access to products/services/opportunities. Farmers report better access to agro-inputs, services and information but the availability of inputs is hampered by affordability. The most significant change for farmers is the new information that farmers received through agro-advisory services provided by agro-dealers and through GAP training provided by VCs at community level. In addition, farmers met reported a greater availability of agro-inputs but that costs are still high. It should be noted however that this may result from farmers expecting to receive seeds and other agro-inputs for free from donors/NGOs. In fact, some farmers met asked the team for these products. Furthermore, it was observed that some owners of agro-dealer businesses

visited by the evaluators were away to procure cheap agro-inputs from neighbouring countries, rather than to rely on domestically procured inputs. In terms of opportunities, pre-finance agreements were reported to be helpful for financing part of production and opening up new market opportunities, and improvements like setting up centralised fermentation and drying services in some cooperatives.

Change in performance and capacity. The programme has contributed to improving the technical capacity of farmers, generating higher yields and earnings. The new knowledge gained through advisory services and GAP training was to a large extent practised by vegetables and cocoa farmers. GROW reports for instance that 82% of vegetables farmers trained successfully apply practices learned. Farmers interviewed confirmed that they have benefited from training on the proper use of fertilisers, are applying GAP and are able to identify pests and diseases. According to farmers met and to GROW reports, this change in practices resulted in an increase in quality, yields and earnings per acre compared to other farmers that do not apply such practices.

Farmers also gained better access to markets through cooperatives and trade agreements. However, relations between smallholders and cooperatives are not as strong as initially expected. Side selling is still prevalent and not addressed by incentives and efforts to strengthen cooperatives to provide services and build closer relations with their members.

Change for women. Interviews did not reveal a gender differentiation in results achieved for farmers. Both female and male farmers improved their knowledge and technical know-how. GROW's studies showed that this has contributed to improved household incomes. Efforts were made to ensure that women train women through female VCs and sales agents. In cocoa, fermentation and drying is a post-harvesting function carried out by women. According to interviews, this task remains a main challenge for improving the quality of Liberian cocoa, underlining the continued need to strengthen technical capacity of women in that regard.

Overall assessment on impact: The programme started to operate systematically since 2018 and has been significantly focused on driving adoption of improvements introduced. In this context, it is premature to expect that change at the level of partners has become known by competitors to drive crowding-in and a wider response in the market system, especially when support functions are lagging. There are however some signals that indicate potential for crowding-in and response particularly in the cocoa sector. Farmers have benefitted from GROW's contribution to improving access to products, services and information, which resulted in business performance. The most significant change for farmers is knowledge gained through agro-advisory services and GAP training, which translated into higher yields and earnings per acre. Challenges remain however. These include the affordability of agro-inputs, incentives promoting the purchase of agro-inputs in the domestic market, and the increase of capacities in post-harvest handling of cocoa, a task undertaken by women and which is key to ensuring quality.

4 Evaluative Conclusions

This chapter summarises key conclusions. These are presented by evaluation criteria responding to the five evaluation questions agreed upon during the inception phase.

Relevance	EQ 1. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of its target group and to Sida strategies?
Effectiveness and Sustainability	EQ 2. To what extent did the project contribute to market system change? If so, how and for whom? If not, why not? EQ3. How well did the M&E system deliver robust and useful information to assess progress towards the achievement of outcomes and to generate learning as a basis for adapting the project during implementation?
Impact	EQ4. What change happened in the wider market system? EQ 5. What change did the project bring about to smallholders?

Relevance. GROW is aligned to Sida's strategy for development cooperation with Liberia 2016-2020 and priorities in terms of gender considerations. Gender equality has been more intensely and systematically integrated since the consolidation of interventions in 2018. While environment is recognised to be important, attention to deforestation risks linked to cocoa development has come in late in the programme. There are plans set in motion to address this issue, but this is not yet fully in place. Interventions and the selection of value chains are also aligned to national strategies and plans, namely LASIP II, PADP and Liberia's 2030 vision. The development of market system analyses included consultations with private and public sector representatives as well as farmers. This contributed to defining market constraints facing the private sector and smallholder farmers and shaping interventions that address a set of these constraints that the programme deemed had a higher potential for success in the context of the market in Liberia.

Effectiveness and sustainability. GROW has been effective in piloting systemic interventions in a thin market, testing the grounds and changing course to what is feasible and has the potential for success. Part of its learning and adaptability can also be seen in its dynamic approach in the selection and retention of partners. While this affects achieving larger scale, the evaluation team considers this a realistic approach. GROW has focused on tactics that encourage partner ownership to establish a strong

basis for adoption and potential adaptation. Although some challenges remain to be addressed, overall, partners have adopted upgrades introduced by GROW. A few of GROW's partners have also adapted improvements. There is preliminary indication that some partners are considering adapting upgrades. In terms of programme organisation and management, these are seen to be adequate for ensuring delivery of results. However, continued uncertainties about the timeframe of the programme prompted more focus on a shorter-term vision of what can be done. GROW has a well-established MRM system, data collection methods and tools that ensure gender-disaggregation of the target population. Part of this data, particularly those linked to partner performance, is used to inform decision making. Logframe indicators are mainly used for reporting purposes. The Logframe includes DCED common indicators at impact level. However, indicators at other levels are not specific enough to be informative of change in the behaviour of targeted market actors. Moreover, the MRM system does not currently differentiate between targeted and non-targeted market actors to reflect any manifestation of systemic change using the AAER logic that is described in the MRM manual. A plan for assessing systemic change using qualitative methods to capture change in the behaviour of market actors is yet to see the light.

Impact. In the context of a delayed start-up and various short-term extensions, efforts have been mainly invested in driving adoption of the improvements introduced by GROW. No strategy for stimulating crowding-in was envisaged. It is premature to expect that change at the level of partners has become known by market actors in the wider market system to drive crowding-in and a wider response in the market system, especially when support functions are lagging. There are however indications of potential for crowding-in and response, particularly in the cocoa sector. In terms of impact on smallholder, there is evidence of positive impact of improved access to agro-inputs, services and information on the performance of smallholder vegetable and cocoa farmers. A key driver for this change is knowledge gained and practised as a result of agro-advisory services and GAP training, which translated into higher yields and earnings per acre. Challenges remain however in terms of affordability of agro-inputs in domestic markets and the qualification of capacities in post-harvest handling, a task undertaken by women, as key for ensuring cocoa quality in line with the vision that GROW is promoting in terms of premium cocoa exports.

5 Recommendations

This chapter builds on findings and conclusions to present key recommendations that would inform the design of Phase II. It is divided into recommendation during the extension phase in preparation for the design phase, and recommendations for the design phase.

During the extension phase and in preparation for the design phase, recommendations are the following:

Intended for	#	
GROW II as legal entity		
Sida	1	Ensure that the “transfer” of local staff from GROW to a newly created entity is accompanied by a handing-over of legal ownership of procedures, manuals, systems, tools and branding material put in place by Adam Smith International for GROW I to the legal entity of GROW II, and if possible of other assets like software, equipment and vehicles.
Vegetables sector		
GROW	2	Conduct an assessment of the smallholder market for agro-inputs including analyses of trends, potential growth, strengths and weaknesses to generate interest and help potential entrants assess the business case for investing in the role of agro-input distributor for smallholder customers.
Cocoa sector		
GROW	3	Prioritise the fulfilment of existing trade agreements for the export of quality cocoa by facilitating dialogue between buyers, cooperatives and farmer representatives to jointly identify constraints and find ways of addressing them including incentives for farmers to sell to cooperatives.
GROW	4	Capitalise on the already established linkage with an interested international investor/buyer to build a business case for the relevance of positioning Liberia in the premium cocoa market.

In the design phase, the team proposes the following recommendations to Sida as the party leading and commissioning the design of GROW II, noting that these recommendations are also intended for the design team. In the future implementation phase, MRM and sector recommendations would be relevant for both Sida and GROW II:

Intended for	#	
GROW II as legal entity		
Sida	5	Ensure that adequate international technical assistance is integrated into the design of GROW II to accompany the launch of the newly formed entity and guide strategic choices.
Monitoring, evaluation and learning		
Sida (design team)	6	Ensure that the MRM framework and Logframe indicators are revised to be more informative for decision making and specific about what change is intended, for whom and at what level of the result chain, and that a plan with qualitative methods for assessing systemic change within the Logframe indicators or beyond them is developed.
Vegetables sector		
Sida (design team)	7	Continue to work with the agro-input distribution model and focus on attracting new entrants to the agro-input distributor role.
Sida (design team)	8	Prioritise renewing interventions to address the systemic dynamics that constrain the output market system in competing with imported vegetables by introducing new business models that disrupt the status quo and offer attractive alternative for selling farmers' produce.
Cocoa sector		
Sida (design team)	9	Continue to promote premium cocoa through facilitating market linkages and incentives for actors to embed services in backward linkages, building relations between exporters and cooperatives, and cooperatives and their members, while focusing on certification with higher potential for larger volume of quality/premium cocoa, and making the case to exporters and the Government of Liberia.
Sida (design team)	10	Ensure that environmental considerations are integrated particularly deforestation risk assessments and monitoring, and a stronger orientation for organic and socially responsible production.
Sida (design team)	11	Ensure the programme considers interventions that explore opportunities for diversification to introduce additional income generating activities and better manage risks.
Sida (design team)	12	Ensure that interventions keep focusing on strengthening the institutional capacities of cooperatives to reinforce their role as key actors in the market system.
Sida (design team)	13	Ensure that considerations to further qualify the technical capacities of women in post-harvesting functions that are crucial for the quality of cocoa are strengthened.

Annex 1 - Terms of Reference



Terms of Reference for a Decentralised Evaluation of GROW Liberia, phase 1 – a Swedish-funded Market Systems Development project in agricultural value chains in Liberia 2013-2020

Date: 10 December 2019

1. General information

1.1 Introduction

Sweden is one of the bilateral donor countries in Liberia and is working for “Better opportunities and tools to enable poor people to improve their living conditions” and by the end of the current strategy period “improved conditions for inclusive and sustainable economic development, with focus on small-scale and sustainable farming” should be achieved. Agriculture is the sector that employs the largest share of the population, figures range between 50-70 percent, and they are primarily engaged subsistence farming. According to the World Bank, though agriculture and fisheries represent a declining share of Liberia’s GDP, 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. In order to create jobs and generate more income for people living in poverty, including smallholders, the Embassy has commissioned Adam Smith International to implement a Market Systems Development project that targets or has targeted several of these agricultural sub-sectors.

1.2 Evaluation rationale

The Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia wishes to undertake a decentralised end-of-programme evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness and potential sustainability of GROW interventions and formulate recommendations as an input to upcoming preparations of a new phase of the programme. It is in the strategic interest of the Embassy for an external and independent evaluation of the programme to provide recommendations for future approaches, organisational structure, interventions and sector selection to support inclusive and sustainable economic GROWth and development in Liberia, focussing on agricultural value chains.

1.3 Evaluation object: Project to be evaluated

The evaluation object is GROW Liberia and the geographical scope is the Republic of Liberia. In practice, the project activities have been focussed on the Counties of Lofa, Nimba, Bong, Marghibi and Montserrado.

GROW (formerly known as “Support to the Development of Markets and Value Chains in Agriculture in Liberia, 2013 - 2018”) is a Swedish-funded Market Systems Development Programme focused on

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economic GROWth and income gain within Liberia's agriculture sector. The contract for GROW was awarded in 2012 and is delivered through commercial supplier Adam Smith International.

GROW mobilised in 2013 and is anticipated to come to a close in April 2020. In March 2018 Sida granted a no-cost extension, which extended the project from December 31 2018 to December 31, 2019. In April 2019 Sida granted a no-cost extension until April 2020, and in September 2019 extended GROW's contract period until June 30 2020 and increased the budget with a 10% top-up fund to maximise impact and returns.

Full implementation has been running over 6 years. The beginning of GROW followed the first term of government after the end of the civil war and Liberia's economic recovery. During the implementation phase the Ebola epidemic also took hold. While initially the team only looked at three markets (oil palm, rubber and vegetables), when GROW reengaged after Ebola, cocoa was added, along with agro-processing. A mid-term evaluation was carried out in May 2017. In programme Years 4 to 6, GROW refined its sector selection and interventions which has significantly increased reported results. By the end of December 2018, 17,000 farming households have benefitted through interventions supported by GROW with total increased net income of USD 4.4M. A majority of programme impact and systemic change has come from cocoa and vegetable sectors from 2017 to date. By April 2020, 25,000 households are expected to benefit from the intervention and a total increase in their income is estimated to USD 12.2M. The target group is smallholder farmers with a specific focus on women and youth but the project works along the whole value chains according to the MSD approach which implies that the actors that are primarily engaged are MSMEs, cooperatives and government entities.

The strategic framework provides GROW with a consistent development rationale and theory of change which informs all programme analysis, action, management and learning. It reinforces the ambition to deliver systemic change that tackles the underlying causes of underperformance, rather than dealing with their symptoms, while also highlighting our dual objectives of pro-poor GROWth and peace building. Early programme research explored Liberia's history of instability, and its current state today, identifying a range of Stability drivers. These were then evolved into a Stability Framework documented in Appendix 7a of the GROW Programme Document 2014-2018 and from which the development programmes theory of change and innovative pro-poor, pro-stability approach which will form the cornerstone of GROW's vision and mode of operations.

The theory of change is at the heart of the programme and is applied in each sector. It is based on the following logic:

- » **Conventional M4P Strategic Framework:** *Interventions*, which are facilitative or catalytic activities and inputs from the programme, lead to *systemic changes* in market systems (such as changes in information, services, rules, linkages) resulting in better functioning markets, improved policies and increased market system capacity. Better functioning markets and increased capacity leads to enhanced *GROWth and access* for poor men and women which in turn leads to *poverty reduction*.
- » **Integrating Stability into the Strategic Framework:** *Interventions*, which are activities and inputs that integrate an understanding of the underlying drivers of conflict, stimulate sustainable changes in market systems that increase GROWth and opportunities for at-risk groups, thereby raising the opportunity cost for engaging in violence and conflict. This leads to enhanced *socially inclusive GROWth* which in turn leads to greater *peace and stability*.

The total budgeted amount is SEK 155.1M which cover fees, reimbursable costs and an intervention fund. To date, SEK 147.4M of this has been disbursed. In addition, the Embassy has contracted FCG

Sweden for monitoring consultancy services delivered by Nathan at a total contract amount of SEK 2.1M, of which SEK 1.6M has been spent. Nathan also did the 2017 mid-term review referred to above.

For further information, the project proposal is attached as Annex D.

The intervention logic or theory of change of the project shall be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

2. The assignment

2.1 Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users

The purpose or intended use of the evaluation is to provide the Embassy, Sida and their partners an understanding of what has been achieved while also informing design of a follow-up phase of the programme with recommendations and inputs for the next phase of GROW Liberia.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia, Liberia, the Ministry of Agriculture and Adam Smith International.

The evaluation is to be designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users and tenderers shall elaborate in the tender how this will be ensured during the evaluation process. Sida should be kept informed. The final report will be shared with other stakeholders in the Liberian agricultural sector.

During the inception phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

2.2 Evaluation scope

The evaluation is expected to build from the mid-term review. The evaluation will assess the programme design and delivery of outputs, outcome, and impact. It will examine the overall programme management and monitoring and evaluation system. The review will evaluate the assumptions of the current GROW log frame and test the Theory of Change based on programme learning and results.

It should encompass a literature review, interviews with the GROW team, as well as Sida, and extensive field interviews with partners (such as agro-input dealers and cocoa cooperatives) and other market actors such as village coordinators (cocoa), sales agents (vegetables) and target beneficiaries.

The evaluation should consider the challenges of operating in the Liberian context with a difficult operating environment, weak private sector, information and trust challenges in the value chain, as well as widespread failures in public service provision.

It should culminate in a series of recommendations for sector, design, and management that can be brought forth for a second phase of the program.

If needed, the scope of the evaluation may be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

2.3 Evaluation objective: Criteria and questions

The objective of this evaluation is to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of GROW Liberia and formulate recommendations as an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase of the project.

The evaluation questions are:

Relevance

- To which extent has the project conformed to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries and donor policies?

Effectiveness

- To which extent have the project contributed to intended outcomes? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Has the M&E system delivered robust and useful information that could be used to assess progress towards outcomes and contribute to learning?
- To what extent has lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust project/programme implementation?

Impact

- What is the overall impact of the project/programme in terms of direct or indirect, negative and positive results?
- Has the project contributed to poverty reduction? How?

Sustainability

- Is it likely that the benefits (outcomes) of the project are sustainable?

Questions are expected to be developed in the tender by the tenderer and further developed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

2.4 Evaluation approach and methods

It is expected that the evaluator describes and justifies an appropriate evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection in the tender. The evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report.

Limitations to the chosen approach/methodology and methods shall be made explicit by the evaluator and the consequences of these limitations discussed in the tender. The evaluator shall to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address them. A clear distinction is to be made between evaluation approach/methodology and methods.

A *gender responsive* approach/methodology, methods, tools and data analysis techniques should be used.

Sida's approach to evaluation is *utilization-focused*, which means the evaluator should facilitate the *entire evaluation process* with careful consideration of how everything that is done will affect the use of the evaluation. It is therefore expected that the evaluators, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) methodology and methods for

data collection that create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, evaluators should ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

2.5 Organisation of evaluation management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia. The intended users are the Embassy, Sida, the Liberian Ministry of Agriculture and Adam Smith International. The intended users of the evaluation form a steering group, which has contributed to and agreed on the ToR for this evaluation. The steering group is a decision-making body. It will approve the inception report and the final report of the evaluation. The steering group will participate in the start-up meeting of the evaluation, as well as in the debriefing/validation workshop where preliminary findings and conclusions are discussed.

2.6 Evaluation quality

All Sida's evaluations shall conform to OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation¹. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation². The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

2.7 Time schedule and deliverables

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the inception report. The evaluation shall be carried out 27 January – 10 April 2020. The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase.

The table below lists key deliverables for the evaluation process. Alternative deadlines for deliverables may be suggested by the consultant and negotiated during the inception phase.

Deliverables	Participants	Deadlines
1. Start-up meeting at the Embassy of Sweden/Skype	Embassy of Sweden, Ministry of Agriculture, ASI, evaluators	27 January 2020
2. Draft inception report		Tentative 31 January 2020
3. Inception meeting Embassy of Sweden	Embassy of Sweden, Ministry of Agriculture, ASI, evaluators	Tentative 17 February 2020
4. Comments from intended users to evaluators (alternatively these may be sent to evaluators ahead of the inception meeting)		Tentative 12 February 2020

¹ DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, OECD, 2010.

² Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.

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5. Data collection, analysis, report writing and quality assurance	Evaluators	17 February – 6 March 2020
6. Debriefing/validation workshop (meeting)	Embassy of Sweden, Ministry of Agriculture, ASI, evaluators	6 March 2020
7. Draft evaluation report		Tentative 20 March 2020
8. Comments from intended users to evaluators		Tentative 27 March 2020
9. Final evaluation report		10 April 2020

The inception report will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by the Embassy before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. The inception report should be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, present the evaluation approach/methodology (including how a utilization-focused and gender responsive approach will be ensured), methods for data collection and analysis as well as the full evaluation design. A clear distinction between the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. A specific time and work plan, including number of hours/working days for each team member, for the remainder of the evaluation should be presented. The time plan shall allow space for reflection and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

The final report shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final report should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report Template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages. The evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection used shall be clearly described and explained in detail and a clear distinction between the two shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. Findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations should reflect a gender analysis/an analysis of identified and relevant cross-cutting issues. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions. Recommendations should be specific, directed to relevant stakeholders and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term. The report should be no more than 35 pages excluding annexes (including Terms of Reference and Inception Report). The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation³.

The evaluator shall, upon approval of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report for decentralised evaluations and submit it to Nordic Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to sida@nordicmorning.com, always with a copy to the responsible Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's Evaluation Unit (evaluation@sida.se). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field. The following information must always be included in the order to Nordic Morning:

1. The name of the consulting company.
2. The full evaluation title.

³ Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014

3. The invoice reference "ZZ980601".
4. Type of allocation "sakanslag".
5. Type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas.

2.8 Evaluation team qualification

In addition to the qualifications already stated in the framework agreement for evaluation services, the evaluation team shall include the following competencies: high level of Market Systems Development competence, competence in agriculture sector reform, including agro-inputs, rubber and cocoa, as well as thorough and updated knowledge about the Liberian context.

It is desirable that the evaluation team includes the following competencies: Monitoring and Results Measurement expertise inline with DCED standards.

A CV for each team member shall be included in the call-off response. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience.

It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. It is highly recommended that local consultants are included in the team if appropriate.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

2.9 Financial and human resources

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is SEK 1,200,000.

The contact person at the Swedish Embassy is Kaspar Nilsen, Programme Manager – Specialist in Market Development, Agriculture and Rural Development. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant documentation will be provided by Winifred Valentine, Programme Administrator at the Swedish Embassy.

Contact details to intended users (cooperation partners, Swedish Embassies, other donors etc.) will be provided by Kaspar Nilsen, Swedish Embassy.

The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics like requesting meetings, booking interviews, preparing the visit to Liberia including arranging accommodation, transport, visas including any necessary security arrangements.

3. Annexes

Annex A: List of key documentation

[Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Liberia, 2016-2020](#)

Terms of Reference for GROW Liberia

Tender Adam Smith International

Latest Annual report

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Latest Conclusion on Performance

Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. project or programme)	
Title of the evaluation object	Markets & Value Chains in Agriculture Liberia
ID no. in PLANIt	52090011
Dox no./Archive case no.	UF2013/67202
Activity period (if applicable)	01/03/2013 – 30/04/2020
Agreed budget (if applicable)	SEK 155,100,000
Main sector	Market development
Name and type of implementing organisation	Adam Smith International, consultancy firm
Aid type	Project
Swedish strategy	Liberia

Information on the evaluation assignment	
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	Embassy of Sweden, Monrovia
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Kaspar Nilsen
Timing of evaluation (mid-term, end-of-programme, ex-post or other)	End-of-programme
ID no. in PLANIt (if other than above).	

Annex C: Decentralised evaluation report template

Annex D : Project/Programme document

Annex 2 - Inception report



Evaluation of GROW Liberia, Phase I- a Swedish funded market system development project in agricultural value chains in Liberia, 2013-2020

FINAL INCEPTION REPORT

07 October 2020

Kimiko Hibri Pedersen

Eric Derks

Hubert Cathala

William Massaboi

Ambrose Forpoh

Daniel Ticehurst

NIRAS Sweden AB

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAER	Adapt, adopt, expand and respond
DCED	Donor committee for enterprise development
EQ	Evaluation question
FGD	Focus group discussion
KII	Key informant interview
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
M4P	Making markets work for the poor
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MSD	Market system development
MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprises
OECD/DAC	Organisation for economic cooperation and development/Development assistance committee
RSS	Ribbed smoked sheet
SEK	Swedish Kroner
SSI	Semi structured interview
TOR	Terms of Reference
USA	United States of America
USAID	United states agency for international development

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1. Introduction

This inception report is written at a time when the covid-19 pandemic is still prevalent. It responds to comments to the draft inception report submitted on March 7, 2020 after which the evaluation was put on hold until August. The evaluation resumed in September 2020 with a kick-off meeting held with Sida and GROW on September 8, 2020 followed by inception meetings held with the GROW team on September 17 and 29, 2020. The report integrated feedback from these meetings.

The situation of the covid-19 pandemic required a change in approach to complete the evaluation in the best possible way that also ensures the safety of consultants. This explains why the current format of the evaluation is one that is a mix of remote data collection undertaken by the international team coupled with in-country data collection by the local team, which is now possible with the lifting of the emergency state in Liberia.

The final inception report starts by assessing the scope of the evaluation (section 2), the evaluability of evaluation questions, framing the evaluative framework and theory of change (ToC) of the project (section 3), proposed methodology and methods that are adapted to semi-remote data collection methods (section 4), and other key issues that need to be addressed (section 5).

2. Assessment of the scope of the evaluation

2.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

The evaluation of GROW phase I (referred to as GROW) was commissioned at a time the project was close to its end. The purpose of the evaluation as noted in the terms of reference (ToR in Annex 1) is:

'to provide the Embassy, Sida, and their partners [with] an understanding of what has been achieved while also informing design of a follow-up phase of the programme with recommendations and input for the next phase of GROW Liberia.'

According to the Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia (hereafter the Embassy), the decision for the continuation of the project is already taken. As such, the evaluation is not to contribute to providing input that affects this decision. The kick-off meetings held with end users namely the Embassy, the GROW team and the Ministry of the Agriculture (MoA) on January 29, 2020 and subsequently on September 8, 2020 emphasised the formative aspect of the evaluation in view of designing the next phase of this market system development (MSD) project. The first meeting had noted a summative dimension in relation to i) systemic change that happened in the market, but also with regard to ii) the validation of reported poverty reduction results¹. In the second meeting, it was agreed that focus should be on systemic change and the journey towards it in the two value chains GROW intends to pursue in phase 2, namely cocoa and vegetables. Therefore, the objective of the evaluation is seen to be twofold:

- To assess results achieved in the form of systemic change in the markets of the two value chains that will be maintained in phase 2 and validation of reported results in relation to poverty reduction.
- To provide recommendations based on findings as input for the preparation of the upcoming phase.

2.2 EVALUATION PERIOD

The project life of GROW initially covered the period 2013 to 2018 and was later extended to end in June 2020. During the initial kick-off phase of the evaluation (February 2020), an extension of 15-months (going potentially up to 24-months if certain conditions are met) was granted to ensure a smooth transition and handover to the second phase. This has led to the postponement of the planned field visit from March to May to October due to the covid-19 pandemic but did not affect the period covered by the evaluation.

The start-up of the project coincided with the outbreak of the Ebola crisis that paralysed the country. Activities were on stand-still until 2016 where they slowly kicked off again. In 2017, a midterm review was carried out and helped shape the portfolio of activities of GROW as we know it today. The review provided rich findings and recommendations that the current evaluation intends to build on. In this context and in agreement with the Embassy, the GROW team and MoA, the evaluation shall cover the implementation period starting from 2017, focusing on 2018 and 2019 and going up to March 2020. It will not include activities under the extension granted in February 2020. Nevertheless, key

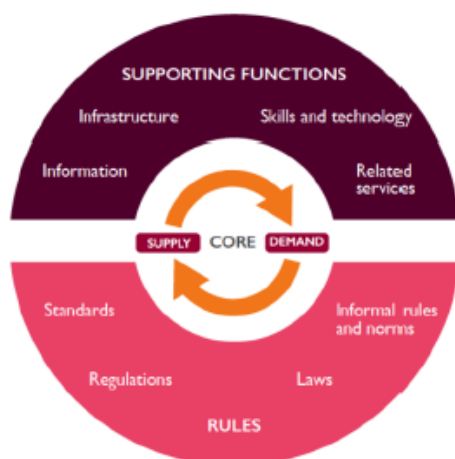
¹ Impact indicators are the common indicators used by the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) standards (net change in income and job creation).

aspects that are relevant to understanding the journey that GROW has undergone, notably the selection of value chains and design of interventions which preceded 2017, will be looked at.

2.3 THE MARKET SYSTEM AS KEY PARAMETER

The kick-off and inception meetings of the evaluation underlined that the market system is the unit of analysis of interest to the Embassy and GROW. As depicted in the chart below, the market system of a given product/service comprises three core dimensions², namely:

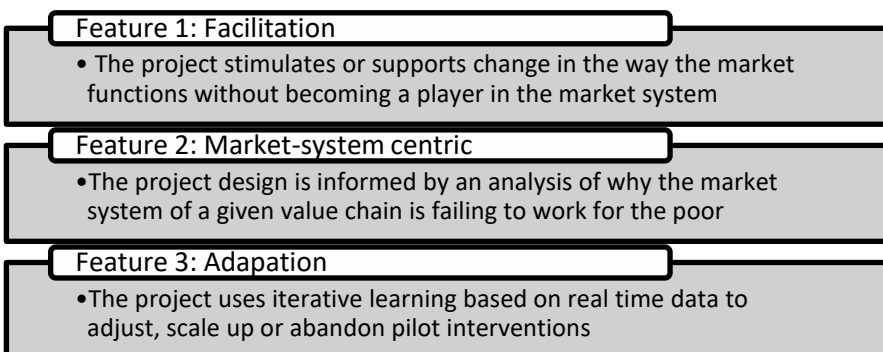
Figure 1: The Market System



- The core value chain where the exchange of goods and services takes place;
- Support functions that provide structures or services that affect the performance of the core value chain; and
- Rules and regulations that govern and affect a given value chain.

Compared to traditional value chain development, three key features characterise working with an MSD approach³, namely:

Figure 2: Key features of MSD projects



As GROW works with an MSD approach in selected agricultural value chains, also known as Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P), it has a facilitative role as underlined in its ToR: “A facilitator to design and implement a programme for support to the development of markets and value chains in agriculture in Liberia” (2012). This means that GROW does not deliver activities directly to small-holder farmers. Rather it works with other market actors to pilot interventions aimed at improving

² The Springfield Centre (2015): The Operational Guide for the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) Approach, 2nd edition funded by SDC & DFID

³ Sida (2018): Evaluation of the market systems development approach, Lessons for expanded use and adaptive management at Sida, Volume I: Evaluation report

the way the market system works for the benefit of smallholders. GROW therefore works directly with market actors such as the private sector to pilot interventions for instance with micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that operate as suppliers of inputs to smallholders in the core value chain or those who offer them other support services (e.g. business advice), and government to influence rules and regulations. The ambition is to stimulate change in behaviour, relationships and/or decisions among these market actors in the hope that this change becomes integrated into the business models of targeted market actors/business partners and act as an inspiration for others to follow suit, thereby affecting how the market works.

In line with the priorities expressed by the Embassy and GROW for working with MSD, the scope of the evaluation will be defined by the market system of the two selected value chains. The evaluation will look at the core value chain as one dimension and go beyond to also cover the two other dimensions of the market system.

2.4 TARGET GROUP

The ToR state that the target group of GROW is “*smallholder farmers with a specific focus on women and youth*”. In practice, the evaluation team was informed that women and youth are not the focus of the programme. However, GROW adapted where possible to account for gender considerations.

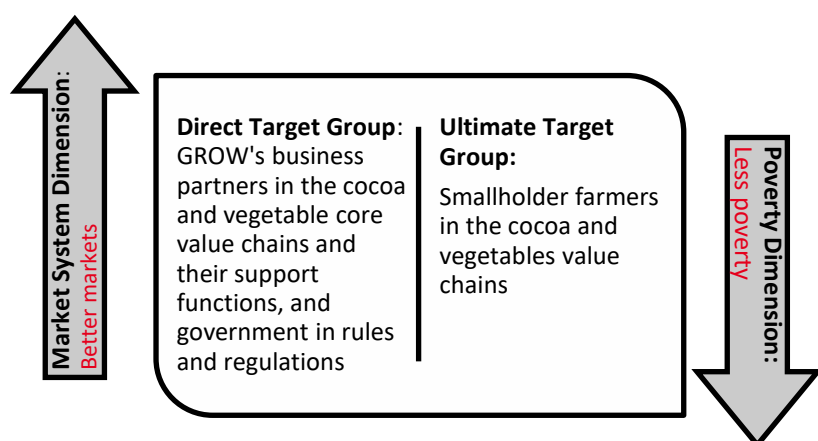
While GROW ultimately strives to improve the opportunities of smallholders to improve their living conditions, its facilitative role means that interventions do not directly support them. Rather, GROW collaborates directly with a variety of stakeholders in the market system, such as companies and cooperatives, to instigate change in their behaviour for the benefit of smallholder farmers. As specified in the ToR, “*actors that are primarily engaged are MSMEs, cooperatives and government entities*”. This defines the systemic rationale of GROW’s positioning and approach. The evaluation therefore differentiates between two categories of target groups⁴:

- **Direct target group:** This covers targeted market actors, including businesses and structures in support functions and the core value chain, as well as government structures as key actors influencing and implementing rules and regulation. GROW works directly with these actors to stimulate change in the way the market system works for smallholder farmers (market system dimension). We note that the inception report uses the terms targeted market actors and business partners interchangeably.
- **Ultimate target group:** This comprises smallholder farmers as the clients of GROW’s business partners, whose living conditions the project seeks to ultimately improve (poverty dimension).

From a gender perspective, the evaluation team deems it would be important to consider the perspectives of and change that happened to women at the level of the direct target group (e.g. female cooperatives) and in smallholder communities at the level of the ultimate target group where possible, since female-headed smallholder businesses are not widespread in the local context:

⁴ Source: adapted from: <https://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/DCEDIndicatorHarmonizationApr16.pdf>

Figure 3: GROW target group



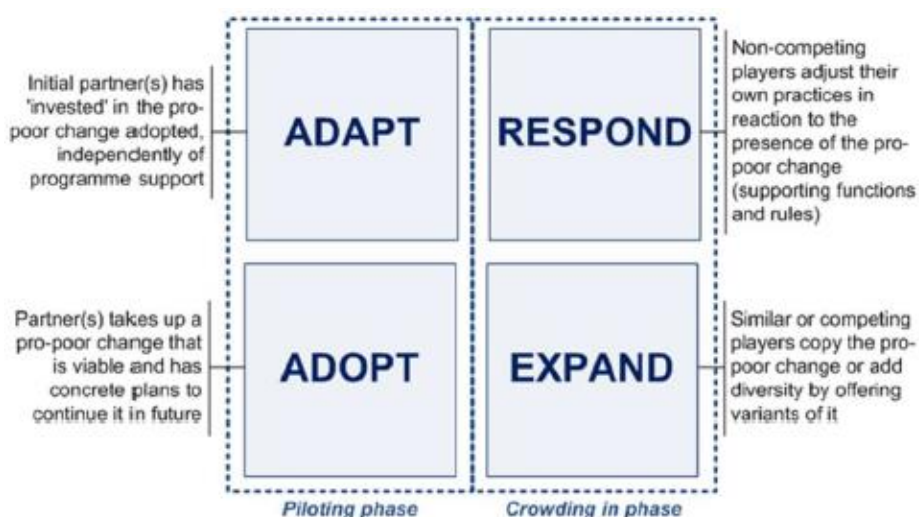
For the direct target group as businesses directly targeted by GROW, focus on women will look at female cooperatives and female-led businesses that GROW has engaged with. The evaluation will examine how their business income was affected by the project and whether other results were attained.

For the ultimate target group as female-headed smallholder farming businesses in cocoa and vegetables that are expected to experience better enterprise income⁵.

2.5 FOCUS ON SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Given that GROW is an MSD project, and in line with priorities expressed during kick off and inception meetings by Sida and GROW, the evaluation will focus on assessing systemic change. This is primarily a result of the wish to continue working with an MSD approach in the second phase and the acknowledgement that the project did not systematically track such change as also noted in the midterm review of 2017. For that reason, and as agreed with the Embassy and GROW, the evaluation will use the Adopt, Adapt, Expand and Respond (AAER) systemic change framework⁶ in line with the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development's (DCED) implementation guidelines for assessing systemic change at outcome and impact levels.

Figure 4: AAER Systemic Change Framework



⁵ The evaluation team notes that an increase in business income does not necessarily lead to an increase in household income of smallholders. Given the complexity of capturing this type of change within the scope of the evaluation, the evaluation will limit its analysis to smallholder business income.

⁶ The Springfield Centre (2014): Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: a framework for managing and measuring systemic change processes, Briefing paper.

The AAER framework will be integrated into the reconstructed theory of change of GROW to reflect systemic change at outcome and impact levels as depicted in section 3.2.

While focus is on capturing systemic change (market system dimension), the evaluation shall also look at results achieved for the ultimate target group in terms of poverty reduction (poverty dimension). GROW reports on DCED’s common impact indicators such as net attributable income change and full-time equivalent jobs created (total, women). The evaluation will analyse this secondary data generated by the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system and to the extent possible validate during interviews reported results on improved income for smallholder businesses and job creation.

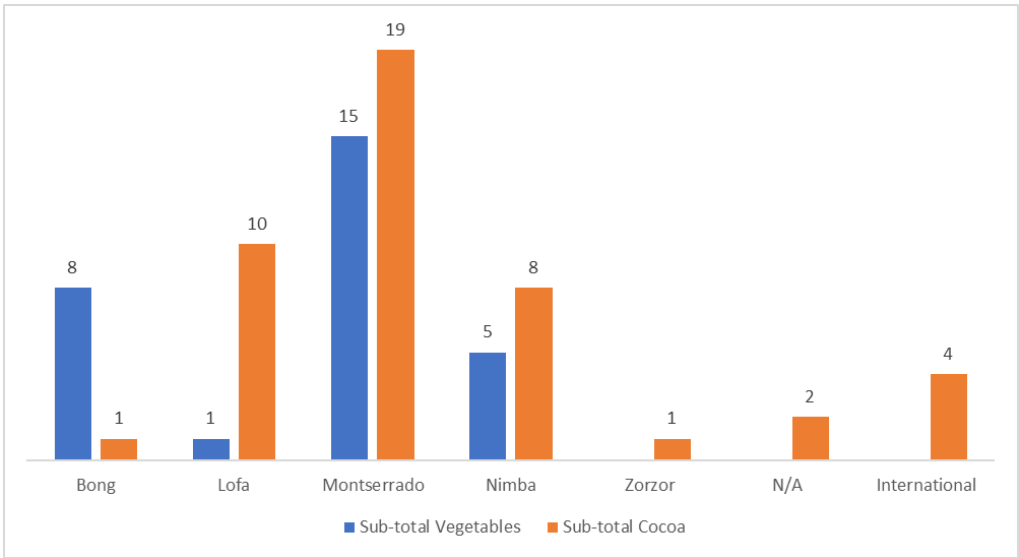
It is worth noting that the initial kick-off meeting revealed that peace and stability considerations are no longer a priority and goal for GROW. In agreement with end users, these considerations will not be examined.

2.6 OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDERS AND GEOGRAPHIC OUTREACH

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of GROW’s geographic outreach in the two selected value chains, namely cocoa and vegetables. Within the time constraints of the evaluation, this section is intended to serve as a basis for the selection of field sites according to a set of criteria including the density of stakeholders within a given area (see section 4.2).

GROW works with variety of market actors, a total of 74 partners; 70 are in based in Liberia⁷, of whom 39% are in Monrovia. Four are international buyers GROW collaborates with in the cocoa sector. Most partners operate in the cocoa sector (61%) compared to 39% in the vegetable sector. GROW has partners in five counties in Liberia as indicated in the chart below.

Figure 5: Geographic overview of GROW partners in the cocoa and vegetables value chain (#)



Source: GROW partner list provided to evaluation team (September 2020)

In Montserrado, where most stakeholders are concentrated for both value chains, 79% of them are based in Monrovia. Nimba is the region where GROW works more or less equally with partners in the vegetables and cocoa sectors. In Bong, partners operate predominantly in the vegetables sector whereas in Lofa, the majority works in the cocoa sector. These distributions will be considered in the selection of field sites in section 4.2.

⁷ Two the geographic location of two licensed buyers is not indicated in GROW’s partner list.

The diversity of market actors that GROW has engaged with to pilot systemic interventions encompasses private companies including investors, MSMEs, cooperatives, and government institutions and agencies:

In cocoa, GROW piloted three types of interventions that aim at improving the readiness and quality of Liberian cocoa for export. The cocoa interventions were implemented in partnership with 45 market actors. According to GROW's partner list, 89% of them operate in the core value chain. These comprise a range of cooperatives, buyers and commercial farms that are located primarily in Montserrado (19), Lofa (10) and Nimba (8) counties. Actors in support functions (4) and rules and regulations (1) are based in Monrovia. In the cocoa sector, around 40% of cocoa partners are based in Monrovia.

An overview of the types of partners GROW has collaborated with is presented in the table below, indicating the broad range of actors.

Table 1: Overview of types of partners in the cocoa value chain by intervention (#)

	# of partners
Intervention 1: Higher Quality and Quantity of Cocoa Production	20
Cocoa Cooperative	15
Commercial Farm	2
Licensed Buying Company	3
Intervention 2: Better Selling and Financing Terms	15
Commercial Farm	1
Exporter/Buyer	10
International Buyer	4
Intervention 3: A More Attractive Market (addressing cocoa governance)	10
Dutch Chamber of Commerce	1
Government Body	5
Government Ministry	1
Government Regulator	1
NGO	2
Total partners in the cocoa sector	45

Source: GROW partner list provided to evaluation team (September 2020)

In section 4.2, the evaluation will use this information to ensure that a variety of key actors from the different interventions and dimension of the market system are included in the evaluation in a balanced and prioritised manner.

In vegetables, the project experimented with four interventions to build a network of agro-dealers and distributors offering local sales and advice to farmers. GROW engaged with 29 partners, 21 of whom operate in the core value chain (72%). These primarily include agro-dealers (66%) and agri-input distributors. Agro-dealers are mainly located in Bong (8), Nimba (5) and Lofa (1) whereas agri-input distributors (2) are based in Montserrado outside Monrovia. In support functions, GROW collaborates with the Agri-input association while in rules and regulations, it works with government bodies and other non-state entities, all based in Monrovia. In the vegetable sector, around half of GROW's partners are in Monrovia.

An overview of the types of partners GROW has collaborated is presented in the table below, indicating the broad range of actors GROW has engaged with.

Table 2: Geographic location of targeted market actors in the vegetable value chain (#)

	# partners
Intervention 1: Distributors	2
Agri-Inputs distributor	1
Agri-Inputs producer and distributor	1
Intervention 2: Agro Dealers	19
Agro-Dealer	19
Intervention 3: Policy	8
Agri-Inputs Association	1
Government Agency	5
Public-Private Organization	1
USAID Program	1
Total vegetables partners	29

Source: GROW partner list provided to evaluation team (September 2020)

The evaluation intends to use this information to ensure that a diversity of key actors from the different interventions and dimensions of the market system are included in the evaluation in a balanced and prioritised manner as elaborated in section 4.2.

2.7 EVALUATION CRITERIA

As noted in the ToR, the evaluation is expected to cover four out of five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, namely relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The seven evaluation questions (EQ) under each criterion are listed in the table below and further discussed in section 2.7⁸.

Table 3: Evaluation questions as per ToR

Evaluation criteria	EQs as formulated in the ToR
Relevance	EQ1. To which extent has the project conformed to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries and donor policies?
Effectiveness	EQ2. To which extent have the project contributed to intended outcomes? If so, why? if not, why not? EQ3. Has the M&E system delivered robust and useful information that could be used to assess progress towards outcomes and contribute to learning? EQ4. To what extent has lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust project/programme implementation?
Impact	EQ 5. What is the overall impact of the project/programme in terms of direct or indirect, negative and positive results? EQ6. Has the project contributed to poverty reduction? How?
Sustainability	EQ7. Is it likely that the benefits (outcomes) of the project are sustainable?

The EQs indicate that five out of seven EQs address effectiveness and impact. As a result, and in agreement with the Embassy, the evaluation will cover all criteria with focus on these two evaluation criteria. The intention of MSD thinking is to install changes in the way the market works for the poor. Key outcomes in the market system are whether market actors end up adopting new upgrades, behaviour and/or relations introduced by pilot interventions by institutionalising them - or a version of them- into their own operations, systems and way of doing things through for instance own investments and operational plans. This adaptation is an indication about the likelihood that these benefits will be sustained without project support. As such, sustainability is embedded in the AAER

⁸ The criteria presented in the ToR relate to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria prior to their revision. The team included some elements of the newly revised criteria such as issues of design under relevance and differentiating results for women and youth under effectiveness. See revised EQ in section 2.7.

framework for assessing systemic change (see Figure 4) and will therefore be addressed under effectiveness when dealing with results at outcome level.

2.8 SCOPE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The scope of recommendations noted in the ToR (sections 1.2 and 2.2) and expressed in the kick-off meeting is all encompassing. It is positive that end users have big expectations to the evaluation and want to use its findings and recommendations to learn and design the next phase. However, some expectations, such as the bearing the evaluation has on the future organisational and management structure, sectors of intervention and the role of GROW, go beyond the scope of the EQs set for the evaluation. These are important. Yet they are more relevant to a subsequent scoping exercise in the design phase.

In line with the ToR, the evaluation team will generate findings as answers to the EQs. These in turn will form the basis for conclusions and recommendations. Therefore, topics that are not addressed in the EQs will not be prioritised. That said, however, should our analysis of what we find reveal issues of structure and function of GROW to be significant, the evaluation will note these and suggest they be included in the design phase.

3. Relevance and evaluability of evaluation questions

3.1 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The seven initial EQs are presented in section 2.7. The evaluation team proposes i) to reformulate some questions; and ii) to reduce the number of EQs. These changes are discussed below. A key consideration for changes made is to draw a clear distinction between what happened at the level of the direct target group of GROW (effectiveness) and what happened at the level of the ultimate target group and in the wider market (impact). It is our assessment that such a distinction will enhance evaluability and the relevance of evaluation findings.

Table 4: Overview of revised EQs

	Criteria	Revised EQs
	Relevance	EQ1. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of its target group and to Sida strategies?
	Effectiveness and Sustainability	EQ2. To what extent did the project contribute to market system change? If so, how and for whom? EQ3. How well did the M&E system deliver robust and useful information to assess progress towards the achievement of outcomes and to generate learning as a basis for adapting the project during implementation?
	Impact	EQ4. What change happened in the wider market system? EQ5. What change did the project bring about to smallholder farmers?

The section below unfolds how each criterion will be addressed in the evaluation. Summary tables describe how each EQ will be handled by indicating the level of inquiry and the areas of inquiry. The latter will be used as indicators in the evaluation matrix (Annex 2) and will inform checklists to be used for the interview guides (Annex 4).

Relevance

EQ1. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of its target group and to Sida strategies?

The EQ noted in the ToR is slightly revised based on feedback from end users. First, conformity to needs and priorities is translated into the responsiveness of GROW to the priorities of its target group. This covers priorities of the direct target group (business partners and government in selected value chains) and of the ultimate target group (smallholder farmers). Second, relevance to Sida policies was reformulated to clearly indicate it covers Sweden's country strategies in Liberia and other cross cutting priorities like gender equality and the environment. The table below presents the areas of inquiry for assessing relevance.

Table 5: Assessing relevance

Level of inquiry	Areas of inquiry
Priorities of Sida's strategies	- Alignment to Sida's country strategy in Liberia 2016-2020 - Alignment to other Sida priorities (gender and environmental considerations)
Priorities of the government and the private sector	- Value chain selection: The analyses and processes leading up to the selection of cocoa and vegetables as targeted value chains - in alignment with government priorities and in consultation with key government entities - Specific interventions selection: The diagnostics and processes leading up to the selection and design of specific interventions - in response to constraints facing the private sector in cocoa and vegetables

Priorities of smallholder farmers

- The extent to which the design of specific interventions was informed by analyses and consultations with smallholder farmers, including women, as to why the market systems of cocoa and vegetables are failing to work for them
- Considerations about value addition generated for the benefit of smallholder farmers in the cocoa and vegetable value chains

Effectiveness and Sustainability

EQ2. To what extent did the project contribute to market system change? If so, how and for whom? If not, why not?

EQ3. How well did the M&E system deliver robust and useful information to assess progress towards the achievement of outcomes and to generate learning as a basis for adapting the project during implementation?

Effectiveness will explore results at output and outcome levels as well as the adaptability of the project to produce these results. This includes outcomes in the form of change that happened in the way the market system works as a result of change instigated by GROW's facilitative role and activities (output level) and its direct target group/partners (outcome level). Higher level results achieved for the ultimate target group (smallholders) and in the wider market system are addressed under impact.

The three EQs listed in the ToR were revised and reduced for the following reasons:

1. The revision is made to reflect priorities noted in the kick-off and inception meetings and to clearly indicate that effectiveness will assess whether and how the intention of stimulating systemic change among GROW's direct target group materialised or likely to materialise.
2. The two EQs on M&E were merged to consolidate focus on M&E into one key question keeping in mind that iterative learning and adaptation during the implementation of pilot interventions is a key dimension of working with an MSD approach.

Differentiating results for women at the level of the direct target group in the market system (e.g. female-led MSMEs) will be looked at. Given that GROW has data that is disaggregated by sex of its partners and their financial performance (e.g. revenue, sales), such information will provide a valuable source of secondary data we will analyse.

With regard to sustainability, the EQ proposed in the ToR was incorporated into EQ2. Sustainability is an embedded consideration and intention of systemic change closely linked to the adoption by partners of pilot models. The likelihood of sustainability of results achieved is enhanced when partners institutionalise the new upgrades introduced, or versions of them, into their operations, systems and plans. As such, sustainability considerations are integrated into the assessment of effectiveness of interventions. While sustainability can mean many things and involve different dimensions, the evaluation will cover the aspect of sustainability as it is defined by the "Adopt" dimension of the AAER framework (see EQ2 below). To indicate that sustainability is addressed in the evaluation, the criteria of effectiveness and sustainability were merged into one subheading. The evaluation will address this in the manner described below.

- **EQ2. To what extent did the project contribute to market system change? If so, how and for whom? If not, why not?**

In order to establish whether GROW contributed to market system change, it is important to understand what activities and outputs GROW had been engaging in overtime and how, including strategies, tactics and other considerations that can help draw a picture of its journey towards MSD. Based on a first follow-up inception meeting on 17th September 2020, the evaluation team and GROW discussed and agreed on the scope of the evaluation's levels and areas of inquiries which are presented below.

a) Assessment of results at output level

The assessment of results at output level will start by examining areas of inquiry highlighted in the table below.

Table 6: Assessing activities and outputs

Level of inquiry	Areas of inquiry
GROW as facilitator	• Systemic interventions introduced by GROW in cocoa and vegetables including their viability/potential for success • The identification and selection of partners in cocoa and vegetables (process, adequacy of choice of partners) • Activities and tactics used to get market actors in cocoa and vegetables to adopt and adapt new practices/technologies and/or drive crowding-in or change in the wider market system of cocoa and vegetables • Adequacy of GROW's organisational structure vis à vis expected deliverables within cocoa and vegetables
Targeted market actors/business partners	• Motivation for engaging with GROW to pilot new models introduced by GROW in cocoa and vegetables • Contributions made by partners to pilot interventions (financial, non-financial) in cocoa and vegetables

b) Assessment of results at outcome level and likelihood of sustainability

In the language of the AAER framework, the assessment of effectiveness of results at outcome level will look at the 'Adapt' and 'Adopt' dimensions of the pilot interventions instigated by GROW. More specifically, it will examine a) whether targeted market actors have taken onboard the new pro-poor practices facilitated by GROW's pilot interventions and b) whether they, or adaptations of them, have been integrated and institutionalised into their daily operations and plans, paving the way for sustainable change. The table below unfolds the areas of inquiry of this part of the EQ.

Table 7: Assessing change in targeted market system

AAER framework	Level of inquiry	Areas of inquiry
Adapt	Uptake by targeted businesses and government of upgrades introduced by GROW pilots	• Reported results for partners (change in business operations, market reach, relations with government and/or other market actors, rules and regulations) • Intent to continue with the pilots (plans to invest in capacity and human resources to institutionalise new practices into daily operations) • Key enablers facilitating adoption • Key challenges hindering adoption
Adopt	Integration of newly adopted upgrades introduced by GROW pilots into own business model (likelihood of sustainability by adoption of pilots)	• Independent investment/concrete plans made by partners to uphold, improve upon, modify or expand pilots without project support • Key enablers facilitating adaptation • Key challenges hindering adaptation

- **EQ3. How well did the M&E system deliver robust and useful information to assess progress towards the achievement of outcomes and to generate learning as a basis for adapting the project during implementation?**

While the two EQs on M&E were combined into one key question and slightly reformulated, the evaluation will still look at the two aspects raised in the initial EQs. First, the quality of data produced to assess progress towards outcomes. Second, whether this data was relevant to inform programme implementation. Our approach to answering this question is informed by three features which, in turn define our two main levels of inquiry:

- 1) The usefulness of M&E information: GROW uses DCED inspired indicators to report on the progress of the project. To be useful, M&E systems need to be driven by questions defined by their intended users. The evaluation will explore whether this is the case for GROW.
- 2) The adequacy of the M&E systems for capturing systemic change: While the use of DCED common indicators is recommended by many donors, it requires a solid and extensive M&E system to produce these indicators. However, these may not necessarily reflect an adequate set of information to assess progress including on systemic change in a way that is useful to management

and project teams. The evaluation will enquire whether the current M&E system responds to the needs of GROW as an MSD project.

- 3) The capacity to learn and adapt: relies on the opportunities for listening to feedback from direct target group and/or their clients. To best answer this EQ, the evaluation will assess to what extent GROW listened and responded to those it directly supported and how it responded.

Table 8: Assessing monitoring, learning and adaptability

Level of inquiry	Areas of inquiry
M&E system and data	- The extent to which M&E indicators are defined by senior management's need to answer questions of interest - The M&E framework, formats and plan at project and value chain level with an emphasis on how well the indicators and assumptions integrate and inform about systemic change and results for women - Methods used to collect data along with ways to verify the data at output and outcome levels
Capacity to learn and adapt	- The use of iterative feedback to guide implementation and provide information relating to what worked and how and what did not and why - Actions informed by M&E data or other feedback taken to adjust implementation, either modifying or stopping specific interventions

Impact

EQ4. What change happened in the wider market system?

EQ5. What change did the project bring about to smallholders?

Impact in the context this MSD project is not defined as higher level wider socio-economic effects. The evaluation will explore change that happened beyond the direct target group of GROW but within the boundaries of the market system of targeted value chains in relation to two dimensions:

1. *The wider market system*: comprising non-targeted similar market actors in the market systems of selected value chains to shed light on whether GROW's pro-poor interventions inspired change in the behaviour/practices of competitors to attain a wider scale of piloted interventions. Scale is a premise for driving and sustaining results achieved for smallholders in terms of poverty reduction.
2. *Poverty reduction*: for smallholder farmers including female led farming businesses where possible to validate reported poverty reduction impacts on better income and job creation.

As MSD strives to transform and leave behind systems that work better for the poor, expectations of change in the wider market system and poverty reduction are embedded into the approach. The evaluation proposes to reformulate the two EQs to clearly articulate the two dimensions of desired results at impact level, one focusing on the wider market system and one on poverty reduction differentiating results for women and youth. The EQs on impact will be explored in the manner presented below.

• **EQ4. What change happened in the wider market system?**

This question pertains to the impact GROW has had in the wider market system of selected value chains. Using the AAER framework as a reference, the EQ will look at the 'Expand' and 'Respond' dimensions of the pilot interventions introduced by GROW. The evaluation notes that while "Adopt" and "Adapt" are sequential (the change must be adopted before it can be adapted), "Expand" and "Respond" need not be so and can occur independently of each other.

The evaluation will explore wider market system change as defined in the table below within what is feasible, keeping in mind that such effects take time to materialise. The assessment of what happened in the wider market system of selected value chains will heavily rely on the ability to identify and take contact to non-targeted actors who are willing to talk to the evaluation team, and information provided by interviewed key informants about such changes. During field visits, prompting of stakeholders met in visited sites will be sought to identify key informants.

Table 9: Assessing change in the wider market system

AAER framework	Level of inquiry	Areas of inquiry
Expand	Non-targeted similar/competing market actors copy practices adopted by GROW's direct target group (ensuring scale)	• Crowding-in of competitors or similar types of organisations who copy and/or adapt the interventions piloted by GROW's direct target group • Key enablers and challenges
Respond	Non-competing market actors adjust their practices given change in market behaviour	• Reported change in the market among non-competing companies (e.g. entry of new actors, emergence of new support services, products, technologies, new rules and regulations)

• **EQ5. What change did the project bring about to smallholders?**

This question deals with poverty effects of the project. It will be examined in relation to better enterprise income for smallholder businesses including female smallholders and job creation to the extent feasible. The evaluation team is aware that different value chains have different production cycles, some are more structured and involve many stakeholders. This means that some impact may emerge more rapidly in some value chains than in others. The evaluation will integrate this consideration in its assessment. The table below elaborates on the areas of inquiry of this EQ.

Table 11: Assessing change for smallholders

Level of inquiry	Areas of inquiry
Smallholder farmers in cocoa and vegetables	• Reported change in access to inputs, products, services, information, markets, new opportunities • Reported change for smallholder businesses in terms of capacity and performance (e.g. use of new practices, business income, commercial relations with input and product markets, risks, job creation) • Key enabling factors • Key challenges faced by smallholders
Female smallholders in cocoa and vegetables	• Reported change in access to inputs, products, services, information, markets, new opportunities • Reported change for female-led smallholder businesses in terms of capacity and performance • Key enabling factors • Key challenges

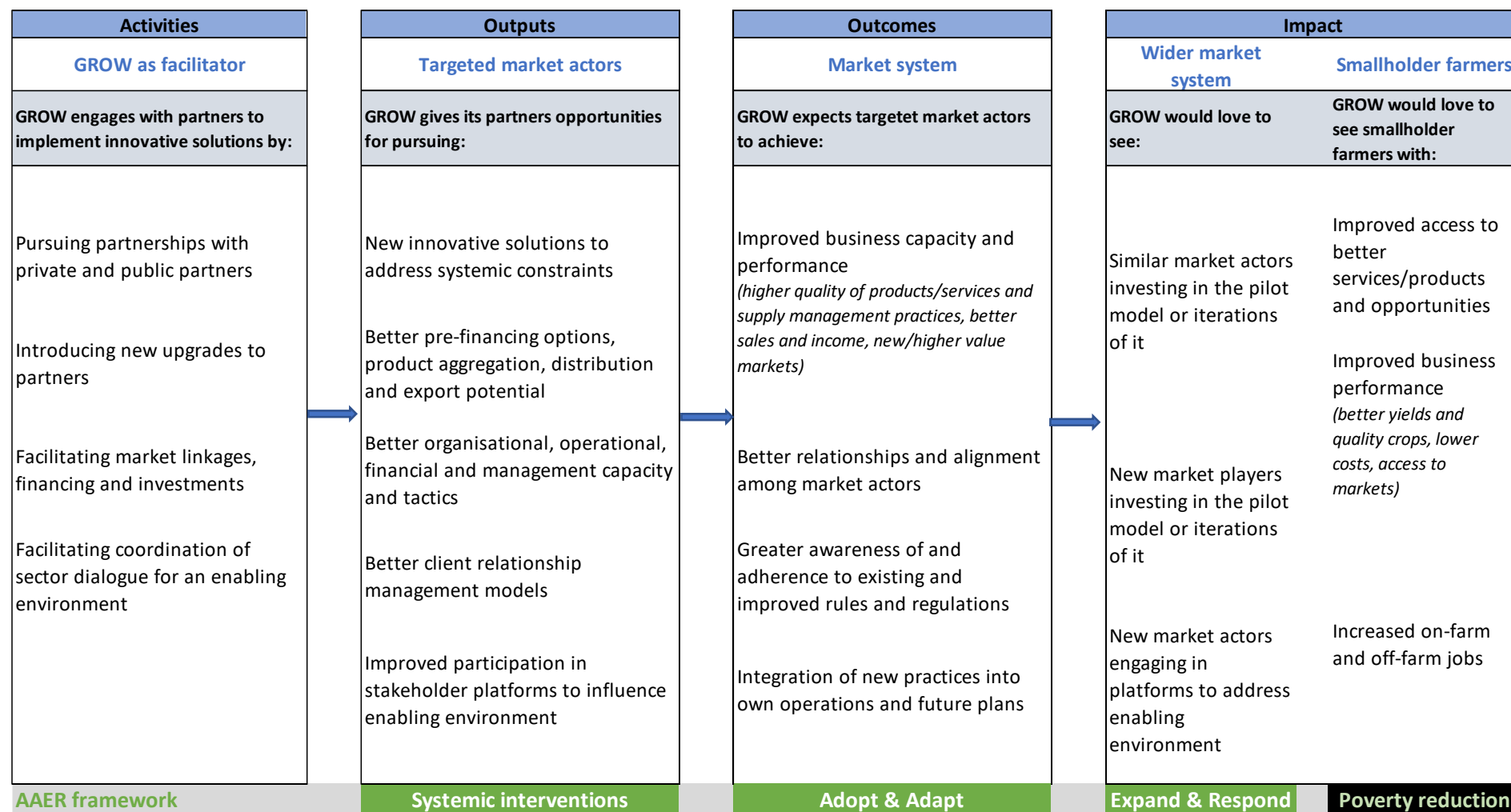
3.2 THEORY OF CHANGE

GROW has a theory of change (ToC) enclosed in Annex 3. According to the midterm review of 2017, this ToC was not revisited. Based on consultations and input from GROW and on annual reports, the evaluation team understands that GROW operates with ToCs for individual value chains. In accordance with the DCED standard, these are called results chains. The evaluation team did not find a more recent overall ToC for GROW as a project.

After the first follow-up inception meeting on 17th September 2020 including discussions on the project's ToC, GROW revised their sector ToCs. Based on this input, the evaluation team compiled the types of interventions at sector level into higher level categories that would encompass sector level activities, outputs and expected results at outcome and impact levels. The reconstructed ToC for GROW as a project is presented below.

Figure 6: Reconstructed ToC for GROW

Reconstructed ToC for GROW



In line with the evaluation scope discussed above, the reconstructed ToC integrates dimensions of systemic change in line with the AAER framework and differentiates results at impact level in the two dimensions of the wider market system and poverty reduction. More specifically:

- Activities refer to what GROW as a facilitator pursued and offered its direct target group;
- Outputs refer to what GROW delivered to its direct target group in the form of opportunities, e.g. new knowledge or market linkages as a result of their partnership with GROW;
- Outcomes refer to what GROW's direct target group did with these opportunities in terms of change in their performance and capacities, relationships, influencing rules and regulations and integrating new upgrades into their own operations and plans;
- Impact differentiates between what happened as a result of the change instigated by GROW's direct target group in the wider market system and how that change affected smallholder farmers.

The reconstructed ToC will serve as the evaluative framework for assessing and reporting on results achieved -or likely to be achieved- at output, outcome and impact levels.

4. Proposed approach and methodology

4.1 OVERALL APPROACH

The intention of the evaluation is to be participatory to the extent stakeholders and end users wish to participate and transparent vis à vis end users and stakeholders consulted in the field as follows:

- The evaluation team strived to include end users and their feedback in the development of the methodology to enhance the utility of findings and recommendations.
- The evaluation team intends to interview a variety of project stakeholders within the cocoa and vegetables sector to give different categories of stakeholders in the three dimensions of the market system a voice while concurrently triangulating findings.
- As the project is meant to inspire change in the wider market system, the evaluation anticipates reaching out to stakeholders that are similar to GROW's project partners but who were not targeted by GROW. This will rely on MoA and GROW's assistance in identifying and getting contact details for such actors. In addition, the evaluation will identify relevant stakeholders to meet when in the field through observation or referrals.
- The evaluation team also intends to the extent feasible to interview other non-project stakeholders (e.g. similar initiatives) to better understand the context of the project and triangulate findings. This assumes that the Embassy, MoA and GROW can assist in identifying such key actors in the cocoa and vegetable sectors. As agreed in a second follow-up inception meeting held on 29th September, GROW will provide a list of key informants in the cocoa and vegetables sectors.
- All stakeholders interviewed will be briefed about the objective and methodology of the evaluation. They will also be informed about the upcoming publication of the evaluation report which will be accessible on Sida's webpage.

In order to deepen its understanding of the two selected value chains, the evaluation intends to adopt a case study approach, where the cocoa market is one case and the vegetables market is the second case. This would allow the evaluation team to look more comprehensively and deeper into the selected value chains with regards to the parameters set for the evaluation.

The evaluation will use the reconstructed ToC as its evaluative framework to assess and report on results achieved by GROW (output level), by GROW's direct target group (outcome level) and its ultimate target group and the wider market system (impact level). While data collection and reporting will be guided by the content of the ToC, the evaluation will have an open space for capturing findings that go beyond the ToC. It will do so by seeking two perspectives:

- *Inward-out perspective*: taking GROW's interventions with the direct target group as the starting point for tracing expected results in line with the ToC
- *Outward-in perspective*: taking reported change by GROW's partners and smallholders as a starting point and trying to assess whether these are linked to GROW's interventions

As already highlighted in section 2.4, the evaluation has integrated gender considerations in its inquiry in a manner that takes account of the challenges faced in implementing the only MSD programme in a very thin market like Liberia.

In view of the global outbreak of covid-19 and in agreement with Sida, the international evaluation team will not be travelling to Monrovia. This implies that the organisation of and division of tasks within the team has been reconsidered. The international team will take lead on interviews with stakeholders based in Monrovia and internationally (around 40% of business partners are in Monrovia as indicated in section 2.6) while in-country consultants will undertake field visits and take lead on interviews in the field. Knowing that internet connectivity can be challenging even in Monrovia, local consultants will be equipped with adequate data packages to ensure fluid communication. In consultation with GROW, the evaluation team is expecting to use downloadable video recording of business sites as an alternative for the international team to get a sense of the field and come up with observations. No audio recording of the meetings will be done to accommodate for cultural sensitivity.

Given the partly remote nature of the evaluation, the following approach will be systematically applied throughout the data collection process:

- Initial briefing and guidance within the evaluation team prior to start of data collection. This includes 1) two introductory sessions on MSD to be held by the MSD expert who is well versed in training on MSD to all team members, 2) working session on the evaluative framework and data collection tools intended for the different stakeholders to ensure targeted and systematic data collection.
- Initial daily briefing from the field to go through next day's interviews. Prior to the planned meetings to be held the next day and for the different types of stakeholders to be met, the team intends to go through the interview guide and adjust some questions of the day so they are better tailored to the stakeholder(s) to be met the next day. Feedback from the daily debriefing could also help finetune some questions and allow for exploring further on certain issues. From day 2, this will be the concluding part of the daily debriefing.
- Daily debriefing if internet connectivity allows to discuss the meetings of the day with the participation of all team members
- Daily uploading of video recording into Dropbox
- Coaching and guiding local team members as needed along the way. The TL and MSD expert will be available to guide the team as needed if in doubt.
- Daily sharing of preliminary notes on Dropbox in line with a data collection template that will be shared with local consultants to ensure data reporting in line with the evaluative framework and EQs

In terms of the organisation of the parallel data collection process, the approach of the evaluation is to optimise to the best possible the use of its team members. As such, the two international thematic experts will split into two sub-teams, each leading one value chain. The intention is for each sub-team to interview key stakeholders in the market system of its value chain. The team leader will cut across both sub-teams and focus on effects on women and M&E. To be able to cover as wide a variety of private sector partners which span financing institutions, input suppliers and dealers, cooperatives, processors and buyers, government and non-project stakeholders, the evaluation team anticipates sharing the interview load across sub-teams as needed.

4.2 SELECTION CRITERIA

This section presents criteria for the selection of two key elements of the evaluation, notably the geographic coverage and stakeholders that will be covered by the evaluation. The selection of the value chains of cocoa and vegetables was done purposefully on the basis of their relevance for the continuation of GROW into phase 2 in agreement with end users. Therefore, no criteria for value chain selection are included in this section.

Geographic scope

Key considerations for the selection of the field sites for the cocoa and vegetables value chains are guided by the following criteria:

1. Density of partners in the area
2. Diversity of partners in the area
3. Performance of partners in the area (see table 10)
4. Road accessibility and condition in the rainy season

Based on the overview presented in section 2.6, we understand that a good deal of stakeholders including partners and government representing the different dimension of the market system are based in Monrovia and intend to cover Monrovia including agri-input distributors in the commercial market outside Monrovia. For counties outside Montserrado/Monrovia, within the planned time for data collection, and as discussed with GROW, the evaluation team proposes Nimba and Bong as field sites for reasons noted below:

- **Nimba as a cost-effective option:** The overview made by the team, confirmed by GROW, shows that Nimba is the county with a good balance and diversity of stakeholders from the

vegetables and cocoa value chains. This makes it a good choice for a field site within the time constraints of the evaluation also because of its ease of accessibility by road.

- **Bong to deepen the quality of data in the vegetables sector:** Consultations with GROW during the second kick off meeting suggest that the type of partners in Bong, where GROW predominantly works in the vegetables value chain, is different than those in Nimba. This means that the data collected in Bong would give a different perspective than then one collected in Nimba. Given that the road conditions are good between Nimba and Bong, this argues for Bong as a second field site for the vegetables value chain.

During the second inception phase, MoA underlined its priority to include Lofa in order to visit the top performer in the cocoa sector. The evaluation team is faced with a dilemma in wanting to respond to the clear message of MoA and its timeframe as noted below:

- **Lofa to highlight success in the cocoa value chain but is challenging choice:** For cocoa, GROW and particularly MoA underlined the importance of visiting the project's top performer in Lofa, as cocoa partners in Nimba are varied in performance, including good ones, but none in the same class as in Lofa. Moreover, the area is known for its cocoa production. GROW has predominantly worked with cocoa in Lofa including a women's cooperative and a commercial farm. GROW's oldest partner in the cocoa sector is located there as is one of the partners with whom the partnership was discontinued. The evaluation team finds it is important to "listen" and respond to MoA's priority to include Lofa and understands the relevance of the matter. From a methodological perspective, this would also ensure a more balanced coverage between vegetables and cocoa from a geographic perspective and enrich the data collection process. However, the team fears that the quality of data collected will be jeopardised by visiting Lofa within the current constraints of the evaluation for the following reasons:
 - Road conditions to and within Lofa are not ideal especially at this time of year. Some car rental companies may not accept to go there, particularly because of unpaved and muddy road conditions.
 - The travel time to and within Lofa is a key obstacle that would take away days planned for data collection elsewhere. This means the team may not have time to mobilise non-targeted stakeholders/peer businesses and farmers in Bong and Nimba to trace whether there have been any signs of market system change and poverty impacts. It also means that the option of allocating one day to visit the commercial market to include agri-input dealers in the evaluation cannot be pursued.
 - Setting the minimum time needed to go to Lofa (four days including two travel days) will jeopardise the quality of reporting on data collected in the field, as this leaves the in-country team with an inadequate number of days for reporting back to the international team, thereby weakening the quality of reporting.

The evaluation team is currently working with the scenario that is will visit two counties while keeping the option that a visit to Lofa may be possible (see section 4.4 and 5.3). A more precise selection of districts to visit will be finalised together with GROW in the coming week.

Stakeholder selection

The evaluation will interview stakeholders to cover different perspectives and experiences with the project including:

- Sida staff knowledgeable about the project including the M&E advisor hired by Sida
- The GROW management and project teams including senior managers, technical leads, M&E team, gender advisor, and ASI project managers.
- An illustrative sample of GROW's private sector partners/targeted market actors in cocoa and vegetables including cooperatives and the private sector
- All of GROW's international partners
- All government entities that partnered with GROW
- Non-targeted market actors
- A sample of smallholder farmers
- Key informants working with, exposed to, or knowledgeable about the cocoa and vegetable value chains including regional and local leaders in selected sites

The illustrative sample of partners to interview will be based on the following key criteria:

- Performance according three categories (stars, modest achievers, laggards)
- Core business to ensure diversity of stakeholders met within the value chain
- Female led partner cooperatives and businesses (purposefully selected)
- Considerations will be given in case of need to prioritise to the longest period of partnership with GROW to be able to capture results and factors facilitating that, and discontinued partnerships with GROW to understand obstacles hindering realisation of results

For the identification of smallholder farmers, the second follow up inception meeting in September revealed that the identification of farmers from cooperative and client lists is not an optimal solution. GROW's business partners' client lists are too extensive (more than 20.000 farmer names in GROW's data base, many without a phone number). It would therefore be difficult and time consuming to identify a sample based on the data base - as intended- only to find out they are not reachable by phone to arrange for a visit, which must be pre-announced.

GROW and the evaluation team agreed that the best way forward is to have a snowball sampling approach. In this manner agro-dealers that the evaluation team will meet with will identify sales agents the team can meet with, who then will identify farmers that can be visited. Given the effective but time-consuming aspect of this approach, it was agreed that once the interview schedule is set in the second week of October as agreed with GROW, GROW's field agents will approach the selected business partners and do preparatory work on the ground to ensure that a visit is planned and farmers are aware of such a visit upon the team's arrival to the field. The evaluation team will still ask consulted stakeholders during interviews for other contacts and will meet with them if time allows.

Non targeted market actors and key informants will be identified based on the lists provided by GROW about similar or competing businesses and key informants knowledgeable about the targeted value chains. The in-country team will also propose stakeholders.

The table below summarises the types of stakeholders the team intends to meet with and selection criteria as relevant.

Table 10: Types of stakeholders and selection criteria

TYPES OF STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSULT		SELECTION CRITERIA	GROW INPUT
PRIVATE SECTOR AND NON-STATE ACTORS			
DIRECT BUSINESS PARTNERS	- Cooperatives and professional associations: e.g., cocoa exporters; agro-input importers, distributors, and retailers; financial institutions - Cocoa exporters - International cocoa importers/buyers - Inputs: distributors; agro-dealers - Technical committee - NGOs	1) Performance of partners in three categories: <u>Stars</u>: partners that are best role models of changes introduced by project <u>Modest achievers</u>: partners that are middle of the pack in terms of their rate of adoption of new ideas and practices <u>Laggards</u>: partners that are slow in making changes or have stopped and no longer work with the project 2) Core business 3) If possible, female led partner businesses	- GROW will help identify relevant actors. - Selection done in consultation with the evaluation team - GROW will facilitate access to its partners
KEY INFORMANTS	(Non-targeted) Peers of direct business and cooperative partners Other key players from the industry including actors who buy and who sell, other service providers to partners, peers, and NGOs	Relevance of non-targeted stakeholders for generating findings on EQs (particularly EQ 1 & 4)	GROW will help identify relevant players and communicate contact to these actors
SMALLHOLDER FARMERS	Diversity of smallholder farmers in selected field sites mainly including clients of GROW partners and non-clients of GROW partners	Clients of GROW partners: - Year of operation - Size of farm - Formal vs informal - Female headed smallholder business if possible	GROW and MoA/MoCD will identify and mobilise smallholder farmers
PUBLIC SECTOR ACTORS			
DIRECT GOVERNMENT PARTNERS	- Ministries of Agriculture, Finance, Development Planning, Cooperative Development - National investment commission - Regulatory authorities	-	- GROW will facilitate access to government partners - GROW will propose other relevant government bodies as needed
KEY INFORMANTS	Other key government players Donor agencies/embassies Regional and local authorities and line ministries in targeted field sites	Relevance for generating findings on EQs particularly EQs 1, 2 & 4	GROW will facilitate access to key informants

4.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The evaluation will rely on qualitative data collection methods using interview guides tailored to the different types of stakeholders (Annex 4) and on existing secondary qualitative and quantitative data. Interview guides reflect the areas of inquiry of the evaluation as defined in the EQs in chapter 3 and the evaluation matrix in Annex 2. The evaluation team views the interview guides as evolving documents and intends to test and revise its interview guides along the way.

The types of qualitative data collection methods that were initially envisaged were revised to be more attuned to the covid-19 situation. This means:

- A more extensive and systematic documentary review and meta-analysis of secondary data including qualitative and quantitative data generated by GROW's M&E system
- Reliance on remote interviews for the international team members of the evaluation team.
- Field visits undertaken and led by in-country consultants
- Meetings involving a gathering of people will not be held. This pertains to focus group discussions (FGD) which were initially foreseen to be the main data collection method in smallholder communities. FGDs will be replaced by in-depth structured interviews with an illustrative sample of GROW's partners (e.g. cooperatives, agro-dealers) and smallholder farmers. Smaller group meetings are however envisaged within safe distances.

The evaluation will rely on the following data collection methods:

- **Documentary review and meta-analysis of secondary data** to map, extract and analyse data from existing documents, studies, reports and assessments that will help the evaluation respond to the EQs. This will include design documents, minutes of meetings, documentation of consultation workshops held and participant lists, value chain and market system analyses, partner implementation plans, partnership agreements, partner profiles and documentation of work done including video or photo documentation, impact assessments, M&E manual, plans, templates and data, annual reports and GROW's partner reports.
- **Semi-structured interviews (SSI)** with multiple key stakeholders in the market system of selected value chains to get a well-informed and rounded view of relevance and results, and to triangulate findings. Meeting in Monrovia will be led by international members of the evaluation team while field meetings will be led by the local team. SSIs will cover the following stakeholders:
 - The GROW team including separate meetings with management and staff (individual or group meetings over Skype or telephone) in Liberia and the UK. Follow-up remote meetings are envisaged particularly with M&E staff to address the desired level of details of EQ3.
 - An illustrative sample of GROW private business partners and cooperatives. The intention is to include female led businesses to the extent feasible.
 - International partners engaged with GROW
 - Government structures and regulatory bodies in targeted value chains that have been engaged with GROW. The mobilisation of these stakeholders will highly depend on GROW and MoA's ability to ensure accessibility to key persons knowledgeable about the project and their willingness to discuss with the evaluation team.
 - A random sample of smallholder farmers in cocoa and vegetables in selected field sites including clients of GROW's business partners. These will include female led smallholder businesses to the extent possible.
- **Key informant interviews (KII)** will be held with resource persons such as donors and other initiatives working in the same value chains, local leaders in smallholder communities, and non-targeted market actors that are engaged in the same value chain as GROW's partners such as other cooperatives, agro-input dealers or distributors within the geographic scope of the evaluation. Remote KII with donors and similar initiatives are envisaged to be

led by international members of the evaluation team. Other KII will be led by local consultants in country. The ability to identify and access contacts to similar cooperatives and businesses will highly depend on GROW's and MoA's ability to identify contacts to such actors. The evaluation will also strive to rely on its local team's network to find relevant actors once in the field.

- **Debriefing** with end users on preliminary findings, conclusions and direction for recommendations. This will give end users the chance to provide feedback prior to the finalisation of the draft evaluation report and correct factual errors. The debriefing will be held remotely.

4.4 PROPOSED FIELD SCHEDULE AND WORKPLAN

The proposed dates for data collection are set for October 19-30, 2020 in agreement with GROW. The field schedule is expected to be finalised before October 15, 2020 in collaboration with GROW.

A tentative schedule for the in-country field visits is presented below. This includes the planned scenario for visiting two counties within the time allotted for data collection, and an alternative scenario for visiting three counties including Lofa, in response to MoA's expressed priority. The team notes that the latter is possible in the event extra days are allocated to the in-country team (see section 5.3).

Table 11: Tentative field schedule

			Planned scenario for Nimba and Bong		Potential scenario including MoA priority to visit Lofa	
			Who	Where	Who	Where
Day 1	Monday	Oct-19	GROW core management team, project team for cocoa, project team for vegetables, M&E, gender advisor	Monrovia	GROW project teams for cocoa and vegetables	Monrovia
Day 2	Tuesday	Oct-20			Partner agrodealers in Totota and Suakoko; Other peers along the road	Travel Monrovia to Bong
Day 3	Wednesday	Oct-21	Partner agrodealers in Totota and Suakoko; Other peers along the road	Travel Monrovia to Bong	GROW field agent; Regional and local authorities; Relevant line ministries, relevant actors identified on the spot	Bong
Day 4	Thursday	Oct-22	GROW field agent; Regional and local authorities; Relevant line ministries, relevant actors identified on the spot	Bong	Partners; Farmers; Peers; Preliminary consolidation of notes Bong	Bong
Day 5	Friday	Oct-23	Partners within vegetables mainly and a few cocoa; Farmers; Peers (non-targeted business and cooperatives)	Bong		Bong
Day 6	Saturday	Oct-24		Bong	GROW field agent; Regional and local authorities; Relevant line ministries	Travel Bong to Nimba
Day 7	Sunday	Oct-25	Consolidation of notes Bong	Travel Bong to Nimba	Partners and farmers - in cocoa and vegetables; Peers; Preliminary consolidation of notes Nimba	Nimba
Day 8	Monday	Oct-26	GROW field agent; Regional and local authorities; Relevant line ministries	Nimba		Nimba
Day 9	Tuesday	Oct-27	Partners within vegetables and cocoa; Farmers; Peer businesses and cooperatives (non-targeted)	Nimba		Nimba
Day 10	Wednesday	Oct-28		Nimba		Travel Nimba to Lofa
Day 11	Thursday	Oct-29	Consolidation of notes Nimba	Travel Nimba to Monrovia	GROW field agent; Regional and local authorities; Relevant line ministries, relevant actors identified on the spot	Lofa
Day 12	Friday	Oct-30	Agri -input dealers and peers in commercial market; Consolidation of notes	Travel Monrovia to Montserrado	Kolahun: Sebehill cooperative (since 2018, Top star)	Lofa
					Foya: Rural women cooperative (since 2018) + Maliandoe Cooperative (modest achiever & oldest partner)	
Day 13	Saturday	Oct-31			Voinjama cooperative (low achiever/partner 2018-2019/discontinued)+ commercial farm: Liberia cocoa corporation (since 2018)	Lofa
Day 14	Sunday	01-Nov				Travel Lofa to Monrovia
Day 15	Monday	02-Nov			Consolidation of notes Lofa	Monrovia

Workplan

The timeline proposed for the evaluation is the following:

<i>Dispatch of documentation</i>	September 25, 2020
<i>Start of documentary review and analysis</i>	Sep 25
<i>Submission of final inception report</i>	Oct 7
<i>Comments/no objection to inception report</i>	Oct 12
<i>Planning for interviews with GROW</i>	Oct 12
<i>Start of remote interviews</i>	Oct 19
<i>Data analysis, consolidation and report writing</i>	November
<i>Debriefing (remote)</i>	Tbd
<i>Submission of draft report</i>	Nov 27, 2020
<i>Submission of final report</i>	Dec 8, 2020

The proposed workplan is enclosed in Annex 6.

5. Other issues and recommendations

5.1 EVALUATION REPORT STRUCTURE

As the EQs are of a general nature and not sector specific, we wish to propose a report structure that addresses the EQs but at the same time provide the reader with more sector specific findings and recommendations. We therefore propose a core evaluation report that is a synthesis of sector findings, conclusions and recommendations. The core report will build on two sector assessments, one for each value chain. These sector reports will have the same format as the core report. The proposed structure is as follows:

Core evaluation report

1. Background
 - a. Evaluation context
 - b. Project background
 - c. Methodology
2. Key findings
 - a. Relevance
 - b. Effectiveness and Sustainability
 - c. Impact
3. Key conclusions and recommendations

Sector assessments in Annexes

1. Assessment of the Cocoa value chain
 - a. Background
 - b. Key findings
 - i. Relevance
 - ii. Effectiveness and Sustainability
 - iii. Impact
 - c. Key conclusions and recommendations
2. Assessment of the Vegetables value chain
 - a. Background
 - b. Key findings
 - i. Relevance

- ii. Effectiveness and Sustainability
- iii. Impact
- c. Key conclusions and recommendations

5.2 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND MEETINGS

In order to maintain the timeline set for data collection, it is paramount that:

- The selection of the illustrative sample of GROW's partner is finalised by the end of the first week of October based on updated lists shared by GROW on October 5, 2020 including categories of performance.
- The selection of key informants based on lists to be shared by GROW is done during the organisation of the interview schedule.
- The interview schedule is finalised before the 15th October, so meetings can be planned in the most effective manner in a way that does not delay the start of the data collection phase
- GROW field agents mobilise partners and those along the value chain to identify farmers to be consulted prior to the arrival of the team to the field sites and that visits are pre-announced once the dates are set
- The team has a space in Monrovia with reliable internet connectivity to hold remote meetings. GROW offered its premises to hold remote meetings with key stakeholders in Monrovia. This is highly appreciated and welcome by the evaluation team. To maintain the independence of the evaluation, we expect that partners attending meetings use their own computer devices to connect to the meetings and that meetings are not recorded by GROW as the evaluation ensures anonymity of consulted stakeholders.

5.3 RESPONDING TO MOA PRIORITY

MoA expressed the importance of visiting Lofa, specifically the top performing cooperative in the cocoa sector. The evaluation wishes to accommodate for this priority as presented in sections 4.2 and 4.4. However, it is challenged by time constraint and budget. The evaluation team would therefore like to confirm with the Embassy, what its priority is in response to what MoA has indicated.

If the Embassy agrees it is important to respond to MoA's request, the evaluation can re-prioritise some meetings to release days for visiting Lofa (e.g. only one meeting day in Monrovia for the local team) but this would still require additional workdays for the in-country team, namely three workdays per consultant. Travel to Lofa is long. In view of optimising the potential presence of the team in Lofa, the evaluation team suggests visiting a few key relevant stakeholders in the region such a women's cooperative, a commercial farm and GROW's oldest partner. The situation does not imply an increase in the budget of the evaluation. It involves however a reallocation of parts of the reimbursable budget that we know will not be spent by the international team due the covid-19 pandemic, such as international tickets. Such a reallocation would make use of idle resources that are already allocated to the evaluation but that can be put into productive use due to changes imposed by the covid-19 crisis. Should the Embassy approve such a reallocation, it would ensure and communicate to MoA that the evaluation is willing to respond to its priority while also enriching the evaluation findings. As the interview and field schedule will be finalised in the coming week to ensure adequate planning, a quick response from the Embassy would be appreciated.



Terms of Reference for a Decentralised Evaluation of GROW Liberia, phase 1 – a Swedish-funded Market Systems Development project in agricultural value chains in Liberia 2013-2020

Date: 10 December 2019

1. General information

1.1 Introduction

Sweden is one of the bilateral donor countries in Liberia and is working for “Better opportunities and tools to enable poor people to improve their living conditions” and by the end of the current strategy period “improved conditions for inclusive and sustainable economic development, with focus on small-scale and sustainable farming” should be achieved. Agriculture is the sector that employs the largest share of the population, figures range between 50-70 percent, and they are primarily engaged subsistence farming. According to the World Bank, though agriculture and fisheries represent a declining share of Liberia’s GDP, 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. In order to create jobs and generate more income for people living in poverty, including smallholders, the Embassy has commissioned Adam Smith International to implement a Market Systems Development project that targets or has targeted several of these agricultural sub-sectors.

1.2 Evaluation rationale

The Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia wishes to undertake a decentralised end-of-programme evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness and potential sustainability of GROW interventions and formulate recommendations as an input to upcoming preparations of a new phase of the programme. It is in the strategic interest of the Embassy for an external and independent evaluation of the programme to provide recommendations for future approaches, organisational structure, interventions and sector selection to support inclusive and sustainable economic GROWth and development in Liberia, focussing on agricultural value chains.

1.3 Evaluation object: Project to be evaluated

The evaluation object is GROW Liberia and the geographical scope is the Republic of Liberia. In practice, the project activities have been focussed on the Counties of Lofa, Nimba, Bong, Marghibi and Montserrado.

GROW (formerly known as “Support to the Development of Markets and Value Chains in Agriculture in Liberia, 2013 - 2018”) is a Swedish-funded Market Systems Development Programme focused on

economic GROWth and income gain within Liberia's agriculture sector. The contract for GROW was awarded in 2012 and is delivered through commercial supplier Adam Smith International.

GROW mobilised in 2013 and is anticipated to come to a close in April 2020. In March 2018 Sida granted a no-cost extension, which extended the project from December 31 2018 to December 31, 2019. In April 2019 Sida granted a no-cost extension until April 2020, and in September 2019 extended GROW's contract period until June 30 2020 and increased the budget with a 10% top-up fund to maximise impact and returns.

Full implementation has been running over 6 years. The beginning of GROW followed the first term of government after the end of the civil war and Liberia's economic recovery. During the implementation phase the Ebola epidemic also took hold. While initially the team only looked at three markets (oil palm, rubber and vegetables), when GROW reengaged after Ebola, cocoa was added, along with agro-processing. A mid-term evaluation was carried out in May 2017. In programme Years 4 to 6, GROW refined its sector selection and interventions which has significantly increased reported results. By the end of December 2018, 17,000 farming households have benefitted through interventions supported by GROW with total increased net income of USD 4.4M. A majority of programme impact and systemic change has come from cocoa and vegetable sectors from 2017 to date. By April 2020, 25,000 households are expected to benefit from the intervention and a total increase in their income is estimated to USD 12.2M. The target group is smallholder farmers with a specific focus on women and youth but the project works along the whole value chains according to the MSD approach which implies that the actors that are primarily engaged are MSMEs, cooperatives and government entities.

The strategic framework provides GROW with a consistent development rationale and theory of change which informs all programme analysis, action, management and learning. It reinforces the ambition to deliver systemic change that tackles the underlying causes of underperformance, rather than dealing with their symptoms, while also highlighting our dual objectives of pro-poor GROWth and peace building. Early programme research explored Liberia's history of instability, and it's current state today, identifying a range of Stability drivers. These were then evolved into a Stability Framework documented in Appendix 7a of the GROW Programme Document 2014-2018 and from which the development programmes theory of change and innovative pro-poor, pro-stability approach which will form the cornerstone of GROW's vision and mode of operations.

The theory of change is at the heart of the programme and is applied in each sector. It is based on the following logic:

- » **Conventional M4P Strategic Framework:** *Interventions*, which are facilitative or catalytic activities and inputs from the programme, lead to *systemic changes* in market systems (such as changes in information, services, rules, linkages) resulting in better functioning markets, improved policies and increased market system capacity. Better functioning markets and increased capacity leads to enhanced *GROWth and access* for poor men and women which in turn leads to *poverty reduction*.
- » **Integrating Stability into the Strategic Framework:** *Interventions*, which are activities and inputs that integrate an understanding of the underlying drivers of conflict, stimulate sustainable changes in market systems that increase GROWth and opportunities for at-risk groups, thereby raising the opportunity cost for engaging in violence and conflict. This leads to enhanced *socially inclusive GROWth* which in turn leads to greater *peace and stability*.

The total budgeted amount is SEK 155.1M which cover fees, reimbursable costs and an intervention fund. To date, SEK 147.4M of this has been disbursed. In addition, the Embassy has contracted FCG

Sweden for monitoring consultancy services delivered by Nathan at a total contract amount of SEK 2.1M, of which SEK 1.6M has been spent. Nathan also did the 2017 mid-term review referred to above.

For further information, the project proposal is attached as Annex D.

The intervention logic or theory of change of the project shall be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

2. The assignment

2.1 Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users

The purpose or intended use of the evaluation is to provide the Embassy, Sida and their partners an understanding of what has been achieved while also informing design of a follow-up phase of the programme with recommendations and inputs for the next phase of GROW Liberia.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia, Liberia, the Ministry of Agriculture and Adam Smith International.

The evaluation is to be designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users and tenderers shall elaborate in the tender how this will be ensured during the evaluation process. Sida should be kept informed. The final report will be shared with other stakeholders in the Liberian agricultural sector.

During the inception phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

2.2 Evaluation scope

The evaluation is expected to build from the mid-term review. The evaluation will assess the programme design and delivery of outputs, outcome, and impact. It will examine the overall programme management and monitoring and evaluation system. The review will evaluate the assumptions of the current GROW log frame and test the Theory of Change based on programme learning and results.

It should encompass a literature review, interviews with the GROW team, as well as Sida, and extensive field interviews with partners (such as agro-input dealers and cocoa cooperatives) and other market actors such as village coordinators (cocoa), sales agents (vegetables) and target beneficiaries.

The evaluation should consider the challenges of operating in the Liberian context with a difficult operating environment, weak private sector, information and trust challenges in the value chain, as well as widespread failures in public service provision.

It should culminate in a series of recommendations for sector, design, and management that can be brought forth for a second phase of the program.

If needed, the scope of the evaluation may be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

2.3 Evaluation objective: Criteria and questions

The objective of this evaluation is to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of GROW Liberia and formulate recommendations as an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase of the project.

The evaluation questions are:

Relevance

- To which extent has the project conformed to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries and donor policies?

Effectiveness

- To which extent have the project contributed to intended outcomes? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Has the M&E system delivered robust and useful information that could be used to assess progress towards outcomes and contribute to learning?
- To what extent has lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust project/programme implementation?

Impact

- What is the overall impact of the project/programme in terms of direct or indirect, negative and positive results?
- Has the project contributed to poverty reduction? How?

Sustainability

- Is it likely that the benefits (outcomes) of the project are sustainable?

Questions are expected to be developed in the tender by the tenderer and further developed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

2.4 Evaluation approach and methods

It is expected that the evaluator describes and justifies an appropriate evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection in the tender. The evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report.

Limitations to the chosen approach/methodology and methods shall be made explicit by the evaluator and the consequences of these limitations discussed in the tender. The evaluator shall to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address them. A clear distinction is to be made between evaluation approach/methodology and methods.

A *gender responsive* approach/methodology, methods, tools and data analysis techniques should be used.

Sida's approach to evaluation is *utilization-focused*, which means the evaluator should facilitate the *entire evaluation process* with careful consideration of how everything that is done will affect the use of the evaluation. It is therefore expected that the evaluators, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) methodology and methods for

data collection that create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, evaluators should ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

2.5 Organisation of evaluation management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia. The intended users are the Embassy, Sida, the Liberian Ministry of Agriculture and Adam Smith International. The intended users of the evaluation form a steering group, which has contributed to and agreed on the ToR for this evaluation. The steering group is a decision-making body. It will approve the inception report and the final report of the evaluation. The steering group will participate in the start-up meeting of the evaluation, as well as in the debriefing/validation workshop where preliminary findings and conclusions are discussed.

2.6 Evaluation quality

All Sida's evaluations shall conform to OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation¹. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation². The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

2.7 Time schedule and deliverables

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the inception report. The evaluation shall be carried out 27 January – 10 April 2020. The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase.

The table below lists key deliverables for the evaluation process. Alternative deadlines for deliverables may be suggested by the consultant and negotiated during the inception phase.

Deliverables	Participants	Deadlines
1. Start-up meeting at the Embassy of Sweden/Skype	Embassy of Sweden, Ministry of Agriculture, ASI, evaluators	27 January 2020
2. Draft inception report		Tentative 31 January 2020
3. Inception meeting Embassy of Sweden	Embassy of Sweden, Ministry of Agriculture, ASI, evaluators	Tentative 17 February 2020
4. Comments from intended users to evaluators (alternatively these may be sent to evaluators ahead of the inception meeting)		Tentative 12 February 2020

¹ DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, OECD, 2010.

² Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

5. Data collection, analysis, report writing and quality assurance	Evaluators	17 February – 6 March 2020
6. Debriefing/validation workshop (meeting)	Embassy of Sweden, Ministry of Agriculture, ASI, evaluators	6 March 2020
7. Draft evaluation report		Tentative 20 March 2020
8. Comments from intended users to evaluators		Tentative 27 March 2020
9. Final evaluation report		10 April 2020

The inception report will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by the Embassy before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. The inception report should be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, present the evaluation approach/methodology (including how a utilization-focused and gender responsive approach will be ensured), methods for data collection and analysis as well as the full evaluation design. A clear distinction between the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. A specific time and work plan, including number of hours/working days for each team member, for the remainder of the evaluation should be presented. The time plan shall allow space for reflection and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

The final report shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final report should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report Template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages. The evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection used shall be clearly described and explained in detail and a clear distinction between the two shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. Findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations should reflect a gender analysis/an analysis of identified and relevant cross-cutting issues. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions. Recommendations should be specific, directed to relevant stakeholders and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term. The report should be no more than 35 pages excluding annexes (including Terms of Reference and Inception Report). The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation³.

The evaluator shall, upon approval of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report for decentralised evaluations and submit it to Nordic Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to sida@nordicmorning.com, always with a copy to the responsible Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's Evaluation Unit (evaluation@sida.se). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field. The following information must always be included in the order to Nordic Morning:

1. The name of the consulting company.
2. The full evaluation title.

³ Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014

3. The invoice reference "ZZ980601".
4. Type of allocation "sakanslag".
5. Type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas.

2.8 Evaluation team qualification

In addition to the qualifications already stated in the framework agreement for evaluation services, the evaluation team shall include the following competencies: high level of Market Systems Development competence, competence in agriculture sector reform, including agro-inputs, rubber and cocoa, as well as thorough and updated knowledge about the Liberian context.

It is desirable that the evaluation team includes the following competencies: Monitoring and Results Measurement expertise inline with DCED standards.

A CV for each team member shall be included in the call-off response. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience.

It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. It is highly recommended that local consultants are included in the team if appropriate.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

2.9 Financial and human resources

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is SEK 1,200,000.

The contact person at the Swedish Embassy is Kaspar Nilsen, Programme Manager – Specialist in Market Development, Agriculture and Rural Development. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant documentation will be provided by Winifred Valentine, Programme Administrator at the Swedish Embassy.

Contact details to intended users (cooperation partners, Swedish Embassies, other donors etc.) will be provided by Kaspar Nilsen, Swedish Embassy.

The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics like requesting meetings, booking interviews, preparing the visit to Liberia including arranging accommodation, transport, visas including any necessary security arrangements.

3. Annexes

Annex A: List of key documentation

[Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Liberia, 2016-2020](#)

Terms of Reference for GROW Liberia

Tender Adam Smith International

Latest Annual report

Latest Conclusion on Performance

Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. project or programme)	
Title of the evaluation object	Markets & Value Chains in Agriculture Liberia
ID no. in PLANIt	52090011
Dox no./Archive case no.	UF2013/67202
Activity period (if applicable)	01/03/2013 – 30/04/2020
Agreed budget (if applicable)	SEK 155,100,000
Main sector	Market development
Name and type of implementing organisation	Adam Smith International, consultancy firm
Aid type	Project
Swedish strategy	Liberia
Information on the evaluation assignment	
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	Embassy of Sweden, Monrovia
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Kaspar Nilsen
Timing of evaluation (mid-term, end-of-programme, ex-post or other)	End-of-programme
ID no. in PLANIt (if other than above).	

Annex C: Decentralised evaluation report template

Annex D : Project/Programme document

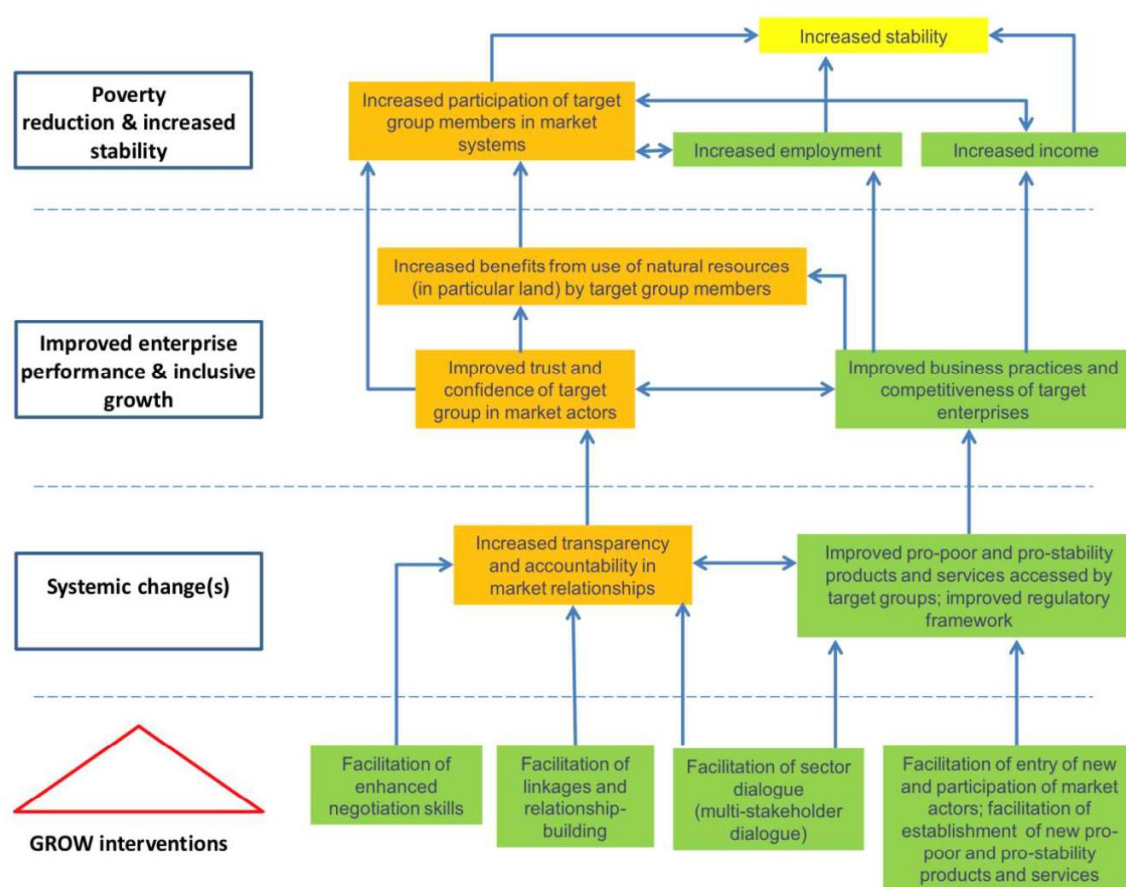
Annex 2 – Evaluation matrix

Questions raised in ToRs (revised EQs)	Indicators to be used in Evaluation	Methods	Sources	Availability and Reliability of Data /comments
Relevance				
EQ1. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of its target group and to Sida strategies?	Alignment of project intentions to Sida country strategy 2016-2020 Alignment to other Sida priorities (gender and environmental considerations) Relevance to priorities of government and private sector: - Adequacy of diagnostic and process leading up to sector selection - Adequacy of diagnostic and process leading up to intervention selection Relevance to priorities of smallholder farmers: - Diagnostic and process leading up to intervention selection including any feedback from consultations with smallholders in cocoa and vegetables and considerations about value addition to farmers - Attention to inclusion of women's perspectives in these diagnostic and processes	Document review SSI	Sida strategies Sida appraisals Embassy of Sweden Sida Stockholm GROW design documents GROW consultation workshops and lists of participants GROW market, value chain and livelihood studies for cocoa and vegetables, analyses and cross cutting assessments GROW management team Sample of business partners Key government partners	Reports are available and remote interviews possible.
Effectiveness and Sustainability				
EQ2. To what extent did the project contribute to market system change? If so, how and for whom? If not, why not?	Facilitation role of GROW: - Systemic interventions introduced by GROW - Identification and selection of partners - Activities and tactics used in cocoa and vegetables to prompt adoption and adaptation and drive crowding in - Adequacy of organisational structure to deliver results Engagement of business partners: - Motivation for engaging in new practices - Contribution invested by partners (financial, non-financial) Uptake by partner businesses and government of GROW's systemic intervention: - Reported change brought about by the intervention for partner businesses (capacity, performance) including female led businesses - Intent and ability to continue and invest in pursuing the new practices - Factors affecting the realisation of change	Document review SSI KII	GROW annual reports GROW impact assessments GROW partner profile sheets GROW partner capacity assessment and follow up reports Trip reports New articles PIP and partnership agreements Partner capacity assessments and reports GROW partner reports and performance sheets/records GROW partner operational plans GROW partner market analysis of smallholder needs and satisfaction Sample of business partners Key government partners Sample of smallholder businesses including female led businesses Other donors/similar initiatives Regional and local authorities	Reports are available and remote interviews possible.

	Adoption of new practices in own business model indicating sustainability of adapted practices: - Independent investment in concrete plans to uphold, improve or expand adopted change - Factors affecting adoption			
EQ3. How well did the M&E system deliver robust and useful information to assess progress towards the achievement of outcomes and to generate learning as a basis for adapting the project during implementation	Relevance and adequacy of M&E system and data: - Rationale for indicator definition and responsiveness to management needs - Relevance of M&E framework, formats and plans for producing results on systemic change and for women - Adequacy of methods and design for data collection and validation Capacity to learn and adapt: - Use of iterative feedback to guide implementation - Actions taken to adjust interventions or stopping them based on M&E data	Document review SSI	M&E manual, framework, plan, formats and reporting templates for GROW and partners M&E management reports KPI data sheets (overall, partner level) GROW partner reports Trip reports Impact assessments Case stories GROW management and staff particularly M&E staff Sample of GROW's business partners Government partners	Data is considered available and a-priori reliable as in line with DCED standards, unless the evaluation analysis shows otherwise
Impact				
EQ4. What change in the wider market system?	Expansion/upscaling of pilot intervention as non-targeted competing market actors copy practices adopted by targeted partners: - Crowding-in of similar actors copying or adapting the pilot - Factors affecting crowding in Response by non-competing market actors to change in market behaviour by adjusting their practices: - Reported change in market among non-competing companies (e.g. entry of new market players, emergence of new products/services)	Document review SSI KII	GROW annual report GROW impact assessments GROW partner reports Trip reports Case stories Other M&E data News articles GROW management and staff Sample of GROW partners Sample of peer competitors not targeted by GROW Government partners Donors and similar initiatives Regional and local authorities	Documents are available and remote interviews with key informants planned. Potential challenge in identifying and accessing non-targeted stakeholders
EQ5. What change did the project bring about to smallholder farmers?	Change for smallholders including female smallholder businesses: - Reported change in access to new products and services - Reported change in business capacity and performance - Reported change in jobs created (also for women) - Factors affecting the realisation of these changes	Document review SSI KII	GROW annual report GROW impact assessments GROW partner reports GROW partner client/cooperative member sheets Case stories Social media Other M&E data GROW management and staff Sample of GROW partners Government partners Sample of smallholder businesses Donors and similar initiatives Regional and local authorities	Data on smallholder farmer business and job creation for women is assumed to be available- assumed because DCED impact indicators merge all types of stakeholders into one category (e.g. men, women and businesses with increased income). Furthermore, it is to be confirmed whether data on job created indicated who made the recruitment. The analysis of available data will reveal whether this is possible

Annex 3 – Theory of change of GROW

GROW theory of change presented in Y2 Annual Report (GROW, 2016f)



Annex 4 – Interview guides

A. Draft interview guide for GROW

Management

1. A bit of background about project history and progression over time
2. What is GROW's vision, strategy and approach?
3. How does GROW know its interventions are relevant to business partners and to government?
4. In what way has GROW addressed the needs of women in design, implementation and monitoring?
5. How does GROW know it is addressing key market system constraints that effectively benefit smallholder farmers?
6. What would you say are GROW's key achievements? What made that possible?
7. What would you say are GROW's key challenges (programmatic, organisation)? How were these addressed?
8. To what extent (how often) would you say that decision making regarding the project has been informed by M&E data? Why/why not? Please provide examples.
9. What other feedback has management used to inform adjustments made to the strategic direction of the project? Please provide examples.
10. What can be done to better improve the relevance and performance of GROW in the future?
11. What would be needed to achieve that?

Key project staff

1. What is your role in the project?
2. What was the basis for the selection of the value chains?
3. How were the specific interventions identified and designed? Who was involved and how?
4. How were market partners identified and selected?
5. What motivated them to participate in your support activities? How did they contribute?
6. What would you say are the key results achieved for you partners? Why?
7. What would you say are the key challenges faced by partners? Why? How were these addressed?
8. To what extent has monitoring data and other feedback informed adjustments over time? Examples.
9. To what extent do you think (or know) that partners will continue with the improvements or versions of them? Examples.
10. How do you know that the project is contributing to changing the way the market system works?
11. How do you know that improvements you have been promoting are gaining scale? In what way are they gaining scale?
12. In what way did the project improve the living conditions of smallholder farmers? Female small holders?
13. What can be done better in the future to improve the impact of GROW on smallholder farmers (including women)?
14. What would be needed to achieve that?

Additional for M&E staff

1. What does the M&E system monitor?
2. How does the M&E system work? Please describe the M&E framework, plans, formats and tools, types of M&E data/reports generated, partner reporting, other iterative feedback, M&E feedback loop.
3. How were indicators defined, by whom and why?
4. What data collection design and methods are used to generate the different types of M&E data?
5. How often is data collected? For what? For whom?
6. What data validation mechanisms are in place- also at the level of partner reporting?
7. How useful do you think the M&E system has been in generating useful data that management can use to make decisions about the strategic direction of the project? Why/Why not? Examples of how data collected has reoriented project direction.
8. How much of this data informs about adoption, adaptation, expansion and responses to the market system? Results for women?
9. What other feedback has informed the direction of the project?
10. What do you think can be done so the M&E system can produce more robust data?
11. What do you think can be done so the M&E system can produce more useful data?
12. What would be needed for that to happen?

B. Draft interview guide for GROW partners

1) Private sector/business partners and cooperatives (in-depth interview)

1. Bit of background about business, client reach, collaboration with other projects
2. In what way did you change the way you work in the last 2-3 years?
3. What made you want to try new ideas of doing business? How does that respond to your needs?
4. What kind of contribution did you invest to benefit from project support? (financial or non-financial)
5. In what way were you involved in identifying the type of support you are receiving?
6. In what way were you involved in deciding the content of activities to be implemented?
7. To what extent do you feel you have had the chance to provide feedback on how the support you received or improvements you have made is working?
8. Do you feel that your feedback helped changed the way things were working? Examples of feedback taken onboard.
9. In what way did you benefit from this new way of doing things? (prompts: improved sales, business income, business operations, market reach, relations with other business, better rules and regulations).
10. What do you think helped these results happen? What were the main difficulties?
11. Do you think you will continue with the improvements you have made in the future? Why/why not?
12. Do you think you have the capacity to continue to utilize the improvements you have made (or modifications of it) without further support? Why/why not?
13. What kind of plans do you currently have for making such an investment? Has it kicked off?
14. Have you noticed whether similar businesses have started making similar types of improvements as the ones you made (with GROW's support)? Examples. Why do you think they are doing it?
15. What changes have you noticed in your suppliers' performance or in your relationships with them? Are these changes related in any way to the improvements you have made with GROW's support?
16. What changes have you noticed in your buyers' performance or in your relationship with them? Are these changes related in any way to the improvements you have made with GROW's support?
17. What changes have you noticed in the past two years in the overall performance or activities in the sector? Are there any new players? Are there new policies or regulations? Are there more service providers? Have there been any major investments? Examples? Do any of these changes relate to the things GROW has been doing? How so?

2) Government

1. Why was it important for your institution to be part of the project?
2. How does that respond to government priorities?
3. In what way were you involved in
 - a. identifying the sectors of intervention of GROW?
 - b. in deciding the content of interventions to be implemented?
4. To what extent do you feel you have had the chance to provide feedback to GROW and shape the direction of activities during implementation? Examples of feedback taken onboard
5. What change did you observe in terms of the capacity and performance of GROW's partners?
6. How did this affect smallholder farmers in areas where GROW works? Female farmers? Women in smallholder farming communities? Are there other similar initiatives ongoing there?
7. What change did you observe or experience in terms of relationship building and collaboration among the private sector? Between the private sector and government? Others? Examples
8. What change did GROW manage to instigate in terms of better rules and regulations? How do these benefit smallholder farmers?
9. What do you consider to be GROW's specific characteristics and added value compared to other types of support/support from other institutions?
10. What would be your advice for GROW moving forward?

C. Draft interview guides for smallholder farming businesses (in-depth interview)

(we will fill out profile sheets for farmers met in which we can capture some key features of those we interview, e.g. whether member of cooperative, size of plot, input providers, # household members)

1. What are the main constraints facing smallholder farmers like you?
2. Who is helping you change this situation? *(prompt: Other projects in the area? What do they do?)*
3. If a member of a cooperative: How has your cooperative helped you deal with these constraints? Why/why not.
4. To what extent do you think these constraints have become easier to deal with in the last 2-3 years? Why do you think that is the case?
5. What change did you notice in the cocoa/vegetable sector over the last 2-3 years? Why? *(prompt: More or less people growing cocoa/vegetables? Why?)*
6. To what extent do you feel that you now have better knowledge about for instance GAP? Other topics? Examples
7. How has this affected your capacity as a farmer? Your business performance? Examples
8. To what extent has this led to an expansion of your business? An increase in business income?
9. What other factors would you say have helped improve your business?
10. Do you feel you now have better commercial relations with other businesses with which you work? With new businesses? How did that happen?
11. Have you or other growing businesses you know in your community hired people from the community as a result? Any women?
12. Did you notice whether there are more women in your community being hired by smallholders like yourself or other growing businesses that work with smallholder farmers like yourself? Examples
13. Do you find that there is now a wider choice of products, services, information that are available for smallholders like yourself compared to three years ago? Examples of products/services.
14. To what extent are these accessible to smallholders? Affordable?
15. Do women face a particular challenge in accessing these services/products compared to men?
16. What do you think should be done to improve living conditions of smallholder farmers like yourself?

D. Draft interview guide for key informants and peers of project partners

1) Key informants

1. Brief background of what they do
2. What kind of initiatives are happening in Liberia in cocoa /vegetables? Who are the main players? Where do they operate? To what extent have you been involved in these initiatives?
3. Are you aware of the improvements promoted and supported by the activities of GROW?
4. What kind of changes have you observed in the performance and business environment of the cocoa / vegetables value chains in the last 2-3 years?
5. What do you think triggered this change?
6. Do you think it has contributed to improving the income of smallholder farming businesses? Why/why not?
7. Have you -or do you know of others who have- considered making similar improvements as the ones promoted by GROW? Examples. Why not.
8. In your opinion, what are the most important market constraints facing smallholder farmers including women?
9. How can these be best addressed?
10. Do you know of any farming system or livelihood studies for farmers done in Bong, Lofa or Nimba? If so, could we get a copy?

2) Peers of project partners

1. What changes or improvements have you made in the past 2 to 3 years to the way you do business or manage relations with buyers and suppliers? What prompted you to make these changes? What support did you receive, if any, in making them?
2. What changes have you noticed in your suppliers' performance or in your relationships with them? What has triggered these changes?
3. What changes have you noticed in your buyers' performance or in your relationship with them? What has triggered these changes?
4. What changes have you noticed in the past two years in the overall performance or activities in the sector? Are there any new players? Are there new policies or regulations? Are there more service providers? Have there been any major investments? Examples? What has triggered these changes?
5. Are you aware of the improvements promoted and supported by the activities of GROW? Are these of interest to you? Have you tried to work with GROW? Explain

Annex 5 – Bibliography

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Annex 6 - Work plan

Work plan 2020

	September					October				November					December			
	w36	w37	w38	w39	w40	w41	w42	w43	w44	w45	w46	w47	w48	w49	w50	w51	w52	w53
Inception Phase*																		
Meeting to discuss/confirm timeline, scope and contact persons (NIRAS, GROW, MoA and Embassy)- 10 Sept																		
2 meetings to discuss and agree on evaluation framework, scope, comments, data collection planning (GROW and Niras) (pre input w38, and post input w40 on eval framework and indicators that matter), 17 Sept and 29 Sept respectively																		
Dispatch of documentation noted in draft inception report p. 25 (GROW)-25 Sept																		
Input from GROW on evaluation framework and scope (ToC, EQ indicators)- 25 Sept																		
Input from GROW on stakeholders to be consulted, schedule, modality, language and contacts- 28 Sept																		
Revision of inception report																		
Submission of revised inception report 7 Oct**																		
Comments/no-objection sent by Stakeholders (12 Oct)																		
Finalisation of inception report																		
Submission of final inception report (14 Oct)																		
Approval/No objection of inception report (16 Oct)																		
Data Collection Phase																		
Documentary review and analysis																		
Team MSD workshop led by MSD expert/thematic lead- 2 Oct																		
Team data collection preparation workshop and daily debriefing meetings																		
Organisation of remote meetings with stakeholders and field visits																		
Remote (international and national evaluators) and face to face interviews in Monrovia (national consultants)																		
Field visits (national evaluators) with possible remote participation of international evaluators																		
Data Analysis and Reporting Phase***																		
Data analysis and Report writing																		
Submission of Draft Report (November 27)																		
Feedback from stakeholders on draft report (December 4)																		
Finalization of the report																		
Submission of Final Report (Dec 8)																		
Approval of final report (Dec 13)																		

* The proposed inception phase stretches over three weeks to ensure that GROW engages in shaping the content of the evaluation framework and issues that are relevant and matter during the revision of the inception report

** Remains unchanged from proposed workplan in May 2020

Annex 3 - List of persons met

GROW team

Name	Position/title	Country	Location
Representative	Team Leader	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Programme Manager	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Technical Director	US	-
Representative	Project director	UK	-
Representative	Deputy Team Leader	Fiji	-
Representative	Principle Manager	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Results Measurement Specialist	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Senior Results Measurement Specialist	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Intervention Manager	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Agronomist	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Business adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Senior Business Adviser	Canada	Victoria
Representative	Cocoa and Business Investment Adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Policy Adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Business Adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Gender Adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Senior Business Adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Business Development Adviser	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Field Researcher	Liberia	Lofa
Representative	Gender advisor	Germany	-

Sida

Name	Organisation	Position/title	County
Representative	Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia	Programme Officer, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development	Liberia
Representative	Sida	Interim programme officer	Sweden
Representative	Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia	Programme Officer, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development	Liberia

Representative	Nathan	M&E consultant	UK
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Partners - Remote interviews

Name	Organisation	Position/title	Country	District
<i>Government actors</i>				
Representative	Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	Principal Economist	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	MoA Technical committee	Director for sectoral coordination/chair of technical committee	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	LACRA	Director general	Liiberia	Monrovia
<i>Cocoa sector</i>				
Representative	Sustainable commodities	Accountant	Liberia	Nimba
Representative	Sustainable commodities	N/A	Liberia	Nimba
Representative	Atlantic cocoa	CEO	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Tradelink	Operations manager	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Footprint	CEO	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Footprint	N/A	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	IDH/Cocoa Platform	Programme manager	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Solidaridad	Head of Liberian Cocoa Sector Improvement Programme	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands/Centre for the promotion of imports from developing countries (CBI)	Programme manager	Netherlands	NA
Representative	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands/CBI	Cocoa consultant	Germany	-
Representative	LUSH	Investment in supply chain manager	Canada	Vancouver
Representative	LUSH	Ethical buying manager	Canada	Vancouver

Representative	Uncommon cocoa	Director of Global Operations and Sourcing	USA	California
Representative	-	Researcher	Netherlands	NA
<i>Vegetables sector</i>				
Representative	T-JAL	CEO	Guinea	-
Representative	T-JAL	Manager Sierra Leone & Liberia	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	T-JAL	Finance manager Liberia	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	Organic matters	CEO	Liberia	Monrovia
Representative	National agro-input dealers association	President	Liberia	Monrovia

Partners (and peers)- Face to face interviews in the field

Name	Organisation	Position/title	County	District
Representative	Arise and Shine Farmers Supply	CEO	Bong	Salala
Representative	Arise and Shine Farmers Supply	Farmer	Bong	Salala
Representative	Arise and Shine Farmers Supply	Sales Agent	Bong	Salala
Representative	Ema Agriculture Business Center	Sales Person	Bong	Jorquelleh
Representative	Farm (Cassava)	Farmer	Bong	Kpaii
Representative	Farm (Pepper & Bitter ball)	Farmer	Bong	Salala
Representative	Farm (Pepper & Bitter ball)	Farmer	Bong	Suakoko
Representative	Farm (Pepper & Bitter ball)	Farmer	Bong	Salala
Representative	Farm (Pepper & Eggplant)	Farmer	Bong	Salala
Representative	J. T. Dobson Multi-Agriculture Business Center	Owner/CEO	Bong	Salala
Representative	J. T. Dobson Multi-Agriculture Business Center	Sales Agent	Bong	Salala
Representative	Lorena Business Center	Agro-Dealer	Bong	Kpaii
Representative	Lorena Business Center	Sales Agent	Bong	Kpaii
Representative	Quapolu Business Center	General Manager	Bong	Salala
Representative	Quapolu Business Center	Sales Agent	Bong	Salala

Representative	Suakoko Agriculture Business Center	General Manager	Bong	Suakoko
Representative	Suakoko Agriculture Business Center	Sales Agent	Bong	Suakoko
Representative	United Women for Sustainable Development	CEO	Bong	Jorquelleh
Representative	United Women for Sustainable Development	Farmer	Bong	Jorquelleh
Representative	United Women for Sustainable Development	Farmer	Bong	Jorquelleh
Representative	VADEMCO	Operations Manager	Bong	Kpaii
Representative	EBJEL Flomo Legacy Farm	Field Supervisor	Lofa	Salayea
Representative	EBJEL Flomo Legacy Farm	Business Manager	Lofa	Salayea
Representative	Farmer (Eggplant, Pepper)	Farmer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Farmer (Rice, Pepper)	Farmer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Farmer (Rice, Pepper)	Farmer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Foya Maliendo Cooperative	Farmer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Foya Maliendo Cooperative	Farmer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Foya Rural Women Cooperative	Chairlady	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Foya Rural Women Cooperative	Gender Officer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Foya Rural Women Cooperative	Business Manager	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Foya Rural Women Cooperative	Farmer	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Jacob F. Tomei Enterprise Store	General Manager	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Jacob F. Tomei Enterprise Store	Sales Agent	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Maliendoe Farmers' Cooperative	Warehouse Supervisor	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Maliendoe Farmers' Cooperative	Manager	Lofa	Foya
Representative	Sebehill Farmers Multipurpose Society	VC/Farmer	Lofa	Wanhassa
Representative	Sebehill Farmers Multipurpose Society	Farmer	Lofa	Wanhassa

Representative	Sebehill Farmers Multipurpose Society	Farmer	Lofa	Wanhassa
Representative	Sebehill Farmers Multipurpose Society	VC/Farmer	Lofa	Wanhassa
Representative	SebeHill Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Business Manager	Lofa	Kolahun
Representative	SebeHill Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Warehouse Supervisor	Lofa	Kolahun
Representative	SebeHill Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Accountant	Lofa	Kolahun
Representative	Voinjama District Farmers' Cooperative	Farmer (Cocoa)	Lofa	Voinjama
Representative	Voinjama District Farmers' Cooperative	Farmer (Cocoa) / VC	Lofa	Voinjama
Representative	Voinjama District Farmers' Cooperative	Farmer (Cocoa) / VC	Lofa	Voinjama
Representative	Voinjama District Farmers' Cooperative	Finance Officer	Lofa	Voinjama
Representative	Voinjama District Farmers' Cooperative	Farmer (Cocoa)	Lofa	Voinjama
Representative	Voinjama District Farmers' Cooperative	Business Manager	Lofa	Voinjama
Representative	Divine Lomsom Agro Business	Sales Person	Montserrado	Paynesville
Representative	Divine Success Agriculture Center	CEO	Montserrado	Greater Monrovia
Representative	Farm Center General Supply	Owner/CEO	Montserrado	Paynesville
Representative	Agriculture General Supplies Store	General Manager	Nimba	Gbain-Garr
Representative	Agriculture General Supplies Store	Farmer	Nimba	Gbain-Garr
Representative	Agriculture General Supply Store	Sales Agent	Nimba	Bain-Garr
Representative	Becky Agro	Sales Manager	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Becky Agro	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Becky Agro	Sales Agent	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Boe-Kparblee Cocoa Farmer Cooperative	Business Manager	Nimba	Kparblee
Representative	Boe-Kparblee Cocoa Farmer Cooperative	Chairperson	Nimba	Kparblee
Representative	Bo-Kpar Cocoa Farmers Cooperative	Farmer	Nimba	Korblee

Representative	Bo-Kpar Cocoa Farmers Cooperative	Farmer	Nimba	Korblee
Representative	Bo-Kpar Cocoa Farmers Cooperative	Farmer	Nimba	Korblee
Representative	Bo-Kpar Cocoa Farmers Cooperative	Farmer	Nimba	Korblee
Representative	Farmer (Cabbage, pepper, okra)	Farmer	Nimba	Bain-Garr
Representative	Farmer (Rice, pepper)	Farmer	Nimba	Bain-Garr
Representative	Farmer (Rice, pepper, bitter ball)	Farmer	Nimba	Bain-Garr
Representative	Gbao-Kwadoe Farmers' Mutil-purpose Cooperative	Farmer / VC	Nimba	Zoe-Geh
Representative	Gbao-Kwadoe Farmers' Mutil-purpose Cooperative	Farmer / VC	Nimba	Zoe-Geh
Representative	Gbao-Kwadoe Farmers' Mutil-purpose Cooperative	Chairpeson	Nimba	Zoe-Geh
Representative	Gbao-Kwadoe Farmers' Mutil-purpose Cooperative	Farmer	Nimba	Zoe-Geh
Representative	Gbao-Kwadoe Farmers' Mutil-purpose Cooperative	Business Manager	Nimba	Zoe-Geh
Representative	Gbao-Kwadoe Farmers' Mutil-purpose Cooperative	Farmer / VC	Nimba	Zoe-Geh
Representative	Jack Agro Business Center	General Manager	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Jack Agro Business Center	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Jack Agro Business Center	Sales Agent	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Jack Agro Business Center	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Jack Agro Business Center	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Kwakerseh	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Kwakerseh	Tree Crop/Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Kwakerseh	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn
Representative	Kwakerseh	Farmer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mahn

Representative	Kwakeseh Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative	Gender Officer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Kwakeseh Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative	Business Manager	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Kwakeseh Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative	Warehouse Clerk	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Kwakeseh Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative	Warehouse Supervisor	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Kwapetah Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative	Business Manager	Nimba	Zehnla
Representative	Kwapetah Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative	Chairperson	Nimba	Zehnla
Representative	Monleh Enterprise	Gender Officer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Monleh Enterprise	Tree Crop Officer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Monleh Enterprise	CEO	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Monleh Enterprise	Act. Business Manager	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Monleh Enterprise	Field Officer	Nimba	Saclepea-Mah
Representative	Rain Forest Agriculture Enterprise	General Manager	Nimba	Gbain-Garr
Representative	Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise	Sales Agent	Nimba	Bain-Garr

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 GROW (undated): Operating expense sheet
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 GROW (undated): Stock control card
 GROW (undated): Current asset list
 GROW (undated): Asset needs list
 Agro Up (undated): Lessons in Good Agricultural Practices for cocoa farmers training manual
 No author (2020): GAP plan 2020
 GROW (undated): VC or LF contract
 GROW (undated): GAP training attendance sheet for cocoa farmers
 GROW (undated): GAP training attendance sheet for village coordinators and lead farmers
 GROW (undated): Master farmer database
 GROW & Agro Up (undated): Lead farmers training good agricultural practices (GAP) on quality seed selection and land preparation
 GROW & Agro Up (undated): Lead farmers training good agricultural practices (GAP) on fertilizer application management
 GROW (undated): Cooperative GAP training design template
 GROW (undated): Post-harvest Lesson #1: Produce the highest quality cocoa
 GROW (2020): GAP training plan
 GROW (undated): VC/LF and agent selection criteria, responsibilities and compensation
 GROW (2019): Traceability and transparency, and record keeping
 GROW (2019): GROW Liberia, Atlantic cocoa and Nimba cooperatives kickoff meeting
 No author (undated): Map o Liberia's cocoa cooperatives
 No author (undated): Policy workshop Exporters association
 Exporters association of Liberia (2019): Exporters association review of cocoa and coffee regulations

Vegetables sector documents

GROW (2020): Introduction, Vegetables sector
 GROW (2020): Learning Note, Agro-dealer sales agent model
 GROW (2020): Establishing agro-inputs distribution in Liberia
 GROW (2020): Duty waiver for agricultural inputs
 GROW (2016): Vegetables market system analysis
 GROW (undated): Partnership Agreement: GROW and TJAL Enterprises
 TJAP (undated): TJAL Enterprises Liberia Inc, Sales and marketing strategy 2019-2020
 GROW (undated): TJAL Enterprises Liberia Inc, Sub-Distributor agreement
 GROW (2018): Agro-dealer development programme, The Blitz
 GROW (undated): Map of agro-inputs distributors and dealers that GROW partnered with
 GROW (undated): Agro-dealer development programme Phase 2, Acceptance and commitment letter
 GROW (undated): Agro-dealer development programme Phase 3, Acceptance and commitment letter

No author (undated): Agricultural General Supply Store Ganta, Nimba County, Business Strategy and Plan, July 2020-January 2021

GROW (2020): Agro-Dealer IMPT

GROW (2020): Distributors IMPT

GROW (2020): Policy IMPT

Republic of Liberia (2019) : Executive order 97, the suspension of tariff on agriculture products

GROW (2020): Agricultural inputs duty waiver campaigns, overview and impact

No author (undated): In conversation with Hon. Robert K. Fagans Sr., Deputy Minister for Agriculture on the merits of extending the duty waiver for agricultural inputs under Executive Order No. 97

GROW (undated): Re-designing subsidy programs to improve effectiveness

GROW (2020): Policy brief, Duty waiver for agricultural inputs important to farmers, Renewal of Executive Order 97 to extend duty waiver needed

No author (undated): Tax waiver on imported agricultural inputs marks important step in boosting farmers' productivity

No author (undated): Duty waiver to help attract critical, missing investment for Liberia's agricultural industry

GROW (undated): Transforming an agro-dealer's offering from a single shelf to a suite of products and services

No author (undated): Direct delivery projects miss the mark for agricultural development in Liberia

No author (undated): Ruptured global supply chains caused temporary shortages in Liberia

GROW (undated): When good intentions aren't enough: How free inputs harm farmers

GROW (undated): Seeds of change: Challenges and solutions to Liberia's agro-input supply

GROW (undated): Why do most of the tomatoes in Liberia come from Ivory Coast?

GROW (undated): How a depreciating currency is subduing Liberia's vegetable trade

GROW (undated): Marketing Sample - Agro-Dealer Devine Success Agriculture Centre

GROW (undated): Marketing Sample - Agro-Dealer Rain Forest Agriculture Enterprise

GROW (undated): Marketing Sample - Agro-Dealer Quapolu Business Centre

GROW (undated): Existing Agro dealers -ADP- Sales and marketing strategy 2019

GROW (undated): Agrodealers tracking templates, Agrodealer stock card

GROW (undated): Agents customer and sales tracker

GROW (undated): Sales agents GAP training attendance sheet record

GROW (undated): Sales Agents - Referral customers and earn more in 5 easy steps

GROW (undated): Sales agents Model Options

GROW (undated): Find and maintain sales agents in 6 easy steps

Agro Up (undated): Agronomy Guide, Quality seed selection (Local seeds)

Agro Up (undated): Business management training, Module 1: customer engagement

GROW (undated): Apply for duty waiver now

Thematic documents

DCED (2018): The 2018 reader on result management, an introduction to the DCED standards

DCED (2016): Harmonised indicators for private sector development

The Springfield Centre (2014): Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: a framework for managing and measuring systemic change processes, Briefing paper.

The Springfield Centre (2015): The Operational Guide for the Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) Approach, 2nd edition funded by SDC & DFID

Bohnet, Iris (2016): What Works: Gender Equality by Design



Decentralised Evaluation of GROW Liberia, Phase 1 – a Swedish-funded Market Systems Development project in agricultural value chains in Liberia 2013–2020

GROW is a market system development programme working with agricultural value chains in Liberia. The evaluation concludes that GROW is pertinent to national and private sector priorities, as well as Sida's strategies and gender equality priorities but more is to be invested in integrating environmental considerations. GROW addresses a set of market system constraints facing smallholder farmers and has been effective in piloting systemic interventions that have generally driven adoption with some signs of adaptation. Its monitoring and evaluation system is well established, but its indicators can be strengthened to be more specific and informative. As GROW effectively kicked-off current interventions in 2018, it is too premature to assess crowding-in and a wider market response. There are however some indications of such responses potentially emerging in the cocoa sector. GROW has contributed to improving access to products, services and especially new knowledge to smallholder farmers that translated into better capacities and business performance. Some challenges remain to be dealt with however to further improve the way the market works for the poor.

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