

# Promoting Sustainable land management for the achievement of Land Degradation Neutrality for Improved Equity, Sustainability, and Resilience in Rice Landscapes of Liberia

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

**FAO** 

# **Basic project information**

GEF ID

11720
Countries

Liberia
Project Name

Promoting Sustainable land management for the achievement of Land Degradation
Neutrality for Improved Equity, Sustainability, and Resilience in Rice Landscapes
of Liberia
Agencies

Date received by PM

9/19/2024

Review completed by PM

9/26/2024

Program Manager

Jean-Marc Sinnassamy

**Focal Area** 

Multi Focal Area

**Project Type** 

**FSP** 

# GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

- 1. General Project Information / Eligibility
- a) Does the project meet the criteria for eligibility for GEF funding?
- b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

- Check the proposed execting partners in the General information table:
- The Letter of Endorsement includes executing partners (Ministry of Agriculture / Central Agricultural Research Institute) that are not in Portal? please ask the Agency to modify the info in Portal to match the info in LoE

General Project information						
Project Title:	Promoting Sustainable land management for the achievement of Land Degradation Neutrality for Improved Equity, Sustainability, and Resilience in Rice Landscapes of Liberia					
Region:	Liberia	GEF Project ID:	11720			
Country(ies):	Liberia	Type of Project:	FSP			
GEF Agency(ies):	FAO	GEF Agency ID:	754252			
Executing Partner:	Environmental Protection Agency	Executing Partner Type:	Government			
GEF Focal Area	Multi Focal Area	Submission Date :	9/18/2024			

Subject: Endorsement for the Project: "Promoting Sustainable Land Management and Climate Resilient Production for the Achievement of Land Degradation Neutrality for Improved Equity, Sustainability, and Resilience in Rice Landscapes of Liberia"

In my capacity as GEF Operational Focal Point for Liberia, I confirm that the above project proposal (a) is in accordance with my government's national priorities, and our commitment to the relevant global environmental conventions; and (b) was discussed with relevant stakeholders, including the global environmental convention focal points.

I am pleased to endorse the preparation of the above project proposal with the support of the GEF Implementing Agencies listed below. If approved, the preparation of the proposal will be supported and executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), under the leadership of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), amongst other partners.

- It is a detail, but the CEO Endorsement request Portal view has different fonts and sizes? please ask the Agency to harmonize.

# Agency's Comments

- 1. The project information table has been updated in the portal.
- 2. As per the revised LoE, two additional executing partners? (government entities) have been included.

#### 2. Project Summary

Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?

Secretariat's Comments
October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

- The summary well describes the problem to be addressed and the proposed pathways to deliver GEBs.
- The summary includes two elements that we cannot find in the result framework:
- \*We can understand the first part of the intention with the support to "sustainably intensify productivity". However, we are not seeing how the project is going to alleviate pressure on high-value forests: basically, the demand of natural resources is increasing, the population is increasing, the forests traditionnally play a role of safety net, and there is no simple correlation that better rice production will mean less pressure on forests (see WB report 2020 on the Forest Sector). Please, clarify, adjust the summary, and reflect the change in the result framework.
- \* We welcome the potential connection of this project with the Guinean Forest IP, the Liberia project, and its Regional Coordination Platform: This connection should also be reported in the result framework, the activities, and later the budget. Please, include this connection (probably in the KM component).

#### Agency's Comments

- 1. Text adjusted in the Summary section and under component 2 in the Results framework.
- 2. KM component outcome 3.1 adjusted to incorporate connection with Guinean Forest IP.

# 3 Indicative Project Overview

- 3.1 a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?
- b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

# Result framework

- Gender aspects are almost absent. It is difficult to figure out how the proposed proportions of women and men will be reached (see CI 11 on beneficiaries). Please,

revise, integrate more gender responsiveness and the specific empowerment of woman organizations and groups, also within the project decision mechanisms,

Gender: Please include in section 9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval: Once the gender analysis has been conducted and the Gender Action Plan developed, the Agency is requested to incorporate the findings to strengthen the reflection of gender perspectives in the project components. The agency is also requested to provide some indicative budget for the Gender Action Plan and related gender-specific activities/outputs.

# Component 1

- We take note of the output 1.1.2 on lessons learned on SLM and LDN. However, it is expected to see at PIF level at least a brief review of lessons and best practices on SLM and especially applicable to rice. Please, complete.
- Output 1.1.3: the formulation is unclear: what do you mean by "developed". Please modify. Clarify the expected result in terms of regulatory and incentive mechanisms.

# Component 2

- Please, clarify the use of GEF resources for the output 2.1.1 (Output 2.1.1: Participatory integrated land management plans (land use plans, forestry / agroforestry management plans, wetland management plans) in the target landscapes (Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Montserrado & Grand Kru) developed). It would be a mistake to have the GEF financing alone all these plans. Please, clarify the baseline situation, eventually the role of cofinancing opportunities, and justify the added value of GEF financed activities.
- We stay dubious with this multiplication of plans. Their interest should be clarified, as well as the experience in terms of application of past and current plans. Please, clarify and correct.
- The main executing partner being the Environmental Protection Agency, please, clarify the role of other institutions in charge of land-use plans, forestry, agriculture, wetland in the design of these plans. The response may be related to the actitvities under the output 1.1.1, but needs to be clarified.

#### Core Indicators

- Please detail the outputs and activities that will lead to 28,000 ha of forests and forested lands restored. These activities are not obvious in the existing result framework. Please, revise.
- We take note of the target of 200,000 ha of production landscapes under 4.3. Please, provide the definition applicable to Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in this project.

- We take note of the carbon gains under the core indicator 6.1 (2,156,250t CO2e).
- o Please include that the calculation is made for a 20-year period in the table and
  - o include the anticipated start year of GHG accounting,
- We take note of the number of beneficiaries (CI 11) with 36,000 female and 24,000 male beneficiaries. However, with the current result framework and gender being mainly included in the component 2 (output 2.1.3) and some outputs (3.1.2), these targets seem difficult to believe. Please, correct the result framework and detail the specific activities that are needed to reach such positive balance for women. See especially outcomes 1.1, 1.2, and outputs 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.1.1. 2.1.2, 3.1.1, 3.1.3.

Kindly consider the proposed changes in the results framework and throughout the component descriptions.

- 1. Gender comments addressed
- 2. Text added under output 1.1.2
- 3. Text in Output 1.1.3 adjusted to ?reviewed and updated? to support LDN
- 4. A text for the context of the plans has been added to Output 2.1.1 for clarity.
- 5. Text adjusted for clarity with the core indicators adjusted based on RF
- 6. Text adjusted and a Table added for clarity
- 3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?

# Secretariat's Comments

- See comments on gender above.
- KM: Please, include the connection with the Guinean IP (GEFID 11142), the Liberia project (GEFID 11144/CI), and the upcoming RCP (GEFID11147).
- M&E Component lacks outputs and outcomes? please, complete.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)						
M&E	Technical Assistance	GET	153,420.00	1,126,630.00		
		Sub Total (\$)	4,870,494.00	35,793,308.00		
Project M	anagement Cost (PMC)	0				
Project M	lanagement Cost (PMC)	<b>0</b> GET	243,525.00	1,789,665.0		
Project M	lanagement Cost (PMC)		243,525.00 243,525.00	1,789,665.0 1,789,665.0		

- Above gender comments has been addressed.
- Connection with the Guinea IP incorporated in both the section on coordination with ongoing initiatives and under KM component.
- M &E component incorporated as component 4 in both the summary table and strategy section.
- 3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?
- b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?
- c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

# Secretariat's Comments

Yes -

In the result framework:

- The proportions of GEF and cofinancing resources to pmc are proportional than the rest of the project (1:7.34).
- PMC are under 5%.

- **4 Project Outline** 
  - A. Project Rationale
  - 4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

- a) is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key contextual drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective?
- b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

Yes

- Further comments might be added when a lisible diagram will be available. Thanks for your understanding.

Agency's Comments- A more visible ToC diagram uploaded.

#### 4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT

- a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?
- b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?
- c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?
- d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

Yes

- The list of stakeholders stay relatively generic, without the names of CSO or private sector for instance. To be clarified.

Agency's Comments1. List of stakeholders has been updated to reflect inclusion of additional stakeholders engaged during and after the PIF pre-inception workshop, with inclusion of CSOs and private sector names

#### 5 B. Project Description

#### **5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE**

- a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?
- b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

- The Theory of Change (diagram) is not readable. Please, correct. Further comments may be provided.
- See the comments on the result framework above, including on gender.

# Agency's Comments

- 1. The theory of Change diagram has been adjusted as attached.
- 2. Addressed

#### 5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING

Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

Yes and no.

- We are seeing the use of GEF resources in the context of SLM and LDN.

- However, and especially for the institutional outputs, the role of baseline and cofinancing is unclear. We are seeing the use of GEF resources, but not in terms of additional funds. Some elements of explanation are lacking, notably related to the numerous plans that are proposed in the result framework. At the end, we expect a lower number of plans.

Agency's Comments- Kindly consider the additional language provided. During the PPG phase an in depth baseline analysis will be undertaken particularly to gather more evidence on plans that the project could benefits for co financing and leverage for additional funds.

#### 5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

- a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?
- b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).
- c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area
- d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments
October 18, 2024

Addressed.

#### **September 26, 2024**

- We understand that the Environmental Protection Agency is the main proposed executing partner. Please, explore if potential partnerships with CSO (academia, NGOs, farmer organizations, especially women) may not help for better execution and integration.
- We take note that the question "Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?", p26, is not responded. Please note that GEF policies, further explained in the Guidelines on Project and Program Cycle, require that ?the separation of implementation functions performed by GEF Agencies and execution functions performed by Project Executing Entities is a key feature of the governance of the GEF Partnership and an important aspect of the GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards.? See <a href="https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF\_Guidelines\_Project\_Program\_Cycle\_Policy\_20200731.pdf">https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF\_Guidelines\_Project\_Program\_Cycle\_Policy\_20200731.pdf</a>. (pages 44-45)

- At PIF stage, Agency (?dual?) execution should not be included in the Agency's proposal. Once the Agency has sufficiently progressed in project preparation and if it anticipates a need for Agency execution, the Agency would submit full information and justification for a request for policy exception.
- The coordination with the CFB IP/Guinean Forests IP is mentioned in the PIF summary, but not reflected in the chapter about coordination and either in the result framework in the KM part. Please, translate the intention from the summary in the rest of the PIF.

- 1. Several of CSOs and NGOs, such as the Society for Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) and the Foundation for Community Initiative (FCI), have been included in the updated stakeholder list. These organizations have been pre-identified as potential stakeholders that could take on execution roles through subcontracting partnerships with the EPA.
- 2. GEF agency (FAO) would not be playing an execution role in this project
- 3. Incorporated in both the section on coordination with on-going initiatives and in the KM component 3.

?

- 5.4 a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?
- b) Are the project?s indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

#### **September 26, 2024**

- Please, check the comments on the targets under the Core Indicators in the item related to the result framework.

Agency's Comments1. Addressed.

5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

#### Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKs

- a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category?
- b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?
- c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately screened and rated at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat's CommentsYes

Agency's Comments

5.7 Qualitative assessment

- a) Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?
- b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?
- c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

**September 26, 2024** 

- This project builds on the LDN targets and SLM on ricefields and include elements of integration, durability, and transformation, with a high potential for scaling-up.
- Clarifications are needed about the national anchorage to see if progress can be made in terms of policy coherence (see comments on the 2022-2028 National Rice Development Strategy of Liberia, NRDS, and the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan, LASIP-II.

Agency's Comments

1. Yes

- 2. Text adjusted and aligned with the current ?LIBERIANS FEED YOURSELVES AGENDA? National Agriculture Development Plan (NADP) 2024-2030
- 6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities
  - 6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?

Secretariat's Comments

Yes.

- The project is mainly designed under the LD1 Objective on SLM, with some elements of LDN.

Cleared.

# Agency's Comments

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)

Secretariat's Comments
October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

- The project is anchored in the LDN targets and mentions the NAP 2020-2030
- Please, confirm this project is well aligned to the 2022-2028 National Rice Development Strategy of Liberia (NRDS) and the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan II (LASIP-II).
- We would like to see a rapid assessment of lessons and best practices of ricefield projects in Liberia, as the Community of Hope Agriculture Project (CHAP) working on Climate Resilient Rice Production and System of Rice Intensification (SRI), in view of boosting lowland rivce production across the country in the lowland and improving livelihood of smallholder farmers. Moreover, some regions are the same Nimba, Lofa, and Bong.

- This is confirmed, the project aligns well with NRDS and LASIP-II
- This is well noted for the PPG phase
- 6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat's CommentsNA - except if some aspects of High Value Forest Ecosystem conservation is included in the project (as written in the summary).

Agency's CommentsNo aspects directly included in the project 7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's CommentsYes

Agency's Comments

7.2 Is a list of stakeholders consulted during PIF development, including dates of these consultations, provided?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# September 26, 2024

- Yes, however, the list of stakeholders is relatively generic, especially about NGOs and the private sector.
- To reinforce the conservation aspects of this project that are currently not fully obvious, we recommending consulting with Conservation of Nature Of Liberia (SCNL). They are very knowledgeable and responsive and may surely contribute to complete the picture of rice culture and forest conservation in Liberia.

- List of stakeholders updated to provide specific names of potential NGOs and private sectors identified and consulted during and after the PIF pre-inception workshop, this includes Society for Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)
- During the PPG phase, SCNL and more stakeholders will be further engaged specific roles of stakeholders, particularly CSOs and private sector actors, will be further clarified, leveraging their existing presence and areas of comparative advantage to enhance partnerships.

#### 8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

8.1 Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments
October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

- Yes, we understand that this concept is financed by LD, BD, and CCM allocations, as it should be reflected in the (revised) LoE.
- However, for the sake of simplicity and integration, the project has been conceived as a LD project, developed mainly under the LD1 Objective on SLM and reporting on GEBs compatible with this objective. This point needs to be reflected in the table ?Indicative Focal Area Elements?, with a single line reporting to the LD1. Please, correct.

Agency's Comments- Done. This has been updated accordingly in the "indicative focal area elements"

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's CommentsYes

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's CommentsNA Agency's Comments SCCF A (SIDS)? Secretariat's CommentsNA Agency's Comments SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)? Secretariat's CommentsNA Agency's Comments Focal Area Set Aside? Secretariat's CommentsNA Agency's Comments 8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated? Secretariat's CommentsYes

8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately

documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

Addressed.

# **September 26, 2024**

- Public investment is investment mobilized normally. Please request the agency to revise the ?recurrent expenditures? to ?investment mobilized? where ?type of co-financing? is indicated as ?public investment?.
- ?In-kind? is ?recurrent expenditures? normally. Please request the agency to revise the ?investment mobilized? to ?recurrent expenditures? where ?type of co-financing? is indicated as ?in-kind?.
- At PIF level, in general in-kind cofinancing is not/cannot be considered as investment mobilized (and in general is considered as recurrent expenditure). Please correct the characterization of in-kind cofinancing from Arcelor Mittal Liberia.

Private Sector Arcelor Mittal Liberia In-kind Investment mobilized

- The cofinancing needs to be confirmed at CEO endorsement.

# Agency's Comments

- 1. Updated in the portal
- 2. Updated in the portal
- 3. Updated in the portal
- 4. Noted

**Annex B: Endorsements** 

8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country?s(ies) GEF OFP and has the OFP at the time of PIF submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?

Secretariat's CommentsYes, the project has been endorsed by the GEF OFP.

Agency's Comments

Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?

Secretariat's CommentsYes.

Agency's Comments

Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?

Secretariat's Comments
October 18, 2024

Addressed.

**September 26, 2024** 

No.

- The template is not correct with several issues:

o The template utilized for this project removed the footnote that conditions the selection of the executing partner to the following: ?Subject to the capacity assessment carried out by the GEF Implementing Agency, as appropriate?. In view of this work program, GEF Agencies were informed that LoEs ?with modifications cannot be accepted and will be returned?. While the removal of the footnote seems to be trivial, it is not: this footnote reduces the chances of having an executing partner that does not meet the fiduciary and procurement standards required to safely execute the project.

o There is a breakdown of resources, but the name of focal areas is missing (Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Change Mitigation).

o In addition, the Agency and the Trust Fund information is also missing.

A new LoE is required fixing the above problems. We will review the financial information in all tables per the resubmission and provide comments as appropriate.

As mentioned in the first item of this review, the list of executing partners in the letter (Ministry of Agriculture / Central Agricultural Research Institute) should be reflected in the Portal General Project Information Table.

Please, revise.

- Revised LoE that addressed all comments has been uploaded
- Executing partners indicated in the LoE updated in the portal

8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?
Secretariat's CommentsNA
Agency's Comments Annex C: Project Location
8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project?s intended location?
Secretariat's CommentsYes
Agency's Comments
Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating
8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?
Secretariat's CommentsYes
Agency's Comments
Annex E: Rio Markers
8.8 Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?
Secretariat's CommentsYes
Agency's Comments
Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet
8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's CommentsYes

Agency's Comments

**Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes** 

8.10 Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. Is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

9.1 Is the PIF and PPG (if requested) recommended for technical clearance?

Secretariat's Comments

October 18, 2024

All comments are addressed. The PIF is recommended for technical clearance.

**September 26, 2024** 

The PIF cannot be recommended yet. Please, address the comments above.

Agency's Comments- All comments addressed

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/Approval

Secretariat's Comments

- Confirm partnerships with institutions and CSOs.

- Confirm cofinancing.
- Confirm the targets under the Core Indicators.
- Confirm implementation arrangements.

# **Review Dates**

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	9/26/2024	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/18/2024	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		