Mainstreaming opportunities for operationalising business contributions to nature

Guidance to support individual, collective and collaboration actions

to deliver positive outcomes for nature

LIBERIA

Prepared by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) as part of the MOON project (Mainstreaming Opportunities for Operationalizing business contributions to Nature in the Mano River Union countries) and is funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

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Contents

1 Introduction

This guidance introduces the concept of nature positive and explores pathways towards achieving nature positive through individual, collective and collaborative action. The focus is on mainstreaming opportunities for business to contribute to positive outcomes for nature in Liberia. As such, this high-level guidance is intended to be relevant for regulators, businesses, and NGOs and serves as a starting point for considering possible pathways and approaches towards nature positive.

The document is organised into the following sections:

Section 2: Global context: current trends and the global call for the world to become nature positive. The section covers what nature positive means and how different actors are responding.

Section 3: A new business as usual is presented, focusing on the national enabling environment and delivery of nature positive in complex landscapes. It highlights the importance of understanding the landscape as an integrated whole, identifying priorities for conservation and restoration and limits to impacts, and the need to assess threats, pressures and impacts by considering the activities of all land uses and projects – past, present and planned. Opportunities to align the actions towards nature positive and the roles of different actors in Liberia are considered.

Section 4: Explores how business can contribute to positive outcomes for nature and what it means for a company to be nature positive. The section considers how to integrate nature into decision-making by setting objectives and mainstreaming nature into all aspects of the business. It highlights the importance of anticipating, preventing and mitigating impacts through a mitigation hierarchy, applied in an iterative and coordinated way alongside other actors in a landscape. Finally, the section emphasises the opportunities for collective and collaborative action that go beyond a 'do no harm' approach and contribute meaningfully towards sustainable landscape objectives and nature positive outcomes on the ground.

The document is not intended to provide detailed guidance for all actors on the steps to take towards nature positive, nor does it provide detailed sector-specific guidance on mitigation planning. Where existing guidance is available, links are provided so that users can access more information and support.

This guidance was developed as part of the MOON project (Mainstreaming Opportunities for Operationalizing business contributions to Nature in the Mano River Union countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinee, Liberia, Sierra Leone) and is funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The project is implemented by Biotope's Foundation, together with Fauna & Flora International, Biotope and Conservation Capital. The project aims to integrate biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practices in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia. The guidance builds on discussions with stakeholders from government, industry and NGOs in Monrovia, Liberia, on the 18th and 19th of May 2022.

2 Global context

2.1 Current trends

The decline of biodiversity is one of the most urgent problems facing humanity. The drivers of this trend come from different fronts: conversion of natural habitats to agriculture, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, alteration of bio/geochemical cycles, the substitution of native and wild species by exotic and domesticated ones, appropriation of primary production, and the interaction and cumulative effects of these patterns, plus other human activities that lead to biodiversity loss[1]. With the global trends of ever-increasing resource consumption, waste generation and the massive decline in biodiversity, there is a vast growing concern for the future of our planets systems and the populations that rely on them[2]. According to IPBES[3], seventy-five per cent of the land surface is significantly altered, 66 per cent of the ocean area is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts, over 85 per cent of wetlands (area) has been lost, and across much of the highly biodiverse tropics, 32 million hectares of primary or recovering forest were lost between 2010 and 2015. In terms of species, around 1 million species already face extinction, and breeds of domesticated plants and animals are disappearing. This loss of diversity, including genetic diversity, poses a serious risk to global food security by undermining the resilience of many agricultural systems to threats such as pests and pathogens.

And fundamentally interlinked to the above, billions of tons of CO2 are released into the atmosphere with no signs of slowing down. The last four years were the four hottest on record. According to a September 2019 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report, we are at least one degree Celsius above preindustrial levels and close to what scientists warn would be "an unacceptable risk"[4]. Glaciers and ice sheets in polar and mountain regions are melting faster than ever, causing sea levels to rise. Almost two-thirds of the world's cities with populations of over five million are located in areas at risk of sea level rise, and almost 40 per cent of the world's population live within 100 km of a coast. Climate change is a direct cause of soil degradation, which limits the amount of carbon the earth is able to contain. Around 500 million people today live in areas affected by erosion, while up to 30 per cent of food is lost or wasted as a result. Meanwhile, climate change limits the availability and quality of water for drinking and agriculture. The effects of climate change heighten competition for resources such as land, food, and water, fuelling socio-economic tensions and, increasingly often, leading to mass displacement. Climate is a risk multiplier that makes worse already existing challenges.

This environmental emergency is even more challenging to face in a world confronting an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis because of the COVID19 pandemic, which threatens to derail the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Global Risk Report[5] flags that post-COVID-19 recovery measures are postponing the transition to a more sustainable economy in favour of short-term stability. Carbon-intensive technologies are still

1 Naeem, S. et al. (2016), "Biodiversity and human well-being: An essential link for sustainable development", Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, Vol. 283/1844, 20162091.

[2] Díaz, S., Settele, J., Brondízio, E. S., Ngo, H. T., Agard, J., Arneth, A., Balvanera, P., Brauman, K. A., Butchart, S. H., & Chan, K. M. (2019). Pervasive human-driven decline of life on Earth points to the need for transformative change. Science, 366 (6471).

[3] IPBES (2019) Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673

[4] https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/global-climate-2015-2019-climate-change-accelerates

[5] WEF (2022) Global Risks Report. Available: https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2022/

ssubsidised, with over 50 developed and emerging economies committing US$345 billion to fossil fuels in 2020.

But the crisis has also unleashed a renewed spirit of multilateral cooperation, spurred by the necessity of a coordinated and common response. Global goals to reduce deforestation and forest degradation and increase forest cover, mitigate climate change and reduce emissions, halt biodiversity loss and combat land degradation, among others, have been set through the ambitious agendas of the Paris climate agreement, the global SDGs, the New York Declaration on Forests, the Bonn Challenge, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi Biodiversity Targets and post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Box 1).

BOX 1: SELECT INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Post-2020 **Global Biodiversity Framework:** During the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework as a stepping stone toward the 2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with nature". In its decision 14/34 the COP to the CBD adopted a comprehensive and participatory process for the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Negotiations are expected to conclude late 2022.

SDG 15 Life on Land: 'Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss,' and **SDG 14 Life below Water:** 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.'

The **Bonn Challenge**, launched in 2011, proposes to restore 350 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded lands by 2030. It is an implementation vehicle for national priorities such as water and food security and rural development while contributing to the achievement of international climate change, biodiversity and land degradation commitments.

The 2014 **New York Declaration on Forests** issued a widely backed call to end natural forest loss by 2030.

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)[6]: Land degradation refers to the reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of land, reducing carbon storage in soil and vegetation, driving the loss of biodiversity, and accelerating climate change. The SDGs include a target for LDN, adopted by the UNCCD in October 2015. Countries committing to set LDN targets (national and sub-national) are required to define and map the extent and location of land degradation and develop strategies to ensure **neutral, or net positive, outcomes** through a combination of activities that actively **avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation** through restoration and sustainable land management interventions.

The **Paris Agreement on climate change is a treaty with a goal to stop the world's average temperature from rising more than two degrees, or ideally 1.5 degrees Celsius. The treaty** requires parties to take action and support activities that reduce emissions, including those from deforestation and forest degradation, through results-based payments and other sustainable forest management approaches.

UN-REDD Programme was launched in 2008 with the aim to reduce forest emissions and enhance carbon stocks in forests while advancing national sustainable development and mitigating climate change. The Programme supports nationally led Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) processes and supports countries to develop their capacities to meet REDD+ related requirements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Global goals are driving regional targets, such as the African Union's mandate, through the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), to bring 100 million hectares of degraded land into

[6] www.unccd.int/actions/achieving-landdegradation-neutrality

restoration by 2030. This contributes to the Bonn Challenge, the African Resilient Landscape Initiative (ARLI), the African Union Agenda 2063, the SDGs, and other targets and complements the regional plans and programmes such as the African Union's *African Landscapes Action Plan,* and the *'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Land Degradation (LDBA)'* programme.

2.2 Global call for the world to become nature positive

International organisations representing conservation and business interests are now uniting around a goal of "Nature-positive", which aims to move beyond just halting biodiversity loss but reverse it by 2050, and this underpins the transformative change needed to bring sustainability into the future. It is a goal that starts now and is ever increasingly important as planetary boundaries are pushed to their limits[7].

Whilst the focus of the attention has been on risks related to climate change, biodiversity loss[8] and the loss of nature presents a fundamental risk to the functioning of human society and economies and there has been an outcry for systematic and rapid economic transformations to stop and reverse the trends of biodiversity loss.

2.2.1 What is nature positive?

Nature positive is both a target and a call to action to tackle loss of biodiversity. At its heart, the goal is to halt and reverse the destruction of nature by 2030 with a full recovery of a resilient biosphere by 2050. A nature positive goal complements the agreed global climate target of net zero emissions by 2050. The proposed quantitative targets, as of June 2022, are for:

Zero loss of nature from 2020 onwards, nature positive by 2030, and full recovery by 2050.

It calls for **urgent, collective and sustained action across all sectors to halt and reverse nature loss** by increasing the health, abundance, diversity, and resilience of species, populations, and ecosystems.

- Nature should be woven into all aspects of society and business, and businesses need to assess and then respond to the protection and recovery of nature in all senses.
- Nature positive represents a **transition from a site-specific approach to a target-based perspective**.
- Nature positive requires a shift from segmented, sector-specific approaches, project-by-project decision making, and siloed action by individual actors at the concession, farm and plantation level to an **integrated, coordinated and cross-sectoral approach at the landscape level**.
- It is about **nature-centric decision-making and holistic, integrated management approaches** that fully apply environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations to the role of nature in all aspects of business activities and the impact these activities have on nature: dependencies and impacts.
- Economic actors have a crucial role to play in shifting their business models "*from nature-negative to nature-positive*" and in identifying and disclosing their dependencies on nature[9],

[7] CBD. (2021). Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework on its third meeting (Part I) (p. 167). Convention on Biological Diversity. https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/aa82/d7d1/ed44903e4175955284772000/wg2020-03-05-en.pdf
[8] Gardner, C. J., Struebig, M. J., & Davies, Z. G. (2020). Conservation must capitalise on climate's moment. Nature Communications, 11 (1), 1–2.
[9] Executive Secretary Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, speaking at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, Marseille, September 2021.

and a new economic model and investment in nature has been called for to bridge the financing gap[10].

Not only do societies and governments, but businesses have an integral role to play in these transformations. Biodiversity loss is now considered to be one of the largest macro-scale business risks, with many sectors highly dependent on the ecosystem services provided by nature. Action needs to be taken by these businesses to ensure a future in which they can thrive alongside the welfare of the planet and its systems.

2.2.2 Who is delivering Nature Positive?

Nature positive has to be a prerequisite to have any chance of delivering the Paris climate agreement. The only way to hold the 1.5°C line is to simultaneously cut emissions, safeguard natural carbon sinks and transform economic growth and development putting nature at the centre of the decision-making process. Countries, international institutions and businesses are delivering on this commitment. Before the UN Biodiversity Summit in September 2020, there were calls from more than 600 businesses, 50 faith organisations, 22 humanitarian & development sorganisations and 15 conservation sorganisations to reverse nature loss within a decade[11]. In addition to the G7, 88 heads of state have signed the Leaders Pledge for Nature to reverse loss of biodiversity by 2030[12]. In the finance sector, the new Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, with over 400 members from 14 countries, will help direct investments towards a nature positive future.

In practice, nature positive is a framework to establish the corporate level and national and international policies and strategies that must include equitable and relevant actionable targets that capture nature's complexity and connectivity from genes to ecosystems.

As an approach, nature positive implies a socio-ecological perspective and a set of principles and processes that can align different actions and inform them under all the multilateral environmental agreements in particular the three Rio Conventions (the CBD, UNFCCC Paris Agreement, and the UNCCD), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

That is, to guide the different stakeholders - governments, civil society and businesses - to work towards common (and ambitious enough) targets and to know what to measure. Science-based targets for a nature positive trajectory are still under intense discussion.

2.3 How are different actors responding to this call and what does this mean?

From structural conditions of the global economy to unsustainable practices at all levels, multiple drivers of biodiversity loss need to be tackled towards nature positive. Different stakeholders have a crucial and relevant role to play in a collaborative and integrative manner where nature is central to decisions related to sustainable development planning. Some of them are already responding to this call for action.

2.3.1 Governments

Supportive and integrating public policy is one of the pillars to effectively embed nature positive as a principle to guide development and conservation actions within a country. These policies and legal

[10] Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, speaking at the IUCN's World Conservation Congress 2020, Marseille, September 2021.
[11] Locke, H., et al. (2020). A nature-positive world: the global goal for nature.
[12] Leaders' Pledge for Nature. Leaders' pledge for nature. https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/

frameworks have to be embedded in multi-level, cross-sectoral policy frameworks designed through participatory processes and accompanied by a range of policy instruments and incentives. The main role of governments is to create a set of enabling conditions to encourage, require, and support actors in all sectors and landscapes to deliver nature positive outcomes on the ground.

2.3.2 Business

With societal expectations and government demand for business to reduce harm and make a positive contribution to society and the environment on the rise, there has been renewed momentum around the concept of no harm, net positive (i.e. doing more good than harm or putting more back into society and the environment than you take out) and nature positive.

Leading companies dependent on natural resources are recognising the operational risks posed to their business from major drivers of environmental change (such as water scarcity, pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss), as well as reputational risks from increasing stakeholder expectations to contribute to meaningful action to address these drivers[13].

Various supply chain actors have responded and made a range of sustainability commitments (Box 2). One of the highest profile corporate commitments in recent years has been the number of companies signing up to zero (net) deforestation commitments, notably among those with agricultural commodity supply chains. Some of the largest companies are leveraging considerable influence by integrating deforestation considerations into decision-making on the spending of multimillion-dollar procurement budgets[14]. A growing number of companies are expanding their pledges to extend beyond forests to include prohibitions on converting any natural ecosystems (grasslands, wetlands, etc.) at risk from commodity production[15]. Commitments to carbon neutrality are also on the rise, and with this, increased demand for nature- and land-based carbon projects to deliver these commitments. This presents both opportunities and risks for nature.

Progress in fulfilling commitments and delivering outcomes on the ground varies: from no action to those making tangible steps forward. While many companies have fallen short of ambitious commitments, efforts to align with ambitious global targets are gaining momentum.

BOX 2: SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS AND WHAT THEY MEAN

The type of public commitments made varies by sector but includes commitments to, for example:

- **Deforestation free and zero deforestation targets** are time-bound commitments adopted by various governments, institutions and companies to reduce and transparently measure their contribution to reduced deforestation. Commitments to zero deforestation are typically either a 'net' or 'gross' target. Whilst each approach has merits, zero gross deforestation commitments can promote a more integrated approach to the delivery of positive contributions, generating benefits for biodiversity, ecosystem services and community stakeholders by retaining forest habitat.
- **No net loss or net positive impact on biodiversity or environment**: A goal in which the impacts on an environmental target (e.g. biodiversity) are balanced or outweighed by measures taken to avoid and minimise the impacts, to restore affected areas and finally to offset or compensate the residual impacts, so that no loss remains. Where the gain exceeds the loss, the term 'Net Gain' or 'Net Positive' may be used

[13] Aiama et al. (2015) No Net Loss and Net Positive Impact approaches for biodiversity: exploring the potential application of these approaches in the commercial agriculture and forestry sectors. IUCN: Gland, Switzerland.
[14] World Bank (2019) Forest-Smart Mining: Identifying Factors Associated with the Impacts of Large-Scale Mining on Forests. World Bank Group: Washington, DC.
[15] Rothrock, P., Ellis, K. & Weatherer, L. (2022) Corporate Progress on No Deforestation and "Nature Positive" Post 2020. Washington, DC: Forest Trends

instead. "Net" recognises that human activities will continue to impact negatively on nature, but that this needs to be appropriately compensated for.

- **Avoiding production in areas of Critical Habitat and High Conservation Value** and the complete avoidance of certain ecosystems (e.g. peatlands) or sites of high biodiversity and/or cultural value (e.g. UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Protected Areas, Key Biodiversity Areas etc.).

2.3.3 NGOs & Civil Society

A group of NGOs, scientists and environmental groups have been pushing for strengthening the Global Biodiversity Framework from the current draft to one that would achieve a nature positive world by 2030. Given that the previous Aichi biodiversity targets are unmet, there is a consensus that the priority must be swift action and credible delivery. The groups are calling for the framework to achieve a full nature recovery by 2050 through measures that track and improve migration patterns; carbon sequestration and storage; ecological integrity of habitats; extinction risk of species; wildlife abundance; and genetic diversity.

On the financial side, a coalition of environmental NGOs has urged developed nations to pledge at least $60bn for international finance for nature in developing countries annually, ahead of the UN's biodiversity summit. The call to action was made by organisations including WWF, the World Resources Institute (WRI), The Nature Conservancy and the Rainforest Trust. The NGOs have pointed to the fact that, by UN estimates, less than $10bn is allocated globally to international biodiversity finance. The organisations recommended that at least $8.1trn be provided to nature-based solutions alone – projects which involve the restoration of ecosystems in a way that enhances climate mitigation and/or adaptation efforts – by 2050.

Additionally, civil society sorganisations are working on influencing governments and the private sector to orient decisions towards nature positive outcomes. While different approaches and initiatives (the World Economic Forum's Nature Positive initiative, the Science Based Targets Network, the Taskforce for Nature-based Financial Disclosure, among others) are under development, companies and financial institutions need support from conservation experts and organisations to turn pledges, commitments and targets into reality on the ground benefits for nature.

Achieving this will require a new business as usual with **urgent and sustained action across all sectors to halt and reverse nature loss** by increasing the health, abundance, diversity, and resilience of species, populations, and ecosystems. All sectors have a role to play in delivering nature positive goals.

3 Delivering nature positive outcomes – a new business as usual

Getting to nature positive, bending the curve to halt biodiversity loss and towards the recovery of biodiversity, requires a range of interventions and a new business as usual (see Figure 1). In this section we highlight:

- The importance of setting national targets and mainstreaming these into policy and legislation
- The need to transition to integrated landscape approaches in which site-based actions are nested within landscape-level delivery of nature positive objectives
- Roles for different actors to contribute towards improved outcomes for nature

***Figure 1**. Framing decision-making within the bounds of nature – A new business as usual*[16]

[16] Fauna & Flora International (FFI). 2021. Coordinated and collaborative application of the mitigation hierarchy in complex multi-use landscapes in Africa. A conceptual framework integrating socioecological considerations. FFI: Cambridge U.K. Available from: www.fauna-flora.org

3.1 National enabling context

Global and regional goals have to be translated into national targets and mainstreamed into policy and legislation to provide clear, enforceable, and measurable objectives for directing action on the ground towards a nature positive goal.

In Liberia, national targets relating to climate mitigation, deforestation, biodiversity, land degradation, and ecosystem restoration are articulated in various national strategies and policies. Whilst not formulated specific to an overarching nature positive ambition, these existing targets can help to align conservation actions in a more integrated way and set the course for action to deliver improved outcomes for nature.

Relevant national targets include, for example:

- 1 million ha of deforested and degraded land to be brought into restoration (Bonn Challenge)
- 30% of forested land representing at least 1.5 million hectares under management for conservation (National Forest Reform Law of 2006)
- Reduce deforestation by 50% by 2030 (NDC 2021)
- Restore 25% priority degraded forests and 35% degraded coastal wetlands and mangrove ecosystems by 2030 (NDC 2021)
- 50% of water catchments under sustainable management by 2030 (NDC 2021)
- Improve protection and conservation of 30% of mangrove ecosystems and reduce GHG emissions through avoided conversion and draining (NDC 2021)
- Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030 + an additional 10% of the national landscape has improved (net gain)
- By 2024, the rate of loss and degradation of natural habitats outside protected areas serving ecological corridors or containing key biodiversity areas or providing important ecosystem services is minimised by 3% through integrated land use planning (NBSAP 2017, Target 2.1)
- By 2023, at least 20-25% of living marine and aquatic resources are managed sustainably and guided by the ecosystem approach (NBSAP 2017, Target 2.1)

Some targets have been further quantified through stakeholder engagement and spatial planning processes. Others have been set more recently, and processes to articulate these spatially at the national level are underway. A roadmap for a potential national biodiversity scheme aimed at delivering conservation outcomes has also been developed, focusing on requirements for offsetting in the mining sector[17].

These goals and targets elucidate a trajectory that could contribute to progress towards nature positive outcomes. A suite of policy measures and priority actions have further been proposed and/or are under implementation to achieve a specific target. Under the NDC this includes, for example:

- Conserve HCV and HCS forests within agricultural, tree crop & commercial forestry concessions
- Establish a net deforestation mining policy by 2030
- Reclamation of degraded land
- Establish new protected areas
- Require certain types of development to achieve a net gain for impacted biodiversity (e.g. some mining projects)

[17] Johnson, S. D. R. (2015). A national biodiversity offset scheme: a road map for Liberia's mining sector (No. 95959, pp. 1-162). The World Bank

- Landscape and jurisdictional approaches, for example, for REDD+ and RSPO.

However, to achieve nature positive a robust framework is needed to orient current and future conservation and sustainable land management initiatives within the different landscapes in Liberia (Box 3).

BOX 3: GAP ANALYSIS: LAWS AND POLICIES FOR MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY IN LIBERIA

Liberia's laws and regulations create a pathway for integrating biodiversity management into development. A recent gap analysis of the laws and policies of Liberia highlights a number of opportunities to strengthen the enabling context for achieving improved outcomes for nature. For example, the Environmental Protection and Management Law (EPML) requires that the Environmental Protection Authority should have promulgated a biodiversity-specific regulation that will require developers to mainstream biodiversity but also mandate government agencies and other non-governmental sorganisations to take actions in promoting biodiversity conservation through no net loss or net gain. Similarly, the National Wildlife Law requires the Forest Development Authority to promulgate regulations to set up and manage the conservation and wildlife fund. To date, the regulations are yet to be developed, thereby preventing the establishment of the conservation and wildlife management fund.

An amendment of the Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law has been drafted. While this version is an improvement from the current law, there is a need to include biodiversity-specific considerations, including the mitigation hierarchy and requirement for NNL/NG outcomes. Should these be included, the soon to be amended wildlife law would contain tighter provisions for protecting and mainstreaming biodiversity.

Finally, one fundamental gap is the lack of explicit language in many sector-specific laws describing or requiring NNL/NG outcomes for development projects. Save the ESIA guidelines, these laws contain ambiguous language which is subject to many interpretations. To ameliorate this gap, a recommendation is to amend some of the laws or promulgate a biodiversity-specific regulation that captures all these issues with enforcement mechanisms across all sectors.

See Goll (2022)[18] for full list of recommendations.

[18] Goll (2022) Laws and policies for mainstreaming biodiversity in Liberia. Gap Analysis. Project Report submitted as part of the MOON project (Mainstreaming Opportunities for Operationalizing business contributions to Nature in the Mano River Union countries.

3.2 Landscape delivery of nature positive

Landscapes are complex **socio-ecological systems** (Figure 2) in which people and nature are inextricably linked. Individuals, communities, businesses, societies and cultures depend on and value land and nature in diverse ways and are constantly shaping and being shaped by natural systems. Complex systems have boundaries (also called thresholds or tipping points) beyond which the system will rapidly reorganise into an alternative regime or result in system collapse.

Growing demands – for energy, land, water, minerals and natural resources – are rapidly outpacing the capacity of landscapes to meet competing needs. This is creating conflict over land allocations and rights and resulting in rapid ecosystem degradation, deforestation, poverty and food insecurity, water crises, and contributing to global climate change.

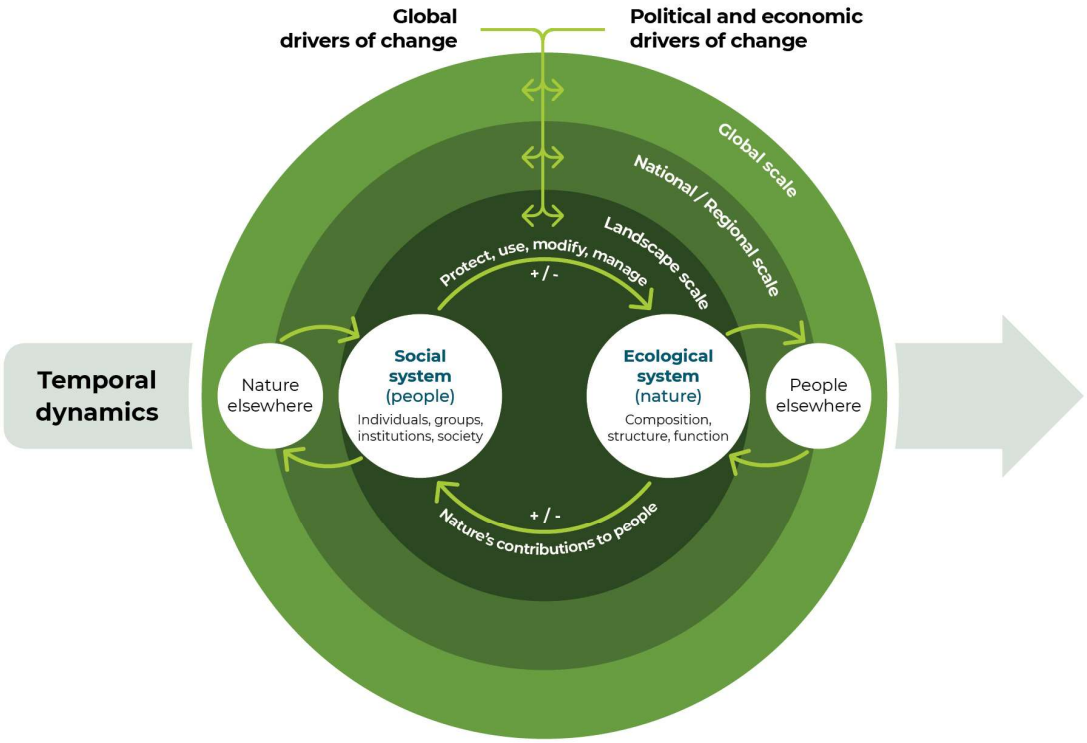


Figure 2: *Socioecological system. Adapted from Fischer et al. (2015)*[19]

Delivering positive outcomes for nature requires tangible **action** on the ground and more holistic approaches that consider the landscape as an integrated whole, priority areas for conservation and restoration, and a clear and measured understanding of the threats and pressures on nature: what is being taken out of the ecosystem and consideration of how to ensure that this is not having a deleterious effect on the health, function and resilience of nature (Figure 3).

[19] Fischer et al. (2015) Advancing sustainability through mainstreaming a social-ecological systems perspective. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 14, 144–149.

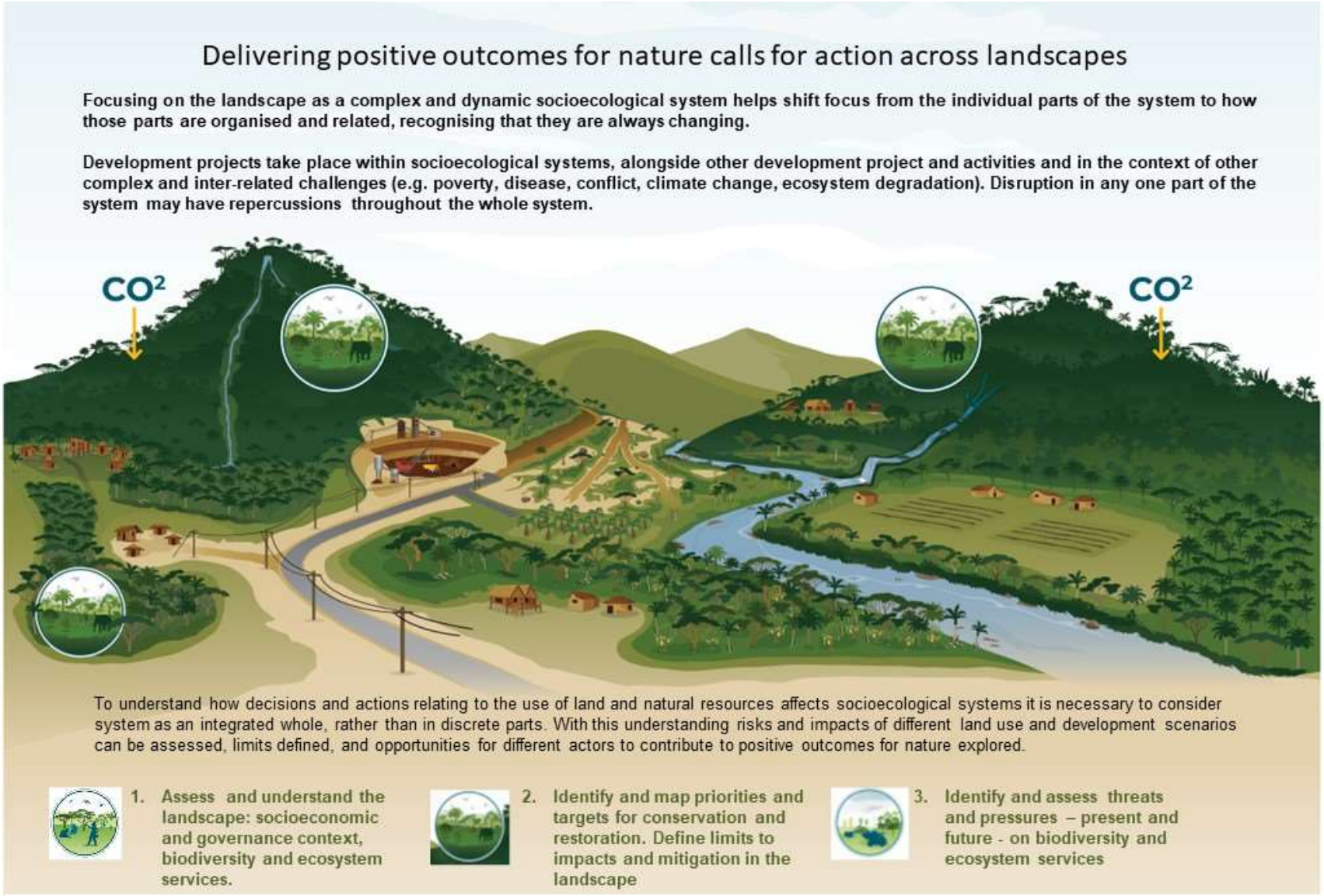


Figure 3: *Delivering nature positive requires an understanding of the landscape, priorities for conservation, and the threats and pressures*

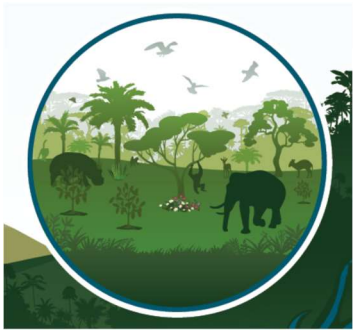
3.2.1 Assess and understand the landscape

Building an understanding of the current state of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the landscape and the societal context in which people and nature co-exist (governing policies, institutions and processes, and socio-economic conditions) forms the baseline from which targets and opportunities for delivering positive outcomes for nature can be progressed.

To **assess and understand the landscape,** it is important to consider:

- the socio-economic context in which people and nature co-exist
- landscape governance, i.e. the set of rules (policies and cultural norms) and the decision-making processes of public, private and civic sector actors with stakes in the landscape that affect actions in the landscape
- what biodiversity occurs where, how much and in what condition, and what different species and ecosystems need to persist and thrive
- the ways in which people use, value, and depend on nature and land (ecosystem services)
- the current state and trends (e.g. are priority ecosystem services adequate, or have there been changes in quality or quantity that affects the benefits derived by people? Are populations of priority species stable, declining or increasing?)

3.2.2 Identify priority areas for conservation and restoration in the landscape and define limits



Mapping priority areas for nature relative to desired outcomes or targets, such as nature positive, is fundamental to understanding **what needs to be maintained in the landscape for biodiversity and ecosystem services to persist and for determining priorities and potential improvement** (e.g. through ecosystem restoration).

In some cases, the current state of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the landscape might not be adequate to support priority species, ecosystems and ecosystem services into the future. For example, there might not be enough habitat area to support viable and persisting populations of certain species. With this insight, it is possible to consider whether or not the system can tolerate further impacts and losses, what the limits to impacts need to be (i.e. what type of impacts can be tolerated where in the landscape without compromising objectives) and the limits to what can be achieved through mitigation.

To pursue long-term sustainable growth, development needs to take place within the boundaries of our natural systems.

Identifying priorities is also the basis on which to explore what opportunities exist to maintain and improve the quality and/or quantities of biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g. by addressing threats, ecosystem restoration etc.) and to build more resilient ecosystems that are better able to cope with stresses and adapt to climate change.

Outcomes-based targets are commonly set as goals for maintaining or increasing the extent and condition of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services in the landscape into the future. These targets can help to inform what kinds of developments are likely to be feasible in the landscape and at what scales, based on an understanding of associated impacts and opportunities for mitigation.

As highlighted in section 3.2, high-level targets relating to biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, land degradation and emissions reductions already exist for Liberia. In some cases, these have been further quantified and represented through spatial planning processes at the national level resulting, for example, in the identification of the national protected areas network, key biodiversity areas, important bird area, Ramsar sites, etc. .

Where no outcomes-based targets exist, or where these are too general, it is important that landscape-appropriate targets are established through the right processes.

Multi-stakeholder processes, supported by spatial planning, can help build a shared vision for the landscape, define desired outcomes and science-based targets for maintaining the amount, integrity and persistence of important biodiversity and ecosystem services at a wider scale.

This provides strategic guidance to inform development planning and decision-making at strategic and project/ site scales and to guide the individual and collective contributions from the business sector and other actors towards nature positive and sustainable landscape objectives.

It is an opportunity to identify and get agreement among relevant stakeholders around the areas and opportunities for:

1. Prioritising **avoidance of adverse impacts in order** to conserve nature in the landscape, prevent irreversible and non-offsetable impacts (e.g. defining 'no-go' areas) and build resilience.

2. Ensuring that impacts from development are **reduced and minimised** in the landscape through careful spatial planning that optimises land use and minimises the impacts or trade-offs with nature (i.e. sectoral activities are strategically sited within the landscape in a way that delivers the least harm to nature).

3. **Restoration** to contribute towards landscape objectives by improving the extent, quality and connectivity of areas important for nature and for the supply, flow and access to important ecosystem services (e.g. restoring degraded or deforested riparian habitat important for connectivity and ecosystem services; degraded agricultural lands prioritised for restoration through the introduction of tree planting for agroforestry etc.).

4. **Biodiversity offsets** or other forms of ecological compensation to contribute towards the protection and/or improvement of important biodiversity and the ecosystem services it underpins. This can help to guide project-level offset investments in a way that contributes

towards securing conservation priorities in the landscape and can contribute towards meeting overarching landscape or national targets (e.g. by sizing them proportional to the respective residual impacts as well as the relevant targets)[20,21,22]. A roadmap for a national biodiversity offset scheme (focused on the mining sector) in Liberia[23] was developed under the World Bank's Extractives for Development Initiative (E4D) and Program for Forests (PROFOR). Through this proposed scheme private sector would support the expansion of the protected areas network.

Landscapelevel plans help to establish the rules of development:

where to go, where not to go; which impacts can and cannot not be tolerated; where are there compromises to make and what are the potential trade-offs; where mitigation can and cannot support nature positive outcomes.

In this way, it creates a more level playing field for existing and new business operators in the landscape - provided it is done at the national level and regulated.

3.2.3 Understanding risks and impacts

Operations across all sectors have the potential to adversely affect nature and the benefits that people derive from ecosystems.

There is always a footprint. No single sector, project or activity acts in isolation.

Development impacts are complex and interlinked and may be expressed at various spatial (site, landscape, regional and global) and temporal scales (immediate, medium and long term) through direct activities and processes and indirect or induced effects (Box 4). The type, duration and magnitude of impacts varies due to a range of factors, including operational parameters, the characteristics of the ecological system as a whole and its component parts, the governance and socio-economic context, and the influence of other threats and stressors.

Immediate, relatively local direct environmental and social impacts within the project footprint (e.g. at a mine site or plantation) may be dwarfed by the potentially far more wide-ranging indirect impacts of associated infrastructure and socio-economic change. For example, the expansion of roads and railways, often along predefined "growth corridors," can encourage major movements of populations into hitherto sparsely populated regions with concurrently increased pressures from land clearing and bushmeat hunting for local consumption. Indirect impacts also include those related to induced in-migration of people into mining areas seeking employment and economic opportunities, resulting in forest loss, increased hunting, poaching, and land conversion to agriculture and urban use; and increased access for logging of timber and removal of non-timber forest products.[24]

[20] Simmonds, J.S., Sonter, L.J., Watson, J.E.M., Bennun, L., Costa, H.M., Dutson, G., et al. (2019) Moving from biodiversity offsets to a target-based approach for ecological compensation. Conservation Letters, 13: e12695.
[21] Standard on Biodiversity Offsets. Business and Biodiversity Offset Programme (BBOP): Washington, DC.
[22] Johnson, S. D. R. (2015). A national biodiversity offset scheme: a road map for Liberia's mining sector (pp. 1-162). The World Bank.
[23] Johnson, S. D. R. (2015). A national biodiversity offset scheme: a road map for Liberia's mining sector (pp. 1-162). The World Bank.
[24] Johnson, C.J., Venter, O., Ray, J.C. & Watson, J.E.M. (2020) Growth-inducing infrastructure represents transformative yet ignored keystone environmental decisions. *Conservation Letters*, 13: e12696.

Impacts may be individual or compounded as cumulative effects over space and time in combination with other threats and pressures in the landscape (see below).

BOX 4: DEFINITIONS

Direct or primary impacts occur through direct interaction of an activity with an environmental, social, or economic component.

Indirect or secondary impacts: Impacts triggered in response to the presence of a project rather than being directly caused by the project's own operations. Induced impacts are defined as those impacts that are not directly caused by a project itself but occur as an unplanned consequence of it. Induced impacts are often a result of socio-economic changes resulting from the presence of a project, and responsibility for managing them is likely to be shared with others, including the government. They may include positive and negative impacts.

Cumulative impacts: The total impact arising from the project (under the control of the developer), other activities (that may be under the control of others, including other developers, local communities, government) and other background pressures and trends which may be unregulated. The project's impact is therefore one part of the total cumulative impact on the environment. The analysis of a project's incremental impacts combined with the effects of other projects can often give a more accurate understanding of the likely results of the project's presence than just considering its impacts in isolation.

Source: BBOP 2012

Figure 4 illustrates the extent of industry concessions in relation to existing Protected Areas in southern Liberia, whilst Table 1 highlights some of the main direct and indirect impacts associated with different sectors. Any landscape supporting multiple operations within a sector and/or multiple projects and activities in different sectors will be exposed to a range of impacts.

Together the many past, present, and future decisions and actions that influence the landscape accumulate and interact. Decisions and actions at all scales have an effect. For example:

- Uncoordinated land allocation processes lead to overlapping concessions and conflicts with existing objectives[25].
- Transformative projects that induce growth in other sectors can lead to significant large-scale and long-term consequences (e.g. for land conversion, carbon emissions and unsustainable wildlife exploitable)[26,27].
- The incremental expansion of small-scale agriculture has potential to drive extensive deforestation[28].

As each decision, project, and activity cuts away a little more forest, adds pollutants to the rivers and soils, and extracts more natural resources than they put back, the cumulative effects on species, ecosystems and the people that depend on them are often significant.

[25] World Bank (2019a) Forest-Smart Mining: Identifying Factors Associated with the Impacts of Large-Scale Mining on Forests. World Bank Group: Washington DC.
[26] Johnson, C.J., Venter, O., Ray, J.C. & Watson, J.E.M. (2020) Growth-inducing infrastructure represents transformative yet ignored keystone environmental decisions. Conservation Letters, 13: e12696
[27] Laurance, W.F. & Arrea, I.B. (2017) Roads to riches or ruin? Science, 358, 442–444.
[28] Oxford Business Group (2019) The Report. Agriculture in Africa 2019. Oxford Business Group.

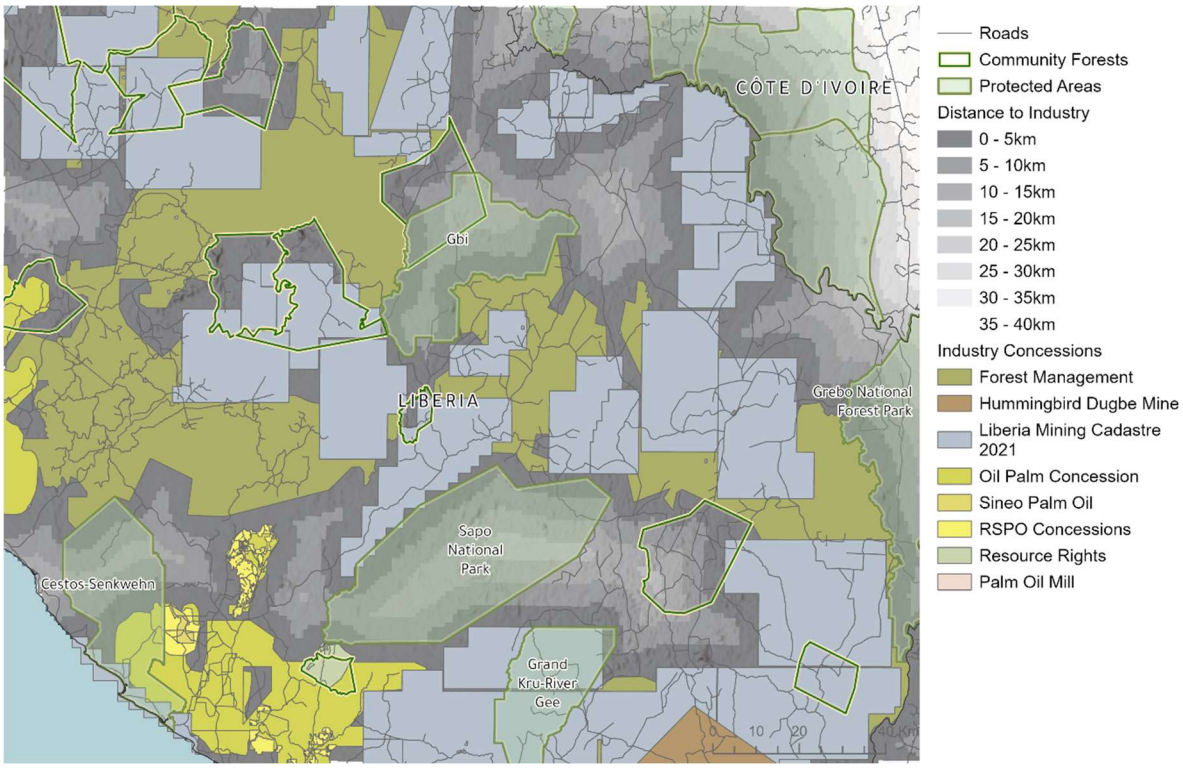


Figure 4: *Locations of industry concessions in relation to protected areas and roads in southern Liberia*[29]

[29] For methodology, data sources and full details see FFI 2022

Table 1: Overview of potential impacts (• direct, + indirect) that may be associated with different sectors. The table is illustrative only. It does not provide an exhaustive list of impacts per sector nor does it take account of context and component specific considerations.

IMPACT	SECTOR							
The impact that affects biodiversity, ecosystem services or society	**Industrial plantation**	**Industrial logging concession**	**Industrial/ intensive agriculture**	**Smallholder agriculture**	**Agroforestry**	**Infrastructure**	**Mining**	**Hydropower**
Habitat clearance	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +
Habitat degradation	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +
Habitat fragmentation resulting from clearance, degradation, edge effects	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +
Resource depletion	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +
Barrier to movement	•		•	•		•	•	•
Bushmeat/trade (in non- operation area)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Exposure to disease	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	+	+	+
Human-wildlife conflict	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	
Drowning	•						•	•
Electrocution						•	•	
Fire damage	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	+	• +	+
Road collision from vehicular activity	• +	• +	• +			• +	• +	• +
Intra-specific conflict (territorial disputes)	•	•	•	•	•	• +	• +	•
Introduction and spread of alien and invasive species	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	•
Light disturbance	+	+	• +	• +	+	• +	• +	
Noise (human) disturbance	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	•
Noise (machinery) disturbance	• +	• +	• +			• +	• +	•
Alteration of drainage network	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	•
Change to soil properties	•	•	•	•	•			
Increased nutrient load and/or increased sedimentation	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +
Increased soil erosion	•	•	•	• +	+	•	•	•
Pollution (of water resources)	• +		• +	•	•		• +	
Pollution (of food resources)			•		•		•	
Pollution (of air e.g. from emissions)	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	+
Pollution from dust	+	+	+	+	+	• +	• +	
Chemical pollution	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Greenhouse gas emissions (from operations)	•	•	•	•			•	
Reduced carbon sequestration resulting from habitat clearance and degradation	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	•
Reduced resources resulting from clearance of mature plantations	•		•	•	•			
Reduction in soil quality and soil stability	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	• +	•

3.2.4 Opportunities and aligning actions towards nature positive

A landscape (or jurisdiction) level conservation plan, developed through a stakeholder engagement, cross-sectoral process and supported by spatial planning, can help to form the basis for aligning the actions of land users towards a nature positive goal for the landscape. The aim is to recover, enhance and protect ecological intactness and functionality with persistence for species across landscapes rather than having small, isolated initiatives that are vulnerable or susceptible to failure due to their fragmented and uncoordinated nature (Figure 5[30]).

It helps identify a suite of options in the landscape to support conservation, restoration and sustainable land management that can then be further validated and refined through assessment and stakeholder engagement at the local level. It provides a valuable starting point and spatially explicit basis for identifying potential ways that businesses can contribute into the landscape, helping to guide and maximise the benefits of private sector contributions towards nature positive outcomes. For example, through the alignment of their respective strategies, plans and objectives, targeted actions, and investment. For business, there is also increasing demand to be demonstrating what is happening at the project level, with spatial planning and disclosure at an asset level increasingly required (e.g. by the market-led, science-based Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures framework[31]).

Box 5 provides an illustration of how stakeholder-engaged spatial planning processes can support the identification of threats and opportunities in the landscape and potential opportunities for business to support conservation and restoration priorities (see also Section 4 which focuses on the different ways in which business can become nature positive and deliver tangible action and outcomes on the ground.)

[30] For more information on understanding the landscape, identifying conservation priorities and targets, and understanding threats and pressures including links to existing tools and resources to support application, see also: Fauna & Flora International (FFI). 2021. Coordinated and collaborative application of the mitigation hierarchy in complex multi-use landscapes in Africa. A conceptual framework integrating socioecological considerations. FFI: Cambridge U.K. Available from: https://www.fauna-flora.org/approaches/biodiversity-business/collaboration-between-sectors/

[31] https://tnfd.global/

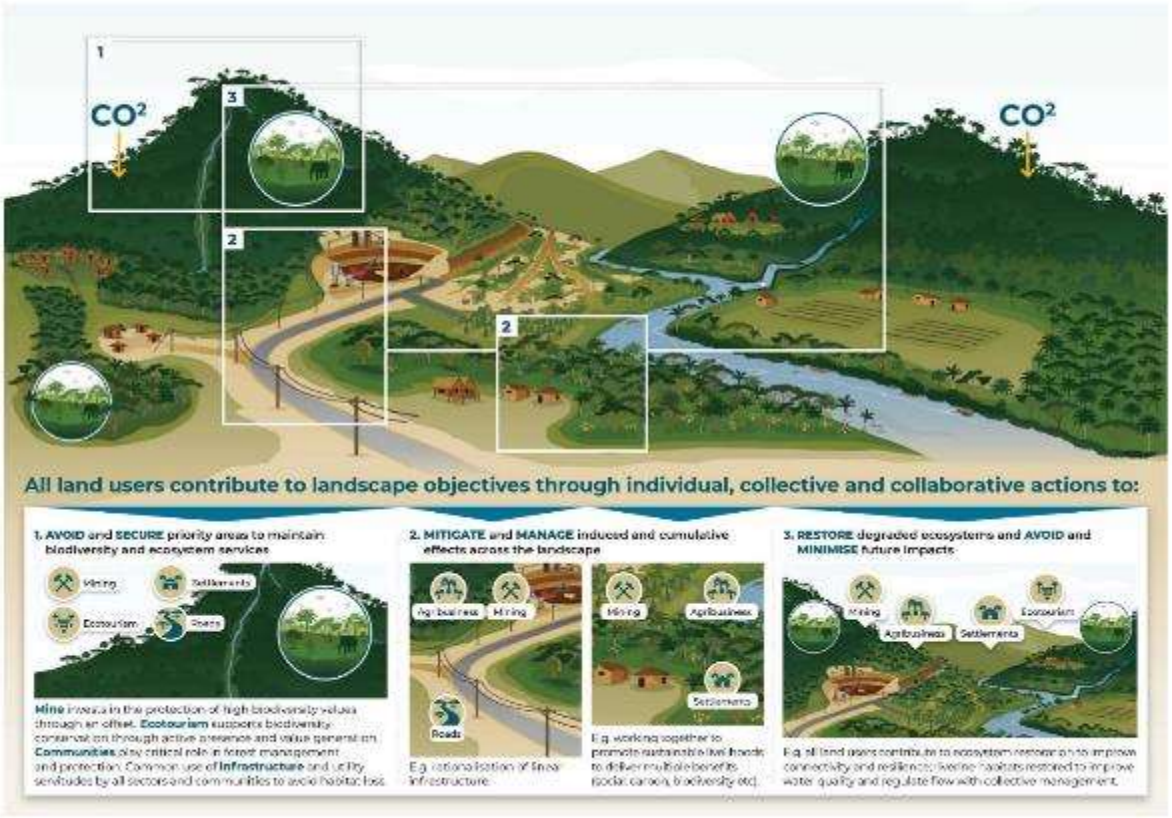


Figure 5: *Opportunities for diverse sectors and actors to contribute positively towards sustainable landscape objectives. (Source: FFI 2021[32])*

BOX 5: KEY QUESTIONS

- Where are the priority areas in the landscape where adverse impacts must be **avoided**? How can these priority areas be mainstreamed into decision-making across all economic sectors?
- How can **businesses contribute** to the long-term conservation and restoration of important biodiversity areas?
- What are the **limits to mitigation opportunities** in the landscape, and how does this need to inform land use planning and decision-making?
- Which industries/ activities have the **least impact** on priority biodiversity and ecosystem services and/or which are able to fully mitigate their impacts with confidence through the robust application of the mitigation hierarchy? This helps guide the strategic placement of different land uses across the landscape to achieve the least harmful outcomes.
- What is the **potential of land that has already been heavily degraded or converted** to be utilised for economic activities and to support the delivery of national policy priorities e.g., for rural development, food security or energy supply?
- What opportunities exist to **improve sub-optimally managed land to deliver benefits** to users (e.g. enhancing productivity through more sustainable management practices) whilst reducing pressure on high biodiversity value areas?
- Where might **tensions be expected** (competition and conflict as well as trade-offs or compromises) between biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services objectives, and industrrial land uses to be the greatest, and how can this inform **pre-emptive action and collaboration/cooperation?**

[32] Fauna & Flora International (FFI). 2021. Coordinated and collaborative application of the mitigation hierarchy in complex multi-use landscapes in Africa. A conceptual framework integrating socioecological considerations. FFI: Cambridge U.K. Available from: https://www.fauna-flora.org/approaches/biodiversity-business/collaboration-between-sectors/

- What opportunities exist to guide **industry investments in the wider landscape** to support overarching landscape or national objectives?
- What technical capacity exist to implement these mitigative activities? How can we futher develop those capability?
- Are there financing mechanism that can be utilise to drive national-level adoption of sustainabile practices?

BOX 6: THREAT AND OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

Creating threat and opportunity maps using available spatial data supported by stakeholder engagement and validation processes can provide a starting point for landscape actors to identify potential opportunities for businesses to contribute to strategic conservation and restoration priorities.

Step 1: High-level spatial analysis uses available spatial data to build an understanding of the landscape and identify threats to and opportunities for biodiversity conservation. In this example, spatial data included areas important for conservation (protected areas, key biodiversity areas, proposed protected areas etc.), concession boundaries, deforestation hot spots, forest connectivity and forest integrity (see example of deforestation trends map produced for the southern Liberia region below). In this example, threats were defined as activities or trends that increase the risk of biodiversity loss, such as increasing deforestation, poor forest integrity and low levels of connectivity. Opportunities were defined as scenarios or partnerships that could help mitigate against biodiversity loss and/or maintain existing biodiversity, the distance to concession boundary map helped identify which actors in the landscape were near protected areas and proposed protected areas to aid partnership development for biodiversity conservation.

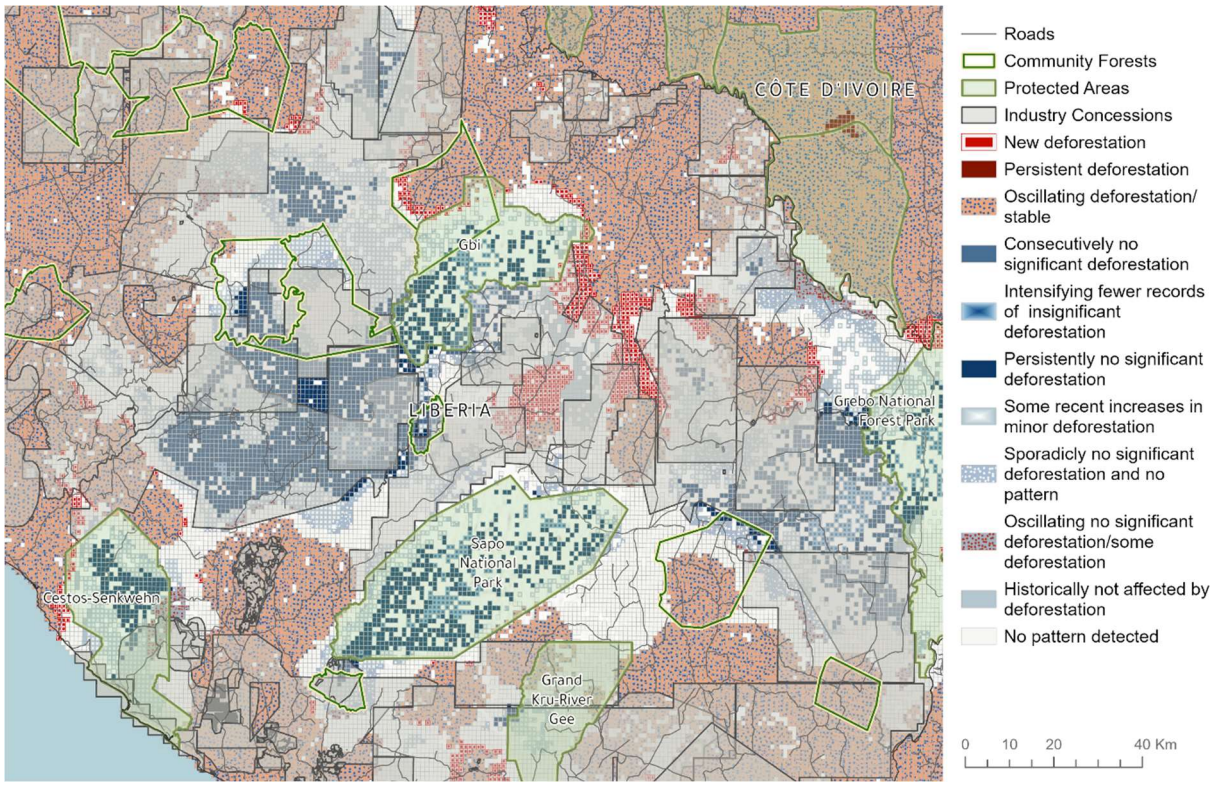


Figure 1: Deforestation spatial-temporal trends between 2001-2020 in southern Liberia

This high-level mapping represents an initial step to identify opportunities and may be used to inform where further detailed analysis and project scoping should be carried out on the ground and in consultation with stakeholders. Steps 2 and 3 then focus on ground verification of the high-level analysis and stakeholder engagement to build an understanding of the socio-economic context and potential feasibility of options to support conservation and restoration outcomes with private sector support. A case study from the Sapo landscape was used to validate the utilisation of the high-level tool in identifying areas of potential threat or opportunity for biodiversity. The high-level analysis shows Sapo National Park is surrounded by forest management, mining, and palm oil concessions. New and oscillating hotspots of deforestation, signifying a threat to biodiversity through deforestation trends increasing in 2020, border roads that pass through concessions between Sapo National Park and Grebo National Forest Park.

Stage 2 of the process has been undertaken through NGO-led projects with extensive engagement with local communities that identified reliance on forest resources as a threat to local biodiversity. Engagement and monitoring within SNP indicated poaching of wildlife for bush meat and scattered small-scale illegal gold mining within the park, although these areas are less degraded than the surrounding forested landscape. Therefore, threat identified through the high-level tool is validated with this local level engagement. In the third stage of the process, projects are now seeking support to generate sustainable livelihood projects to decrease local communities' reliance on forest resources. This could provide an opportunity for businesses to contribute towards conservation initiatives that protect the landscapes' biodiversity and have a net positive impact.

The restoration opportunity assessment in the East Nimba Nature Reserve is another good example of how such finer-scale assessments can be carried out with emphasis on stakeholder engagement and identifying priorities for private sector contribution and partnership[33].

[33] Forest Development Authority (2020) Forest Landscape Restoration Opportunities Assessment. East Nimba Nature Reserve, Liberia.

3.3 Roles for different actors in Liberia

All actors have a role to play in contributing toward nature positive outcomes through individual, collective and collaborative action in the landscape. The responsibilities of different actors and the roles they can play in delivering nature positive will vary according to the context. For example:

3.3.1 Governments

- Setting national and jurisdictional goals and targets
- Establishing the enabling environment for nature positive
- Proactive assessment of risks and opportunities through the use of existing tools including Strategic Environmental Assessment (see Box 6), Cumulative Impact Assessments, and integrated land use planning.
- Landscape-level conservation planning including the identification of areas important for biodiversity, ecosystem services and other values to which adverse impacts must be avoided and minimised, protection provided and/or those offer opportunities for improvement through restoration or more sustainable land management
- Decision-making on development projects – upholding limits to impacts that can be sustained in landscape
- Regulation of business activities – formal accountability for outcomes
- Catalyse, lead, facilitate, partner and/or actively participate in cross-sectoral and collaborative processes – government support for landscape initiatives important
- Identify and engage other landscape actors to prevent, manage and monitor cumulative impacts
- Establish the legal basis and contribute to the enabling conditions for public, private, and community collaboration
- Enforcement of laws and implementation of policies that protect the environment, prosecuting violators as needed

BOX 7: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

- SEA is a process and a tool for evaluating the effects of proposed policies, plans and programmes on natural resources, social, cultural and economic conditions and the institutional environment in which decisions are made. SEA might be applied to an entire sector (such as a national policy on energy, for example) or to a geographical area (for example, in the context of a regional development scheme).
- The role of SEAs in modelling induced impacts and identifying alternatives (e.g. avoiding areas with high biodiversity and/or carbon values) at the design stage of transport and other major infrastructure developments has been emphasised as important in promoting forest-smart investments.
- Such strategic and pre-emptive decision-making processes are especially important in areas that are home to sensitive or threatened biodiversity, support high levels of endemism, ecological intactness and that provide ecosystem services with local and global significance (e.g. through their role in regulating hydrological services or carbon sequestration and storage)[34].
- The benefits are further evident in examples of well-planned transport infrastructure that avoid ecologically sensitive areas, increase employment opportunities, reduce transport costs, and are better

[34] Johnson et al. (2020) Growth-inducing infrastructure represents transformative yet ignored keystone environmental decisions. *Conservation Letters*, 13: e12696.

aligned to benefit local communities and agriculture[35]. In the Amazon, for example, research has demonstrated that the strategic prioritisation of fewer road development projects in carefully chosen locations could dramatically improve environmental, social and economic outcomes whilst mitigating adverse impacts on forests, biodiversity and ecosystem services[36].

3.3.2 Businesses (new and existing)

- Identify and acknowledge the role in impacting (or undermining) the integrity of the socio-ecological system
- Contribute towards the understanding of the current state of the landscape through data gathering, research and making data available to others
- Prioritise avoidance of impacts
- Apply the mitigation hierarchy in a systematic and iterative way throughout the lifecycle of the project
- Design and implement site and landscape-level mitigation interventions
- Seek collaborations and partnerships to improve and secure the longevity of mitigation outcomes and contribute towards multiple benefits for nature and local stakeholders (e.g. to protect an area that has been restored or to secure long-term protection for an area that was avoided by the development due to its high conservation value)
- Investigate the potential for Nature based Solutions (NbS) to support and enhance mitigation efforts and contribute positively to the wider landscape
- Catalyse, support and/or participate in collaborative landscape processes to address complex sustainability issues and work towards nature positive outcomes.
- Align activities with sustainable landscape objectives
- Go beyond compliance requirements to deliver positive contributions into the landscape.

Opportunities for preventing, mitigating and managing impacts and making a positive contribution are covered in more detail in Section 4.

3.3.3 NGOs and civil society

- Contribute to the identification of strategic priorities and partnership opportunities
- Catalysing and facilitating processes to support collaboration and coordination
- Contribute to an understanding of the current state and trends, and the assessment of threats and pressures in the landscape
- Supporting governments to create the enabling conditions to engage the private sector in delivering conservation actions to achieve net positive impacts at a landscape level.
- Brokering partnerships
- Delivery partners
- Research and monitoring
- Engaging and building partnerships with private sector actors to design robust strategies and projects to deliver conservation positive outcomes at landscape-level.
- Demanding more from companies in terms of ESS
- Watch dog – monitoring activities on the ground
- Holding government and private sector to account for delivering on commitments

[35] Ascensão et al. (2018) Environmental challenges for the Belt and Road Initiative. *Nature Sustainability*, 1, 206–209.

[36] Vilela et al. (2020) A better Amazon road network for people and the environment. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 117, 7095–7102.

4 How can business contribute towards positive outcomes for nature?

Nature positive puts nature at the centre of business decision-making, in the same way as financial returns and human wellbeing. To make progress towards tangible, lasting outcomes for nature on the ground, the diverse actors depending on, influencing and impacting landscapes need to act – individually, collectively and collaboratively.

It is about making sure that nature is considered at every turn in decision-making and planning and that business is delivering no net loss or net gain at the location of primary activities. It is about helping suppliers and consumers to do the same. It is also about influence and investing in the landscape in ways that generate positive outcomes for nature.

Going nature positive therefore includes considering company processes, activities, and strategy to identify opportunities that achieve positive outcomes for nature and long-term business sustainability. It is also about meeting nature positive policy objectives.

4.1 Companies being nature positive

Nature positive encompasses the broadest suite of mitigation and compensation activities that manage nature across a business. It includes traditional quantitative / compliance approaches, and also voluntary and qualitative conservation investments. It is not limited to managing impacts on Critically Endangered species or areas of high biodiversity value but can incorporate actions to promote a healthy natural environment in the spaces where people also live and work. By establishing and following a process that enables understanding of where and how a company impacts and depends on nature – and the positive actions it can take – a nature positive approach best suited to a specific business needs and nature-related risks can be developed. This will typically begin by mapping the value chain to identify key nature risks and ideally include quantifying the biodiversity footprint and using this to set a strategy.

There are a range of potential actions open to companies, including regenerative agriculture, wildlife-friendly farming, procurement options, nature-based solutions, zero deforestation, setting a science-based target for nature, circular economy initiatives and biodiversity net gain for direct footprints. As outlined in the figure below, nature positive encompasses project or site-level interventions that deliver positive outcomes for nature and apply nature based solutions, and broader commitments to society and transformation of business decision-making to mainstream nature.

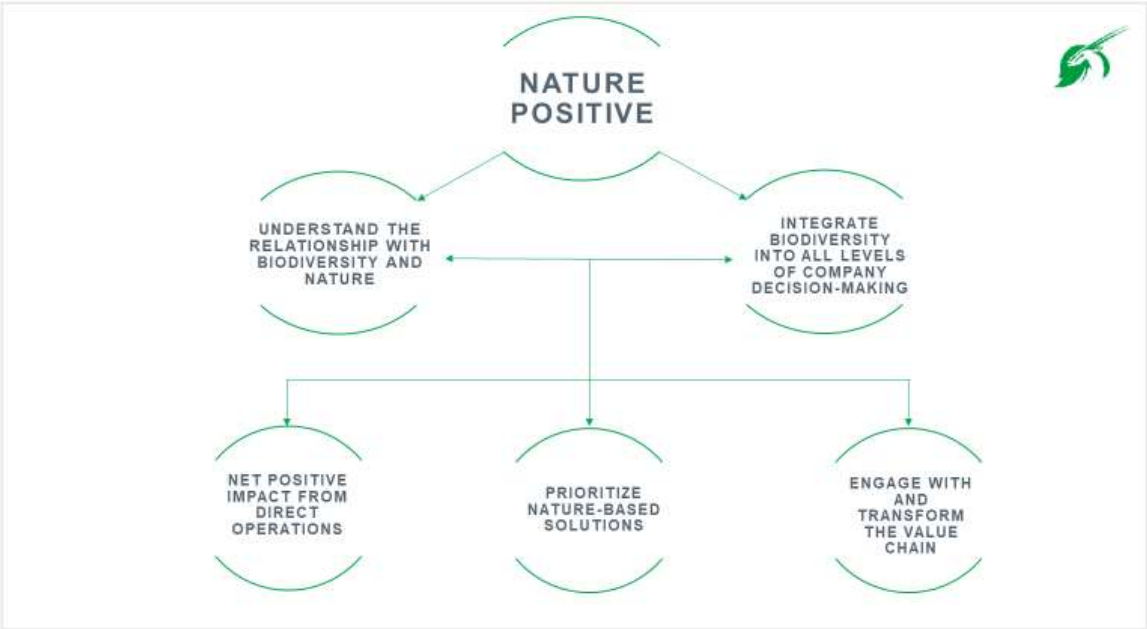


Figure 6: *Building blocks within a nature positive framework*

Business can also contribute toward positive outcomes for nature through individual, collective and collaborative action. Figure 6 illustrates the core components of building a nature positive approach for business. The section includes:

- **Integrating nature into decision-making** by setting objectives aligned to an overarching goal of nature positive
- **Net positive impact from direct operations**: the importance of anticipating, preventing, and effectively mitigating risks and impacts through the mitigation hierarchy
- **Going beyond** to deliver nature positive through collaboration, transformation, supply chains and Nature based Solutions, in addition to the delivery of NPI at a site level

The roles of government and civil society in driving, enabling and collaborating in the delivery of actions to improve outcomes for nature are highlighted.

4.2 Integrating nature into decision-making

Nature positive is an objective. Within this overarching framework, are a number of component building blocks that are part of delivering nature positive (Figure 4).

It is important for a business to understand its impacts and dependencies on nature, and to understand who and how its actions and activities affect the impacts and dependencies of other stakeholders and actors in the landscape. This way, opportunities to work together, to deliver nature positive outcomes, may be possible.

Nature positive can be delivered as part of compliance within the legal framework (Box 8), a commitment to net positive impact or net gain by a company at an operational or site level, such as required by the UK DEFRA biodiversity net gain policy, or lender safeguard requirements such as those within the IFC's performance standard 6 requirements for net gain in critical habitat or no net loss of biodiversity in natural habitat.

There is no single accepted way of approaching these targets, but established guidelines are available. Ensuring that project-level objectives are nested within and contributing towards jurisdictional, landscape and/or national objectives is important for making progress towards sustainable landscape objectives and nature positive outcomes.

BOX 8: COMPANIES DELIVERING NATURE POSITIVE THROUGH COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY OBJECTIVES

Companies are required by law to meet certain standards when it comes to environmental, social and governance performance.

Currently, there is not an explicit requirement under Liberian law for sectoral development projects to achieve no net loss or net positive impact of biodiversity. However, such objectives have become legal requirements through the ESIA process on a project by project basis (see Groll 2022). National strategies such as the NDC 2021 further indicate a move toward sector-specific objectives (e.g., establishing a net deforestation mining policy by 2030; conserve HCV and HCS forests within agricultural, tree crop and commercial forestry concessions) in order to deliver national climate goals and with clear relevance for biodiversity objectives where deforestation is avoided, and reforestation or forest restoration undertaken.

Relevant authorities involved in the ESIA process thus have a critical role to play in creating the enabling context for nature positive in any given landscape in Liberia where projects or activities (e.g. an expansion of existing operations) that trigger the ESIA process are proposed and/or planned.

It is important that biodiversity commitments set through the ESIA process[37]:

- Are clearly defined, i.e. the biodiversity scope specifies which biodiversity components
- Are measurable against a specified reference scenario so that progress can be tracked, i.e. no net loss or net gain compared to what?
- Adhere to the mitigation hierarchy (see below)
- Clearly acknowledge limits to impacts – not all impacts can be restored or offset, and such limits must be clearly acknowledged and impacts avoided (*e.g. commitments to NOT develop projects within UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Strict Nature Reserves (IUCN Management Category Ia) and Wilderness Areas (IUCN Management Category Ib)*).
- Linked to an appropriate time frame *(e.g. to achieve net positive impact on [specified biodiversity components] by [year]*)
- Accompanied by transparent public disclosure of goals and progress towards them.

4.3 Net positive impact from direct operations

4.3.1 Anticipating and addressing impacts in complex landscapes

In complex multi-use landscapes, operators need to anticipate, assess and manage their impacts in the context of the wider landscape and dynamic socio-ecological systems (see also Sections 3.2 and 3.3). This requires individual industry operators to take an integrated approach and to look beyond the fence to contextualise themselves, their role, and impacts within the landscape, taking into consideration threats and pressures and the activities and impacts of other land users (past, present and proposed).

Particular attention needs to be given to those impacts that compound and cause ecological stress, species loss and loss of ecological function and ecosystem services. The implications for conservation priorities and landscape objectives need to be assessed.

[37] De Silva, G C., et al. (2019) The evolution of corporate no net loss and net positive impact biodiversity commitments: understanding appetite and addressing challenges. *Bus Strat Env*., **28**: 1481-1495

BOX 8: DRIVING STRATEGIC AND SITE-LEVEL IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO PREVENT LOSS OF NATURE

Regulatory authorities have a critical role at strategic national and landscapescales and in ensuring the robust assessment of risks and impacts at the project level:

- ➔ Proactive utilisation of Strategic Environmental and Social Assessments (SEA/SESA) and Cumulative Impact Assessments to inform development planning and decision-making, particularly in landscapes with important and sensitive biodiversity and where industry development involving multiple operations and/or sectors is planned or anticipated. This includes, in particular, growth-inducing infrastructure projects with the potential for transformative impacts on nature and the people that depend on nature.
- ➔ Requiring the robust assessment of Project dependencies and impacts through the ESIA process, ensuring that risks and impacts are contextualised in the wider landscape and include analysis of direct, indirect and cumulative impacts.

4.3.2 The mitigation hierarchy

The mitigation hierarchy (described below) is widely accepted as an approach for mitigating and managing environmental impacts, particularly biodiversity. However, The mitigation hierarchy itself is not a standard or a goal but can be applied to achieve objectives of 'no net loss' or 'net positive impact'[38] (Figure 7).

Whilst the impacts and mitigation options associated with different sectors vary, the mitigation hierarchy provides a structured approach to mitigation planning that can be applied by any sector, project or land user to help limit, as far as possible, the negative impacts of development projects on specified biodiversity components and priority ecosystem services.

The mitigation hierarchy is defined by the following steps:

Avoid: The first and most important step is to anticipate and avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity before they occur.

Minimise: Impacts that cannot be avoided entirely are then minimised as far as possible.

Restore: Where impacts cannot be avoided or prevented, measures to actively remediate impacts to degraded or impaired biodiversity.

Offset: Measures to compensate for significant residual impacts that cannot be prevented and remediated in the preceding steps may be required.

In practice, avoidance and minimisation actions serve to prevent impacts to biodiversity and ecosystem services, whereas restoration works to remediate remaining impacts and offsetting compensates for residual impacts. The four steps of the mitigation hierarchy may be applied sequentially, simultaneously or in series and may require different levels of effort throughout the

[38] A goal in which the impacts on an environmental target (e.g. biodiversity) are balanced or outweighed by measures taken to avoid and minimise the impacts, to restore affected areas and finally to offset or compensate the residual impacts, so that no loss remains. Where the gain exceeds the loss, the term 'Net Gain' or 'Net Positive' may be used instead. "Net" recognises that human activities will continue to impact negatively on nature, but that this needs to be appropriately compensated for.

process. When applied as a hierarchy of steps and in an iterative and adaptive way, applying mitigation hierarchy will only require using offsets to compensate for residual negative impacts.

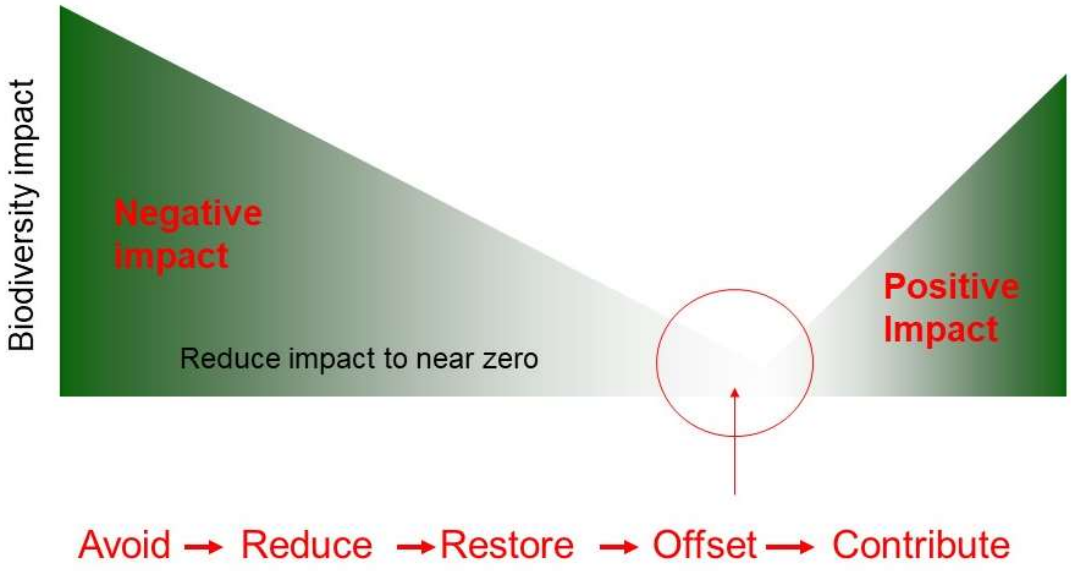


Figure 7: Applying the mitigation hierarchy to achieve a net positive impact.

Offsets are implemented to achieve a 'no net loss' or preferably a 'net gain' outcome for biodiversity through physical actions and management of biodiversity that either improve or restore previous damage (e.g. habitat degradation caused by livestock grazing) or prevent or avert imminent or projected threats (e.g. unregulated harvesting of timber). If offsets are required to achieve objectives of no net loss or net gain, core principles should be applied[39,40,41]:

- Not all impacts can be offset; there are **limits** to offsets (e.g. based on the value of the biodiversity and/or ecosystem services they support, the significance of impacts that cannot be mitigated and offset, and/or the likelihood of delivering successful outcomes). This informs the real need for avoidance in the landscape early on and helps to inform decision-making by both the regulator and the proponent (e.g. requiring the significant redesign of projects).
- Biodiversity gains from offsets should be proven to be **additional**
- Gains should be **comparable** to the losses incurred by the project
- Gains should be **long-lasting** and sustainable
- The **social dimensions to offsetting** must be assessed, and social impacts and trade-offs anticipated, avoided and mitigated.

Note that area-based offsets are unlikely to be appropriate for commercial agriculture or tree plantations involving large-scale clearance of natural habitat due to the sheer scale of compensation that would be required. This emphasises the importance of avoidance of impacts before they occur

[39] BBOP (2012) Standard on Biodiversity Offsets. Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP): Washington, DC.
[40] BBOP (2012) Resource Paper: Limits to what can be offset. Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP): Washington, DC.
[41] Aiama et al. (2015) No Net Loss and Net Positive Impact approaches for biodiversity: exploring the potential application of these approaches in the commercial agriculture and forestry sectors. IUCN: Gland, Switzerland.

(e.g. by siting plantations on already degraded lands) and the consideration of alternative forms of compensation and contribution into the landscape.

The mitigation hierarchy has been embedded in national policy, legislation and ESIA regulations (see Box 9), as well as in the environmental and social safeguards of lender banks, corporate policy and commitments, and sector standards. For more information, guidance and resources on the mitigation hierarchy and biodiversity offsets see Box 10.

BOX 9: COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS IN LIBERIA

In Liberia, proposed projects and activities subject to an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment under the Environmental Protection and Management Law (EPML) are, according to the ESIA Procedural Guidelines, required to "*identify impacts to biodiversity and critical habitat where appropriate*"[42] . It is stated that "*mitigation and impact management action shall be taken to establish the measures that are necessary to **avoid, minimise or offset** predicted adverse impacts and, where appropriate, to incorporate these into an environmental management plan or system."*[43] Whilst the 'mitigation hierarchy' is not explicitly referred to or defined, the requirement to avoid, minimise, offset adverse impacts on environment is clearly stipulated.

It is important to highlight here that the implementation of the mitigation hierarchy is designed to be applied as a systematic series of steps starting with the most important, reliable and cost-effective step of **AVOIDANCE**. All projects should therefore be required to AVOID, and MINIMISE their impacts on biodiversity and the environment. Remediation, in the form of rehabilitation and restoration, and as a last resort offsetting, should be additional to and not in place of efforts to avoid and minimise impacts.

BOX 10 –GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

- Cross-Sector Biodiversity Initiative. 2015. **A cross-sector guide for implementing the Mitigation Hierarchy**. CSBI.
- Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme. 2012. **Standard on Biodiversity Offsets**. BBOP–Forest Trends.
- **IUCN Policy on Biodiversity Offsets** provides a framework to guide the design, implementation and governance of biodiversity offset schemes and projects. It provides guidance as to where offsets are and are not an appropriate conservation tool to ensure that, when offset schemes are used, they lead to positive outcomes for nature compared to business and usual. https://www.iucn.org/resources/iucn-policy-biodiversity-offsets
- International Finance Corporation. 2012. **Performance Standard 6: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources**. IFC.
- Johnson, S. D. R. (2015). **A national biodiversity offset scheme: a road map for Liberia's mining sector** (No. 95959, pp. 1-162). The World Bank
- **The Science Based Targets for Network** is in the process of producing a guide for companies wishing to set science-based targets for nature: https://sciencebasedtargets.org/about-us/sbtn

4.3.3 Applying the mitigation hierarchy alongside other landscape actors

Changing threats and pressures in the wider landscape can have implications for the effectiveness of mitigation efforts and may undermine the sustainability of outcomes for nature. Individual operators need to pay attention to what is happening in the wider landscape, considering:

- how existing threats and pressures change over space and time (e.g. increasing or shifting deforestation pressures) and implications for mitigation outcomes;

[42] ESIA Procedural Guidelines (2016) Section 2 (4) (e)
[43] ESIA Procedural Guidelines (2016) Section 1.2

- the role that new and emerging drivers of change in the landscape play in supporting or undermining mitigation efforts (e.g. a new development project being approved, emergence of infectious disease, a new policy directive affecting landscape decision-making, a climatic event).

Monitoring, evaluation and clear documentation of how nature responds to interventions and adjusting management of mitigation plans and actions accordingly to prevent further impacts and secure outcomes are crucial (Figure 8).

Adaptive application of the mitigation hierarchy also requires coordination with other operators and proactive engagement with stakeholders in the landscape. Failing which, the outcomes of one operator's mitigation efforts can quickly be undermined by the actions of neighbouring operators and land users.

BOX 11: ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

- Regulators to enforce the robust application of the mitigation hierarchy, as required through the ESIA Procedural Guidelines, and ensure progress towards stated objectives for nature.
- Interministerial communication and coordination are needed to help ensure that the activities of one industry actor do not undermine the mitigation efforts of another and prevent unintended trade-offs and consequences that compromise the overall objective of nature positive.
- Use of strategic planning tools including Strategic Environmental Assessment, nature inclusive land use planning, and systematic conservation planning to inform mitigation actions across the landscape.
- Support building of capacity through institutional infrastructure so that all sectors supported to apply the mitigation hierarchy
- Supporting civil society and subnational levels – to understand, inform and support decision-making
- Mainstreaming nature positive objectives and application of MH in all sectors to avoid conflicting agendas
- Advance national biodiversity offset scheme to improve the delivery of conservation outcomes through an aggregated offset system

BOX 12: POTENTIAL FOR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT TO DELIVER CONSERVATION OUTCOMES THROUGH A NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY OFFSET SCHEME

In Liberia, various drivers have resulted in a number of mining companies in Liberia implementing or working toward creating project-specific biodiversity offsets. These have become part of compliance commitments through the ESIA process.

"Project-specific offsets are an important tool for offsetting residual adverse impacts of a project, but are not necessarily the best tool for achieving conservation outcomes in Liberia. Because of uncertainties around land tenure, competing land uses, and the dependence of rural populations on forest resources, selecting offset sites that are politically, socially, and technically feasible to implement is complex, costly, and time consuming." [44]

A number of alternatives and/or complementary approaches to project-specific offsets have been investigated for Liberia and are described in detail in the roadmap for a national biodiversity offset scheme (focused on the mining sector) in Liberia[45]. This includes the potential for a biodiversity offset scheme that offers the prospect of achieving enhanced conservation outcomes through expansion of the protected areas network, with a focus on investment into Proposed Protected Areas. This is another opportunity where a national instrument could play a critical role in orienting decisions to deliver conservation outcomes.

44 Johnson, S. D. R. (2015). A national biodiversity offset scheme: a road map for Liberia's mining sector (pp. 162). The World Bank.
45 Johnson, S. D. R. (2015). A national biodiversity offset scheme: a road map for Liberia's mining sector (pp. 162). The World Bank.

Opportunity therefore exists to strengthen the enabling environment to support a national biodiversity offset scheme into which the private sector can contribute to compensate for unavoidable residual impacts after full application of the mitigation hierarchy.

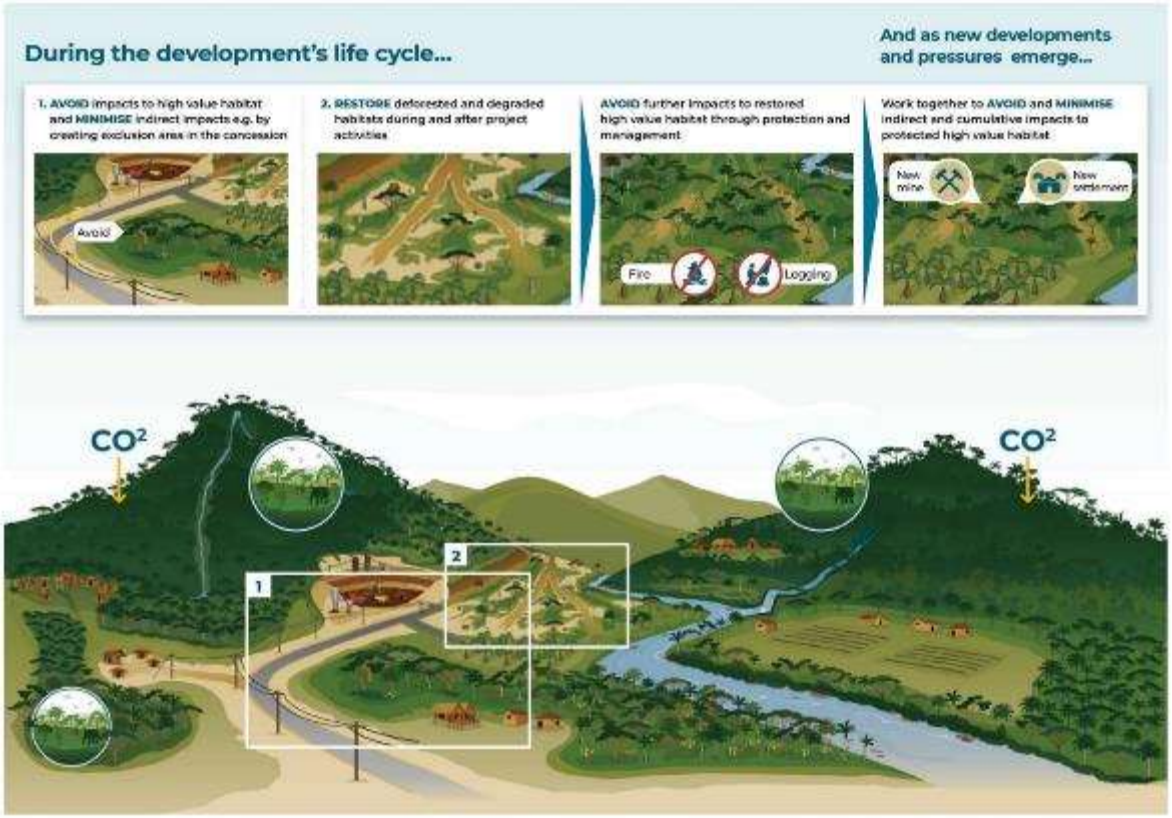


Figure 8: *Iterative application of the mitigation hierarchy in coordination with other land users*

BOX 13: KEY QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT THE ADAPTIVE AND COORDINATED APPLICATION OF THE MITIGATION HIERARCHY IN A LANDSCAPE:

- Are site-level mitigation actions working? What challenges are being faced, and how can these be addressed and approaches adapted to respond to successes and failures?
- Are there existing or new opportunities for collaboration and collective action?
- Who else is operating and planning to operate in the landscape? How might their activities, impacts and mitigation strategies support or undermine my mitigation efforts? How might this influence the cumulative effects across the landscape? What else might need to be done to avoid and mitigate these effects? Who needs to be engaged?
- What opportunities exist to add value to the mitigation measures applied by neighbouring projects to promote positive, durable outcomes for nature?
- Are there conflicts or unforeseen consequences of mitigation actions unfolding that need to be addressed and mitigated?
- What opportunities exist to resolve these issues? Who needs to be engaged?
- How are changes (emerging or anticipated) in the social and political landscape likely to affect mitigation plans and outcomes?
- What opportunities exist for collaboration in financing mitigation measures and sharing the costs?

4.4 Going beyond to deliver positive outcomes for nature

Nature positive requires collective action, strategic investment, collaboration and transformation, in addition to the delivery of net positive impact at a site-level. It is about:

- Helping meet biodiversity conservation targets or goals
    - Protecting or consolidating priority areas & stopping degradation
- Helping improve or repair biodiversity and ecosystem services
    - Improving management of priority areas – funding, technical support
    - Re-creating or restoring lost habitat
- Helping to reduce pressure on/threat to biodiversity and ecosystem services
    - Supporting more sustainable livelihoods, improving the efficiency of resource use, etc.

Nature based solutions, the transformation of value chains, partnerships and collaboration, and investment mobilisation are needed.

4.4.1 Prioritise Nature based Solutions

As defined by the IUCN, Nature based Solutions (NbS) cover '*actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human wellbeing and biodiversity benefits*'.[46] In essence NbS mean working with natural systems to provide solutions to societal problems and the design and delivery of NbS is a core component of achieving nature positive.

NbS are based on the principle that healthy natural systems provide a range of services which have value to society, and that maintaining or restoring these systems can be one of the most cost-effective and beneficial ways of generating or protecting these services.

The term 'NbS' is an umbrella phrase encompassing a variety of alternative phrases and acronyms that describe similar approaches including ecosystem-based adaptation, ecosystem-based mitigation, eco-disaster risk reduction, and green infrastructure. Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) is another term commonly used to describe actions that use nature to address climate challenges.

The range of activities that can be classified as NbS is large and includes activities to **prevent** the loss of natural systems, activities to **manage** natural systems better and activities to **restore** or **generate new** natural systems.

NbS, implemented well, have the potential to address a wide range of environmental, social and development challenges and be an extremely cost-effective way of delivering multiple benefits at scale.

There has been a significant ramping up of ambition across all sectors in response to the convergence of extraordinary environmental changes coupled with unprecedented engagement from the private and financial sectors:

[46] IUCN. *Defining Nature-based Solutions*. World Conservation Congress, Hawai'i (2016).

- In the private sector, there is recognition of financial risks and opportunities resulting from environmental change and of NbS as a potential response.
- In the financial sector, the amount of money flowing towards NbS remains small, but significant movements to 'green finance' and to 'finance green' are underway. Climate risk remains the main focus of environmental interest, and interest is growing in treating natural capital as a new asset class.
- NbS is increasingly well supported by governments through international agreements, notably the Paris Climate Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity and is being reflected at national level as countries integrate NbS into climate strategies.
- Many civil society groups srecognise the potential for NbS to bring together climate, biodiversity and sustainable development targets and to harness climate finance to drive cross-cutting change. However, there are also significant voices in opposition to NbS that focus on the role of NbS in combatting climate change and how it is implemented, monitored and verified.

Successful NbS involve good project planning and design, implementation and delivery of key goals, followed by monitoring and evaluation. NbS interventions are, at their core, specific in regard to geographic location, political context, and community involvement and are intrinsically dependent on the functionalities of ecosystems.

The IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions provides a set of specific criteria that can help shape NbS options for implementation, mainstreaming and long-term success.

BOX 14: NBS RESOURCES

IUCN *Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions. A user-friendly framework for the verification, design and scaling up of NbS*. https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-020-En.pdf

World Bank (2022) "*Guidance to Applying Nature-Based Solutions in the Large-Scale Mining Sector*". This guide introduces the concept of Nature based Solutions (NbS), explores the business case, financing, and funding for NBS on mining projects, and outlines the steps required to implement NbS. https://lnkd.in/dMnZsBkQ

Nature-Based Solutions NBS Facilitation Team. *Compendium of Contributions Nature-Based Solutions*. Climate Action Summit 2019. (2019). https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/29988

4.4.2 Engage with and transform the value chain

"Value chains are an integral part of strategic planning for many businesses today. A value chain refers to the full lifecycle of a product or process, including material sourcing, production, consumption and disposal/recycling processes."[47] Businesses need to understand where their supplies are coming from and look to develop procurement policies that support sustainable local livelihoods and nature positive objectives. It's about understanding the business ecosystem and transforming value chains to generate positive outcomes at both local and landscape levels, leveraging partnerships and building capacity along the value chain towards nature positive.

[47] WBCSD (2011) Collaboration, innovation, transformation: Ideas and inspiration to accelerate sustainable growth – A value chain approach

4.4.3 Collaboration and partnerships

It is in the interests of all industry operators to come together and to engage with other land users and regulators, to foster inclusive coalitions and partnerships, share responsibility, and deliver joint action to mitigate risks, spread the investment needed and make a positive contribution into the landscape.

The drivers and motivation for industry operators to engage in partnerships, collaborative processes and to commit resources to a landscape will vary but are typically linked to their individual assessment of risks and opportunities.

For industry operators in forest landscapes and landscapes rich in biodiversity, negligence or failure to manage risks relating to forests, water security, and endemic and threatened species will have repercussions on project delivery. For example, unmanaged issues can slow projects down, may affect access to finance, cause conflict and controversy, cost money and increasingly may stop projects altogether.

These types of issues often support the internal business case for engagement and investment beyond the business operations in the wider landscape and with other actors. For example, the risks that cumulative effects posed for individual operators delivering on their respective environmental and social commitments have been the catalyst for mining companies coming together in Guinea to create a sectoral platform to improve coordination and a collaborative response.

Setting nature positive objectives and targets at the national and sub-national levels can help to drive collective and collaborative action (e.g. partnerships for ecosystem restoration). A rapidly diminishing resource or landscape value (e.g. water, forest, great apes, pollinator populations) can also bring different actors together to better understand the issues, co-develop strategies to address them and accelerate collective action to respond to impacts and challenges.

BOX 15: GUIDANCE ON ESTABLISHING LANDSCAPE COALITIONS AND PRIVATE-PUBLIC-CIVIC PARTNERSHIPS

- Gross, L. & Wertz, L. (2015) *The landscape approach for sustainability in African agribusiness. Partnerships that support excellent companies, communities and ecosystems*. EcoAgriculture Partners: Washington DC.
- Heiner, K., Buck, L., Gross, L., Hart, A. & Stam, N. (2017) *Public-private-civic partnerships for sustainable landscapes: A practical guide for conveners*. EcoAgriculture Partners and IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative.
- Brouwer, H., Woodhill, J., Hemmati, M., Verhoosel, K. & van Vugt, S. (2015) The MSP Guide. How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen University & Research: Wageningen, The Netherlands.

4.4.4 Mobilising investment for nature positive landscapes

Mobilising finance and funding is critical for delivering nature positive. Financial flows to conserve nature are currently hugely outbalanced by financing targeted to activities that are directly harmful to biodiversity. However, momentum is growing. Business, government, civil society and donors –

individually and together - play a key role in leveraging and providing finance and other in-kind resources (such as human or physical resources) to enable landscape level delivery of nature positive.

The finance sector is also seeking to embed nature positive in project financing, and lenders are increasingly scrutinising corporate ESG performance and project or asset level risks and dependencies on nature, to support a nature positive outcome. With the 2022 release of the *Nature-related Risks & Opportunity Management and Disclosure Framework*, it is likely investors will continue to expect companies to provide more details on governance, strategy, risk management, and metrics related to safeguarding critical natural capital[48]; demanding evidence and disclosure from project developers and companies on nature positive. Business is increasingly expected to invest in the delivery of nature positive. Where business is responsible for or anticipates having adverse impacts on nature, adequate upfront financing of conservation action is paramount.

There is a wide range of finance, funding and delivery options as well as innovation and new players seeking to unlock financing for delivering nature positive (Box 16).

There are also calls to move away from ad hoc project-by-project investments towards a robust integrated landscape finance system in order to successfully mobilise resources that generate economic, social and ecological benefits and realise nature positive and sustainable landscape objectives[49]. Well-designed landscape finance offers the opportunity to provide real economic alternatives to unsustainable use of the natural world and can allow stakeholders in at-risk landscapes to access the financial resources needed to achieve realistic, long-term landscape-level conservation[50]

Establishing the enabling frameworks, partnership models, and investment vehicles for private-sector to contribute towards national and landscape priorities (e.g. through a national biodiversity offset scheme, jurisdictional REDD+, national conservation trust fund etc.) can help to drive collective investment in conservation outcomes.

BOX 16: TYPES OF FINANCE AND FUNDING FOR DELIVERING NATURE POSITIVE

- A **company may deliver and finance projects** internally, on a balance sheet, or through a special purpose vehicle with a corresponding choice of financing on or off-balance sheet, drawing on the general corporate finance available to the project, ring-fencing funds with specific use of proceeds, or drawing wholly on external finance.
- **Blended finance** is an approach that involves the use of public and philanthropic funds to change the risk/ return profile of investment projects in order to attract the private sector. It is an approach that can enable and incentivise public-private-civic partnerships to deliver nature positive outcomes in landscapes.
- Other **emerging investment opportunities** focus on innovative financial instruments that unlock capital to invest in nature's services. These involve bonds, insurance products, and "payment for ecosystem services" funds of various kinds.
- Various **innovative finance instruments** allow for project, landscape and regional requirements and specificities including, for example, up-front activity-based payments, project-based and jurisdictional payments for performance (such as REDD+), green equity funds, green loan funds, enhanced or unenhanced green forest bonds or risk sharing, transfer arrangements, or other public-private partnerships.
- **Landscape finance** is the investment of funds that generate a financial return for the investor and achieve positive environmental outcomes in a landscape. Organisations looking to address environmental

[48] Rothrock, P., Ellis, K. & Weatherer, L. (2022) Corporate Progress on No Deforestation and "Nature Positive" Post 2020. Washington, DC: Forest Trends

[49] Shames, S. & Scherr, S.J. (2020) Mobilizing finance across sectors and projects to achieve sustainable landscapes: Emerging models. EcoAgriculture Partners: Washington DC.

[50] *Forest-Smart Mining: Guidance to Applying Nature-Based Solutions in the Mining Sector*. World Bank, 2021.

degradation through investment in sustainable commercial activities in a landscape often include a mix of sustainable commodity production, carbon, regenerative agriculture, and tourism.

- **Climate and carbon finance** is directed at mitigation activities, adaptation financing and blended finance facilities.
- **Impact investment** is a strategy where risk, return, and impact are soptimised to finance businesses that address the SDGs.
- **Payments for ecosystem services** - a market-based instrument to sincentivise and enable landowners and communities to maintain intact ecosystems.
- **Microfinance** - a banking service provided to unemployed or low-income individuals or groups who otherwise would have no other access to financial services. Microfinance allows people to take on reasonable small business loans safely, and in a manner that is consistent with ethical lending practices. For example, the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) scheme.
- **Conservation financing options and community-based schemes** such as community forest enterprise, provide an innovative structure and process for forest conservation with social development and enterprise.

For more information on finance and funding see: *Forest-Smart Mining: Guidance to Applying Nature-Based Solutions in the Mining Sector*. World Bank, 2021. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099120005072233028/P1722450216fbf0fe0a1940eb4798287bc1

5 Conclusion

Evidence shows that with urgent, concerted and collaborative efforts for transformative change across economic, social, political and technological factors, there is still time to halt biodiversity loss and reverse the trend of nature's decline while meeting other global societal goals simultaneously[51]. This requires rapid and improved use of existing tools, innovative new initiatives for individual and collective action, and a new business as usual[52,53,54]. Nature must be woven into all aspects of society and business. Potential pathways towards nature positive outlined in this high level guidance for Liberia emphasise the need for proactive cross-sectoral, collaborative approaches that deliver tangible outcomes on the ground and at a landscape scale. This must be enabled by national and jurisdictional targets that are mainstreamed into policy and legislation to provide clear, enforceable, and measurable objectives for directing action on the ground towards a nature positive goal. All actors have a role to play in bringing about this new business as usual.

The opportunity for business to contribute to the delivery of nature positive in Liberia is emphasised. Every business needs to understand its impacts and dependencies on nature, and how its actions and activities affect the impacts and dependencies of other stakeholders and actors in a landscape. This way, opportunities to work together, to deliver nature positive outcomes, may be possible, and factored into the project design. Potential adverse impacts on nature need to be anticipated, prevented, mitigated and managed through the robust application of a mitigation hierarchy with the aim to achieve objectives of no net loss or, preferably, net positive impact on nature from operations. Delivery of nature positive requires businesses to go beyond impact mitigation at a site level. It requires 'beyond the fence' thinking and approaches, collective action, strategic investment, collaboration and transformation. Mobilising finance and funding will be crucial and business, together with government, civil society and donors, will be instrumental in leveraging and providing finance and other in-kind resources to enable landscape delivery of nature positive.

[51] WWF (2020) Living Planet Report 2020 - Bending the curve of biodiversity loss. World Wildlife Fund (WWF): Gland, Switzerland.
[52] WWF (2020) Living Planet Report 2020 - Bending the curve of biodiversity loss. World Wildlife Fund (WWF): Gland, Switzerland.
[53] World Economic Forum (2020) New Nature Economy Report II. The future of nature and business. WEF: Geneva, Switzerland
[54] IPBES (2019) Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. IPBES Secretariat: Bonn, Germany.