

INCEPTION REPORT

MID-TERM REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN.

Submitted to:

Conservation Trust Fund (CTF).

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Date: 1st November 2023

Technical Team

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1st November 2023

Brief Overview

Brief description of the assignment

Following a restructuring process due to the change of government in 2018, the CTF has a new Board, one of whose mandate was to develop a new strategic plan (SP). The plan is required to guide the strategic focus of CTF. To accomplish this task, the consulting firm, Inspiration Lifeline was hired to facilitate the development of a five-year SP for the Trust.

Fast forward, The Conservation Trust Fund Sierra Leone (CTF) Strategic Plan, which has been in force for the past two years is due for a mid-term review. While the midterm review of the CTF's Strategic Plan is essential to ensure the organization's effectiveness in achieving its goals and aligning with evolving national priorities, the review will also provide actionable recommendations to enhance the impact and sustainability of the CTF's conservation efforts as well as proactively respond to emerging issues, including Feed Salone program; Climate Change; and Environment Protection. In addition, the Mid-term review would consider and incorporate the amended act which should enhance and strengthen the Mandate of CTF.

The purpose of this Mid Term Review (MTR) was to review and evaluate the project approach, progress, and results to date against the agreed results framework indicators, with a focus on relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

The midterm review is focused primarily on internal learning and on informing project management's decisions about improving the implementation of the project to maximize the potential to achieve the targets and objectives. It will assess the potential of the interventions to reach the intended impact and assess the results of the activities that have been achieved since the start of the project in 2021 (incl. unintended, positive, and/or negative results) to draw recommendations for improvement of the project performance for the remainder of the project duration.

Objectives

The consultants recognize that the following objectives are set out to be addressed in the course of evaluating the CTF's performance in achieving its strategic objectives and goals outlined in the strategic plan.

- a) Assess the alignment of the CTF's strategies with the evolving needs and priorities of Sierra Leone's conservation and environmental landscape.
- b) Identify any challenges, risks, and opportunities that the CTF has encountered during the implementation of the plan.
- c) Provide recommendations for adjustments, improvements, and focus areas to address emerging issues including climate change, "Feed Salone" a food security initiative and flagship of the government during the remaining period of the strategic plan.

Scope of Work

The review will encompass various aspects of the CTF's operations and strategic plan, including, but not limited to:

- i. Progress towards achieving the strategic objectives and goals.
- ii. Financial performance, resource mobilization, and funding sources.
- iii. Stakeholder engagement and partnerships.
- iv. Community involvement and community-based conservation efforts.

- v. Alignment with national development goals, policies, and legal frameworks.
- vi. Risks, challenges, and opportunities encountered during implementation.
- vii. The extent to which emerging issues can be incorporated in the second half of the implementation of the strategy, to make it more viable and donor-friendly.

Deliverables

The midterm review is expected to produce the following key deliverables:

- 1) **Midterm review report:** A comprehensive report summarizing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- 2) **Presentation:** An in-person or virtual presentation of the review findings to the CTF Board of Trustees and stakeholders.
- 3) **Action plan:** A set of actionable recommendations for the CTF to consider for the remainder of the strategic plan period.
- 4) **Abridged report:** An abridged version of the review report composed of the key findings, recommendations strategic actions will be produced.
- 5) **An updated strategic plan or an addendum** to the current strategic plan, including an abridged version for sharing with donors and other key stakeholders.

Methodology and Approach

The purpose of this assignment is to conduct a mid-term review of the strategic plan for CTF. The process will follow the following steps:

- Review the Vision/Mission statement and its impact on decision-making.
- Review the current strategic plan and relevant business plans against new opportunities and risks.
- Investigate what has been missed and what should be incorporated into the revised strategic plan.
- Focus on the degree to which planned results are on target, and the areas that may require improvement.

Of course, the Strategic Plan review will take a phased process in which systematic actions will be taken from inception to the completion stage.

Phase 1: Initial preparation work:

This entails the collection and analysis of key documents by the consultant (existing strategic plan, annual report, financials, strategic and risk documents as agreed).

Phase 2: Strategic plan review facilitation:

1. Review the Vision/Mission statement and its impact on decision-making.
2. Review the current strategic plan and relevant business plans against new opportunities and risks.
3. Investigate what has been missed and what should be incorporated into the revised strategic plan.
4. Investigate any strategic assumptions that have changed and their impact on the strategic plan.
5. Discuss strategies for ensuring that the strategic plan is carried out at the various levels (Board, staff, partners, committees, etc), including reviewing the strategic plan regularly, and strategic thinking processes.

6. Strategies for embedding the strategic plan into performance measures and job descriptions at all levels of the organization.

The mid-term review of CTF's program strategic plan is a crucial step in ensuring that the program is on track to achieve its goals. Here are some of the key steps that we shall be following as part of the review exercise:

1. **Review the strategic plan:** We shall review the strategic plan to ensure that it is still relevant and aligned with the program's goals. We shall identify any changes that have occurred since the strategic plan was created and assess their impact on the program.
2. **Assess progress:** We shall evaluate the progress made towards achieving the goals set out in the strategic plan. We shall identify any areas where progress has been slow or where there have been setbacks.
3. **Identify strengths and weaknesses:** We shall identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program. This will help you to identify areas where improvements can be made.
4. **Engage stakeholders:** We shall engage stakeholders in the review process. This will help you to get feedback on the program and identify areas where improvements can be made.
5. **Develop an action plan:** Based on the findings of the review, we shall develop an action plan to address any issues identified. The action plan would include specific steps that need to be taken, timelines for completion, and responsible parties.
6. **Monitor progress:** We shall monitor progress towards achieving the goals set out in the action plan. This will help you to identify any issues that arise and take corrective action if necessary.

Key Review Questions

The MTR would explore processes with techniques to address the following questions:

1. What has worked and what hasn't worked in the past since the strategic plan officially came into use?
2. What has changed in the operating environment?
3. What new things/actions/approaches/strategies were put in place for the implementation of the strategic plan?

Additionally, in the ToR, the consultants recognized that to achieve the aforementioned objectives in the course of the mid-term review, the following questions should be considered to guide the entire process of the evaluation. Even though these questions are not exhaustive, they would provide a good starting point for the MTR.

1. What has worked well so far, and what hasn't?
2. What are the reasons for success or failure?
3. Have there been any significant changes in the business environment since the plan was created? If so, how have these changes affected the plan's goals and objectives?
4. Are the goals and objectives still relevant and achievable? Are there any new goals or objectives that should be added?
5. Are the resources allocated to the plan sufficient? Are there any areas where resources could be better utilized?
6. How well is the plan being communicated to stakeholders? Are they aware of the goals and objectives, and do they understand their role in achieving them?

Data Collection methods

Data collection will be done using qualitative and quantitative methods. The team will ensure data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. Methods that would be used in data/information collection include:

i. Desk research

Desk research will basically involve collecting data from existing resources or secondary sources. Because it is very effective, our team intends to conduct desk research right from the starting phase of the review as it is quite quick and less expensive, and most of the basic information could be easily collected and can be used as a benchmark in the research process. The consultants will use two desk research techniques:

1. Internal Desk Research – The consultant will perform internal desk research of existing project documents to organize the collection of data in such a way that is not only efficient but usable as well. Internal documents that the consultants will review may include the strategic plan.
2. External Desk Research - External Desk Research will involve a review of documents outside the organizational boundaries and the collection relevant information. These outside resources include:

Online Desk Research – Consultants will carry out online desk research of best practices and innovative approaches in the key areas that the CTF strategic plan is focusing on; and

Government published data – The consultants will review government policies and plans related to project focus areas of the CTF strategic plan.

ii. Focus group discussion (FGD)

To allow more room for information but also triangulation, FGDs will be conducted with different segments of reference groups targeted by CTF. The FGDs will be used to learn about the experiences and perceptions of the different stakeholders – board, staff, partners, beneficiaries, etc. Compared to individual interviews, focus group interviews may yield deeper insights as the comments of each respondent can stimulate reactions from the other respondents. Our team will ensure knowledge-based development through the FGDs.

iii. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews with key informants will also be conducted targeting key stakeholders within the communities that were served by the organization. In this regard, the consultants will work with the project point person to have a list of key stakeholders as a starting point. In the absence of a stakeholder list, the consultants will resort to the snowball approach which is recommended for key informants' interviews.

iv. Validation workshop

Once the task is nearly completed, we shall hold a final validation workshop with key stakeholders of the organization. The goal of the validation workshop is to finalize all the key findings of the study and, secure agreement and support for the study. Participation at a validation workshop should be limited to key stakeholders whose contributions can help improve the quality of the report. The validation workshop shall be organized by CTF and the consultants will facilitate the presentation and discussions.

Sampling and sample size

The following guide is the sample size and sampling methodology presented in the ToR.

Review focus	Number and category of respondents	Type of data/information collection method		
		Focus Group Discussions.	Key Informant Interviews	Others (Surveys, etc.)
Review of the Vision/Mission statement and its impact on decision-making.	Board Senior staff Partners		X	
Review the current strategic plan and relevant business plans against new opportunities and risks.	Board Senior staff Partners	X	X	
Investigate what has been missed and what should be incorporated into the revised strategic plan.	Board Senior staff Partners	X	X	
Investigate any strategic assumptions that have changed and their impact, on the strategic plan.	Board Senior staff Partners	X	X	
Discuss strategies for ensuring that the strategic plan is carried out at the various levels (Board, staff, partners, committees etc), including reviewing the strategic plan regularly, and strategic thinking processes.	Board Senior staff Partners		X	
Strategies for embedding the strategic plan into performance measures and job descriptions at all levels of the organization.	Board Senior staff Partners		X	

Information/Data Management

The data management plan covers the following aspects: data sources, data collection methods, data quality assurance, data analysis techniques, data storage and security, data sharing and dissemination, and ethical considerations. The aim of the data management plan is to ensure that the data collected and analyzed from the inception are reliable, valid, relevant, and ethical, and that they can be used to inform the design and implementation of the strategic plan. A password protected filing and coding system will be implemented as a mechanism to ensure data protection.

Data Sources

Data will be collected from a wide range of data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various components. Data will be generated from primary and secondary sources. The consideration for combining data from multiple sources is to triangulate findings and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the legal provisions, implementation and impacts.

- a) **Primary Sources:** Primary data sources will cover interviews with the key stakeholders of the organization (CTF), including its partners, that will be generated through FGDs, KIIs and consultations.
- b) **Secondary Sources:** For secondary data reference will be made to the following:
 - a. Internal Desk Research – The consultant will perform internal desk research of existing project documents to organize the collection of data in such a way that is not only be efficient but usable as well. Internal documents that the consultants will review may include strategic plan.
 - b. External Desk Research - External Desk Research will involve review of documents outside the organizational boundaries and collecting relevant information. These outside resources include:
 - i. Online Desk Research – Consultants will carry out online desk research of best practices and innovative approaches in the key areas that the CTF strategic plan is focusing on; and
 - ii. Government published data – The consultants will review government policies and plans related to project focus areas of the CTF strategic plan.

Roadmap of the Assignment

No	Activities	Deliverable	Weekly schedule						Responsible
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. Inception and pre-research activities									
1.1	Inception meetings	Inception report with finalized tools and work plan.							CTF
1.2	Develop data collection tools								Consultants
1.3	Final work plan								Consultants
1.4	Develop inception report								Consultants
2. Data collection									
2.1	Conduct desk research								Consultants

2.2	Facilitate consultations	Desk-based research and consultations conducted							Consultants
2.3	Conduct key informant interviews								Consultants
3. Analysis and reporting									
3.1	Data analysis and preparation of draft report	Draft report							Consultants
3.2	Validation meeting with key stakeholders	Validation meeting							Consultants
	Develop final report	Final report							Consultants
4. Presentation and submission									
4.1	Address technical comments and feedback, finalize and produce report	Final report							Consultants
4.2	Present final report								Consultants

Required Support

To aid the process, the team requires from the committee an introductory letter to the partners and various stakeholder groups introducing the team. We also require support with:

- List of individuals and groups to be interviewed.
- List of key informants and stakeholders in the communities relevant to the review.
- Reference materials from CTF and partner organizations relating to the implementation of the strategic plan and CTF's work generally.
- Mobilization of respondents of focused groups (CTF to share the contacts of their members and partners so that they can support the data collection process)
- Implementation plan or framework of the current CTF strategic plan.

Ethical and Safeguarding Considerations

Broadly, the review will be directed by principles of voluntariness, anonymity, and confidentiality. Good practices that will be used to ensure security include:

- Requiring that all members of the study team sign a code of conduct.
- Protecting the confidentiality of respondents through using identification codes rather than names.
- Safe storage of data after collection.

We are aware of the key phrases that describe the system of ethical protection and we will work to ensure these are adhered to and respected throughout the exercise.

- **Voluntary participation** - This requires that we ensure prospective review participants are not coerced into participating in our exercise. We will ensure that participation of all potential respondents of discussants is voluntary irrespective of status or location.
- **Informed consent** - Closely related to the notion of voluntary participation informed consent. Essentially, this means that we will ensure prospective review participants are fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in this exercise and must give their consent to participate.

- **Risk of harm** – We will also ensure that this study does not in any way put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation. Harm can be defined as both physical and psychological.
- **Confidentiality** – We will guarantee all respondents' confidentiality. We will ensure that identified information is not made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the assignment.
- **Anonymity** - The stricter standard we will use is the principle of anonymity which essentially means that respondents will remain anonymous throughout the study. The anonymity standard is a stronger guarantee of privacy.

The consultants wish to ensure adherence to ethical principles for evaluation, and our team will be in a position to comply with CTF's guidelines on ethical considerations for evaluation, Safeguarding Policy, and Code of Conduct. As required by standard evaluation procedures, our team will undergo training in regards to introduction to ethics in evidence generation before embarking on the actual evaluation exercise. Our team is obliged to observe the following ethical principles:

- **Independence and impartiality:** that the consultants shall be free of bias, and ensure that they are not unduly influenced by the views or statements of any party. In any instance where the consultants come under pressure to adopt a particular position or to introduce bias into the evaluation findings, the consultants will responsibly ensure that independence of judgment is maintained professionally.
- **Credibility:** That the review shall be credible and based on reliable data and observations. The report of the review shall show evidence of consistency and dependability in data, findings, judgments, and lessons learned that appropriately reflect on the quality of the methodology, procedures, and analysis used to collect and interpret data.
- **Conflict of interest:** That conflicts of interest shall be avoided as far as possible so that the credibility of the review process and product shall not be undermined. Therefore, any potential conflicts of interest shall be disclosed and dealt with openly and honestly.

On the other hand, when it comes to the obligations to participants, our team is obliged to observe the following ethical principles:

- **Respect for dignity and diversity:** The consultants shall respect differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction, power relations, sexual orientation, gender roles, disability, age, and ethnicity and be mindful of the potential implications of these differences when planning, carrying out and reporting on evaluations, while using review instruments appropriate to the cultural setting.
- **Rights of participants:** While working to include individuals or groups in the review process, the consultants shall ensure participants' right to self-determination where they are treated as autonomous agents and must be given the time and information to decide whether or not to participate and be able to make an independent decision without any pressure or fear of penalty for none participation.
- **Confidentiality:** Consultants shall respect participants' right to provide information in confidence and make participants aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. All personally identifiable data must be redacted from final reports that are disseminated or shared within or outside of the organization.
- **Avoidance of harm:** The consultants seek to minimize the risks to, and burdens on, participation in the review. Therefore, will maximize the benefits and reduce unnecessary harms that might occur from the evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of stakeholders to be interviewed/consulted.

Supporters, Donors, Funding Partners

- European Union Delegation (EU Delegation).
- Wet Lands International Africa.
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS).
- West Africa Peninsular Water Fund Project.
- RAMP AO (Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas.
- International Union for the conservation of Nature.
- Royal Society for the protection of Birds (RSPB).
- Goal Ireland

CTF Management

- Chairman, CTF.
- Finance Manager, CTF.
- Resource Mobilization Manager, CTF.
- HR& Corporate Affairs Manager, CTF.
- P R Outreach and Research
- Strategic Partnership
- Program Officer
-

Board members

- Edward Sesay, Boa
- Dr Patrick Kormawa
- Joseph Rahall

Implementing Partners

- NPAA (Yatta H. Kamara).
- Conservation society of Sierra Leone (Ansumana Baba Turay).
- Reptile and Amphibians (Edward Aruna).
- Director of Fisheries
- Deputy Directors of Fisheries.

Beneficiary Groups

- Yawri Bay.
- Tombo to Shenge Mangrove Management Committee.
- ECO Guards.
- NPAA Game Guards.
- Sierra Leone Artisanal Fishermen's Union.