



Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural and Rural Entrepreneurship in Democratic Republic of Congo (AVENIR)

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11883

Countries

Congo DR

Project Name

Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural and Rural Entrepreneurship in Democratic Republic of Congo (AVENIR)

Agencies

IFAD

Date received by PM

3/5/2025

Review completed by PM

4/3/2025

Program Manager

Jason Spensley

Focal Area

Climate Change

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

March 21, 2025:

Cleared. Well noted with thanks. In the future, please highlight all new text in the PIF

March 9, 2025:

A) In the second sentence of the PIF, what climate scenario is this referring to: "Projected effects of climate change in the DRC include a temperature increase of 1?2.5?C by 2050, an increase in the frequency of intense rainfall events and prolonged dry spells, and possible decreases in rainfall during the dry seasons (June-August, and September-November) in the southern region of the country by 2050." We assume this is an optimistic scenario. Given uncertainty, please also provide a range, including an optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, with the anticipation that the project

will drive for adaption within this range. Ideally, to the extent information can be found, please refer to RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 looking 30 years ahead.

B) This comment is also relevant for the reference to expected changes in precipitation.

Agency's Comments

The comment is well noted, and as recommended, alternative information has been provided highlighting RCP8.5 and RCP4.5 scenarios for both temperature and precipitation (pp 3 and 15).

27/03/2025

Noted. Additional text now highlighted.

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

March 21, 2025:

Cleared.

March 9, 2025:

A) Consistent with the comments on the project summary section, please strengthen the articulation currently in the PIF on the climate adaptation rationale by articulating a plausible range of climate hazards based on optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, preferably RCP 4.5 and 8.5 to 2050 or 30 years out. Importantly, please also ensure the project interventions are directly and explicitly designed to address the current and anticipated impacts of those climate hazards, and more explicitly articulate these linkages between the climate problem and the project solutions to that climate problem.

Agency's Comments

The comment is well noted, and in response a table (Table of RCP4.5 and RCP8.5 Scenarios in DRC) at the beginning of Section B has been included. Also, info has been added to highlight the adaptation rationale, consistent with what the project is proposing to address impacts of climate change (p15). The info provided could be further improved at PPG.

3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?

Secretariat's Comments

March 28, 2025:

Cleared

March 25, 2025:

There are relevant gender dimensions in Outputs 1.1.4, all outputs under Outcome 2. and Output 3.2.4. Please revise to capture gender perspectives. On Output 3.2.2, please ensure that knowledge produced on lessons learned and best practice capture results and advances on gender equality and women's empowerment.

March 9, 2025:

A) How will this project overcome the challenges of small holder farmers and SMEs limited access to capital, and the high cost of capital when they can access it, which is crucial for them to purchase the inputs needs to transition to climate resilience practices particulate in components 1 and 2? For example, how will the project partner with microfinance institutions for their development of lending products and insurance focused on climate adaptation and resilience solutions, as accessible terms? Please consider a robust strategy and corresponding budget of incentivizing and de-risking Microfinance institutions (MFIs) of different types to create lines of credit focused on climate adaptation solutions, as well as providing technical assistance to increase financial inclusion and microlending by the local organizations and MFIs in the project target areas.

B) Please ensure that any technical assistance provided to farmers and MSMEs is accompanied by strategies to improve their financial inclusion and access to capital and fair terms. In doing so, please endeavor to learn from other GEF projects focused on microfinance, including GEF ID 11901 (Global Microfinance Initiative) supported through the GEF SGP competitive window on microfinance and GEF ID 10497 (AGRI3).

Agency's Comments

The comments are noted, please see clarification on small holder farmers and SMEs limited access to capital on pg.23-24.

March 26, 2025

The comment is well noted, and as suggested, gender dimensions are reflected in the outputs, and additional info provided under brief component descriptions in the document (p.22, p.23, p.24 and p.25).

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

March 21, 2025:

Cleared.

March 9, 2025:

Please see the comments below on climate adaptation rationale.

Agency's CommentsThe comments are noted, please see responses provided below.

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

March 21, 2025:

Cleared.

March 9, 2025:

A) Please see the comments above on climate adaptation rationale.

B) Please provide a description of coordination and cooperation with the several ongoing initiatives in the area of agricultural development, entrepreneurship, and climate adaptation in the target areas.

Agency's Comments

The two comments are noted with thanks. With regards to A), please refer to the response provided above under 3.1.

With regards to B), as recommended by the reviewer, a sub-section, 'coordination and cooperation with other initiatives' has been added under the list of ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF) (p.27).

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

March 21, 2025:

Cleared.

March 9, 2025:

Please clarify these institutional management and coordination aspects of the project.

Agency's Comments The comment are noted, please see clarification on the institutional management and coordination on pg.31

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

April 2, 2025:

Cleared

March 28, 2025:

As per the same comment provided on March 21, please provide an ambitious indicative impact level for core indicator 5 (it is currently zero) of " Number of private sector enterprises engaged in climate change adaptation and resilience"

March 21, 2025:

B) 4,000 hectares seems very low, especially considering 200,000 beneficiaries. This would be 50 beneficiaries for each hectare, for a project that has a focus on agriculture. This logic on numbers seems off. Please increase the hectares.

C) Please include an ambitious target for core indicator 5 on private sector, recognizing a broad understanding of private sector.

March 9, 2025:

A) The number of direct beneficiaries is low. Please increase to a more ambitious target.

B) The number of hectares is indicated as 4,000.000.00. Please confirm if this is meant to be 4 million, 4 thousand, or something else.

C) Please include an ambitious target for core indicator 5 on private sector, recognizing a broad understanding of private sector.

Agency's Comments

Comment A is well noted ? the estimate was informed partly by other similar GEF-funded projects in DRC (notably ECORELEM which has 150,000 as number to of direct beneficiaries). The cost of business in DRC is very high, and therefore the provided estimate is about right, learning from other projects. Nonetheless, the number has been raised to 200,000 from 180,000 to be confirmed at PPG.

With regards to comment C, the number of hectares is 4,000 (four thousand hectares). Again, this takes into account the cost of doing business in DRC and the average size of land per household in the target regions.

March 26, 2025

Comment B is noted, and in response, the target has been increased to 10,000 ha ? this proposed figure will be confirmed at PIF after baseline studies and stakeholder consultations.

As per reviewer's recommendation, core indicator 5 has been included in the project submission portal.

April 4, 2025

Apologies for oversight, core indicator 5 has now been reported on.

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

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

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 Comments

March 21, 2025:

Cleared.

March 9, 2025:

In the Risks section and/or elsewhere in the PIF, please expand on the common challenges with project governance and execution in the country, and how this project will avoid the pitfalls encountered by other projects.

Agency's CommentsThe comment is well noted, and additional information has been provided on pg. 11-12 ? following the eruption of conflict in the Eastern parts of the country, the information will be reviewed at PPG considering the evolution of security in the country.

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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 Comments

Agency's Comments

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 28, 2025:

Cleared

March 25, 2025:

Considering the uncertainty around the evolution of conflict in eastern DRC and conflicts among diverse stakeholder groups, the project should provide a more detailed strategy/approach in terms of stakeholder consultations and engagement in project development. Moreover, the picture and signatures provided as summary and list of names and dates of consultations are not sufficient. It looks like some effort has been made to do so, but this information is placed in a different section and is also unreadable. Please provide a complete list of all stakeholders (and their affiliations) consulted in project design, including also their interest and agency plans to engage and consult these as part of project development in section on stakeholder engagement.

March 9, 2025:

Please provide a list of all stakeholder organizations consulted during PIF development, including dates.

Agency's Comments

The comment has been noted with thanks. As recommended, a table, "Table of stakeholders" for a list of stakeholder organizations consulted at PIF development has been included together with dates (p41).

March 26, 2025

As recommended, a column has been added to the table on pg.44 indicating the role of the stakeholder in the project. A text has also been added to highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement in the project. Attendance lists have also been added (pg. 42-43). Additional information will be provided at PPG.

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's Comments

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments

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 Comments

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

March 21, 2025:

We note that co-finance levels will be increased during project preparation.

March 9, 2025:

The scale of co-finance is limited. We also note there are only two sources of co-finance currently indicated. Please seek to increase the scale and number of sources of co-finance.

Agency's Comments

It wasn't possible to increase the cofinancing amount, additional cofinancing amount will be explored during the PPG.

March 26, 2025

Efforts will continue to look for additional co-financing for the project.

Annex B: Endorsements

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 7, 2025:

Cleared

April 6, 2025

On the letter of Endorsement: the project title in the portal is different than in the LoE. Please obtain a new LoE *or* to correct the title in the portal to match that in the LoE.

Agency's Comments

April 7, 2025

Title in portal corrected to match LoE title.

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 9, 2025:

Yes

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

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

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 CommentsN/A

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 Comments

March 21, 2025:

Cleared

March 9, 2025:

A map is provided, but we cannot locate the georeferenced data in the PIF document. Please address.

Agency's CommentsThe comment is noted, and in response, a table below the map has been added with georeferenced data for the target provinces (p.46). Once territories within these provinces are confirmed at PPG, the georeferenced data will be updated.

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 Comments

March 28, 2025:

Cleared

15 March 2025:

We note that the IFAD attached the Environmental and Social Risk Screening Checklist and the Project's environmental and social risk is classified as moderate. The project recognizes high risk related to persistent conflicts and the presence of multiple guerilla groups, security concerns, political and institutional instability, corruption, and complex institutional framework. However, the Environmental and Social Risk Screening Checklist failed to recognize risks related to these, particularly for the indigenous peoples and local communities, displaced populations, women, youth and other vulnerable populations engaged in the project including gender-based violence.

Please elaborate further conflict related risks particularly for the most vulnerable populations, and provide a plan for further assessment, consultation, and development of environmental and social risk management plan during the PPG.

Please also elaborate further about potential risk to impact natural resource use of indigenous peoples and provide plan to ensure Free, Prior and Informed Consent with indigenous peoples during the PPG.

Agency's Comments

March 27, 2025

The comment is appreciated, and in response, we would like to mention that while the conflicts persist in the country, these conflicts are not active across the entire country. That is, the conflicts are essentially in the eastern part of the country, and the project intervention provinces are far from the conflict hotspot area. Nonetheless, though in the target provinces, there are no active conflicts led by multiple guerrilla groups, ripple effects of these conflicts cannot be downplayed, and a good understanding will be required. Thus, the technical design team will pay special attention to the evolution of the conflict, and a better picture will be captured during PPG to inform recommendations for further assessments, consultations and development of environmental and social risk management plan (pg.36). The recommendation to elaborate further about potential risk to impact natural resource use of indigenous peoples and provide plan to ensure Free, Prior and Informed Consent with indigenous peoples during the PPG is well noted.

Annex E: Rio Markers

8.8 Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat's Comments

March 9, 2025:

Yes

Agency's Comments

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

March 9, 2025:

Yes

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 CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 7, 2025:

Technically cleared, pending OP clearance.

April 6, 2025:

A final issue has to be addressed on the title in the PIF not matching the title in the LOE.

March 28, 2025:

Responses to comments on indicators still need to be addressed.

March 25, 2025:

Responses to comments are required still required to be addressed.

March 9, 2025:

Comments need to be addressed.

Agency's Comments

March 27, 2025

With thanks for the reviewer's comments, reasonable efforts have been made with the available information to respond to the comments, acknowledging that some comments will be better responded to during PPG.

April 4, 2025

Apologies for oversight, this has now been addressed.

April 7, 2025

Title in Portal corrected to match LoE title.

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 25, 2025:

1) Please ensure to include relevant gender-specific indicators in the RF.

2) In the development of the Gender Action Plan, please include specific budget lines, as appropriate and plans for monitoring and reporting on the GAP. Under M&E, please reflect

that reports submitted (MTR and TE) include gender-specific results and progress in the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

3) We note that co-finance levels will be increased during project preparation.

4) Please elaborate further conflict related risks particularly for the most vulnerable populations, and provide a plan for further assessment, consultation, and development of environmental and social risk management plan during the PPG.

5) Please also elaborate further about potential risk to impact natural resource use of indigenous peoples and provide plan to ensure Free, Prior and Informed Consent with indigenous peoples during the PPG.

Agency's Comments Comments related to gender-specific indicators in the RF, budget for the GAP, MTR and TE under M&E, and co-finance amounts are well noted, and will be considered at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	3/9/2025	3/21/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	3/21/2025	3/28/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	3/25/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)	3/28/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/2/2025	