

Liberia Forestry Development Authority:

An Institutional Capacity Assessment

September 2019



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from an institutional capacity assessment of the Liberia Forestry Development Authority (FDA) based on a survey of FDA employees. The FDA plays a pivotal role in managing Liberia’s forest resources, and its Strategic Plan (2018-2030) prioritizes institutional strengthening for achieving its vision of “sustainable forestry for sustainable development”. The Liberia FDA employee survey was conducted to provide scientific evidence on the main organizational and personnel dimensions of institutional capacity, including staff skills, management practices, staff attitudes and behaviors, experiences of corruption and undue political interference, stakeholder interaction and factors determining project success. 438 employees, or approximately 82 percent of all FDA staff, were interviewed, and the sample covered Monrovia and the field offices.

The survey’s findings are relevant to key FDA strategic pillars of improving staff productivity, strengthening internal governance, and improving the agency’s customer service charter. On productivity, the survey found:

- FDA staff have weaker educational qualifications than staff in other Liberian ministries or international comparators, and lack adequate access to in-service training.
- Staff motivation levels vary widely across the FDA, with 69 percent of staff reporting lower motivation levels compared to when they joined the FDA.
- The perceived opaqueness and inequity of the FDA’s compensation structure being a large source of tension and dissatisfaction. Only 40 percent of all FDA staff are satisfied with their salary, and 70 percent of them state that they are not paid fairly or equally, the main reason being that pay setting is highly discretionary.
- The quality of management, particularly staff performance evaluations, is a main determinant of staff motivation. 75 percent of staff view performance evaluations as an effective tool to improve performance but only 31 percent of staff state that their managers conduct these evaluations. Staff who have managers that evaluate their performance are 13 points more motivated than staff whose managers do not evaluate performance.
- Management practices and access to facilities affect FDA outputs such as success rates for projects.

On internal governance and the customer charter, the survey’s main findings were:

- FDA staff report high levels of rent-seeking in the organization with 55 percent of staff believing that there is a practice of regularly collecting informal fees from citizens and companies for solving problems.
- Better management is associated with safer and more trustworthy work environments. While most employees believe that it is acceptable to report unethical behavior, only half of them feel

safe to do so. Staff are 15 percent more likely to feel safe reporting on an unethical colleague in units characterized by above median management quality as compared to units with below median management quality.

- FDA staff value community engagement which reinforces the importance of FDA's customer service charter. Staff view community interaction as vital to project success, with 44 percent reporting that insufficient engagement is the main reason for project failure.

These findings identify four key reform pillars that, supported by a strong foundation of better data and more regular monitoring and evaluation, will help strengthen FDA's institutional capacity. The reform pillars are: improving skills through merit-based recruitment and competency-based training; stronger management practices, in particular, performance assessments, targeting and monitoring; more equitable pay; and greater community engagement. Administrative data and regular staff surveys can be the basis of a key set of indicators on public employment and management that the FDA can use to assess progress towards institutional strengthening.

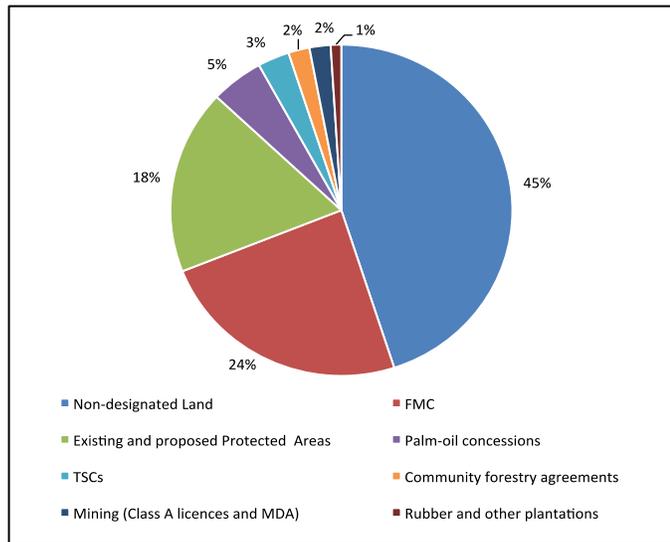
1. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

Liberia's forests and their significance¹

1. **Liberia is the most forested country in West Africa.** In 2015, forests (greater than 30 percent tree canopy cover) made up 6.5 million ha, or 68 percent, of Liberia's land surface (Metria and Geoville 2016). This includes some areas under tree-crops such as oil palm, rubber and cocoa. Out of this, about 4.3 million ha of the is categorized as dense tropical forest with a canopy cover of over 80 percent.

2. **Existing forests have different uses (Figure 1).** Out of the total forest area (with canopy cover over 30 percent or nearly 6.6 million hectares), almost 28 percent is designated for commercial timber production (under Forest Management Contracts [FMCs] and Timber Sale Contracts [TSCs]); 18 percent is under existing and proposed Protected Areas; 5 percent is under palm oil concessions; and 1 percent is under rubber plantations. The non-designated category is about 45 percent of the forest area. This land is used in a variety of ways by communities, smallholder cultivators, and transitory populations.

Figure 1: Allocation of forest land in Liberia (2015)



Source: Metria and Geoville 2016.

3. **The forest sector contributes significantly to national development, and there is potential for even greater gains.** Liberia's forest sector is uniquely placed with relatively high contribution of the sector to the national economy compared to other sectors (contributing to 10 percent of GDP, Figure 2) and serving as an important source of employment; the highest forest cover (68 percent) (Metria and Geoville, 2016) as percentage of land area in West Africa; high biodiversity value of forests; and high commercial value of forests.

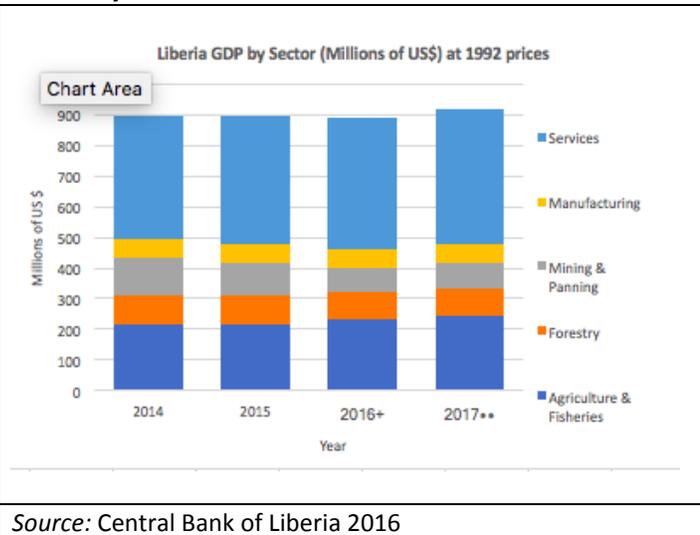
¹ This section and the next, draw heavily from the Country Forest Note for Liberia (Hooda et al, 2018).

4. **The forest sector is also a large employer and an important source of livelihoods for rural Liberians.** Over one third of Liberia’s population lives in forested areas. The formal sector contributes to GDP and formal employment. The informal sector contributes significantly to incomes and employment, through activities such as chainsaw milling and charcoal production. The annual revenue generated by chainsaw milling alone is estimated to be US\$31-41 million or about 3-4 percent of the GDP (USAID, 2015).

5. **Despite the important contributions they make to the economy and to livelihoods, forests are under threat and need to be better managed.** Overall, net forest depletion (as percentage of gross national income), a measure of unsustainable use of the forest, increased from 0.5 percent in 2005 to 32 percent in 2015 (World Development Indicators, 2015). The deforestation (forest loss) rate is estimated at 0.46 percent per annum over 2005-2015 (Winrock International, 2016). Deforestation and forest degradation (depletion of existing forests) are caused by shifting agriculture, chainsaw milling, charcoal production, poor enforcement of regulations governing forest concessions, expansion of commercial agriculture concessions (for example, palm oil), and wide-spread mining. Additionally, ineffective management of protected areas poses a risk to biodiversity and critical ecosystem services.

6. **There has been significant progress towards institutionalizing forest management and establishing a conducive legal framework.** The establishment of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) in 1976, the enactment of the National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL) in 2006, and the Community Rights Law (CRL) with respect to forest lands in 2009 has helped better institutionalize forest management in Liberia. The NFRL has provided a new framework for identifying, allocating, and managing logging concessions; it also ushered in the era of the “three Cs” approach, giving equal balance to *community*, *commercial*, and *conservation* aspects of forestry. The NFRL has provided a solid foundation for the operation of the sector and its sustainable contribution to the economy. The CRL provides a strong basis for engagement of communities in forest management. However, implementation and enforcement of forest policy, laws, and regulations that would result in sustainable forest management and benefits to communities is lacking.

Figure 2: Contribution of the forestry sector to Liberia’s economy



7. **The sector still faces several challenges which need to be addressed before it can become an engine of growth for the economy.** The factors contributing to the underperformance of the sector pertain to weak implementation of the existing legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks, poor

governance, and limited capacity and budgetary constraints of the FDA. These are compounded by cross-sectoral challenges from mining and agricultural concessions due to lack of national and regional land use planning.

The Liberia Forestry Development Authority (FDA)

8. **The FDA has a pivotal role in the sustainable forest management in Liberia.** The FDA was established as a state-owned enterprise, with a broad remit to conduct research, provide training, and “devote all publicly owned forest lands to their most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people, considering their direct and indirect values” (FDA Act, Section 3 (b)). The Agency’s vision, as stated in its Strategic Plan (2018-2030) is “sustainable forestry for sustainable socioeconomic development”, with a core emphasis in the Plan on institutional capacity building, particularly in the first five-year phase. Pillar 1 of the plan focuses on optimizing the institutional efficiency and effectiveness of FDA by enhancing staff skills and productivity, developing complementary infrastructural facilities and exploring improved revenue collection options.

9. **The FDA’s central management team is based in Monrovia, with a network of district offices across the country.** The FDA is headed by a Managing Director and two Deputy Managing Directors and is overseen by a Board of Directors, and is organized into five major departments—Legality Verification, Commercial, Conservation, Community Forestry, and Research and Development—to be able to effectively discharge its mandate. Each department is led by a Technical Manager, who reports to the Deputy Managing Director of Operations. The total staff strength of the FDA is about 550, distributed between Monrovia and four regional offices (FDA 2016). The central offices determine policies, whereas field offices generally focus on implementation, monitoring, and enforcement. The FDA monitors the movement of timber and forest products around the country and maintains a presence at road checkpoints to issue waybills and collect related revenues. The various field teams are managed from the central offices in Monrovia, and report to managers within the various Departments.

Study objectives

The objective of this study is to undertake an institutional capacity assessment of the FDA through a diagnostic survey of its staff to generate granular level data on the inner workings of the agency. The survey captures work practices, management approaches, staff motivation, leadership and work environment at the FDA to highlight specific HR and institutional weaknesses that constrain its effective functioning. The survey serves as a diagnostic tool to identify the interventions needed to alleviate those constraints and provide the basis for a key set of indicators on public employment and management that the FDA can use to assess *progress towards* institutional strengthening.

Anecdotal evidence points to serious deficiencies in many of FDA’s operations, including human resource management. The survey allows for a systematic look at the work practices, management approaches, staff motivations, leadership and work environment at the FDA to highlight specific weaknesses that

constrain its effective functioning. The survey findings will also help identify key interventions needed to remove those constraints. In addition, it will provide a baseline measure of civil service productivity against which progress can be measured, as interventions get implemented. Specifically, this work will:

- Measure in a scientific manner the attitudes and behaviors of public employees in FDA that are known to matter for organizational performance.
- Elicit the experiences and perceptions of FDA employees on management practices, compensation and other HRM factors that impact attitudes and behaviors.
- Identify priority reforms to be supported by the LFSP.
- Establish a baseline to monitor progress on reforms.
- Suggest Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress towards institutional strengthening.

The study is both an individual (perception-based) and organization-(management) level survey. The survey instrument was developed using a set of core modules designed by the Bureaucracy Lab which have been validated in various other settings, and which were tailored to the Liberian forestry sector context. An assessment of the constraints to citizen engagement would be an important addition to understanding the demand-side accountability mechanisms in place. The survey abstracts from this to focus on workplace practices, however a future assessment of citizen engagement, transparency, and accountability mechanisms would be able to provide more insight into this aspect of organizational function.

Survey methodology

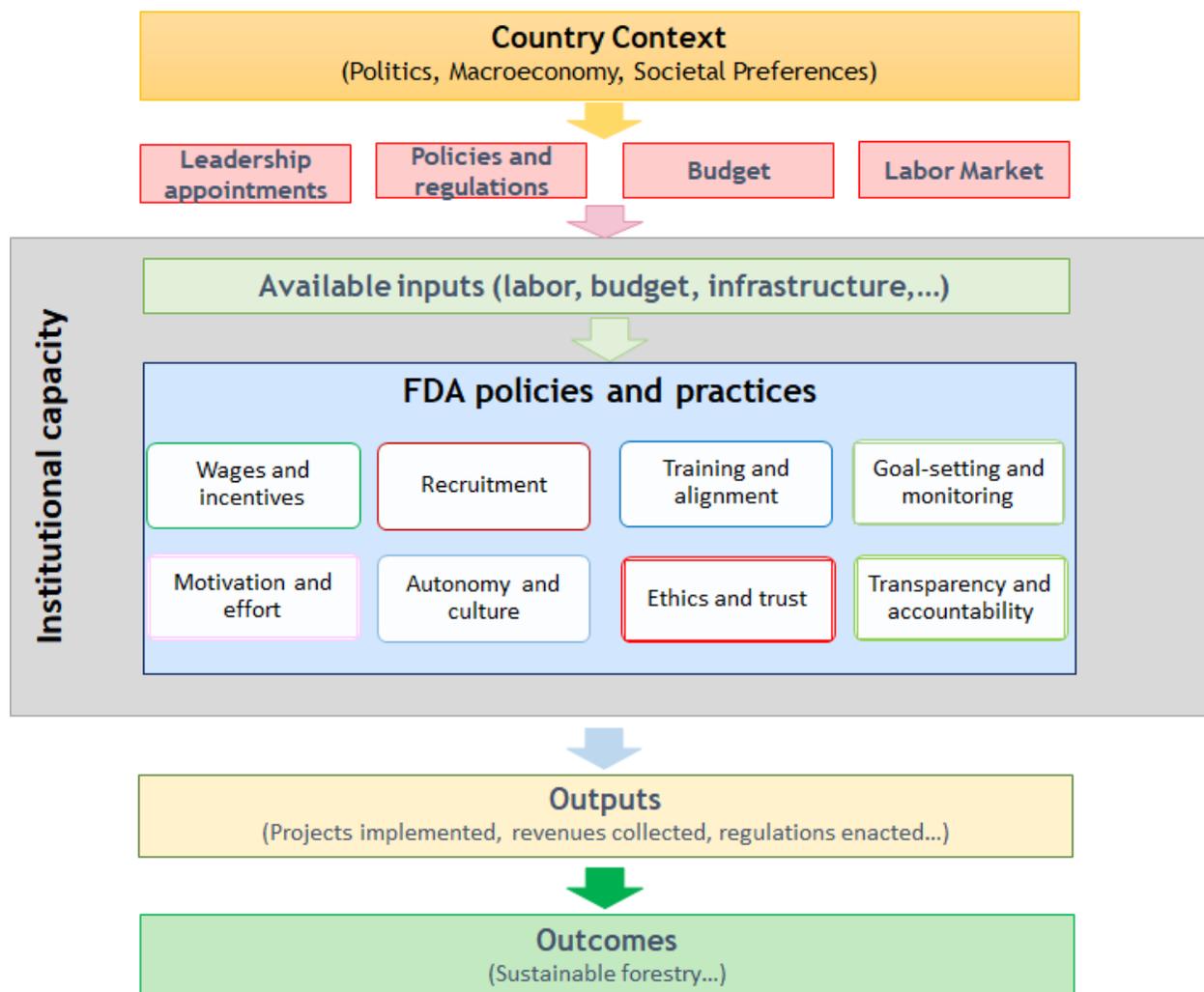
The Liberia FDA survey was undertaken in December 2018-January 2019 and included all FDA staff. In the case of the FDA, it was more cost-effective to conduct a census of employees due to the relatively small size of the organization and the wide distribution of FDA staff across the regions. In other settings, a representative sample of the organization's staff would be surveyed to ensure the survey was a practical exercise but still a useful one.

The data collection was carried out by a team of 18 highly-trained enumerators, split into 4 teams. The teams were assigned regions and an itinerary was drawn up based on the location of the selected field offices and sites.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL APPROACH

10. A government agency production function is a useful framework for conceptualizing and measuring institutional capacity (Figure 3). A production function is the process by which “inputs”, or the human and financial resources available to a public sector organization, are converted to outputs. These outputs can be the number of children educated or, as in the case of FDA, the number of forestry projects implemented, the amount of revenues collected, and the type of regulations enacted. Outputs in turn will influence the long-term outcomes of sustainable forestry for sustainable socio-economic development. Agencies with high capacity are not only those with enough inputs but, more importantly, those that are efficient in converting these inputs into outputs through effective policies and practices.

Figure 3: The conceptual framework for institutional capacity of the FDA



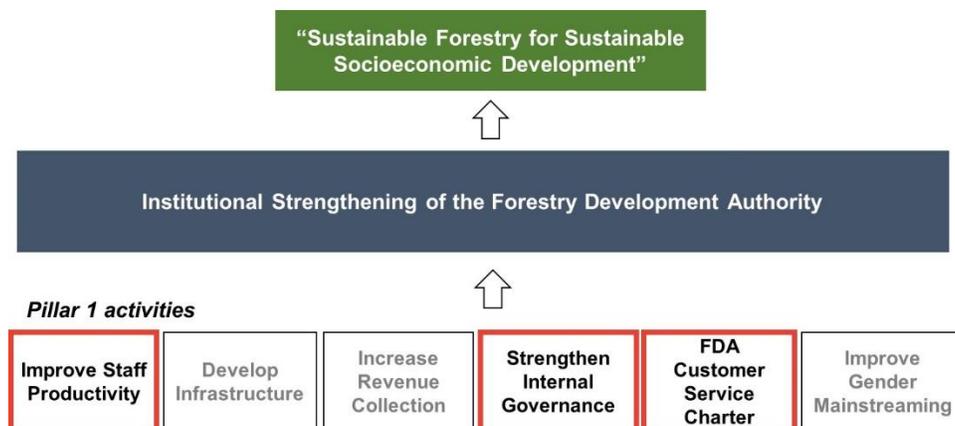
11. **We define institutional capacity as the agency-level factors that impact the production process.** Specifically, we zero-in on personnel management policies and practices to underline that institutional capacity is only partly a function of the quality of personnel or resources in an agency; it is also, and arguably more importantly, a function of the effectiveness with which these resources are converted to outputs through management practices, wage and incentives, training and alignment and other agency-level factors. A growing empirical literature has shown that effective organizational and personnel management practices determine organizational productivity in firms and governments (Bloom and van Reenan 2007; Rasul and Rogger 2018). Merit as the main criterion for selection and promotion is the hallmark of the Weberian bureaucracy and can help create strong professional norms that drive performance. Equally important is the day-to-day management of whether an agency has clear goals with quantifiable targets, and regular monitoring of the achievement of targets; the extent to which staff internalize those goals and effectively work together to achieve them; whether managers effectively involve staff in problem solving and give them autonomy to work; and the regularity and robustness of performance evaluations and performance conversations.
12. **An extensive academic literature has also shown that motivation and professional norms impact the productivity of government employees.** These attitudes and behaviors—motivation and effort, ethics and trust—are particularly important in public administration given that is difficult to monitor the daily work of bureaucrats which creates unique accountability challenges (Dixit, 2002). These attitudes are a function of selection mechanisms that attract and screen for intrinsically motivated workers, in addition to those with the necessary skills, and good management practices which motivate staff and ensure that they work with integrity.
13. **Institutional capacity is also influenced by country context and government-wide policies outside the agency.** Country-level influences include the overall political environment and socioeconomic context. These impact government-wide factors such as policies and regulation, the available budget, the leadership appointments in ministries and agencies, and the overall labor market in which the government operates and competes with the private sector for human resources. The political-bureaucratic interface is especially important as while senior bureaucrats need to be accountable to elected officials, this responsiveness needs to be balanced with appropriate rules and protections for civil servants so that their decision-making is impartial, and politicians do not unduly influence their decisions to create bias in the allocation of resources, in the award of contracts, and in the selection and implementation of projects which can hurt implementation effectiveness.
14. **For the purposes of this survey, we are most interested in the factors that operate inside a government agency and can be changed by agency leadership, depicted in the blue box in Figure 3.** Clearly, the linear and unidirectional relationship depicted here is simplistic as agency-level factors also influence the amount of resources an agency will be given and the interaction with the political leadership.

However, this conceptual distinction is important to identify reforms that require distinct levels of decision-making.

15. **The conceptual framework utilized is directly relevant to three Pillar I activities of the first phase of FDA’s Strategic Plan (Figure 4).** The relevance of the production function approach to staff productivity is self-evident. Management practices, the external environment, and staff integrity are also crucial for internal governance and the extent and quality of FDA’s interactions with its customers, such as forest-dependent communities, local traditional authorities, non-governmental organizations, and forest-based enterprises. The FDA’s interaction with Senior bureaucrats need to be accountable to elected officials, but this responsiveness needs to be balanced with appropriate rules and protections for civil servants so that their decision-making is impartial, and politicians do not unduly influence their decisions. In many systems, political factors undermine impartial decision-making. Clientelism, or the provision of jobs, contracts, welfare support, budget, and so forth in exchange for political support, is a common feature of the public sector across countries in all regions and income groups. Politicians also often create bias in the allocation of resources, in the award of contracts, and in the selection and implementation of projects which can hurt implementation effectiveness.

16. **The empirical approach adopted for this study measures institutional capacity through a survey of the employees of the FDA.** The survey is a scientific way to assess the core elements of FDA’s personnel management and enables the identification of priority areas for reform that can then be operationalized through activities funded by the Liberia Forestry Sector project. The survey findings help to establish a baseline against which the impact of these reform initiatives can then be assessed. The granularity of the survey captures variation in management practices and attitudes and behaviors across units and localities within the FDA that can help better target interventions.

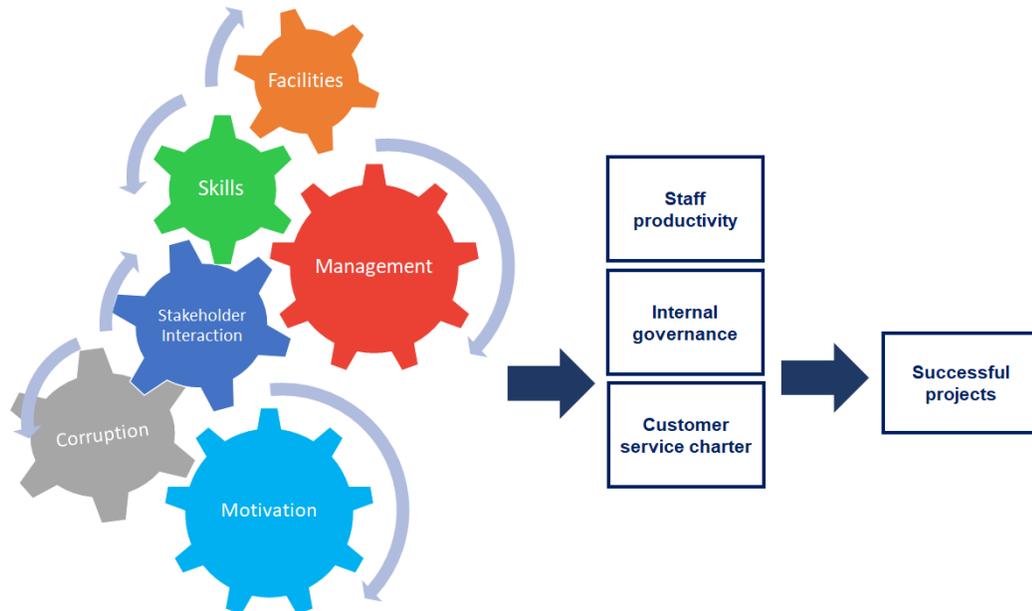
Figure 4: Relevant pillars of the FDA Strategic Plan



17. **The survey design draws on the experience of the World Bank’s “Bureaucracy Lab” (the Lab).** The Lab has conducted and analyzed surveys of approximately 30,000 public employees in 10 countries.

Some of the FDA survey modules are derived from core modules that the Lab has developed and refined over the course of implementation in these countries and which have been tailored to the context of the FDA. These relate to staff skills, management practices, and attitudes and behaviors that are important for all organizations irrespective of their unique functions. Other modules were designed specifically for the FDA to capture aspects of its activities in the forestry sector.

Figure 5: Survey modules that will inform the FDA Strategic Plan



18. The survey has six modules covering various aspects of the FDA’s institutional capacity and to inform reforms that can be implemented under the Strategic Plan (Figure 5). The survey modules on skills and facilities measure staff educational qualifications, demographics, access to training, IT abilities; and availability of resources such as vehicles, access to electricity and the internet, and to schools and hospitals. The module on management draws on the World Management Survey (WMS), a rigorous method of quantifying managerial and organizational practices, which has revealed that the quality of management is the main driver of innovation and productivity in firms across the world (Bloom and Van Reenen 2007; Cirera and Maloney 2017). The survey adapts this tool to measure the quality of management of public sector organizations. The module on motivation measures general job satisfaction, a summary measure that represents a comprehensive assessment of all relevant job aspects which some studies have found is linked to labor productivity; satisfaction with salary; and the difference in an employee’s current motivation levels as compared to when they first joined the FDA. The survey also asks about the prevalence of rent seeking, attitudes towards taking bribes and reporting on colleagues that engage in corrupt practices; staff views on the FDA’s interaction with communities; as well as their perceptions of project success. These different modules help provide a comprehensive picture of the quality of outputs of the FDA and the various factors that may be impacting performance and results.

3. MAIN SURVEY FINDINGS

19. **The Liberia FDA staff survey was conducted over the period December 2018 to February 2019 and 438 employees, or approximately 82 percent of all FDA staff, were interviewed with a response rate of 98 percent.** The data were collected by a team of enumerators using Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI). The questionnaire had 10 modules with over 250 questions that were asked of 313 technical and 125 non-technical staff in Monrovia and in the four regional offices of the FDA.

20. **The majority—85 percent of all, and 86 percent of technical—survey respondents were male, which reflects the demographic composition of the FDA.** Women are even less represented in the regional offices. Improving gender mainstreaming is one of the priorities of the FDA’s strategic plan and clearly serious effort will need to be made to attract more women to the organization. Since there are very few female respondents in the survey, the survey findings cannot be disaggregated by gender.

Staff productivity

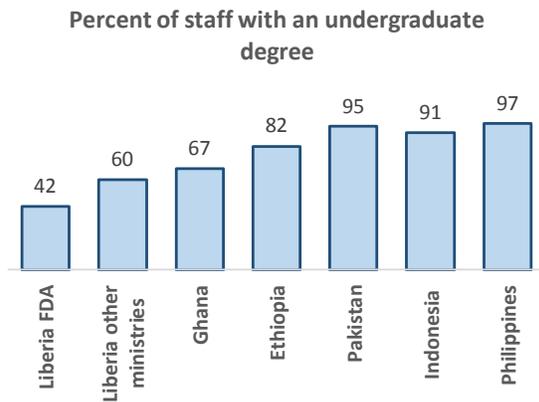
21. **Weak educational qualifications and the lack of ‘in-service’ training significantly limits the productivity of FDA staff.** Thirty-one percent of all FDA staff, and 42 percent of technical staff, have an undergraduate degree, which is much lower than staff in other ministries in Liberia or other low and middle-income countries for which we have data (Figure 6). Staff skills are particularly deficient outside of Monrovia as only 23 percent of staff in the regions have a university degree. On average, only five individuals can use office software like PowerPoint and Excel across all units in the FDA and, in over half of the units, there is only one staff member with these skills. Furthermore, only 8.5 percent of staff state that training programs are regularly held to improve skills as compared to 41 percent of staff who state that they have never received training (Figure 7).

22. **The lower qualifications of FDA staff compared to those in other Liberian government agencies suggests that the problem has less to do with the overall availability of skilled professionals and more to do with the attractiveness of the FDA as an employer or deficiencies in recruitment practices.²** Anecdotal evidence from the field suggests that much of the work carried out by technical staff of the FDA is considered ‘manual labor’, so schooling is not considered an important requirement of the job by many

² Anecdotal evidence from the field suggests that much of the work carried out by technical staff of the FDA is considered ‘manual labor’, so schooling is not considered an important requirement of the job by many staff.

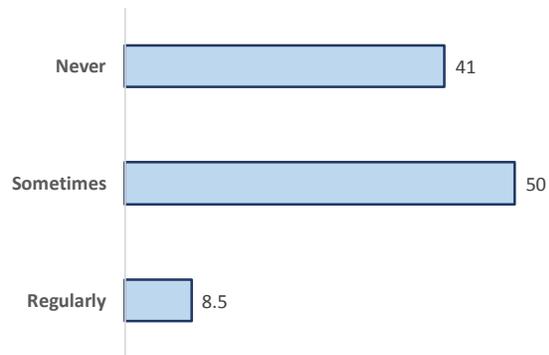
staff. Limited resources of the Forestry Training Institute and the Forestry School of the University of Liberia, which provide the pool of new entrants for the FDA, is one reason for the limited training opportunities and the poor skills of graduates.

Figure 6: Staff in the FDA have comparatively low educational qualifications



Source: WB survey

Figure 7: “Are training programs held to improve learning and performance”



23. **Staff productivity is also compromised by weak facilities such as limited access to electricity, internet, health and education facilities, office space, and other resources.** In a typical working day, 90 percent of staff outside of Monrovia report that they never have access to electricity (with 23 percent of all FDA staff reporting no electricity access). Most regional staff have very limited access to their emails (i.e. every month or every quarter), constraining their ability to ensure regular communication with central offices. While 69 percent of staff in the regions state that they have access to vehicles, only 22 percent state that there is enough fuel to utilize them effectively. Furthermore, only 50 percent of staff in the regions have relatively easy access to education and health facilities. The absence of basic infrastructure suggests that significant investments will be necessary in infrastructure and facilities in the regions before a significant move towards greater decentralization can be effective, as presented in Phase II of the FDA’s strategic plan. The FDA does not receive adequate annual budgetary allocation to develop an effective investment plan for the sector, thus limiting its ability for strategic multi-year planning for its activities. Additionally, the actual disbursements to the FDA are rarely made on time and quarterly disbursements have often been arbitrarily cut back.³

³ Personal conversations with the Managing Director and the Comptroller at the FDA.

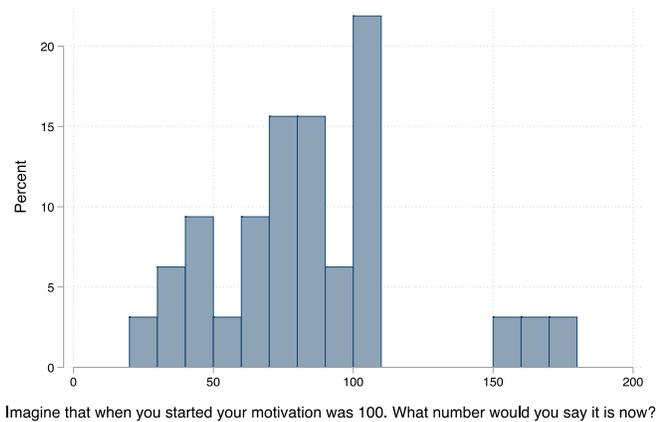
24. **Staff motivation levels vary widely across the FDA.** The survey aims to measure employee motivation in several ways, ranging from general questions of respondents' satisfaction with their jobs, reasons for joining the public sector, and assessment of their current motivation levels compared to when they joined the FDA. While 71 percent of staff are satisfied with their overall experience working in the FDA, this average masks the considerable variation in motivation levels, particularly when individuals reflect on how their motivation has changed over time. On this measure, the survey asks respondents to imagine that when they entered the FDA their motivation was 100; they are then asked what their motivation level is now relative to then. Findings suggest that on average FDA staff are more motivated—the overall motivation score is 103—but there is wide variation in motivation levels with 31 percent of staff reporting higher motivation levels compared to when they joined the FDA and the remaining stating that their motivation levels were lower (Figure 8).

25. **A perceived opaqueness of the compensation structure and discretionary implementation of compensation policies work to weaken motivation levels of staff.**

The FDA has its own salary scale—the Personnel Classification and Compensation Plan—approved by its Board of Directors, which establishes the classes and grades that determine salaries for 253 different job titles. Associated with a subset of these job titles are benefits like housing allowances, access to vehicles, fuel allowances, and per diem for travel. Only 40 percent of all FDA staff are satisfied with their salary, and only

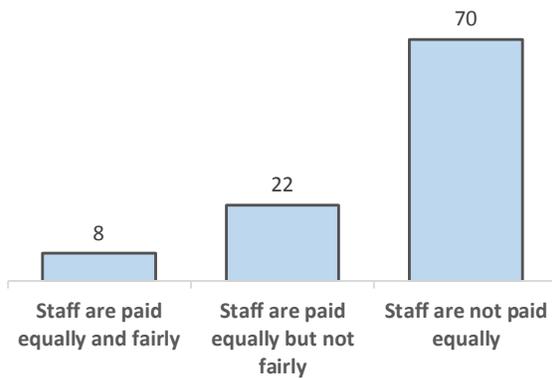
10 percent are satisfied with their benefits. 70 percent of FDA staff state that they are not paid fairly or equally (Figure 9). The main reasons stated are that pay setting is highly discretionary (i.e. 30 percent of respondents state that this process is determined by personal relationships between the staff and the manager); there is a lack of clear standards (27 percent); or that decisions are subject to political interference (22 percent, see Figure 10). 65 percent of staff also believe that the compensation system is a source of tension and conflict within the FDA. Ultimately, the main source of dissatisfaction is the lack of pay equity and transparency, which is not surprising given the large number of different positions relative to the number of staff in the FDA (253 to 550). Furthermore, the lack of rigorous job evaluations underpinning the class and grade classifications for these jobs exacerbates challenges with the perceived discretion associated with the enforcement of compensation policies.

Figure 8: There is considerable variation in staff motivation across the FDA



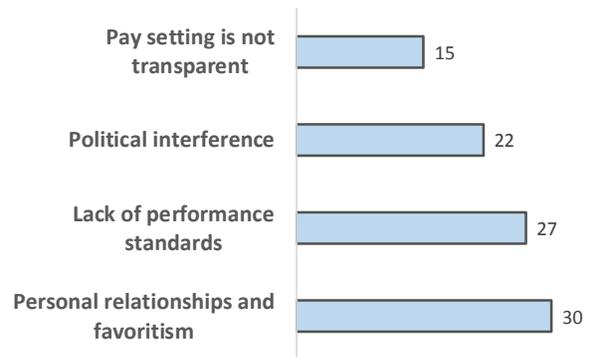
Source: WB survey

Figure 9: “Are FDA staff paid fairly and equally across the organization?”



Source: WB survey

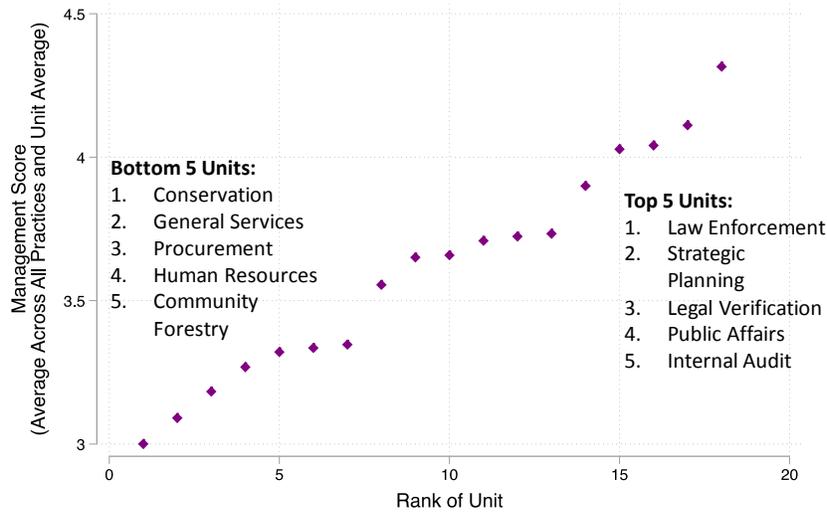
Figure 10: “What are the biggest problems with the compensation system?”



26. **While many staff report that decisions around compensation are unfair, the quality of management is the main determinant of staff motivation.** While staff are dissatisfied with their salary, compensation is not associated with motivation—staff who are satisfied with their salary do not report higher levels of motivation than staff who are dissatisfied with their salary. The quality of management, as detailed below, is a more important determining factor of how effectively staff believe they are in implementing their respective tasks.

27. **The quality of management varies widely across units of the FDA.** Several dimensions of management practices are measured in the survey: the extent to which a unit has explicit targets for its goals and whether they are effectively communicated to staff; whether regularly monitoring of these targets takes place; processes around the distribution of tasks across employees, the levels of staff involvement in problem-solving, and levels of staff autonomy to carry out their tasks, and; the use of incentives, particularly regular performance evaluations, to motivate staff. Survey findings suggest that the average management score across these dimensions varies significantly, with some of the key client-facing units like Conservation and Community Forestry ranking in the bottom five on management (Figure 11).

Figure 11: The quality of management varies considerably across units in the FDA



Source: WB survey

28. **What particularly stands out is the unevenness in how regularly staff performance evaluations are conducted.** 75 percent of staff view performance evaluations as an effective tool to improve performance (Figure 12) but only 31 percent of staff state that their managers conduct these evaluations (Figure 13). In addition to its infrequency, staff complain that performance evaluations, when conducted, are based on poor criteria and not done fairly by managers. The Bureaucracy Lab surveys from other countries also reveal that performance evaluations and incentives are the weakest aspects of management, as compared to organizational targeting and monitoring which are relatively stronger. Staff in these other countries also highlighted problems of favoritism and lack of objectivity in performance evaluations, though unlike in the FDA, the actual conduct of performance evaluations is relatively high.

Figure 12: “Has employee performance improved because of performance evaluations?”

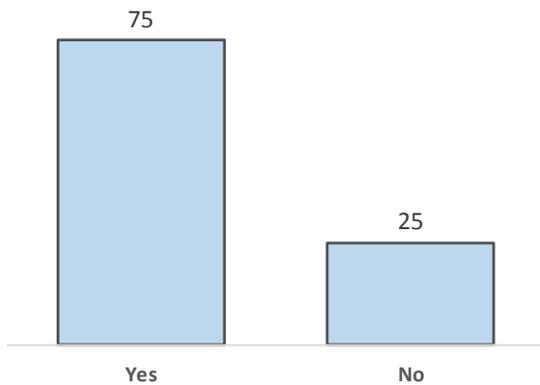
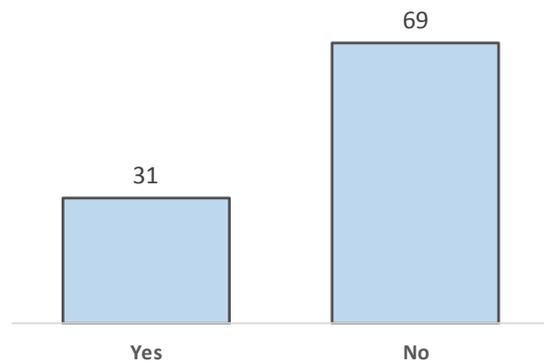


Figure 13: “Does management of your unit conduct performance evaluations?”



Source: WB survey

29. **The conduct of performance evaluations and selection of pro-socially oriented individuals is correlated with staff motivation levels in the FDA.** We find that staff who have managers that evaluate their performance are 13 points more motivated than staff whose managers do not evaluate performance (Figure 14). The regularity of performance evaluations has a similarly positive association with self-reported staff satisfaction. Other management practices like effective screening for pro-social candidates are also correlated with motivation levels, underlining the importance of effective recruitment practices that select for both skilled and pro-socially motivated staff. Staff who state that they entered the FDA to serve Liberia or to improve the ecosystem are 15 points more motivated than those that entered for extrinsic reasons such as income, benefits, or prestige (Figure 15). Unsurprisingly, survey findings illustrate a correlation between access to adequate facilities like vehicles and fuel, and higher staff motivation levels.

Figure 14: Conduct of performance evaluations are correlated with higher motivation

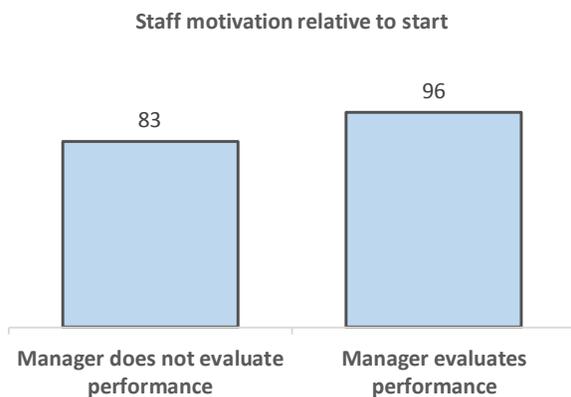
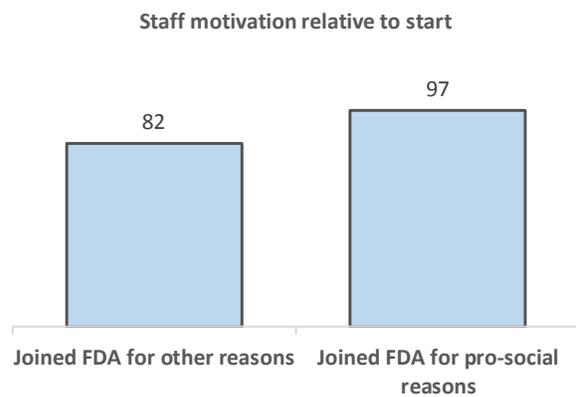


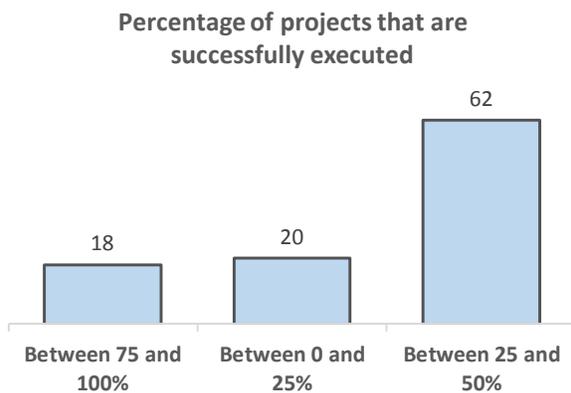
Figure 15: Individuals who joined the FDA for pro-social reasons have higher motivation



Source: WB survey

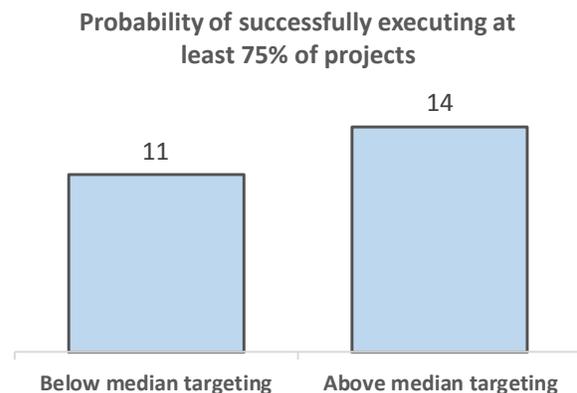
30. **Management practices and access to facilities affect FDA outputs such as success rates for projects.** FDA staff generally have a poor view of the rates of successful project completion, with only 18 percent of respondents saying that most projects (more than 75 percent) are successfully executed (Figure 16). Better management, especially better targeting, improves likelihood of project success—going from below median to above median targeting is associated with a 3 percentage-point increase in successfully executing at least 75 percent of projects (Figure 17). Staff that say that they have adequate access to vehicles are also 4 percentage-points more likely to say the FDA successfully executes at least 75 percent of projects.

Figure 16: Less than 20 percent of projects are successful most of the time



Source: WB survey

Figure 17: Better targeting improves the likelihood of project success



Internal governance and stakeholder interaction

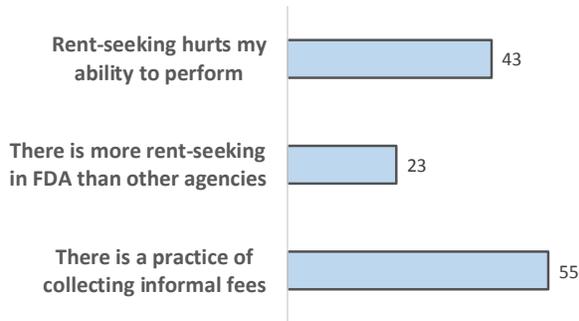
31. FDA staff report high levels of rent-seeking in the organization. Fifty-five percent of staff believe that there is a practice of regularly collecting informal fees from citizens and companies for solving problems, though only 23 percent of employees think that there is more rent-seeking in the FDA than other agencies in Liberia (Figure 18). Several other survey questions confirm the high prevalence of paying and accepting bribes. For example, 50 percent of respondents stated that it was acceptable for an officer to receive a small amount of money or a small gift, and 40 percent said it was fine to accept a large amount of money and an expensive gift, from a citizen for solving their problem. External factors including undue political influence seem to compromise project quality, with 46 percent of FDA staff saying that politicians try to influence staff in their units such as on decisions related to the choice of projects or procurement. Staff cite the main reasons for rent-seeking as low pay, selection of corrupt or corruptible individuals, too many regulations that enable officers to exercise bureaucratic power, and pressures from their superiors to engage in corrupt practices.

32. There are also high levels of political interference in the promotion of staff. Given the dearth of regular performance evaluation, it's unsurprising that a significant proportion of staff (32 percent) do not believe that merit is a key criterion for promotion. By contrast, 53 percent of respondents believe that promotions in their units are likely to be based on political connections.

33. Better management is associated with safer and more trustworthy work environments. While FDA staff are aware that a code of ethics exists, very few are knowledgeable about it. 87 percent of respondents are familiar with the existence of an FDA code of conduct, yet 55 percent of staff said that they had not read the code, and only 10 percent had read the code and were very familiar with its provisions (Figure 19). While most employees believe that it is acceptable to report unethical behavior, only half of them feel safe to do so (Figure 20)—only 15 percent of staff have reported a colleague for

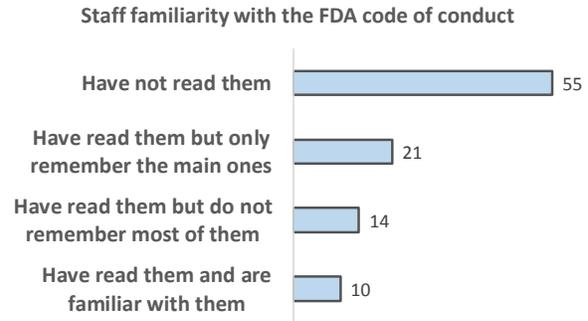
unethical behavior. According to the survey, staff are 15 percent more likely to feel safe reporting on an unethical colleague in units characterized by above median management quality as compared to units with below median management quality.

Figure 18: Perceptions of rent-seeking in the FDA: Percentage of respondents saying “yes.”



Source: WB survey

Figure 19: There limited knowledge about the code of ethics

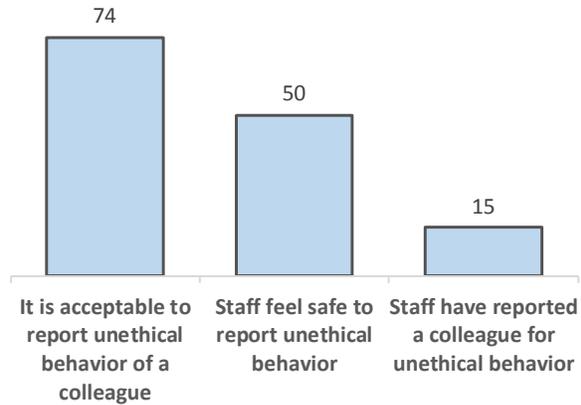


34. **FDA staff value community engagement which reinforces the importance of FDA’s customer service charter.** The charter

lays out a commitment to and a framework for defining service delivery standards, the rights of customers, and how complaints from customers will be handled. FDA staff generally believe that they have a good working relationship with key stakeholders through regular interactions with forest-dependent communities, forest-based enterprises, local traditional authorities, and non-governmental organizations and development partners. Staff believe that these stakeholders consider the FDA to be trustworthy

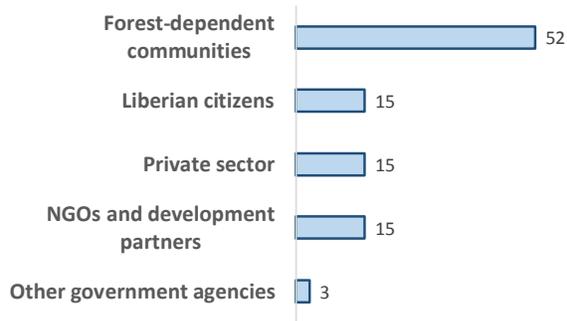
and competent, except for forest-dependent communities whom more than half of survey respondents believe do not trust the organization (Figure 21). Staff also view community interaction as vital to project success, with 44 percent reporting that insufficient engagement is the main reason for project failure, followed by corruption (Figure 22).

Figure 20: Reporting unethical behavior: Percentage of respondents saying “yes”



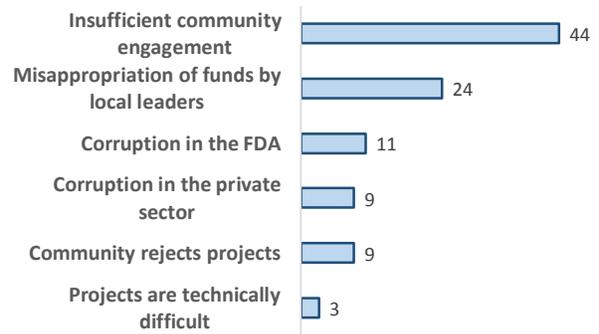
Source: WB survey

Figure 21: Perceptions of the FDA among stakeholders: Percentage of respondents saying they do not see the FDA as trustworthy and competent



Source: WB survey

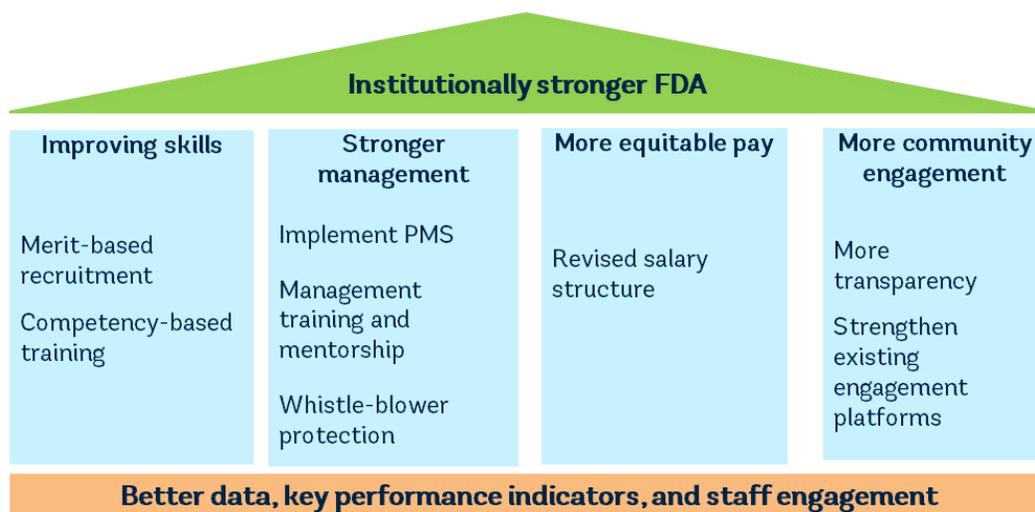
Figure 22: Reasons for project failure



4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

35. The survey findings identify four key reform pillars that, supported by a strong foundation of better data and more regular monitoring and evaluation, will help strengthen FDA's institutional capacity (Figure 23). The reform pillars are: improving skills through merit-based recruitment and competency-based training; stronger management practices, in particular, performance assessments, targeting and monitoring; more equitable pay, and greater community engagement. Recommendations are limited to activities that are within the purview of the FDA and that can be implemented by the FDA within the timeline of Pillar I of the Strategic Plan, with support from the World Bank's Forestry Sector Project.

Figure 23: Main policy recommendations



Improving skills

36. To improve staff productivity, merit-based recruitment practices based on tests are essential to help identify more qualified and public-service motivated individuals. Merit-based recruitment is a basic pillar of the Weberian bureaucracy model, and research shows that it is associated with lower levels of corruption, higher citizen satisfaction and trust, and greater performance, motivation and satisfaction amongst civil servants (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Cingolani, et al., 2015; Meyer-Sahling, Schuster & Mikkelsen, 2018; Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen & Schuster, 2018). While countries have a variety of assessment mechanisms to ensure merit, the recommended approach for low and middle-income countries with high levels of political patronage, like Liberia, is to place relatively greater emphasis on selection through testing via written examinations rather than selection purely on academic qualifications and interviews (Ashraf, Bandiera and Lee 2014). Written examinations are the most common approach to ensure merit as they limit discretion and the potential for political influence or nepotism and can be implemented relatively cheaply.

37. **Drawing on the experiences of both OECD and low-income countries, as well as Liberia's own President's Young Professionals Program (PYPP), a merit-based recruitment policy should include the following elements:** First, there should be open, external advertisement for job vacancies to help ensure transparency and perceived fairness in the recruitment process. Second, the establishment of pre-identified minimum qualification requirements, including education levels for technical staff, will help to ensure that new recruits have a university degree. Third, a knowledge-based written examination that tests for key skills is an essential component that will help to filter the pool of candidates. These skills should be a combination of basic legal knowledge (Liberia's constitution and forestry-specific laws) and analytical and problem-solving abilities that can be measured through psychometric tests. The test can be multiple-choice to make it cheaper to implement. While competency-based recruitment has become increasingly common in OECD countries since the early 2000s, it would be more relevant for managers and senior level employees than new entrants in Liberia as the screening process is both more demanding and more discretionary. Fourth, candidates who pass the threshold for the test should be assessed for personality traits, particularly pro-social motivation, through essay questions that screen for reasons for joining the FDA. Lastly, final interviews would help identify the final selection of candidates that have passed the above stages of the recruitment process.

38. **Merit-based recruitment should be complemented with an outreach program to attract motivated and skilled young Liberians to join the FDA.** As discussed, more pro-socially oriented FDA staff have higher motivation levels. The experience of the PYPP is instructive and inspirational, as it reveals that a program that emphasizes service to Liberia, and to the ecosystem and the global climate in the case of the FDA, can be attractive. Pro-socially motivated, qualified candidates are often willing to forgo higher pay in the private sector for such an opportunity. For example, a recent study showed that university graduates are willing to taking relatively lower pay in the Ghanaian civil service as they viewed government jobs as a unique experience and a long-term investment that could potentially present more lucrative future careers in the private sector, development organizations, or NGOs (McDonnell 2017).

39. **Regular competency-based in-service training is necessary to ensure that staff skills are continuously upgraded and that staff skills remain relevant and up-to-date.** These competencies would not focus on a candidate's topical knowledge, but rather on broader issues such as leadership, teamwork, and strategic, critical and innovative thinking (Lodge & Hood, 2005). The OECD for example, has identified four necessary skills for civil servants: policy advice, working with citizens, collaboration in networks, and commissioning and contracting. Encompassing these four skillsets are three competencies: strategic thinking, professional expertise, and innovative capabilities (OECD, 2017). The necessary competencies for the FDA will likely differ by unit, and the first stage should be an identification of core competencies for these different units which will then help in the design of a training program.

Stronger management

40. **Undertaking regular and robust performance evaluations is a clear recommendation that emerges from the survey results given its impact on staff motivation and performance.** In Liberia, the Civil Service Agency has rolled out a new Performance Management System (PMS) which aims to stimulate regular monitoring and resolution of staff challenges, with the ultimate objective of shifting civil service culture towards a performance orientation for improved productivity. The performance appraisal tool evaluates staff on personal goals and objectives that are linked to organizational targets, as well as on desirable behaviors. The PMS is currently being implemented in several ministries, accompanied by a training of managers and staff. Given the important impact performance evaluations seem to have on staff motivation and performance, the FDA should participate in the Civil Service Agency's pilot program to benefit from this reform initiative and maximize potential synergies. To be maximally effective, the PMS (a central-level reform program) will need to be customized to the specific context in which the FDA operates, in which a very large proportion of staff are based in remotely located field offices.

41. **Effective performance management will require regular implementation of the PMS, accompanied by a shift from evaluation to coaching and problem-solving.** While the implementation of the PMS will be an important reform, academic research reveals that the effectiveness of performance appraisals is contingent upon the perceived fairness of the process, the quality of the relationship between the manager and employee, and employees' reaction to feedback (Center for Evidence-Based Management 2016, 19). A cross-country survey with 23,000 civil servants from four continents found that for clear impact, performance needs to be evaluated against objectives identified in advance, and performance results need to be perceived to matter for promotions, pay rises, or job stability (Meyer-Sahling, Schuster and Sass Mikkelsen 2018). However, the difficulty of objective measures of performance, and limited opportunities for promotions and pay increases, make effective implementation of performance appraisals in public administrations difficult. In response to this challenge, many OECD countries are shifting the performance conversation from one that evaluates staff, to a two-way conversation in which employees get the direction and developmental opportunities to continually improve performance, while evaluators have the chance to provide timely feedback.

42. **Managers can use a variety of tools beyond performance evaluations and performance conversations to motivate staff.** Evidence from ethnographic studies points to effectiveness of access to training or learning opportunities, a friendly work environment, staff recognition and appreciation, and involvement of staff in decision-making as key motivational devices that managers can use particularly in resource-constrained environments (McDonnell, 2017; World Bank 2019).

43. **Managers will need to be incentivized and mentored to improve management practices.** These incentives can include conditioning managers' own performance evaluations on the regularity and quality of the performance feedback that they provide staff, both through the PMS and, more importantly, through regular performance conversations. Increasingly, managers in OECD countries have a different

performance appraisal system than the rest of the civil service, with an emphasis on their achievement of strategic organizational goals as well as their managerial and leadership skills (Kuperus and Rode 2016). To be effective coaches, managers will need targeted training in assessing employee skills, mastering difficult conversations and giving constructive feedback. For example, in Ireland managers need to undergo 30 hours of training specifically on performance appraisal and, in Canada, managers receive special training on performance management from the Canada School of Public Service. Equally important is mentorship, ideally by high-performing managers in the Liberian public administration (and these can be identified from the FDA and broader Liberia public administration surveys), who can provide hands-on coaching that can potentially have more impact given their embeddedness in the local context.

44. **Organizational management practices like targeting and monitoring also need to be strengthened to complement these personal management improvements.** The survey reveals that better organizational management practices have a strong correlation with improved staff motivation and staff productivity. At the same time, the quality of specific components of management practices, such as targeting, monitoring and performance tracking vary widely across the departments of the FDA. Encouraging the adoption of internal best practices can therefore be a cost-effective way of improving FDA staff motivation and organizational productivity. The FDA's strategic plan has a concrete set of time-bound goals that can be the basis of organizational objectives and goals, which can then be cascaded down to unit level targets that managers can focus on and be held accountable for achieving.

45. **Whistle-blower protection is an essential reform to address staff safety concerns regarding their ability to report on corrupt practices.** While reducing corruption is an institutionally complex reform that requires prevention and enforcement measures that go well beyond the jurisdiction of the FDA, managers can create a culture where staff feel safe to report wrong-doing. The OECD definition of whistle-blower protection is "legal protection from discriminatory or disciplinary action for employees who disclose to the competent authorities in good faith and on reasonable grounds wrongdoing of whatever kind in the context of their workplace" (OECD 2016). A necessary requirement is whistle-blower protection legislation based on internationally accepted principles. In Liberia, a draft whistle-blower protection law has been under debate for several years, yet, according to the government's self-assessment report under the Open Government Partnership, the challenge in implementing the commitment is the lack of political will.⁴ In the meantime, the FDA can implement a protection policy that informs employees about their rights and obligations, establishes a reporting channel (e.g., a complaints portal) that maintains the anonymity of the whistle-blower, and specifies penalties for retaliation against whistle-blowers.

⁴ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/liberia/commitments/LR0019/>

More equitable and transparent pay

46. **A simple pay and grading structure based on clear job profiles will help restore staff confidence and ensure more equitable pay for equal work.** The complexity of the FDA's Personnel Classification and Compensation Plan—with one position for every two employees in the organization—is not based on any clear job evaluation methodology, resulting in some surprising classifications. For instance, rangers, a core technical job, are classified lower than administrative and legal assistants, and among rangers those in the Department of Community Forestry have a lower class and grade than those in the Commercial Forestry and Conservation Departments. It is therefore, not surprising that the staff survey revealed such high levels of dissatisfaction with pay, specifically lack of pay equity and transparency. Restoring staff confidence will require a simplified classification and compensation plan that both reduces the number of job titles and assigns grades based on an established job evaluation methodology.

More cooperation and coordination with key stakeholders

47. **A robust forest governance framework includes mechanisms for stakeholder participation in policy making and implementation.** According to the findings of the staff survey, FDA staff recognize the need to improve interactions between the FDA and local communities. The '9-Step' process, under the Community Rights Law, brings together the FDA and forest communities to foster collaboration on forest management. The use of trained facilitators, particularly sensitive to community interests, helps to develop a relationship of trust between the two major stakeholders. Opportunities for quality interaction are also available through the Community Forest Working Group (CFWG), Community Forestry Development Committee (CFDC), and the Regional Inter Agency Task Forces (RIATs). Ensuring that these platforms are well resourced and managed is integral to their effectiveness.

48. **Improve public access to information.** The FDA has developed protocols and procedures on public access to information. Patterned after the National Freedom of Information Act of 2010, the FDA finalized protocols for public disclosure in 2016 (FDA 2016). The protocols provide user-friendly step by step descriptions of internal and external channels for obtaining information from the FDA. These protocols will improve FDA's credibility and strengthen the level of transparency, accountability, and good governance for the sector. To operationalize public access to information, it is recommended that the FDA establish an adequately resourced unit dedicated to responding to public requests for information, promptly and with clarity. Given the sense of distrust of local communities in the FDA as reported by FDA staff, the establishment of an information desk in *the regional* FDA offices where members of the public may go to request information would be particularly beneficial to strengthen public access to information. Furthermore, the development and implementation of an information management system in consultation with other key stakeholders and according to a clearly agreed upon timetable would help reinforce public trust in the organization's capacity to deliver on its mandate.

Better data, key performance indicators, and staff engagement

49. Better data, both administrative data and staff surveys, is necessary for informed human-resource management practices and broader evidence-based policy making and implementation in the forest sector. Better information systems including the necessary infrastructure and staff capacity is necessary to ensure an effective management of information in the sector. Better data generation, both in terms of accuracy and frequency, backed by reliable information systems are the backbone of effective monitoring and evaluation and, in turn, evidence-based decision making. Furthermore, the FDA staff survey provides a baseline against which the impact of human resource management and other reforms can be measured through follow-on surveys. Surveys should be complemented by administrative data, particularly payroll data, to measure inefficiencies in staffing and inequities and distortions in compensation, and identifying staffing needs and gaps. These data are a vital tool for management for improving internal decision-making, for identifying high-performing and low-performing units, and to help the FDA develop momentum for reforms.

50. These data will enable the FDA to compile and regularly track a set of indicators on public employment and management to assess progress towards institutional strengthening. A proposed set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), measured by payroll data and surveys, is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed KPIs on public employment and management

	Indicators from Staff Surveys	Indicators from Admin. Data
Attractiveness	% applicants/ staff who think that recruitment is based on merit	Vacancy Rate (by grade/type of position) Number, qualification, and scores of applicants to public administration positions Length of time individuals search for public sector jobs (relative to private sector jobs)
Retention	% staff who thinks about leaving the FDA % of staff who think about leaving the public sector	Turnover Rate (disaggregated by key staff categories and positions) Reason for turnover (voluntary versus forced).
Skills	% staff satisfied with the relevance, frequency and targeting of training programs	Number of staff trained

	% of staff who believe they have the right skills for the tasks (technical and non-technical)	The proportion of staff that have the minimum set of qualifications for their job
Quality of management	<p>% staff who believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •managers conduct regular and robust performance evaluations •managers and supervisors try to use the right staff for the right job •their department has a clear set of targets derived from the organization’s goals and objectives •staff perception of percentage of projects successfully executed •their organization has the job–relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals 	<p>Vacancy rate (by grade/type of position); average duration of vacancies</p> <p>Turnover/mobility rate within the public administration</p> <p>Frequency of reorganizations</p>
Motivation	<p>% staff who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •joined FDA to serve Liberia and improve the ecosystem •are satisfied with their experience in public service •Staff perceptions of alignment of FDA mission with their personal motivation •Have motivation levels above that when they joined the FDA 	<p>Public-private wage differential (controlling for worker and job characteristics)</p> <p>Relative wages across FDA occupations (both vertically and horizontally)</p> <p>Relative wages across occupations between FDA and other ministries</p>

51. **Short and regular surveys can also be an effective motivational tool for staff.** An SMS-based short survey, regularly conducted, can be an effective mechanism for engaging staff, eliciting their feedback, and having the type of regular performance dialogue that research reveals as having positive impacts staff motivation. A separate manager-level survey would be helpful to get direct information on the availability of skilled staff and their appropriate deployment, and the effectiveness of the PMS. The public sector in general has not adequately leveraged technology for performance management, but many global private sector companies are increasingly using mobile applications to elicit feedback on staff and manager performance (Ewenstein, Hancock and Komm 2016). These applications are used to gather structured and unstructured real-time feedback from meetings, problem-solving sessions, completed projects, etc. The important point is that this technology-enabled communication should not be about monitoring staff performance, as that can create perverse incentives, but instead be about eliciting staff views on issues and involving them in solving organizational problems.

52. **The FDA staff survey provides granular-level data on existing organizational-level challenges affecting its performance and effectiveness.** Much of the findings highlight challenges relating to the broader human resource management framework and management practices across different units. In order to improve organizational capacity to deliver on its mandate, the FDA would benefit from investing in skills development through targeted training programs of its staff; building staff morale through regular performance evaluations and more equitable compensation schemes as well as more access to adequate resources required for staff to fulfill their tasks effectively; and stronger accountability frameworks through meaningful stakeholder interaction and stronger information management systems to feed into policy decision making and implementation.

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