

UK Blue Carbon Fund Programme Review
October 2023

Date issued	Reviewer(s)	Notes
30/10/2023	ODA Hub	Feedback received
03/11/2023	G7/G6	G7/G6 feedback
03/11/2023	Deputy Directors	Feedback received
04/01/2024	G7	Feedback received
10/01/2024	G6	Feedback received
12/01/2024	Director	Approved

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Abbreviations

AR(s)	Annual Review(s)
BPF	Blue Planet Fund
CI	Conservation International
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Affairs
EA(s)	Executing Agencies
FCDO	Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HMG	His Majesty's Government (UK)
IBC	International Biodiversity and Climate directorate
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICF	International Climate Finance
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PMM	Programme Management Manual
ToC	Theory of Change
UKBCF	United Kingdom Blue Carbon Fund
VfM	Value for Money

1. Executive summary

The UK Blue Carbon Fund (UKBCF)

The Blue Carbon Fund (UKBCF), managed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), aims to accelerate the development of the blue economy of key countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) by catalysing and mobilising strategic public and private sector investments in blue carbon sector and closely linked thematic areas such as sustainable fisheries, sustainable aquaculture, coastal zone management, payment for ecosystem services and eco-tourism. The programme was launched in 2019 with a funding commitment from the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) of £12.75 million over seven years.

Purpose of the Programme Review of UKBCF

Following three low scores in Annual Review two B's and a C, Defra determined that a more thorough review of the programme was required. The purpose of this programme review of the UKBCF is to answer if:

- i. The programme is underperforming?
- ii. The programme is performing but not being reported accurately?¹

By collating and analysing a range of evidence to answer these questions and provide advice on next steps for programme management, the programme review will also:

- iii. Consider joint challenges faced by the IDB and Defra in programme delivery, monitoring, reporting and communication;
- iv. Assess the delivery status of each live project delivered through the UKBCF;
- v. Create a plan of action to ensure:
 - a. Project and programme level² progress is being reported according to International Climate Finance (ICF) Key Performance Indicators and internal requirements;
 - b. Project level work is accurately translated and aggregated to the programme level to ensure cohesion;
- vi. Identify areas to improve ways of working and communication between the IDB and the Defra and provide recommendations accordingly.

Methodology for evidence collation

The programme review was conducted by Defra's programme team. It focused on the evaluation of IDB's projects in progress in Panama, Jamaica, and Colombia; as well governance arrangements between IDB and its delivery partners. The review collated information by:

¹ Tom Morrow, Group Chief Internal Auditor at the Government Internal Audit Agency advised the programme team to consider these two questions for the Programme Review.

² Project level refers to the in-country delivery carried out by an EA, programme-level refers to the UKBCF as a portfolio.

- i. Seeking and collating targeted feedback from the project Executing Agencies (EAs) through interviews at an in-person technical workshop on Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation³;
- ii. Seeking and collating feedback on the projects from IDB, the EAs and from Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) in-country staff in Panama, Jamaica, and Colombia via email and online meetings;
- iii. Collaborate with FCDO programme managers in partnership with the IDB to understand if there are any shared experiences and understand which lessons learned could be adopted by Defra's programme management team;
- iv. Seeking advice from Andrew Clark, UK Representative to the IDB to ensure the programme teams approach with the IDB is appropriate;
- v. Assessing project progress based on qualitative and quantitative data supplied by the IDB;
- vi. Evaluating project logframes⁴ and project results matrices to understand if they are suitable for purpose and assess if projects are on track;
- vii. Seeking information about project reporting governance and responsibilities between IDB and the EAs through in-person and online meetings with key stakeholders;
- viii. To support, test and consolidate the findings of this review, IDB colleagues and Defra's programme team reached a consensus on the programme recommendations and next steps.

Summary of recommendations

Based on the findings from the review process, the Defra programme team have developed a suite of recommendations to agree jointly with colleagues from the IDB. These recommendations are designed to help Defra and the UKBCF work together more effectively to deliver shared outcomes. These recommendations are explored thoroughly in [Section 10: Recommendations](#).

1. Test the programme level logframe in the future to ensure it is fit for purpose for new projects in the pipeline;
2. IDB-Defra to formalise annual and quarterly reporting requirements;
3. Establish a joint Defra/IDB SharePoint site;
4. Development of a formal programme risk register;
5. Introductions between the IDB and EAs with in-country BPF Regional staff;
6. Collaborative revision of the governance structures;
7. Inclusion of UK Aid logo on external project outputs.

Conclusion

[Redacted]

2. Introduction

The UKBCF

The UKBCF aims to foster a transformational change towards the sustainable management of mangroves and coastal ecosystems across 14 countries⁵, by developing and implementing

³ Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) project. The objective of this project is to implement a regional MRV system for mangrove ecosystems that provides a science-based data platform on the sequestration and release of blue carbon.

⁴ Logical framework

⁵ The MRV will deliver across 14 countries (Panama, Jamaica, Belize, Colombia, Haiti, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago).

financial innovations which will catalyse and mobilise strategic public and private sector investments in the blue carbon sector; in addition to shifting the behaviours that are responsible for environmental degradation. The UKBCF has been implementing its projects since 2019 and works across Latin America and the Caribbean. Currently in delivery are projects in Panama, Jamaica, Colombia, and Suriname, with a view to expand progressively to other countries in the region as part of their Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) project.

UK support to the UKBCF

The UK is the largest contributor to the UKBCF, with Defra business case approval in 2018 for £12.75 million over seven years.⁶ The UK's commitment comprises five years of programme funding and an additional two years of programme management from the IDB and Defra, concluding in 2026. In 2021 the UKBCF was awarded a further £200,000 extension to support research and evidence for an independent global review on the Economics of Biodiversity, taking the total value of the programme up to £12.95 million. In accordance with the Business Case, full payment was transferred to the Bank of England by a Promissory Note. As of December 2023, £8,290,600 has been drawn down by IDB, with £4,663,400 remaining.

Annual reviews

Since the programme commenced, both the July 2019 – June 2020 and the July 2020 – June 2021 Annual Reviews (ARs)⁷ scored Bs, on a scale from A++ to C. Whilst there was a joint effort to develop appropriate logframes by IDB and Defra at the outset of the programme, changes in programme management and staff resource pressures on both sides meant the logframe put into place in 2022 was not effective or fit-for-purpose. The logframe that Defra approved in June 2022 was overengineered and did not reflect accurately the deliverables of the programme. Subsequently, there was no logframe against which performance could be quantitatively measured, these ARs were both considered “process based”.⁸ Recognising the limitations of the AR process without a logframe, the programme was nonetheless considered to be underperforming based on the lack of progress recorded against previous recommendations, programme output indicators and delays in project delivery.

Without a robustly developed and agreed logframe to bring the projects together, the projects could not report appropriate, measurable results against agreed targets. Defra were therefore less able to determine progress and performance, or adequately assess risks to the investment, environmental outcomes, or value for money (VfM). Although there were project level ‘results matrices’ (logframes) in place, these had been developed separately to FCDO reporting standards and ICF key performance indicator (KPI) methodologies, which Defra use to govern their monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes. Furthermore, they differed per project which made it difficult to aggregate project level indicators into programme level indicators. Despite ongoing efforts to address these issues, continued challenges with resource pressures, staff changes and communication on both sides contributed to a strain on the relationship between Defra and the IDB.

⁶ Breakdown of the counterpart financing of the active portfolio: Audubon Society of Panama- £522,663, Puerta de Oro- £157,192, University of West Indies SODECO- £1,558,000, University of West Indies- £110,034

⁷ Annual reviews are internal programme assessments that review its performance, ongoing relevance, and value for money.

⁸ The Annual Review measured progress against programme output indicators, reflecting on key milestones and challenges.

Due to the outcomes of the Annual Reviews, the programme was put on special measures⁹ from July 2021 to June 2022. During this time several conditions were put in place, including the development and agreement of an ICF-aligned logframe. This logframe was agreed in May 2022 at time when the UKBCF was managed by Defra's International Biodiversity and Climate (IBC) directorate. The programme was transferred in July 2022 to Defra's Marine and Fisheries directorate, bringing all marine Official Development Assistance (ODA) programmes under the management of the International Sustainable Blue Finance Team, and alongside UK's the Blue Planet Fund¹⁰. A short form Annual Review was written to cover the period from July 2021 to December 2021. This was the first "performance based" AR using the new agreed logframe. This AR demonstrated the programme was still not meeting its targets and resulted in a **C rating**. This AR outcome reflected the issues within this timeframe but also the ongoing challenges relating to reporting and communications. Regardless of the cause, the two B ratings and the C put the programme into the 'underperforming' category. This triggered the need for a programme review to identify the cause of the issues and assess risks to Defra as the donors providing UK Aid to the programme, as well as risks for intended beneficiaries.

Next Steps: UKBCF Programme Review

This programme review of the UKBCF aims in part to consider these challenges and risks and how they relate to programme delivery, building on recent successful efforts by Defra and IDB to jointly address shortfalls identified through the AR. The evidence collated and analysed as part of this review will be used to generate confidence that the source of the issues has been identified, and that the recommended next steps for programme management are the right ones for Defra as donors, for the UKBCF as fund managers, and for the intended beneficiaries of the UKBCF's projects.

Defra and the IDB have already agreed as of August 2023 to a series of new measures for programme management moving forward, capitalising on opportunities for closer and more collaborative working, particularly between their respective programme managers and MEL leads. These measures will be considered within the scope of this programme review.

⁹ Special measures: a pause where existing projects continued to be delivered, but new projects were not signed off or further developed.

¹⁰ The UK's £500 million Blue Planet Fund (BPF) supports developing countries to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty.

3. Methodology for the programme review

In February 2023, the Defra ODA Hub reviewed the 2021 (July-December) UKBCF programme Annual Review¹¹ and rated it as a C, indicating that there were some significant issues with the programme delivering or reporting against its agreed outputs. The Defra programme management team presented a paper to the ODA Hub outlining possible options for the next steps of the programme. After a series of discussions, the ODA Hub advised the programme team to:

- i. Gather more evidence from a wider range of sources on project and programme performance and reporting;
- ii. Identify the root cause of the perceived poor performance at a project and programme level;
- iii. Deliver an up-to-date performance assessment of the programme.

The programme team also sought advice from the Group Chief Internal Auditor at the Government Internal Audit Agency. They suggested that the purpose of the review did not meet the criteria for an audit, as it sought to examine performance rather than financials. This advice, combined with the guidance from the ODA Hub, revealed a programme review to be the most appropriate and proportionate approach. It would utilise the experience of those familiar with the programme to easily engage with the IDB technical leads and EAs, alongside consideration of the functionality of logframes and reporting mechanisms. This process would include interviews with programme and project staff, progress reports and presentations, and technical analysis of the MEL framework.

The hypotheses at the outset were based around two possibilities: inadequate project delivery by the EAs, and/or the shortcomings of the IDB reporting framework not reflecting project progress at the programme level. These were derived from lack of provision of quantitative data to substantiate the claims made in the IDB annual donor reports and in the Quarterly Advisory Boards. When Defra probed for further detail, the annual donor report nor the logframe reflected the progress the IDB claimed projects made. With the combination of interviews, expert input and technical analysis of the MEL framework, the Defra team felt able to bring together the right mix of evidence to identify the issues and present appropriate management measures. The following methodology was used:

Section 4: Stakeholder feedback

- i. From the project Executing Agencies (EAs) through interviews at an in-person technical workshop on Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation¹²;
- ii. On the projects from IDB, the EAs and from Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) in-country staff in Panama, Jamaica, and Colombia via email and online meetings;
- iii. Collaborate with FCDO programme managers in partnership with the IDB to understand if there are any shared experiences and understand which lessons learned could be adopted by Defra's programme management team;

¹¹ Scores range from A++ to C.

¹² Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) project. The objective of this project is to implement a regional MRV system for mangrove ecosystems that provides a science-based data platform on the sequestration and release of blue carbon.

- iv. Seeking advice from Andrew Clark, UK Representative to the IDB to ensure the programme teams approach with the IDB is appropriate.

Section 5 and annexes 3-5: Project progress

- v. Assessing project progress based on qualitative and quantitative data supplied by the IDB.

Section 6: Monitoring, evaluation and learning

- vi. Evaluating project logframes¹³ and project results matrices to understand if they are suitable for purpose and assess if projects are on track;
- vii. Seeking information about project reporting governance and responsibilities between IDB and the EAs though in person and online meetings with the IDB and the EAs.

Section 7: Washington DC workshop

- viii. To support, test and consolidate the findings of this review, IDB colleagues and Defra's programme team collaboratively reached a consensus on the programme recommendations and next steps. Advice was also sought from the UK representative to IDB (UK alternate director).

By using this project-to-programme level approach and by bringing together the right mix of evidence, the programme team was able to gain an in-depth understanding of where the issues lay, allowing them to present appropriate management measures. Initial outcomes and recommendations from this appraisal were presented to the IDB at an in-person workshop in Washington DC in November 2023 (see [Section 7: Washington DC workshop](#)) and tested with UKBCF delivery partners.

¹³ Logical framework

4. Evidence collation: Stakeholder Engagement

To gather evidence needed to support the programme review, the Defra programme team sought to understand views through staff engagement with regional, in-country and UK-based staff. As set out in the methodology in Section 3:

- i. Seeking and collating feedback from the project Executing Agencies (EAs) through interviews online and at the MRV workshop;
- ii. Seeking and collating feedback on the projects from IDB, the EAs and from Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) in-country staff in Panama, Jamaica, and Colombia via email and online meetings;
- iii. Collaborate with FCDO programme managers in partnership with the IDB to understand if there are any shared experiences and understand which lessons learned could be adopted by Defra's programme management team;
- iv. Seeking advice from Andrew Clark, UK Representative to the IDB to ensure the programme teams approach with the IDB is appropriate.

MRV technical workshop, Jamaica

The Defra programme team attended a technical workshop in Jamaica in August 2023, hosted by IDB. The aim was to bring together EAs for UKBCF projects from Panama, Jamaica, Colombia and Suriname to discuss a new project in the programme- the MRV project and to see demonstrations of the techniques being proposed to measure carbon storage potential in the field. The trip to Jamaica was determined to be a good opportunity for the Defra team to understand the MRV project, test how well EAs felt the projects were going, build on working relationships and to test concerns relating to performance. The participation of all key stakeholders (Defra, IDB programme and project leads, and EAs) provided a valuable opportunity to seek a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the programme.

During the workshop, the EAs delivered presentations with an overview of the projects and their progress. The Defra attendees felt that it was positive that all EAs reported to be on track and that their results were reflected in the results matrix that is reported to the IDB. This was however, the first time Defra had seen the results matrix and were not aware of it prior to the workshop. This has been noted by Defra as a key tool for communicating project-level progress. Although the results matrices are not the most accessible tool to gain insight into what good progress looks like, with modification this tool would be useful for sharing to understand what progress projects have made against project indicators.

These presentations and informal conversations with EAs served to support the view that the programme's performance challenges are unlikely to be linked to ineffective project delivery at the country level, but potentially a series of issues with the governance and process for reporting at the programme level. During these informal conversations EAs communicated to Defra that they believe projects are on track and are working against agreed delivery timelines. This is discussed further below in the context of the data gathered to support this review, but the conversations and presentations at the workshop also indicated that there have been challenges in translating qualitative and quantitative project data up to programme reporting for Defra's purposes.

This was further reinforced by discussions on reporting and indicators, where IDB project leads explained that there is not a standardised way EA projects report to central IDB programme managers, indicating that project-specific information cannot be easily aggregated. The potential for inconsistent project reporting is therefore likely to contribute to the difficulties in

synthesising the programme outcomes and inputs into a meaningful Annual Donor report, which aims to provide the required quantitative report on project progress.

Further technical discussions at the workshop with IDB and the EAs concluded that:

- It is unlikely the fund level MEL processes are sufficient for programme needs;
- Standardised reporting is lacking at the project level;
- Despite the challenges in communicating project level outcomes, the IDB and the EAs have established a positive working relationship.

EAs have informed Defra that since the start of the projects, the IDB project leads have been responsive and have effectively addressed their challenges.

Overall, the IDB and EAs appear to have built a strong foundation of trust and communication. It was reassuring to hear that EAs have been able to obtain the necessary assistance from the IDB to address their delivery/operational challenges.

Further supporting feedback

In addition to the feedback sought at the MRV workshop in Jamaica, positive and constructive recognition of the work carried out by the UKBCF and its EAs has been reflected by UK colleagues in-country and on delegation. Given the Defra team are unable to be frequently present in project delivery countries, the feedback offered by colleagues is useful to support hypotheses regarding the quality of work undertaken.

On a visit to Southern Clarendon, Jamaica, 2022, an FCDO senior official stated in an email to the Defra programme team following a site visit that they “*came away extremely impressed with the selection of the project site and the way it is being implemented*”, and that they “*agreed that this would be a very appropriate site to show Ministers a flavour of the UK’s development programme in the country*”.

Feedback has also been offered for a UKBCF site in Vida Manglar, Colombia, during a BPF visit in April 2022. A team leader said that the “*Colombia site visit (Vida Manglar) was really great. Conservation International (CI) seem like they’re doing a fantastic job and the communities are really engaged through their locally led mangrove authorities*”.

Feedback from FCDO in-country staff in Jamaica (October 2022) noted with encouragement that they were “*delighted to see the recovery taking place at one project, with new mangrove shoots visible, the return of wildlife, including thousands of tiny fish and how well it illustrated how recovery can be supported*.” This offers a valuable insight into the tangible impacts happening on the ground because of the project.

Engagement with the FCDO and BPF regional coordinators

Recruitment is underway for a Blue Planet Fund regional coordinator in the Latin America region to lead oversight, engagement, and coordination of BPF programmes and projects that deliver in the region – including the UKBCF. Once hired, we will work with the coordinator to establish how they can best support the IDB and delivery teams and boost BPF support on the ground.

Through the course of this review the Defra programme management team have commenced close contact with the institutional lead for the IDB at the FCDO. This is facilitating broader support and engagement on programme management and associated risks, as well as gaining greater insight into the IDB’s operations and developments. For example, the BPF team have recently taken the opportunity to review and feedback on the IDB’s new institutional strategy,

allowing us to strongly advocate for the strengthening of language surrounding the blue economy and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Life Below Water.

Engagement with the UK Representative to Multilateral Investment Fund Donors Committee

During a recent workshop in Washington DC hosted by the IDB, Defra's programme team had a productive meeting with Andrew Clark. Mr. Clark serves as the Alternate Executive Director for the Office of Croatia, Japan, Korea, Portugal, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom at the IDB, who also acts as the UK Representative to the Multilateral Investment Fund Donors Committee (IDB Lab).

The programme team updated the Alternative Executive Director on the challenges and concerns encountered while managing the UK-Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (UKBCF). Their discussion focused on the complexities of navigating the programme and finding solutions to optimize its effectiveness.

It is important to note that the UK holds of influence over decision-making at the IDB. Recognising this leverage, Andrew shared the IDB's internal strategy with Defra, seeking feedback and insights. Defra's engagement in this process underscores the UK's active participation in shaping the direction of the IDB and its initiatives.

Engagement with the UK Sustainable Infrastructure Programme Manager

In September, Defra's UKBCF programme team met with the Programme Manager for the UK Sustainable Infrastructure Programme (UK SIP), delivered by the IDB. During the meeting, both parties provided insights into the challenges that programme teams have encountered in managing the programme and understood many of obstacles paralleled. Between 2018 and 2021, the UK SIP received four consecutive B ratings and since then the programme has scored A and A* ratings. Both parties engaged in a constructive discussion to address these challenges and collectively absorbed lessons learned to enhance future programme management practices.

Key takeaways

The visit and the reports from site visits when considered together, provide a range of first-hand views on project progress. Despite some site-specific challenges, which are noted above, the overarching views were that EAs in country are delivering and projects are progressing well. Their work is highly regarded in each region, which may be due in part to the strong working relationship that the IDB has built with the EAs. The takeaway from the visit and the reports is that the performance challenges detailed in Section 2 could stem from specific difficulties with project and programme level reporting.

5. Evidence Collation: Project Progress

To gather further evidence needed for the programme review, the Defra programme team engaged with the IDB and EAs to better understand progress being made on each project. As set out in the methodology in Section 3:

- v. Assessing project progress based on qualitative and quantitative data from the IDB.

This section will report progress against each project component using a range of information provided by the IDB. According to online meetings, IDB Annual Report data and information provided by the IDB, project progress is broadly on track, and they have proven to be resilient against the delivery challenges surrounding COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. Panama overcame a lot of these challenges by having virtual meetings and reallocating resources. The IDB felt that other projects such as the Colombian project have experienced major risks in 2023 and have made good progress in mitigating them, through utilising the resources Defra and HMG in-country staff can provide. We explored this further through meetings with HMG in-country Colombian staff who agree good progress is being to mitigate risks regarding Component 2.

UKBCF Colombia Project: Adding Value to Mangroves Conservation in Coastal-City Systems

The Colombia project was approved in May 2021 with the overarching aim of encouraging the conservation and restoration of mangrove ecosystems.

Table 1: Colombia Project: Adding Value to Mangroves Conservation in Coastal-City Systems, components and aims.

Component	Aims
1. Adding Value to Mangroves Conservation in Coastal-City Systems (executed by Puerta de Oro)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Environmental Recovery Plan for the Ciénaga de Mallorquín • Recover and preserve the wetlands of Barranquilla (650 ha), to benefit 1000 inhabitants
2. Community conservation of mangroves (executed by Conservation International)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of 3,054 ha of mangroves in the Caimanera and Bocas de Guacamayas areas in the Gulf of Morrosquillo • Reduction of 9,738 tCO₂ eq by 2024 and 32,426 million tCO₂ in the following ten years, benefiting approximately 300 people¹⁴

Component 1: Adding Value to Mangrove Conservation:

Component 1 is on track and has made satisfactory progress. The Environmental Recovery Plan, contracted to ECOVERSA corporation, was completed in August 2023. The Stakeholder Involvement Strategy, developed by INPSICON Ltda., was approved by the Bank in December 2022. Three project pilots are currently being designed and will be executed in 2024. An Environmental Recovery Plan for the area is in place, which aims to improve the conservation of the Ciénaga and the livelihood of the surrounding communities to integrate these areas to

the socioeconomic development of the city. *Component 2: Community Conservation of Mangroves:*

Component 2 is experiencing delays due to approval still pending for the management plan by the Local Authority (LA). Direct intervention has not yet started in the two selected sites. Defra, HMG in-country staff, CI, and the IDB met in June 2023 to create a plan of action to support local authority approval of the management plan. Overall, the project is making progress, but Component 2 is experiencing delays due to the delays with the Local Authority approving the management plan. The project team is working to address this issue and ensure that the project remains on track to achieve its objectives.

Please see Annex 3 for more detail on project progress in Colombia.

UKBCF Jamaica project: Blue carbon restoration

In January 2020 this project was approved to restore mangrove ecosystems in southern Clarendon, Jamaica.

Table 2: Jamaica Project: Blue carbon restoration, components and aims.

Component	Aim
1. Characteristics and impact analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a study that provides a baseline on hydrology, sediments, soils, bathymetry, coastal dynamics and geomorphology, faunal and floral composition, and socio-economic conditions
2. Formulation and implementation of actions and measures to restore 1,600 ha of mangroves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore 1,600 ha of mangroves
3. Sustainable charcoal production plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the health and safety practices of charcoal producers; Use technology to produce more coal in a shorter period of time; Make charcoal burning more environmentally friendly; Increase the overall income of charcoal producers through the use of technology
4. Management and monitoring of 5. restoration programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage and monitor the restoration activities; Assess the improvement in economic value of the restored system

Component 1: Characteristics and Impact Analysis:

The feasibility study is complete and provides a baseline on hydrology, sediments, soils, bathymetry, coastal dynamics and geomorphology, faunal and floral composition, and socioeconomic conditions. The environmental assessments are complete and will be presented to the national environmental authority to ensure compliance with regulations.

Component 2: Formulation and Implementation of Actions and Measures to Restore 1,600 ha of mangroves: The implementation and restoration plans are complete, and implementation activities have commenced. Mangrove restoration interventions are currently being conducted in phases in the four mangrove areas.

Component 3: Sustainable Charcoal Production Plan: The procurement process for this component has been restructured, and the consultancy has been divided into separate tasks to be undertaken by individual consultants. Community sensitisation is ongoing, through door-to-door engagements, small group meetings, and the circulation of informational sheets.

Component 4: Management and Monitoring of Restoration Programme: Hydro-meteorological monitoring has started in two of the mangrove areas slated for restoration interventions, using GPS and water flow meters.

Component 5: Knowledge Dissemination and Training: Overall, the project is progressing well. All components are underway, and there has been significant progress in several areas. The environmental assessments have been completed, and the implementation of the restoration plans has commenced. The procurement process for the sustainable charcoal production plan has been restructured, and community sensitization is ongoing. Hydro-meteorological monitoring has started in two of the mangrove areas, and three training workshops have been completed. A web page has been created for the project, and updates will be provided on the website. Please see Annex 4 for more detail on project progress in Jamaica.

UKBCF Panama project: Valuing, Protecting, and Enhancing Coastal Natural Capital

This project is being delivered by Audubon and began in May 2020. It was designed to restore, protect, and enhance mangrove management.

Table 3: Panama Project - Valuing, Protecting and Enhancing Natural Capital

Component	Aim
1. Deliver robust science to establish a blue carbon baseline in Panama's mangroves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a blue carbon baseline for mangroves in Panama
2. Establish economic valuation of mangrove ecosystem services and promote its conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce natural capital assessments Develop a conservation plan for the Bay of Parita
3. Build knowledge, awareness, and engagement with key stakeholders to drive action that increases protection of coastal wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness for coastal wetlands
4. Support and strengthen policies that incentivize mangrove conservation and restoration through outreach, science and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and strengthen policies that incentivize mangrove conservation and restoration through outreach, science and research

Component 1: Deliver robust science to establish a blue carbon baseline in Panama's mangroves:

- The project team has created a mangrove coverage history map from 1980 to 2021 for Parita Bay and Panama Bay, with a 2022 update following a ground-truth analysis site visit.
- Blue carbon assessment work is ongoing at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed with the National Audubon Society. Sample collection in Parita Bay has been completed.
- The project team is developing complementary research on mangrove dynamics, such as nutrient effects, salinity changes, and mapping of mangrove and bird species as an indicator of ecosystem health. This research will inform more efficient ecosystem management and identify priority areas for conservation and restoration.
- The project team is providing capacity development seminars for undergraduate students and promoting participation from international students on different aspects of the project.
- The project team has developed a national registry for the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Environment (MiAmbiente) of reforested plots with mangrove species in Panama. This registry will help to identify areas reforested with mangrove species at the provincial scale and quantitatively evaluate the success rate of mangrove reforestation projects.

Component 2: Establish economic valuation of mangrove ecosystem services and promote its conservation:

- The project team has contracted ESSA Technologies Ltd to carry out a natural capital assessment. ESSA has:
 - Finalized a literature review on political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions associated with mangroves and mangrove conservation in Panama.
 - Completed an assessment of the condition and risk of mangroves.
 - Developed management scenarios.
 - Involved key stakeholders in all of these activities.
- The project team has developed a conservation plan for the Bay of Parita in partnership with the Panama Audubon Society. The final draft of the conservation plan is complete and under review. It was launched in February 2023.

Component 3: Build knowledge, awareness, and engagement with key stakeholders to drive action that increases protection of coastal wetlands:

- Expanded the “Aulas Verdes” environmental education program in the 2022 school year to reach 3,323 students in 16 schools in the Bay of Panama and 97 students in two schools in Parita Bay.
- Organized several workshops, presentations, and meetings with key stakeholders, including MiAmbiente, other government agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations.
- Conducted 45 webinars, workshops, and meetings, involving a total of 520 participants.
- Refined the communications strategy and materials and organized key events, such as World Mangrove Day and the Plastics Symposium.

- Established a partnership with the Euroclimate+ project and jointly developed a blue carbon workshop on comprehensive blue carbon management.
- Relunched “Voices of the Juan Díaz” during the blue carbon workshop and the Plastics Symposium to continue promoting engagement on the plastics topic.

Component 4: Support and strengthen policies that incentivize mangrove conservation and restoration through outreach, science, and research:

- Coordinated with the technical team in charge of the Panama Bay Management Plan and a consultancy to identify financial and governance scenarios for the sustainability of Panama Bay’s management plan.
- Identified the need for a rapid ecological assessment of mangrove areas adjacent to Panama’s Tocumen airport future expansion area.
- Identified an opportunity to create a National Chapter of the Global Mangrove Alliance in Panama to support and strengthen policies that incentivize mangrove conservation and restoration.
- Established a methodology to use birds as indicators of carbon and ecosystem health. Training and field implementation have begun.

Overall, the Panama mangrove conservation project is making good progress on all four of its components. The EAs are working to deliver robust science, establish economic valuation of mangrove ecosystem services, build knowledge and awareness among key stakeholders, and support and strengthen policies that incentivise mangrove conservation and restoration. Please see Annex 5 for more detail on project progress in Panama.

6. Evidence Collation: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

As set out in the methodology in [Section 1: Executive summary](#), the Defra programme team sought to evaluate programme and project level MEL practices including reporting procedures, project reporting requirements, indicator frameworks and dissemination of project information through:

- vi. Evaluating project logframes and project results matrices to understand if they are suitable for purpose and assess if projects are on track;
- vii. Seeking information about project reporting governance and responsibilities between IDB and the EAs through in-person and online meetings with key stakeholders.

This section will evaluate the IDB’s MEL capabilities and assess the way that progress is measured and reported. This section highlights that whilst there is still a good level of qualitative data provided through the IDB annual report and the Quarterly Advisory Boards, there is a limited availability of quantitative data to support this.

Logframe Evaluation

During the workshop in Jamaica, Defra and the IDB agreed that a critical step in strengthening programme management was to revise the ICF Programme logframe. Both parties agreed that the logframe did not sufficiently reflect project progress due to the following two considerations:

Baseline and Targets

Most indicators did not have targets and baselines. This makes it difficult to understand what good progress looks like or risks an inaccurate conclusion regarding progress.

This risk became apparent in the case of outcome indicator 1.1 “*Hectares (ha) of mangrove forest under sustainable management*” for the Panama project. The IDB informed Defra that the baseline was actually the total area of the mangrove ecosystems in the two project areas, rather than the area of mangrove that would be directly in scope for the project. The baseline was therefore an overestimate. The updated baseline aligns with the current understanding of the project scope and Panama's government's policy/conservation commitments outlined in their National Determined Contribution (NDC).

The IDB have revised the baseline for this specific indicator. The adjustment was evaluated and approved by the BPF MEL Lead, therefore Defra have accepted the revision and agree that this reduction is appropriate to ensure accurate representation of progress in line with project delivery.

Where baselines are absent and cannot be retrospectively constructed, the IDB have agreed to work with EAs to create short-term, mid-term and long-term targets to support appropriate project progress assessments.

Achieved Results

For the 2022 logframe, the indicators were not populated with any data, meaning no annual results. As we discovered from conversations with the EAs this is not indicative of the work carried out on the ground. As suggested by site visits and conversations with EAs and in-country staff, the reasons for this are:

1. Indicators in the logframe are only measurable once pipeline projects start delivering;
2. The logframe indicators are not entirely reflective of the work that is being completed by live projects;
3. The IDB have not been aggregating results and inputting them into the programme level logframe. This is partially because the IDB are not aware which activities contribute to which indicator;
4. The logframe has been overengineered with too many ICF KPIs, which does not reflect reality of what the projects are trying to deliver.

Reframing the Programme Logframe

Following the Jamaica workshop, the Defra team felt that discussions and evidence were pointing towards issues with MEL as a potential cause or contributor to poor performance. As part of efforts to explore this further and to answer the questions underpinning the purpose of the review, the Defra programme management team, including MEL analysts, collaborated to support IDB's MEL staff in revising the programme logframe. Both parties had weekly meetings and identified the following steps to inform the review and our subsequent recommendations:

1. To update the UKBCF Theory of Change;
2. To populate results matrices and redraft baselines and targets to track progress;
3. IDB to qualify these updates with EAs and in-country IDB project leads;
4. Create high-level programme indicators based on project indicators;
5. Qualify programme logframe with EAs and in-country IDB project leads;
6. IDB project leads populate the programme logframe.

This process exercise has now been completed and the outcomes have been used to inform Defra’s advice and recommendations for future programme management, as part of this programme review. As a result of these conversations and steps, significant progress has been made which is detailed in [Section 8: progress to date](#).

Results Matrices

Similarly, to the logframe, the project results matrices¹⁵ do not sufficiently convey what is being delivered on the ground and therefore, how they can contribute to the programme level reporting. There is the same issue of absent baselines, targets, and populated results. For example, Figure 1 below highlights the Colombia project’s outcome for indicator 2 “*improved conservation and sustainable use of mangroves in the Morrosquillo Gulf*”.

Outcome: 2 Improved conservation and sustainable use of mangroves in the Morrosquillo Gulf

Indicators	Flas*	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Baseline Year	Means of verification	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	EOP	
2.1 Area of mangrove habitat where deforestation and degradation have been avoided, where restoration has occurred, or is under improved management practices.		Hectares	0.00	2021	Areas of both Caimanera and Guacamayas under improved management.	P	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,054.00	0.00	3,054.00
						P(a)	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,054.00	0.00	3,054.00
						A	0.00					
2.2 CO2e sequestered, avoided or reduced.		Metric tons	0.00	2021	Monitoring report (MIR).	P	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,738.00	0.00	9,738.00
						P(a)	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,738.00	0.00	9,738.00
						A	0.00					
2.3 Local community beneficiaries of the project (disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, etc.).		People	50.00	2019	Number of community members benefited and MAS+ tool data.	P	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	0.00	300.00
						P(a)	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	0.00	300.00
						A	0.00					
2.4 Innovative community businesses implemented in La Caimanera and Bocas de Guacamayas that contribute to the conservation and restoration of the mangrove forest.		Community business	0.00	2021	Number of business contributing to the conservation and restoration of Caimanera and Guacamayas and MAS+ tool data.	P	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00
						P(a)	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00
						A	0.00					

Figure 1: Snapshot of Columbia project outcome indicator 2

The indicator does not show any accumulative progress nor explanations of how its sub-indicators will be achieved in 2024. There is very limited information on targets and baselines, therefore it is difficult to understand what good progress is and what progress has been made. The vagueness around these indicators is a recurring theme around all project results matrices and required revision to make data more accessible.

Risk

Risks at project level have not always been tracked and escalated early enough. For example, in May 2023, the IDB raised a serious concern to Defra about the potential cancellation of Component 2 of the Colombia project. If this had been raised earlier with Defra, UK post could have intervened earlier to mitigate communication issues between CI and the IDB to help the two parties to create a plan to overcome risks. Due to the risk being flagged later, tensions and miscommunication between the IDB and CI escalated which made it more difficult to find and implement a solution which potentially risked the reputation of all parties in Colombia.

To prevent this and ensure that risk tracking at a project level is formally being recorded and included in quarterly updates, we recommend that the IDB take the following steps:

1. Create a risk register template and require all project managers to use it. The template should include all of the relevant information about each risk, such as the risk description, probability, impact, mitigation strategy, proximity, and owner;
2. Update the risk register regularly. The project manager should update the risk register quarterly, or more often if needed. This will help to ensure that the risks are being tracked accurately and that any changes in the risk profile are identified and addressed promptly;
3. Review the risk register at quarterly project status meetings. The IDB project manager should review the risk register with Defra at quarterly project status meetings. This will help to ensure that everyone is aware of the risks and that the mitigation strategies are being implemented effectively;
4. Include a risk section in quarterly project updates. This section should summarise the key risks facing the project, the mitigation strategies that are being implemented, and the status of each risk.
5. As part of the risk register, safeguarding risks should be captured in line with IDB policies and incidents reported to Defra in the event of a safeguarding issue.
6. The risk register should be shared with HMG in-country staff to ensure they have sight of the risks. This will also provide them the opportunity to advise mitigation measures where appropriate and allow them to raise potential risks. In-country staff also look beyond project risks and consider contextual diplomatic and reputational risks.

By adopting these recommendations, the IDB can improve the risk tracking process at a project level and reduce the risk of poor performance. Additionally, by informing Defra at earliest convenience, Defra can use HMG resources such in-country colleagues to help mitigate risks.

Quarterly updates

The last two quarterly update reports and meetings have contained the right level of detail in a clear format and Defra is keen that this continues. To ensure maximum productivity, the quarterly reports should be sent to Defra at least one week in advance to allow Defra colleagues time to process the information.

Annual Reports

The annual reports provide a good overview of the progress projects have made. The report provides key highlights against each project component and includes a high-level breakdown of costs incurred throughout each year. We recommend that IDB continue with these and embed at an appropriate level of detail, information on risk reviews, project level reporting and progress against the new logframe as per the above recommendations.

Communications

Defra and the IDB have experienced instances where there have been pressures on the working relationship, leading to miscommunications and misunderstandings. To realign the objectives and expectations of the IDB and Defra, both parties should collaboratively revise the Programme Management Manual (PMM) to help:

1. Improve communication and understanding. A collaborative revision will bring the two parties together to discuss their respective objectives and expectations, and to develop a shared understanding of how to achieve the programme's goals;
2. Increase transparency and accountability. A codified set of expectations would help to increase transparency and accountability between the IDB and Defra. Both parties

would be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities, and there would be a clear process for addressing any issues or concerns that arise.

7. Washington DC workshop: November 2023

The workshop was an opportunity for Defra and the IDB to meet in-person and strengthen their partnership by building good working relationships with the team, collaboratively review programme performance and identify areas for improvement following the 2021 AR (July-December). It also served as an opportunity to discuss potential future directions by exploring pipeline projects presented by the IDB Lab and jointly consider options for utilising the remaining funding effectively. As set out in the methodology in Section 3:

- viii. To support, test and consolidate the findings of this review, IDB colleagues and Defra's programme team collaboratively reached a consensus on the programme recommendations and next steps.

Workshop objectives

1. To create a plan and timeframe for the recommendations of the programme review to be implemented;
2. For the IDB to provide assurances to improve MEL capacity for the programme;
3. To understand the pipeline projects and how those projects will align with the objectives of the programme and Theory of Change;
4. Review the Programme Management Manual to establish better ways of working and have clear guidelines of formal processes (e.g., IDB approval process for projects);
5. Verify programme logframe indicators with EAs.

Workshop readout

The two-day workshop was positive and holding it face to face was beneficial. The Defra team also heard directly from EAs, met with IDB Lab and had an opportunity to meet the UK Executive Director to IDB, Andrew Clark, who agreed with Defra's approach and is at Defra's disposal to support us as we work through the programme review recommendations. The main areas discussed, and the agreements reached are described below.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- Logframe accessibility and disaggregation: IDB and Defra agreed to enhance the accessibility of the logframe and review/disaggregate indicators to better highlight the programme's contributions to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and poverty alleviation.
- Logframe validation: To validate the fitness for purpose of the logframe, the IDB and Defra held a meeting with EAs and IDB Project Leaders to ensure that the logframe accurately reflected their deliverables and was workable in practice (the previously agreed UKBCF logframe had never been tested in this way and proved unworkable for EAs), which has formed part of our lessons learnt.
- Baseline issues: For outcome indicator 1.1 "*Hectares (ha) of mangrove forest under sustainable management*" for the Panama project, the EAs have revised the baseline and have reduced it. Defra programme team will seek guidance from the ODA Hub before approving this change.
- Reporting tool: The IDB and Defra agreed an enhanced reporting tool that showcases the qualitative and quantitative progress of UKBCF at programme level. This tool is crucial to address concerns raised by Defra regarding the IDB's lack of quantitative reporting, which was identified as a key factor contributing to the programme's poor performance.

- Annual Review performance: Defra emphasised that any further decisions on continuation of the existing programme and future pipeline projects were contingent on testing whether the revised and improved logframe had 'fixed' the issues identified in the programme review to date, namely that an overengineered and complex logframe was unable to showcase the good progress being made at project level and translate this into programme level results. The IDB agreed to populate data in the logframe up to and including Q3 of 2023, and Defra will use this, as well as 2022 data, to assess the potential for the programme to achieve an improved annual review score for 2022 (which is due) and 2023 (which would show direction of travel for the programme). This is critical to provide reassurance to the programme SRO and decision makers that improvements to the logframe are contributing to improving programme reporting and poor Annual Review scores.

Programme Review recommendations

- The IDB and Defra reviewed the high-level Programme Review recommendations. Defra agreed to modify some of the language to better clarify the objectives and both parties agreed with the need to incorporate a recommendation on strengthening governance. This has been reflected in the [recommendations in Section 10](#).

Programme Management tools

- Defra and the IDB collaboratively edited the Programme Management Manual to formalise ways of working together, in line with the Administrative Agreement.
- Defra and the IDB agreed a strengthened approach to risk management.

Approvals and remaining funds

- Pipeline projects: The IDB Lab (co-financiers) presented the two pipeline projects: the Honduras projects and the Mangrove Challenge. The Lab provided an overview of the projects' objectives, methodologies, and, importantly, how they align with the Theory of Change and logframe.
- Project approval: Defra re-emphasised that the decision to approve the pipeline projects will depend on the outcome of the PR.
- Remaining funds: The IDB are exploring options for utilising the remaining funds of £1,443,400, including potentially investing in knowledge products, disbursing funds to live projects, or a combination of both. These would be presented to the Steering Group which would be established through the new governance recommendation.
- End-of-programme evaluation: IDB has allocated \$400,000-\$500,000 for the end-of-programme evaluation of all five projects. A sample size evaluation costs around \$350,000.

Lessons Learned

The UKBCF workshop proved to be a valuable learning experience in programme management. The focus on MEL was key. This involved assessing the logframe's accessibility and disaggregation, validating it with Executing Agencies, and establishing a robust reporting tool. These steps were fundamental to ensure all quantitative data could be translated to Defra through a fit-for-purpose framework. This approach ensures effective communication and data-driven decision-making.

Beyond data, the workshop focused on strengthening programme management tools through the Program Management Manual (PMM). Establishing clear guidelines around risk management enhanced accountability, transparency, and clearly defined expectations for reporting. This comprehensive approach will ensure everyone is on the same page, minimising ambiguity and maximising efficiency.

Please refer to [Annex 6](#) for the workshop agenda.

8. Progress to date

Logframe/ Theory of Change Workshop, October 2023

Following the agreement in Jamaica, Defra's UKBCF programme manager and BPF MEL lead, along with IDB's UKBCF MEL lead, started coordination to redevelop the programme Theory of Change (ToC) and logframe. Both parties agreed that the logframe needed simplifying, such that there were fewer indicators and that the indicators that were retained better reflected the activities and outputs at a project level.

Defra and IDB tried various ways to identify the best route to redeveloping the logframe in a way that would work for all parties and minimise the administrative pressure on all sides. For instance, an initial plan to engage each Executing Agency separately was planned to understand how project level activities and outputs fed into their programme level counterparts but this idea was shelved once it was established that this was not the most effective route to understand the issues. Instead, the IDB created an Excel spreadsheet that was shared with all EAs to feed in which project level activities and outputs fed into their programme level indicators.

Following further work by the IDB to map project level information to the programme level, and a separate exercise by Defra to review from a programme level to a project level, a two-part session was organised to redevelop the programme ToC and logframe. The session was facilitated by the Defra BPF MEL lead and attended by several members of the IDB.

The first part of the session focussed on the ToC and led to several substantial outcomes including a revised impact statement, the rewording of several outcomes and outputs and a review of the ToC assumptions, with one new assumption being added. There was also consideration of how potential onboarding of the pipeline projects will impact the assumptions, with both parties agreeing that no edits were required. The session was also helpful in clarifying the links between the ToC and logframe, and the reason for the differences in wording and consequent issues with reading across from the ToC to the logframe. All parties concluded the first part of the session with a clearer sense of what had informed the initial ToC design and what could be updated at this stage in delivery.

The second part of the session focused on simplifying the logframe and was informed by the mapping exercises undertaken by the IDB and Defra. The logframe was reviewed from impact through to outputs: Defra and IDB agreed on the removal of several indicators and on the steps to re-adding a set of indicators should the two pipeline projects be agreed.

Updated Logframe

The updated logframe has now been approved by Defra's SRO for the programme. The logframe was quality assured by BPF's MEL team and the ODA Hub. The logframe indicators has been streamlined to reflect the impact, output, and outcomes of the programme. The IDB's MEL team have also populated the logframe with data from the inception of the programme to Q3 of 2023.

The ODA Hub have expressed satisfaction with the modifications made to the logframe, noting its improved clarity and alignment with the programme's objectives and commended the methodologies employed for ICF KPI 6, 8, and 17.¹⁶

¹⁶ KPI 6: Tonnes of greenhouse emissions reduced or avoided. KPI 8: Ecosystem loss avoided. KPI 17: Area under Sustainable Management Practices as a result of International Climate Finance.

While the logframe does not explicitly reference GESI or poverty alleviation in the wording of the indicators, Output Indicator 2.1 (# of people trained in sustainable use of mangrove resources) is disaggregated by gender, and Output Indicator 2.2 (# of community-based projects for the protection of mangroves implemented) directly contributes to poverty alleviation efforts. Poverty alleviation and gender equality are anticipated outcomes of the programme and are recognised as co-benefits of the project components. These outcomes will be tracked and reported through the IDB Annual Report.

For Impact Indicator 1 (area of mangrove forest where deforestation and degradation has been avoided or restored), the baseline for Panama has been revised from 68,659 hectares to 36,000 hectares. See section 6 for more information on this.

Following the BPF MEL team's rigorous quality assurance process, the programme's logframe has emerged with significant enhancements, earning an indicative score of **A** for both the 2022 and 2023 annual reviews. This revised framework paves the way for improved transparency, accountability, and significant increase in confidence for the programme's reporting and value for money.

9. Evaluation of Evidence

Feedback on EAs by Defra and FCDO staff from in-country meetings and site visits is consistently positive: evidence of trust and communication between the EAs and IDB, impressive results at project sites, and progress reported through presentations. However, it has been recognised that the projects are experiencing difficulties reporting to the programme level, with the absence of a standardised reporting process and lack of stipulations for all projects to include targets, baselines (where appropriate) and achieved results.

This evidence reinforces Defra's concerns about projects delivering on the ground but not sufficiently reporting, specifically quantitatively. Defra's programme management team have reviewed project results matrices and IDB's annual donor reports in depth and have concluded that was difficult to understand the progress projects have made against project level indicators since these documents contained limited data to support the results presented. This is made more difficult by the lack of baselines and targets (see [Section 6: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning](#)). Prior to the new logframe Defra could not assess if projects were on track, which is critical for continual assessment of VfM and communication of impact.

The IDB are demonstrating good practice at providing qualitative data through the annual reports and the Quarterly Advisory Boards. Substantive narratives are provided for the projects, but there was very limited quantitative data to support this and measure project progress against agreed targets. Although we recognise the value of supporting qualitative summaries, we require data to be presented with quantitative evidence to reinforce communication of the outputs and outcomes that the programme has set out to achieve. Defra and IDB have worked together to create an aggregated and streamlined programme logframe to allow common reporting of each project, and we encourage continued collaboration on this to ensure that it fulfils the needs of all users.

The relationship between Defra and IDB has experienced challenges since programme inception: changes in teams in both organisations and Covid-19 were disruptive, leading to issues with communications and several misunderstandings. These challenges were reflected in the approval of the programme logframe in 2022 that subsequently proved unfit for purpose. Both sides had taken different interpretations of what constituted the logframe, resulting in confusion about what was being reported and the progress being made at a project level. To address this issue, both parties agreed in Jamaica that the logframe required major revision to accurately represent what the projects are doing, and to ensure a proportionate number of indicators. This work has been completed (see [Section 8: Progress to Date](#)). The following section presents recommendations to respond to this evaluation and facilitate improved performance and reporting appraisals.

10. Overall Programme Review Recommendations

This section provides recommendations based on this Programme Review, noting the terms agreed to in the administration arrangement and the expectation on IDB as the fund managers. These recommendations are advisory and should be agreed upon with the IDB. Many of the recommendations will need to be implemented jointly, drawing on the specific expertise and experience of all partners.

Even with the successful adoption of these recommendations, it will take sustained input from all partners to ensure that impacts are realised for people and nature.

[Redacted]

Recommendations to the IDB

The following actions have been agreed with IDB following the engagement and workshops described in Sections 4-8 above. As part of next steps, these recommendations will be captured in a work plan by IDB and Defra, along with measurable and timely actions.

1. **Logframe** - continue to test the logframe after potential new projects onboard to ensure it is still fit for purpose.
2. **Programme Reporting** expectations should be agreed between IDB-DEFRA and be codified in the Programme Management Manual. This will ensure clarity and standardised ways of reporting.
3. **The IDB and Defra should have a SharePoint** for documents that have shared ownership. For example, the risk register is an important document that requires regular updates from both parties (HMG in-country staff). This will facilitate transparency and help improve ease of communications.
4. **Proactive Risk Management.** A formal risk register that can be used to communicate risk status, mitigating actions and ongoing issues can increase transparency between donor and programme manager on how delays to project delivery are being dealt with appropriately and timely.
5. **Defra should facilitate collaboration between IDB in-country staff and EAs, with BPF Regional in-country staff.** The UKBCF programme management team at Defra are based within a significantly different time zone and infrequently visit the projects. Linking UKBCF up with BPF staff in-country will offer access to HMG advice, improve visibility on both sides and help to mitigate potential risks with communication and project progress more quickly.
6. **The IDB and Defra should collaboratively revise the governance structures.** This can be done through the revision of the Programme Management Manual to establish better ways of working and improve communications between the two parties. The PMM will also help establish clarity and guidance over formal decision making.
7. The IDB should ensure **EAs are including the UK Aid logo on their resources.** This will not only support visibility of UK as donors it will increase understanding of Defra's interest and role in project/programme evaluations.

11. Conclusion

[Redacted]

Annex 1: UKBCF programme portfolio

Panama- Valuing, Protecting, and Enhancing Coastal Natural Capital

This project is being delivered by Audubon and began in May 2020. It was designed to restore, protect, and enhance mangrove management.

The operation aims to elevate the importance of Panama's coastal natural capital (mangrove ecosystems and related wetlands), the carbon they sequester, and the biodiversity they support by shifting perceptions of their value and importance through a multi-pronged approach. This approach includes:

- i. Delivering robust science that establishes a blue carbon sequestration baseline;
- ii. Establishing economic valuation of the ecosystem services provided by mangroves and related wetlands;
- iii. Building knowledge, awareness, and engagement with key stakeholders to drive action for the protection of these ecosystems;
- iv. Supporting and strengthening policies that promote mangrove conservation and reforestation.



Image 1: Fieldwork campaigns to collect above ground and below ground carbon stocks data for mangroves in Panama, March 2023.

Image 2: Visit of the UK delegation to the Panama Bay Mangroves, March 2023. Pictured left to right: Tim Stew - UK Ambassador in Panamá; Thérèse Coffey -Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of UK; Ligia Castro -Climate Change director from Environment Ministry of Panama; Esperanza Gonzalez - IDB Climate Change Specialist; and Julio Montes de Oca, Coastal Resilience Director Audubon Americas.

Jamaica- Blue carbon Restoration

In January 2020 this project was approved to restore mangrove ecosystems in southern Clarendon, Jamaica. The interventions are expected to improve the sequestration capacity of these restored areas to store blue carbon and improve climate change resilience. The objectives of the projects are:

- i. Assess the site characteristics and the contributory factors to the dieback of the mangrove in South Clarendon, Jamaica.
- ii. Develop a restoration plan for the mangroves and analyse the plan's environmental impacts within the proposed restoration areas.
- iii. Implement restoration actions and measures that result in the regeneration of targeted dead and/or degraded mangrove forests within the southern area of Clarendon



Image 3: The University of the West Indies' (The UWI) Solutions for Developing Countries (SODECO) chief scientist, Professor Terrence Forrester and minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator Matthew Samuda discuss the importance of mangroves, especially during hurricane seasons.

Colombia- Adding Value to Mangroves Conservation in Coastal-City Systems

In May 2021 this project was approved to encourage the conservation and restoration of mangrove ecosystems in Colombia through the following objectives:

- i. Recover and conserve highly biodiverse urban regional wetlands and integrate them into urban development processes;
- ii. Strengthen the community's management schemes for mangrove conservation and development of sustainable economic alternatives for local populations;
- iii. Systematise the lessons learned to expand the initiative to a more significant number of coastal cities in Colombia.

This project is being delivered across three sites and is being executed by two different EAs. Conservation International are delivering in Caimanera and Bocas de Guacamayas, in the Gulf of Morrosquillo and Puerta de Oro are delivering in Ciénaga de Mallorquín, Baraquilla.

In the Gulf of Morrosquillo, the project has a more specific aim to capture, avoid and reduce 9,738 tCO₂ eq¹⁷ by 2024 and 32,426 million tCO₂ in the following ten years, benefiting approximately 300 people.

¹⁷ tonnes of CO₂ equivalent



Image 5: Community Dialogue for ecotourism in Mallorquín Swamp, Colombia, July 2022.

Regional Blue Carbon Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Mechanism

The purpose of this project is to implement an MRV system for mangrove ecosystems that provides a science-based data platform on the sequestration and release of blue carbon. Blue carbon, the carbon stored and sequestered in mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, and tidal salt marshes, is considered a cost-effective means to achieve positive climate change mitigation and adaptation outcomes. This project aims to establish a standardized and regional MRV mechanism for the blue carbon captured in mangrove forests for at least those countries that are beneficiaries of the UKBCF. It will do this by collecting data using both remote sensing, including satellite imagery, as well as on the ground field measurements, to aide in the development of region-specific parameters for the estimation of carbon stocks in mangroves with this MRV system, blue carbon projects of the Fund will be able to:

- i. Improve the valuation of ecosystem services provided by blue ecosystems, including mangroves. This will enable the programmes develop baselines for mangrove conservations/restoration;
- ii. Potentially include blue carbon data in the national NDCs, REDD+ schemes, SDG programs, UNFCCC National Communications and carbon markets programs;
- iii. Utilise an MRV system for results-based payments under a reforestation programme. There is a growing trend to support or encourage results-based actions for reforestation, conservation, or reduced deforestation efforts. In order to effectively participate in or take advantage of these types of efforts, a key element of the results-based payment scheme will be a fully functional MRV.



Image 6: Demonstration of methods to extract tree core slice to measure carbon storage belowground in mangroves in Jamaica,2022.

Image 7: Demonstration of 3D scanning of mangroves to measure the levels of carbon stored aboveground, 2022.

Suriname - Blue Carbon Restoration in the Bigi Pan Multi-Use Management Areas

The primary objective of this project is to improve mangrove management in Suriname by applying an evidence-based approach in the Bigi Pan MUMA wetland, which will guide future conservation and restoration efforts, enhance the governance of these ecosystems, and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Annex 2: Readout from Colombia in-country staff on site visit with the IDB and CI

From June 28th to 30th UK in-country staff joined a verification mission to the UK Blue Carbon Programme component 2- Vida Manglar (VM), implemented by International Conservation in the Department of Sucre, Municipality of Santiago de Tolú (protected areas of lagoon ecosystem of the Ciénaga de la Caimanera and the Regional Natural Park (PRN) of Guacamayas.

The objective of this visit was to monitor the development of the project, as there were some alerts about the progress of the project plan and the budget execution. The visit was useful for clarifying any possible concern about the project development; build trust relationships with the IDB (delivery partner of the programme) and International Conservation and for establishing project governance and monitoring structures.

Within the agenda we meet with CARSUCRE (regional environmental authority), community leaders Caimanera and Guacamayas, and we held internal meetings with the IDB and International Conservation. In addition, we visited the mangroves with the communities and participants of the projects in both areas (see the pictures below).

Main points to highlight:

- Regarding the management plans of the 2 protected areas Ciénaga de la Caimanera and the Regionak Natural Park of Guacamayas:
 - CARSUCRE is right now in the special planning phase of the plans. The regional authority expects to have ready the plans in October for the last check and signature.
 - A consultant financed by VM is supporting CARSUCRE for advancing the management plans.
 - The support and a huge amount of the information provided for the VM project is the baseline for understanding the ecosystem and formulating the management plans.
 - The management plans are going to be aligned with advances made by the VM project.
 - There are certain activities that cannot be done without the management plans, as these are the roadmap for these zones (for example, the plans are going to establish the governance structures for these zones). However, this doesn't mean that the project cannot continue advancing the mangrove conservation and management actions. In fact, there is already great progress in the protected areas.
 - It was emphasised that management plans are instruments that will be required in the event that there is feasibility for the generation of a financial mechanism based on the commercialisation of blue carbon credits. Nevertheless, this would be a value added to the project, not the ultimate goal.
 - In Colombia, we are going to have regional and local elections on October 29th 2023. This is a risk for the process of the approval of the management plans that must be assessed.
- Regarding the regional authority:
 - The relationship with CARSUCRE thought the project has been close
 - CARSUCRE has been benefited by the Vida Manglar project through workshops, activities and field trips that had generated institutional strengthening.

- The VM project has been acting as bridge builder between the regional environmental authority and the communities, improving the way of working together.
- Regarding the communities and the local context:
 - The community leaders in both areas are involved in the development of the project and this is a key and central element on its progress and success.
 - The community-based monitoring processes had been developed successfully.
 - The project works with a GESI approach, in particular with vulnerable communities and involving youth in the activities. Although, traditionally the economic activities related with the mangroves are mostly developed by men (i.e. fishing, tourism by canoe) they are trying to empower women to develop some of this activities and are actively developing strategies for integrating them.
 - Land tenure in this region is affected by the conflict situation in the region. This is relevant for the elaboration of the land ownership study proposed by the project. We will need to deepen in the safeguarding's developed by International Conservation and the IDB in these cases.
- Regarding the budget execution and reporting
 - CI presented some delays in the justifications for the acquisitions plans, and reporting of the contracts executed for the project. They compromised to update this information. As of today, the IDB has now the latest information on this regard as this was established as an action point resulting from the mission.
 - It was agreed that IDB and CI were going to meet to review the legalisation of the advance and the request for the second disbursement with the IDB's operations analyst, in accordance with the resource execution figures presented during the mission.
 - IDB and CI held a meeting on Monday 10th of July for aligning the reporting of the project with DEFRA's logframe. We consider that there was a mismatch between the real advances of the project and the way CI were reporting them.
- Other relevant points:
 - 2 representatives of CI were invited by the IDB to be part of the Mission IDB Regional MRV Blue Carbon Technical Workshop from the 31st of July to the 4th of August.

Action points:

- Establish monthly recurrent follow-up meetings between CI, IDB, British Embassy in Colombia and DEFRA.
- We are going to follow-up on the result from the reporting alignment meeting held on Monday 10th.
- UK Embassy agreed to ask for the authorisation of the use of the UK government logo for the VM materials, as this has been in pause due to the in process audit. We are pending on DEFRA's instructions regarding this point.
- The UK Embassy will share its gender policy with CI to strengthen the operation's management and include these requirements in the development of the component's activities
- It is agreed between the parties that CI will submit technical information to request no technical objections to all TDRs for the activities with the following particularities:
 - BID will provide the NOB application form (it is an integral part of this memory aid).
 - NOBs will be requested in parallel to the opening of the call for proposals.
 - The IDB will process the request within a maximum period of one week.
- We agreed to coordinate biannual meetings with Puerta de Oro as the implementing agency for the operation in component 1.

Annex 3: Colombia, Project Progress

Progress: Component 1, adding value to mangroves conservation

- The Environmental Recovery Plan, for which the ECOVERSA corporation was contracted. Their contract began in August 2022 and they have since completed an environmental diagnosis on the Ciénaga de Mallorquín.
- The Stakeholder Involvement Strategy is developed by the company INPSICON Ltda. This team began the execution of the activities in August 2022, and formally delivered the strategy in December of 2022. It has been already reviewed and approved by the Bank. Three project pilots are currently being designed and executed next year.

Progress: Component 2, community conservation of mangroves

Component 2 is experiencing delays according to the IDB and CI. For Conservation International (CI) to execute this component, their management plan must be approved by the Local Authority (LA) but is still pending formal approval by the authority's board of directors. As a result, the project has been on hold since August of 2022, and direct intervention has not started in the two selected sites (Caimanera and Guacamayas). Prior to obtaining this formal approval from the LA, the authority needs to carry out a public consultation of the management plans. The main concern at this stage is that even if CI advances on the proposed activities, project implementation must align with the working components of yet-to-be approved management plans.

Defra, HMG in-country staff, CI and the IDB met in June 2023 and created a plan of action to help ensure every measure possible is taken to support local authority approval of the management plan (see Annex 2). Despite the delays with this component, some advances have still been made with the feasibility study for implementing mangrove restoration actions and a in establishing socioeconomic baseline for community business models.

Other components of this project that we were able to gather further progress updates on, include two impact analyses on urban expansion and cattle farming pressure on mangroves. The aim of these will be to identify mitigation actions using Nature Based Solutions (NBS), financial needs assessment for implanting these actions, and costs of reducing threats to water connectivity. Overall, the project will support at least two local associations to implement mangrove conservation activities and develop a technical document for blue carbon credit certification. The socio-economic baseline of all community actors will be measured and monitored, accompanied by training and capacity building in Caimanera and Guacamayas.

Annex 4: Jamaica, Project Progress

Progress: Component 1, characteristics and impact analysis

The feasibility study has been completed and provides a baseline on hydrology, sediments, soils, bathymetry, coastal dynamics and geomorphology, faunal and floral composition, and socio-economic conditions.

The completed environmental assessments are to be presented to the national environmental authority to ensure compliance with environmental regulations based on the expected interventions regarding restoration.

Progress: Component 2, formulation and implementation of actions and measures to restore 1,600 ha of mangroves.

The implementation and restoration plans are completed. Implementation activities commenced in this quarter. The mangrove restoration interventions are currently being conducted in phases in the four mangrove areas based on the numerical modelling of baseline hydrological data to support the interventions.

Progress: Component 3, sustainable charcoal production plan

The procurement process has been restructured as it was not possible to procure a firm to undertake the process. The consultancy has been restructured into separate tasks to be undertaken by individual consultants. Community sensitisation of the thematic area is ongoing, through door-to-door engagements and small group meetings, as well as the circulation of informational sheets in the community.

Progress: Component 4, management and monitoring of restoration programme.

Hydro-meteorological monitoring has started in two of the mangrove areas slated for restoration interventions, using GPS and water flow meters.

Progress: Component 5, knowledge dissemination and training

Since the projects inception at least three training workshops have been completed. Local community members have been trained in the use of drones and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and there was a mangrove sensitization session. At least 40 people were trained during 2022.

Virtual knowledge platform: The procurement process for the consultant to undertake the task of producing the platform has started.

Public Awareness: A web page has been created for the program and updates will be provided on the website.

Annex 5: Panama, Project Progress

Progress: Component 1, deliver robust science to establish a blue carbon baseline in Panama's mangroves

- Creation of mangrove coverage history map from 1980 – 2021 in Parita Bay and Panama Bay, with 2022 update of coverage following ground-truth analysis site visit.
- Continuation of blue carbon assessment work, conducted at Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed with National Audubon Society. Sample collection in Parita Bay has been completed
- Development of complementary research on mangrove dynamics (e.g., nutrient effects, salinity changes, mapping of mangrove and bird species as an indicator of ecosystem health) that will better inform more efficient ecosystem management as well as the identification of priority areas for conservation and restoration.
- Addition of capacity development seminars for undergraduate students and promotion of participation from international students on different aspects of the project (e.g., mangrove species identification).
- Development of a national registry for Dirección Regional del Ministerio de Ambiente (MiAmbiente) of reforested plots with mangrove species in Panama to identify areas reforested with mangrove species at the provincial scale and quantitatively evaluate the success rate of mangrove reforestation projects.

Progress: Component 2, establish economic valuation of mangrove ecosystem services and promote its conservation.

- Contracted ESSA Technologies Ltd to carry out a natural capital assessment. ESSA:
 - i. Finalised a literature review on political, economic, social and environmental dimensions associated with mangroves and mangrove conservation in Panama;
 - ii. Are finalising an assessment of the condition and risk of mangroves;
 - iii. Are developing management scenarios—all of these activities have and are continuing to involve active participation of key stakeholders identified by both ESSA and Audubon Americas teams.
- Developed a conservation plan for Bay of Parita in partnership with Panama Audubon Society. The final draft of the conservation plan for Bay of Parita is complete and under review, and was launch February 2023.

Progress: Component 3, build knowledge, awareness and engagement with key stakeholders to drive action that increases protection of coastal wetlands.

- Expanded “Aulas Verdes”¹⁸ in the 2022 school year to reach 3,323 students in 16 schools in Bay of Panama, plus 97 students in two schools in Parita Bay.
- Organised several workshops, presentations and meetings with key stakeholders, including the “Regional Directorate of the Environmental Ministry”, MiAmbiente and other government

¹⁸ Aulas Verdes provides environmental education on the importance of conserving the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) surrounding the schools where environmental teachings are taught.

agencies and NGOs and community-based organizations necessary for the success of this project.

- Carried out a total of 45 webinars, workshops, and meetings, involving a total of 520 participants from NGOs and community-based organizations involved in conservation programme activities.
- Refined the communications strategy and materials and organized key events outlined for this project, such as the World Mangrove Day and the Plastics Symposium.
- Established partnership with complementary Euroclimate+ project and jointly developed blue carbon workshop “Comprehensive blue carbon management: Reconciling science and policy”
- Relunched “Voices of the Juan Díaz” during the blue carbon workshop and the Plastics Symposium, to continue promoting engagement in the plastics topic.

Progress: Component 4, support and strengthen policies that incentivize mangrove conservation and restoration through outreach, science and research.

- Coordinated with the technical team in charge of the Panama Bay Management Plan and a consultancy to identify financial and governance scenarios for the sustainability of Panama Bay’s management plan.
- Identified the need of a rapid ecological assessment of mangrove areas adjacent to Panama’s Tocumen airport future expansion area.
- Identified an opportunity to create a National Chapter of the Global Mangrove Alliance in Panama to support and strengthen policies that incentivise mangrove conservation and restoration.
- Established the methodology to achieve birds as indicators of carbon and ecosystem health, and training and field implementation has begun.

Annex 6: Washington DC workshop agenda

Tuesday 14 th November 2023		
9:00	Welcome UK-IDB Partnership- Introductions/ Team Building Exercise	IDB/Defra lead
9:30	<p>UKBCF Logframe: Update & Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual presentation from Tom Smith • Q&A <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand next step of the programme logframe 	Defra lead
10:45	<p>Defra's Programme Review: Update & Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra to present the overarching objectives, and proposed recommendations of the draft Programme Review. • Followed by discussion on next steps on the programme review for Defra • Discussion <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDB are clear on suggested recommendations in the programme review. • Defra & IDB have opportunity to discuss recommendations and implications on programme delivery • Actions are identified to practically implement recommendations into UKBCF delivery and management 	Defra lead
13:00	<p>Programme Management Manual: Amendments & implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas within the PMM that may require updating in line with recommendations and recognising previous challenges with reporting • Be clear on the expectations of each other going forward. • Co-create a timeline for the remaining M&E requirements for the programme to assuage the IDBs concerns about data requests. • IDB to outline formal procedures (e.g., project approval process) <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus reached on updates required to the Programme Management Manual, in the context of the revised logframe and Defra recommendations. • Potential to amend the admin agreement on the basis of the PMM updates has been discussed and actions identified, if needed. 	IDB/Defra lead
14:45	Continued work on Project Management Manual	IDB/Defra lead
Wednesday 15 th November 2023		
9:00	<p>Presentation: IDB Lab pipelined projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDB teams to present purpose of Mangrove Challenge, and Honduras projects 	IDB lead

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the IDB Lab project indicators, clarifying how projects are inline with the revised ToC and logframe • Q&A <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra are informed of the aims, objectives and reporting processes of the IDB LaB projects. • Group have the opportunity to discuss how they will align with Defra’s recommendations and support overarching UKBCF outcomes 	
10:45	<p>Logframe Verification: Technical discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test draft indicators with EAs • Discuss timelines and support required to complete the logframe, ensuring pipelined projects are compliant. • Discuss feasibility of establishing targets and retrospective baselines. <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timelines agreed for completing the UKBCF logframe • Defra are sighted on work to complete the targets and feasibility of setting baselines for projects to report against. • Expectations are agreed on degree of retrospective reporting on project progress. 	IDB/Defra lead
13:00	<p>Remaining UKBCF Budget: Options & discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDB to outline potential use for remaining budget for UKBCF. • Discussion on options. <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parties are sighted on the options to take forward to use remaining budget. • Defra have information to consider as part of the final recommendations and programme review. 	IDB lead
14:00	<p>Next steps / final remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key reflections and takeaway points from the workshop. • Outline next steps to agree and finalise the logframe, PMM and other governance tools. • Propose and agree timelines to implement the recommendations. <p>Review additional actions.</p>	IDB/Defra lead