GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title	
Land Degradation Neutrality for Increased Resilience to Climate Change in Dominican Republic	
Region	GEF Project ID
Dominican Republic	11402
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Dominican Republic	FSP
GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency ID
FAO	748199
Executing Partner	Executing Partner Type
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Government
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	10/18/2023
Project Sector (CCM Only)	
Taxonomy	
SIDS : Small Island Dev States, International Waters, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Land Degradation Neutrality, Focal Areas, Small Island Developing States, Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Change	
Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
MTF	60
GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
4,416,212.00	0.00
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)
419,538.00	0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
4,835,750.00	15,156,920.00
PPG Amount: (e)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)
150,000.00	14,250.00
PPG total amount: (e+f)	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)
164,250.00	5,000,000.00
Project Tags	
CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No	

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B “project description”.(max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The Dominican Republic (DR) faces significant climate change-induced threats like sea-level rise, storm surges, flooding, and saltwater intrusion, which further intensify land degradation and disrupt livelihoods. Climate projections for the DR include the modification of rainfall patterns in the country, reductions in annual precipitation accumulations and severe droughts, especially in areas located leeward to the main mountain chains, typically characterized by drier climates. The changing climate will significantly affect various sectors, including crop zones, reduced water resources municipal management challenges, increased infrastructure damage, and growing economic pressures

The Dominican Republic's food security relies to a large extent on external markets. High import and export costs, along with irregular trade flows, worsen the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these vulnerabilities. To enhance food security there are several critical challenges, including low agricultural productivity, limited access to formal credit, small-scale production, inadequate value addition, and vulnerability to natural disasters. These challenges are compounded by limited institutional capacity, including a lack of sufficient and accurate spatial information on land resources, governance gaps, scarce financial resources for wide adoption of sustainable practices and a fragmented institutional environment for soil and land management. The continuity of business-as-usual practices will result in increased land, water, and biodiversity degradation, with uncoordinated responses between and within scales that lack an integrated and strategic landscape view and perpetuate a high degree of exposure and vulnerability to shocks.

The proposed project is designed to leverage funds for transformational adaptation in the Dominican Republic towards the synergic achievement of LDN and climate goals on adaptation through: i) enhanced policy coherence and LDN mainstreaming (Outcome 1.1); ii) knowledge exchange and multi-stakeholder and multiscale collaborations within the national institutional framework, as well as with the wider regional setting (Outcomes 1.1 and 4.1); reinforced governance through improved planning instruments and decision-making processes (Outcome 1.1); increased capacity of communities for SLM adoption towards LDN and climate resilience and related behavioral change (Outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 3.2 and 3.4).

Since the project will target lands currently showing degradation trends or suboptimal land use, the activities under components 2 and 3, will, simultaneously advance towards LDN, produce additional Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) in the form of GHG emissions avoided, biodiversity enhanced, and hectares of land with improved ecosystem services and subsequent reduced food security and sustainable development. Specifically, the project is expected to support the development of land use management plans for two basins, the restoration of 1,960 ha of forest lands, the improved management of 15,700 ha of productive landscapes, 113,346 ha of area of land managed according to climate resilience´s practices. The project will directly benefit 19,732 people with land use planning activities and early warning systems and 1,500 farmers in the country with trainings.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

To enhance climate resilience, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and achieve land degradation neutrality through effective adaptation strategies and sustainable development in alignment with the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the national LDN Targets

Project Components

1. Strengthening the enabling environment for informed and integrated land use planning to achieve land degradation neutrality and climate change adaptation

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
680,540.00	1,012,816.00

Outcome:

1.1. Strong enabling environment that aligns with the NAP to support better decision-making for achieving land degradation neutrality and climate change adaptation

Indicators:

- Number of institutions (by type) actively participating in integrated land use planning, consistent with the NAP

- Relevant data into decision making and territorial planning across different spatial scales

- Enhanced capacity of key stakeholders to monitor LDN and climate resilience

Output:

1.1.1. Interdisciplinary, interinstitutional, and intersectoral alliances are strengthened to ensure the sustainable management and protection of natural resources.

1.1.2. National Soil Information System developed integrated into the National Environmental Information System and linked to the Caribbean Soil Information System.

1.1.3. Spatially explicit Decision Support System (DSS) codeveloped with national stakeholders, integrating land degradation, soil properties and climate change indicators, in alignment with NAP priorities.

1.1.4. Technical capacity development program, incorporating a gender transformative approach for LDN and CCA designed and implemented, based on a gap analysis, and including the use of DSS for land use planning and LDN.

1.1.5. Facilitate the development of land use plans for the target watersheds and at least two municipalities, enhancing decision-making and planning in line with NAP strategies

1.

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	SCCF-A
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)

70,250.00	104,549.00

Outcome:

SCCF2: 113,346 Ha Area of land managed according to climate resilience´s practices, as specified in the NAP

SCCF3: Number of plans developed to strengthen climate adaptation in alignment with NAP strategies, with a target of 2 plans

Output:

2. Improving the resilience of ecosystems and communities in 2 prioritized watersheds through sustainable and inclusive land management in productive areas and land restoration in target ecosystems

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
865,542.00	2,274,747.00

Outcome:

2.1. Land is sustainably managed, degradation is reduced, and productivity stabilized or increased, depending on the production systems in the two priority watersheds in accordance with the NAP

Indicators:

- CI3: 1,960 Ha of forest land restored in line with NAP objectives

- CI4: 15,700 Ha and productive landscape under improved management (950 hectares of agroforestry and 100 hectares of silvopastoral systems) as specified in the NAP

- CI6: GHG emissions reduced in the productive landscape of the river basins as targeted in the NAP

Output:

2.1.1. Priority areas for SLM/SSM and restoration identified through participatory and gender transformative approaches

2.1.2. Best climate smart SLM practices and technologies identified and made available to farmers and local communities for addressing land degradation

2.1.3. Technical assistance and rural advisory services strengthened to support the achievement of global environmental benefits

2.1.4. Priority steep lands in the upper basins are restored with native and/or endemic species, incorporating payment for environmental services and the land redistribution model, and under sustainable soil management

2.1.5. Sustainable soil and land management practices implemented in the target basins, including agroforestry and silvopasture systems

2.1.6. Community surveillance and wildfire protection systems strengthened and adapted to site specific conditions

2.

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	SCCF-A
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
1,668,419.00	4,384,810.00

Outcome:

2.2. Farming communities are more resilient to drought and flood through sustainable and inclusive land management, including soil re-carbonization as per NAP priorities

Indicators:

- Ha of soils with improved soil water infiltration and water holding capacity as aligned with NAP guidelines

-Number of communities that adopt and implement drought and flood risk reduction strategies

-Number of communities covered by the Early Warning System

Percent reduction in disaster-related losses in targeted communities due to the Early Warning System

-SCCF4: 1500 beneficiaries in total, in which 150 are direct beneficiaries from training (soil doctors) and 1350 are other farmers served by the soil doctors. (at least 20% of each group of beneficiaries are women)-CI6: tons of CO2 sequestered

Output:

2.2.1. Measures implemented for reducing drought and flood risk and increasing resilience against climate impacts through green water buildup

2.2.2. Measures implemented to enhance community scale drought and flood preparedness

2.2.3. Establish an Early Warning System for drought and flood resilience in alignment with NAP goals

3. Promotion of entrepreneurship sustainable livelihood development

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
35,124.00	298,646.00

Outcome:

3.1. Mobilize funds through project mechanisms and integrate sustainable finance options in alignment with the NAP for target area

Indicators:

-Amount of funds mobilized through project mechanisms

3.2. Improve value chains, including product differentiation to improve market access, and align enterprise management capacity with NAP goals

Indicators:

-Number of new enterprises created that survive the first year of operation

-Amount of funds mobilized by female-led and youth-led enterprises

Output:

3.1.1. Access to sustainable finance improved for beneficiaries in target areas

3.1.2. Value chains improved, including product differentiation to improve market access

3.2.1. Capacity building program implemented for local businesses to improve their operations.

3.2.2. Investments in agriculture diversification, value chain improvement and gender-sensitive alternative livelihood initiatives piloted.

3.

Component Type	Trust Fund
	SCCF-A
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
738,515.00	5,779,353.00

Outcome:

Output:

4. Knowledge management

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
70,249.00	80,000.00

Outcome:

4.1. Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to enhance project results.

Indicator:

-Percent of the communication and KM strategies that is completed during the project life

Output:

4.1.1. Roadmap for integrated land use planning and implementation

4.1.2. Knowledge management plan developed and implemented, including South-South cooperation activities with SOILCARE, Joint training initiatives with other LDN projects in the region, Soil Doctors for Kid

4.1.3. Communication strategy developed and under implementation

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
30,912.00	

Outcome:

M&E System supports results-based management

Output:

ME1. Data for project indicators collected (at least) on an annual basis.

ME2. Gender-sensitive and responsive Annual Project Implementation Reports (PIR), Project Mid-Term and Final Evaluations submitted to GEFSEC in a timely manner.

ME3. Gender Action Plan developed and implemented.

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	SCCF-A
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
46,365.00	500,000.00

Outcome:

SCCF Cost sharing and reporting on M&E

Output:

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)

1. Strengthening the enabling environment for informed and integrated land use planning to achieve land degradation neutrality and climate change adaptation	680,540.00	1,012,816.00
1.	70,250.00	104,549.00
2. Improving the resilience of ecosystems and communities in 2 prioritized watersheds through sustainable and inclusive land management in productive areas and land restoration in target ecosystems	865,542.00	2,274,747.00
2.	1,668,419.00	4,384,810.00
3. Promotion of entrepreneurship sustainable livelihood development	35,124.00	298,646.00
3.	738,515.00	5,779,353.00
4. Knowledge management	70,249.00	80,000.00
M&E	30,912.00	
M&E	46,365.00	500,000.00
Subtotal	**4,205,916.00**	**14,434,921.00**
Project Management Cost	84,118.00	288,797.00
Project Management Cost	126,178.00	433,202.00
Total Project Cost ($)	**4,416,212.00**	**15,156,920.00**

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

1. The Dominican Republic is a Small Island Developing State of nearly 11 million people, with approximately two-thirds of its residents under the age of 34. Urbanisation is steadily increasing, with 82.5% of the population residing in urban areas, a proportion expected to reach 92% by 2050. Despite being classified as a high-middle-income country with one of the most dynamic economies in Latin America and the Caribbean, official figures show that poverty stood at about 23.9% in 2021, affecting over 300,000 individuals.

2. Over 40 percent of Dominicans live in precarious circumstances, making them vulnerable to climate-related events and economic downturns. Women face heightened vulnerability, characterised by limited access to resources and employment opportunities They also confront increased risk from disasters. Women are disproportionately affected by various shocks, given higher economic stress, additional caregiving responsibilities, disrupted family structures, increased domestic violence, heightened migration, limited control over resources such as property and land, and reduced participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, female-headed households constitute 40 percent of all households in the DR and experience disproportionately higher poverty rates. Poverty impacts women to a greater extent, and rural areas exhibit higher poverty rates compared to urban regions[1]1.

3. About 92% of the country's economic production and 97% of its population are in areas vulnerable to two or more types of threats. The agri-food sector[2]2 that is critical for the country’s resilience and food safety, is highly dependent on natural resources and ecosystem services, from coffee farms high in the mountains to fishing communities along the coasts. The primary agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fisheries sectors contribute about five percent of GDP, and grow about 4 percent annually, while agroindustry contributes an additional 11 percent annually. The sector engages 9% of the country's labor force, comprising 364,302 individuals, with 30,157 being female workers. Traditional agriculture has been in decline since the 1980s, with small-scale farmers facing challenges in increasing production and income. Lack of access to financial resources and technology adoption, as well as vulnerability to natural disasters, are key issues. However, the Dominican Republic has emerged as an exporter of fair trade, organic, and high-quality agricultural products, with a substantial organic farming sector.

4. Human and economic development are thus hampered by environmental degradation and the occurrence of disasters related to climate change. In particular, land and soil degradation are critical environmental issues faced by the RD and are among the country's top environmental priorities.

Climate change

5. Climate variability and change is one of the greatest challenges for Small Islands Development States (SIDS), which are increasingly affected by multiple hazards including sea level rise, drought, and flooding events, according to the report Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Dominican Republic, as a SIDS, has barely contributed, by 0.08%, to greenhouse gases, although it will be one of the most impacted in the world. In that sense,

Dominican Republic is among the first 15 most vulnerable countries in the world, , making the island at the frontline of severe climate impacts. The country is already experiencing the impacts and effects of a drastically changing climate, including most intense tropical cyclones, storm surges, droughts, changing precipitation patterns, sea-level rise, coral bleaching, and invasive species, all of which are already detectable across both natural and human systems[3]3. That is, DR is struggling to escape poverty just as climate change accelerates the degradation of the natural resources that underpin their economies. Therefore, to address these challenges, this project is going to place a strong emphasis on climate change adaptation, as a fundamental component of sustainable development and resilience, and alongside its primary focus on combating land degradation. Also, including early warning systems and preparedness measures are integral to safeguarding the well-being of the population and reducing the societal impacts of climate-induced disasters by enhancing farmers and other value chain actors' capacity to make climate-informed decisions in agriculture.

6. Climate projections for the Dominican Republic depict different future scenarios depending on different global GHG emission patterns [4]4[5]5[6]6. Two different scenarios are of particular relevance: one (RCP4.5) envisions shifts in the onset and offset of the dry season, decreased annual precipitation, and the likelihood of severe droughts, especially in leeward areas, typically characterised by drier climates. The other scenario (RCP8.5) points to significant temperature increases across all timeframes up to 2100, particularly affecting minimum temperatures and the winter season. These scenarios form the basis for planning climate adaptation strategies within the context of this project.

7. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP 2015-2030) of the Dominican Republic underscores the pivotal role of effective territorial arrangement and sustainable agricultural practices in enhancing climate adaptation efforts. As a nation highly susceptible to climate variability and change impacts, RD recognizes that the strategic organisation of land use and the promotion of resilient agricultural systems are paramount to building climate resilience. The NAP highlights the need to perform sectoral analysis of both climate variability (e.g., El Nino) and change impacts on key sectors such as agriculture, in order to design tailored climate adaptation measures at both policy and field levels. This must be supported by strengthening meteorological stations' spatial-temporal coverage and capacity to collect, process, climate data, particularly through digitalization of registries and improving data (from historical climate information to climate impact assessments) exchange platforms from regional to international levels. Furthermore, the NAP places significant emphasis on aligning land use planning with climate adaptation objectives to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance the overall adaptive capacity of the country. It emphasises that sustainable and resilient agriculture practices, in particular, are vital components of climate adaptation, as they bolster food security, reduce the risks associated with extreme weather events, and contribute to long-term climate resilience. This holistic approach, as articulated in the NAP, not only safeguards the environment but also ensures the well-being of local communities and their livelihoods, further reinforcing the urgent need for climate-resilient land and agricultural management.

8. As outlined in the Dominican Republic's National Determined Contribution (NDC) for 2020[7]7, the country has identified several key priorities in the realm of adaptation to climate change. These priorities emphasise the urgent need to strengthen the nation's resilience to climate impacts, reduce vulnerability, and foster sustainable development. One of the paramount concerns is enhancing adaptive capacity in the face of

rising maximum and minimum surface temperatures and increased drought and flooding events. This includes improving disaster risk management and developing effective strategies for coping with extreme weather events, particularly given the country's vulnerability to hurricanes. Additionally, the NDC underscores the importance of safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity, recognizing their role in providing essential services and supporting local livelihoods. The document also underscores the need to bolster the agriculture sector's resilience, given its significance in the national economy. Furthermore, the NDC highlights the importance of integrating climate adaptation considerations into national and local policies, ensuring that they align with broader development objectives.

9. Gender inequalities are moderate/high in Dominican Republic as demonstrated by a Gender Inequality Index of 0.42, where 0 indicates that women and men fare equally, and 1 indicates that one gender fares as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions of reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market[8][8]. As of 2018, it is the 4th country with higher inequality in Latin America and Caribbean, after Haiti, Panama, and Guatemala. The Second Gender Action Plan on Climate Change in the Dominican Republic (PAGCC-RD)[9][9] represented a significant milestone in addressing gender disparities within the context of climate change. Under the PAGCC-RD, several key advancements were realized. Firstly, it acknowledged the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, particularly those in rural areas, underscoring the distinct roles and conditions in women's productive activities that rendered them more vulnerable. Secondly, the plan recognized the limited access of Dominican women to crucial resources, such as land ownership, credit, training, information, participation in decision-making spaces, and technology. These limitations hindered their ability to adapt to climate change. Moreover, the gendered division of labour, especially prevalent in rural and coastal regions, exacerbated women's vulnerabilities, adding unpaid work burdens and constraining their capacity to cope with climate adversities. Overall, climate variability and change are expected to exacerbate such inequalities by increasing the workload among women in agriculture to counteract climate impacts on crop yields, infrastructure, water and food insecurity, and land degradation The plan also acknowledged that in many rural communities, women held and transmitted traditional knowledge and practices across generations, which could serve as invaluable contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation processes.

10. Building on those advancements, the Third National Gender Equity Plan in the Dominican Republic 2018-2030 (PLANEG III[10][10]) envisions a future with a stronger commitment to addressing gender disparities in the face of climate change. This forward-looking plan outlines several key elements. First, it spans the decade from 2020 to 2030, aligning with critical national and international frameworks, including the Dominican Republic's National Development Strategy, its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Secondly, PLANEG III emphasises the importance of generating gender-disaggregated data to facilitate the formulation of precise and effective actions tailored to the specific needs of women regarding climate change impacts. The plan places a strong emphasis on integrating gender mainstreaming into planning processes, ensuring that this approach extends beyond the year 2030. This strategy is fundamental to promoting resilience among women and ensuring equitable and sustainable development in the Dominican Republic. Advancing from the achievements of PAGCC-RD to the vision of PLANEG III, the Dominican Republic is taking substantial steps to empower women, reduce their vulnerability, and enhance their capacity to adapt to the changing climate, ultimately working toward a more equitable and resilient society.

11. In the context of recent advances, it is worth noting that on November 2, 2023, the National Gender and Climate Change Table was officially established. This table is jointly chaired by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Women, and the Council for Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanism (CNCCMDL). Its primary purpose is to accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan framed within the PAGCC-RD.

12. The National Gender and Climate Change Table represents an important collaborative platform that brings together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from the public sector, private sector, academia, civil society, and cooperation agencies. This initiative reflects the Dominican Republic's commitment to promoting gender equality and addressing climate change comprehensively, laying the foundation for coordinated and effective action at the intersection of these two critical areas.

Land Degradation

13. In the context of the Dominican Republic (RD), climate change can significantly exacerbate land degradation pressures, impacting the country's landscapes and ecosystems. On the one hand, rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns can also lead to more frequent and severe droughts, posing a direct threat to the nation's agricultural and natural lands. These droughts induce soil moisture deficits, negatively affecting soil fertility and the overall health of ecosystems. Consequently, the risk of land degradation becomes more pronounced. On the other hand, changes in precipitation patterns can also result in more intense rainfall events which can cause erosion and wash away the topsoil and nutrients essential for plant growth.

14. Furthermore, the expansion of arid and semi-arid regions within RD due to climate change can lead to desertification, affecting areas previously used for agriculture and grazing. This transformation results in soil erosion, reduced land productivity, and diminished vegetation cover. RD's dryland ecosystems become even more vulnerable, making land degradation an increasingly pressing concern.

15. The interconnectedness between climate change and land degradation forms a concerning feedback loop, potentially leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions from degraded soils, further contributing to climate change. RD faces the challenge of addressing this complex relationship between climate change and land degradation. The proposed intervention aligns with these challenges by focusing on sustainable land management and restoration efforts, aiming to enhance land resilience and mitigate the impacts of climate change, ultimately fostering a more sustainable and resilient future for the Dominican Republic.

16. Within a relatively small land area of just over 48,000 square kilometres, the DR has a wide range of climatic conditions because of its mountainous terrain, which acts as a barrier to prevailing moisture-laden winds, creating distinct climate zones. RD's territory includes areas with typical arid and semi-arid climates, with an average annual precipitation barely exceeding 500 mm, as well as areas with a per-humid climate, where the average annual precipitation accumulates to over 2,500 mm. This wide climatic diversity is reflected in an even greater diversity of ecosystems and habitats, ranging from pre-desert regions to cloud forests, including ecosystems that are unique to the Caribbean, that host a rich biodiversity, with high endemism, particularly with respect to reptile species, vascular plants, and bird species.

17. Land and soil degradation affect approximately 10% of the national territory[11]11, threatening biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services. Primary drivers encompass deforestation, resulting in the transformation of forests into shrublands, grasslands, farmlands, and urban areas, along with timber extraction. Additionally, factors such as overgrazing, inappropriate land use leading to erosion and soil compaction in farmlands, and the abandonment of farmlands resulting in conversion to bare soils contribute

to decreased productivity and ecosystem degradation. These challenges emphasize the crucial need to address these issues to ensure environmental sustainability in the country.

18. Biodiversity in the Dominican Republic is under severe threat due to habitat conversion, chiefly driven by agriculture, livestock farming, tourism, and mining. By 2004, agriculture and pastures covered 46.35% of the country's land, and tourism had a notable impact on coastal ecosystems. Habitat degradation is exacerbated by forest fires and land and water pollution. Forest fires have significantly reduced biodiversity, especially in pine forests and protected dry areas. Pollution, primarily from mining, agriculture, and waste, harms freshwater and coastal marine ecosystems. Overexploitation of native flora and fauna through excessive fishing, illegal hunting, and wildlife and plant collection is a major concern. Introducing invasive species, both animals and plants, has negatively affected terrestrial biodiversity. Animals like dogs, cats, pigs, goats, rats, mongooses, weavers, finches, marine toads, and bullfrogs, as well as cultivated plants, pose threats to native species.

19. Climate change compounds these issues[12]12. In fact, observed increases in average maximum and minimum surface temperatures combined with high interannual rainfall variability imply an increase in evapotranspiration during dry spells and thus drier soils, also increasing the risk of runoff during heavy rainfall events. Furthermore, the dry season from November to April (1960-1990) is expected to shift to December-April both under RCP4.5 and RCP8.5, with impacts on timelines for economic activities such as agriculture, e.g., adjustments of crop calendars to changing onsets and offsets of the rainy/dry seasons and impacts on crops' phenology, with indirect impacts also on the quantity and quality of grassland and feed for livestock. Sea level rise is also expected to exacerbate soil erosion in coastal areas through saltwater infiltration, coastal erosion, as well as damaged infrastructure[13]13.

20. In addressing the challenges posed by current climate variability and anticipating the exacerbation or introduction of new stresses associated with projected climate change, the proposed adaptation activities strategically integrate comprehensive measures. The project recognizes the dynamic nature of climate conditions and aims not only to enhance resilience to existing climatic uncertainties but also to proactively prepare for future challenges. This includes the implementation of sustainable land management practices, watershed-level planning, and capacity development programs that consider the evolving climate scenarios. By fostering adaptive capacities at local, regional, and national scales, the project aligns itself with a forward-looking approach to climate adaptation. This approach ensures that the interventions not only mitigate the immediate impacts of climate-related challenges but also establish a foundation for sustained resilience in the face of future climate uncertainties.

Food security

21. The Dominican Republic's food security relies to a large extent on external markets due to limited resources. High import and export costs, along with irregular trade flows, worsen the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these vulnerabilities. To enhance food security there are several critical challenges, including low agricultural productivity, limited access to formal credit, small-scale production, inadequate value addition, and vulnerability to natural disasters. These challenges are compounded by limited institutional capacity, including lack of enough and accurate spatial information on land resources, governance gaps, scarce financial resources for wide adoption of sustainable practices and a fragmented institutional

environment for soil and land management. The continuity of business-as-usual practices will result in increased land, water, and biodiversity degradation, with uncoordinated responses between and within scales that lack an integrated and strategic landscape view and perpetuate a high degree of exposure and vulnerability to shocks.

22. The Dominican Republic has adopted a proactive approach to combat the challenges posed by climate change. This response is intricately linked to the country's vulnerability and underscores the integration of climate adaptation into its broader development planning. In addressing these multifaceted issues, the nation's key priorities revolve around enhancing production sustainability, improving farmer profitability, reducing rural poverty, and promoting social equity. To achieve these objectives, a range of strategies has been devised, including the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, capacity building for small- and medium-sized producers, the facilitation of rural micro-financing services, and the development of robust value chains. At the core of this strategy is the overarching goal of reinforcing food and nutrition security, which is pursued through a combination of targeted measures and systemic enhancements within the agricultural sector while striving to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This comprehensive approach aligns with the country's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LDN-TSP) and is further supported by the National Plan to Combat Desertification and the Effects of Drought (PAN-LCD 2018-2030), the National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation in the Dominican Republic 2015-2030, and related planning documents such as the National Plan for the Management of Priority Watersheds.

23. The National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Variability (PNACC-RD) is an essential component of this overarching strategy, aiming to create synergy between mitigation and adaptation efforts. Recognizing the vital role of the agricultural sector in ensuring both food security and the nation's economic stability, the PNACC-RD places a strong emphasis on the promotion of sustainable and resilient agricultural practices. This includes measures to enhance water management for irrigation and to build the adaptive capacity of farmers, particularly in response to extreme weather events. The conservation and sustainable management of forests are also central to the objectives outlined in the PNACC-RD, advocating for reforestation and the restoration of degraded areas, with a specific focus on enhancing forests' capacity to absorb carbon. Significantly, the plan acknowledges the pivotal role of local communities, including women, in forest resource management and deforestation prevention. Furthermore, the plan confronts the critical issue of land degradation, striving to promote sustainable land management practices that reduce erosion and improve soil quality. This includes measures to restore degraded lands and prevent further degradation, with particular attention given to water management in agricultural landscapes to enhance water retention in the soil and reduce erosion. Recognizing that women are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the PNACC-RD underscores the importance of gender equality. The plan actively seeks to involve women in decision-making processes and encourages their active participation in climate adaptation projects. Through targeted training and improved access to resources, the plan aims to empower women in the management of natural resources and enhance their adaptive capacity.

24. Beyond its relative contribution to GDP and employment, agriculture plays a pivotal role in Dominican society as it often serves as the sole source of income for rural communities. Projected climate changes can affect the agricultural sector in two ways: firstly, by increasing drought conditions, which increases the risk of water stress, and secondly, in coastal areas, leading to floods and aquifer contamination due to rising sea levels and coastal inundation. Both impacts limit water availability, effectively reducing crop productivity and significantly affecting harvests. This poses a high risk to farmers, who witness diminishing incomes, and to the general population, who, in the face of reduced supply, faces rising prices that impact their purchasing power. The analysis of hazard, exposure, and vulnerability levels shows that the agricultural sector faces a

high risk[14]14. The project will focus on addressing these threats and strengthening the resilience of rural communities and the agricultural sector through the development of an Early Warning System specifically for droughts and floods in line with the objectives of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and National Determined Contributions (NDC).

25. The Dominican Republic faces significant challenges in land tenure, characterized by a lack of legal certainty in tenure rights. Land concentration, the absence of formal titles, and the prevalence of informal tenure pose substantial obstacles to the country's sustainable development, particularly in long-term forested areas. The Land Tenure and Resource Assessment for the Dominican Republic's Emission Reduction Program, conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in 2019[15], highlights these issues as key elements requiring effective solutions to ensure sustainability and equity in land use. Recent experiences from successful initiatives in various contexts offer encouraging insights for addressing similar challenges. Projects that have implemented strategies such as issuing provisional titles for small-scale farmers, promoting payment for environmental services schemes, and involving communities in land management have proven to be effective[16]. These successful experiences, documented in various studies, indicate that a combination of legal, economic, and social approaches can significantly contribute to overcoming barriers in land tenure and promoting sustainable practices. The proposed intervention directly aligns with the lessons learned from these successful initiatives and the ongoing national efforts on providing secure tenure rights[17]. By addressing the lack of legal certainty through the continued issuance of provisional titles, promoting economic incentives such as payments for environmental services, and encouraging community participation in land management, the project seeks not only to overcome existing restrictions but also to lay the groundwork for more sustainable and equitable development in the country in line with the Decisions 26/ COP 14 and 27 / COP 15 and the FAO - UNCCD technical guide on the integration of the *Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure for Land, Fisheries and Forest* (VGGT) into the implementation of the UNCCD and LDN (FAO & UNCCD, 2022[18]).

26. However, the following **barriers** remain:

- *Limited enabling environment.* Despite encouraging initiatives such as the Interinstitutional technical Group (GTI, in its Spanish acronym), RD is still limited in its capacity to manage a transformation from degrading land use systems to sustainable soil and land management at scale. This limitation stems from the insufficient focus on climate change adaptation and climate resilience within the institutional environment regarding SSM and SLM implementation for LDN. There's a pressing need for the integration of climate adaptation measures and climate resilience strategies in the existing policies, knowledge management infrastructures, and networks. Furthermore, addressing this barrier requires a significant enhancement in trained human resources in key areas, such as Soil Science and climate-smart and sustainable agriculture, emphasizing the role of climate-resilient land management practices.
- *Limited Soil Information to support decision-making processes on LDN and Data Fragmentation:* The Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) framework is designed to be flexible and, as such, is applicable to all land uses, including land managed for production (agriculture, forestry); land managed for conservation (protected areas) and land occupied by human settlements and infrastructure. However, the integration of LDN in national policy frameworks and planning instruments requires specific information on soils, namely on organic carbon, a critical parameter for LDN as well as for climate adaptation and climate-resilient land management. The outdated soil data significantly hinders the country's ability to make informed decisions on land use in the context of climate change. Up-to-date and georeferenced soil information is essential for climate

adaptation strategies, climate-resilient agriculture, and achieving the nation's climate resilience goals.

- *Limited capability for integrated land planning and implementation of SSM/SLM for LDN.* Recognising that LDN is not the simple implementation of sustainable land management practices, but rather provides a framework for a balanced approach which considers trade-offs and anticipates new degradation, planning is needed as a bridge between land policies and healthy land. While, in RD, there is some level of familiarity with integrated planning aspects among technical specialists who are working with farmers and stakeholders in the field, the technical capacity available is still not enough. Protocols, technical resources, and methodologies to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation in the context of changing climate and increased climate risks are mostly unavailable and seldom applied. Demonstration of SSM/SLM approaches within integrated land planning, accompanied by targeted capacity development programs and adequate knowledge transfer strategy,is needed to provide those capacities, as well as in terms of fostering behavioral change among stakeholders towards the adoption of climate-resilient and sustainable practices. The approach should encompass strategies for adapting to the changing climate, which is crucial for the long-term success of the project.
- *Limited Capability to Address the Climate Hazards of Flooding and Drought and Related Land Degradation.* Particularly from the climate risk reduction perspective, the capacity of RD for addressing the climate hazard is far from adequate. Specifically, soils in slopes have lost the capacity to provide adequate hydrological regulation. Degraded soils and lands thus lead to a higher severity of climate impacts like floods and droughts, which, at the same time, exacerbate land degradation, in a perverse loop that limits resilience at the watershed scale. Also, climate adaptation and resilience strategies, such as alternative livelihoods and improved value chains, are still insufficiently implemented and need to be strengthened for providing improved coping capacity. From the point of view of enabling preparedness, communities are still largely unable to adopt readiness strategies. National systems of early warning are under development but need still to be enhanced and expanded with improved forecasting and alerting efficiency, particularly in the context of climate-induced disasters.
- *Limited availability of economic instruments for Integrated Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) and Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in the Face of Climate Change.* The Dominican Republic faces a unique set of challenges in its pursuit of integrated climate adaptation through Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) and Sustainable Land Management (SLM). While the nation is characterized by a dynamic economy, it encounters a pervasive financial barrier that hinders its transition towards these vital goals, which are intrinsically linked in reinforcing climate adaptation. Despite some successful experiences such as the loans scheme of the Agricultural Bank, this area remains weak in RD. The adoption of SSM and SLM practices can be onerous in the short term, particularly for smallholder farmers, given the additional pressures brought about by a changing climate. Therefore, strategies that encourage investment from stakeholders and reduce the risk of adoption must be put in place, in order to facilitate adoption at the local scale and to upscale the LDN approach at the national scale. Crucially, these strategies must ensure that the adopted integrated practices are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the Dominican Republic must strive to establish gender-inclusive financial mechanisms that bridge the gap in access to financial resources and credit, particularly for women and youth. These groups are disproportionately affected by climate change and also by these financial strains, and specific actions need to be taken to address their unique needs. The approach should be multifaceted, nurturing both the generational renewal in agriculture and gender equity. This approach ensures that the economic instruments prioritize practices that are resilient to climate change.

27. In order to address these barriers and closely align with the country's priorities, the project "*Land Degradation Neutrality for Increased Resilience to Climate Change in Dominican Republic*" has been conceptualized. It consists of a comprehensive and integrative investment project **based on the LDN framework**, with the overarching objective **to enhance climate resilience, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and achieve land degradation neutrality through effective adaptation strategies and sustainable development in alignment with the National Adaptation Plan.**

28. This objective is aligned with the Dominican Republic's vision of sustainable development and environmental protection, as articulated in its National Development Strategy 2030. It not only aims to combat land degradation but also recognizes the vital role it plays in climate change adaptation. By promoting sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation, and climate-resilient practices, the project directly supports the country's goals of sustainable environmental management, effective risk reduction, and adaptation to climate change. Furthermore, the project's emphasis on community involvement and social participation echoes the policy of promoting citizen engagement in shaping public policies. In essence, this initiative serves as a critical catalyst for realizing the nation's vision of fostering a society with a culture of sustainable production and consumption, equitable environmental risk management, and robust climate adaptation, ultimately contributing to the well-being of the Dominican people and the preservation of their natural heritage.

29. This project will support the RD to meet land degradation and climate adaptation challenges in two key watersheds (Ocoa and Nizao) and nationally, via strengthened institutional enabling conditions for LDN – including improved national soil information and decision support systems–, integrated land use plans that result in more sustainable productions systems, restored ecosystems, ecosystem services, and hydrological cycles, targeted programs for capacity development, and plans for stimulating further investments in SLM and SSM for LDN.

Project locations

30. The two prioritized basins for the interventions contained in the project, the Nizao (1,039.8 km^2) and Ocoa (679.4 km^2) river basins in the south of the country, (see map in Annex C), strategically located in the southern region of the Dominican Republic. The basins encompass four provinces: Peravia, which is home to 166,592 inhabitants, with 70,093 living in poverty; San Cristóbal, with a population of 522,641, of which 248,135 are in poverty; San José de Ocoa, where 61,194 inhabitants reside, with 20,053 facing poverty; and Azua, with an overall population of 208,898, including 97,280 individuals living in poverty. In terms of the rural population, Peravia houses 66,841 inhabitants, while San Cristóbal is home to 326,294. San José de Ocoa has 21,341 rural residents, and Azua accommodates 53,796 individuals living in rural areas[19]15. In addition, the Agricultural Pre-census registers 259,971 agricultural producers, of which 16.7% are concentrated in the Valdesia region[20]16. These rural communities are at the forefront of the project's interventions, facing unique challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed to improve their livelihoods and enhance their resilience to climate change.

31. A comprehensive analysis of climate risks in the target territories reveals specific areas of concern. Notably, Peravia exhibits a high level of risk, primarily attributed to the potential for flooding resulting from extreme coastal events, the risk of heatwaves due to rising temperatures, and the threat of water scarcity caused by decreased precipitation. To mitigate these risks, the proposed measures for productive landscapes in Peravia include investments in flood protection, the development of urban green zones, and the

enhancement of drought contingency plans. These tailored measures aim to bolster the region's climate resilience, safeguarding both its population and economy in the face of climate challenges.

32. Vulnerability assessments reveal that the four provinces within the Ocoa and Nizao river basins face medium to high vulnerability to drought. Additionally, three out of the four provinces exhibit medium to high vulnerability to flooding[21][17]. The vulnerability to climate change is also assessed as medium to high in three out of the four provinces. The data is derived from the 'Plan Nacional de Adaptación al Cambio Climático' (National Climate Change Adaptation Plan).

33. Both average maximum and minimum surface temperatures are projected to increase from 0.7°C under RCP2.6 to 1.7°C under RCP8.5 by mid-century (2041-2060) compared to the 1995-2014 baseline period[22][18]. Furthermore, for the Valdesia region, where the four prioritized provinces of this proposal are located, climate scenarios indicate a reduction in precipitation by approximately 17.5% and 20.3% by 2050 (2041-2060) and 2070 (2061-2080), respectively, under a high-emission scenario (RCP8.5), compared to the 1960-1990 baseline period[23][19]. This is also expected to result in a reduction in the mean annual Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI drought index) by 20% under both SSP1-2.6 and SSP5-8.5 by mid-century, and an intensification of dry spells[24][20].

34. The proposed pilot territories are among the RD's priority basins[25][21] because they have a strategic importance for the country's economy and overall environmental health. They are, however, highly exposed to extreme atmospheric events, including climate change and climate variability, while also exhibiting numerous elements of degradation associated with a fragile environment and highly vulnerable resident populations.

35. They are in the southeastern portion of the Central Mountain Range, the main mountain chain of the Dominican Republic. Given the wide altitudinal gradient (from 0 to 2550 metres a.s.l.), multiple ecosystems are present in the landscape, which are critical for delivering water to residents, to the economy, and in terms of the biodiversity they host. Important ecosystems range from the dry thorn forest of the lowland areas of the Ocoa river basin to the humid broadleaf forest, typical of the higher parts of the Ocoa basin and much of the mountainous areas of the Nizao basin. This high biodiversity justifies the inclusion of a significant portion of their territories (40% for Nizao and 25% for Ocoa) in the National System of Protected Areas.

36. The slopes of the mountainous and hilly areas in both basins are characterized by high instability, especially in areas where the original forest cover has been removed for agricultural cultivation. On one hand, this results in soil loss and reduced land productivity, and on the other hand, it causes accelerated sedimentation downstream, posing significant problems for water reservoirs. This is particularly critical in the case of the Nizao River basin, which hosts the Jiguey-Aguacate-Valdesia-Las Barias reservoirs and dam complex and provides water and electricity to 40% of the population of Santo Domingo (more than 1.5 million people), with an installed capacity of 205 MW, provide an annual average generation of over 160 GWh of energy. Furthermore, over 18000 hectares of land in the Peravia and San Cristóbal provinces rely on water from this watershed for irrigation.

37. From a socio-economic perspective, the economy in both basins is predominantly agricultural, with 32% of the Nizao basin and 28% of the Ocoa devoted to agriculture. The middle and upper parts of the Nizao

basin are dominated by greenhouse agriculture, delivering up to 18% of the national production of vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and others. Coffee cultivation is also important, especially in the upland areas.

38. Poorly mechanized and environment-dependent subsistence agriculture characterizes the economic activity of more than 100 rural communities in both basins, with a population exceeding 60 thousand people and 15% of the land dedicated to this type of land use. Livestock farming is predominantly extensive, leading to negative environmental impacts in terms of soil compaction, erosion, and land degradation in both basins. Communities are thus highly vulnerable to land degradation and climate impacts. The local population has very limited knowledge about measures to adapt to climate change and are poorly prepared for coping with climate extremes, which involves further threats to food security, livelihoods, and water access.

39. Nonetheless, some initiatives in the area have succeeded in organic production, showing high added value both socially and environmentally. In particular, coffee farmer cooperatives operating under the Federation of Coffee Growers of the South Region (FEDECARES). The activity of FEDECARES and of similar initiatives needs to be further strengthened by expanding markets for their products.

40. Land use conflicts are widespread in both basins[26][22], linked to violations of planned land uses and inconsistencies with land suitability. The percentage of territory in conflict reaches 54% in Ocoa and 47% in the Nizao River basin. In the former, more than 18% is being overused, especially for subsistence agriculture and pasture in areas with a typical forest vocation. In the latter, this percentage rises to 38%. On the other hand, a percentage ranging from 9% (Nizao River basin) to 35% (Ocoa River basin) is underutilized, particularly due to the lack of supplementary irrigation that would allow for the development of intensive agriculture systems. Pasture areas are estimated to cover 20% of the territory in both basins.[27]23

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[16] For instance, the PSA-CYN Pilot Project, applying a Payment for Environmental Services scheme, extended incentives, and compensations to most beneficiaries without formal land titles. Informal tenure was recognized through verification of elements of prescription adquisitive, culminating in a contract outlining rights and obligations for compensation payments. The project targeted water conservation in the Yaque del Norte Basin, with a pilot phase focusing on reforestation in mountainous areas (approx. 80,000 hectares). Outcomes included flow regulation, reduced sedimentation, and improved water quality. The PSA mechanism incorporated three components: compensation for forest conservation, collaborative actions for land use change, and advocacy for overcoming factors affecting environmental services. Systematic evaluation, approval, and payments drive growing applications of interested stakeholders.

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B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

41. The project's Theory of Change (ToC, Figure 1) is framed under the DPSIR (Drivers-Pressures-Status-Impact-Response) approach, aiming to address key barriers to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and adaptive development in the country. It outlines the interlinked causal pathways that drive the project activities, which are designed to address the key barriers identified in section A of this document (Project Rationale). This will be done through four components, each of them delivered through a set of outputs that will act on the identified land degradation Drivers and the Pressures posed by them, and on the current land degradation and Status of the system. Upon delivery, the outputs from each component will result, if the specified project level assumptions are met, in immediate and medium-term outcomes, that will further improve the Status and mitigate the Impact of land degradation on communities and on the country as a whole.

42. The long-term goal of this comprehensive project, i.e., its expected impact, is enabling the achievement of LDN and enhancing climate resilience, thereby reducing exposure and vulnerability to climate change impacts by integrating climate risk management into the LDN framework. For this purpose, a multiscale problem-oriented approach has been developed. Climate resilience will be improved by integrating climate-resilient practices and technologies into land, soil, crop management, and by enhancing decision-making capacities against extreme weather events and impacts on land degradation and socio-economic assets. The project is designed to be **transformative** because it leverages funds for transformational adaptation in RD towards the synergic achievement of LDN and climate goals on adaptation through: i) enhanced policy coherence and LDN mainstreaming, as per Outcome 1.1; ii) knowledge exchange and multistakeholder and multiscale collaborations within the national institutional framework, as well as with the wider regional setting (Outcomes 1.1 and 4.1); it will reinforce governance through improved planning instruments and decision making processes (Outcome 1.1); increased capacity of communities for SLM adoption towards LDN and climate resilience, with a focus on tenure, gender and age-sensitive approaches (Outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 3.2 and 3.4).

43. Given that these activities will be implemented on lands currently experiencing degradation or under suboptimal land use, components 2 and 3 will simultaneously yield **additional Global Environmental Benefits** (GEBs). These benefits come in the form of reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, enhanced biodiversity, increased hectares of land offering improved ecosystem services, subsequently, decreased food security risks and sustainable development.

44. The **upscaling** of the SSM and SLM approaches, initially implemented at local scale under components 2 and 3, will be facilitated by several factors. These include improved watershed scale planning, access to up-to-date soil data, the improved monitoring capacities and the strengthened enabling environment established under component 1. Additionally, this upscalling process will be supported by better access to financing under component 3 and the gender and age sensitive knowledge management strategy of component 4, as well as by the project's capacity development program.

45. The incorporation of the project approach into national planning instruments for land management, LDN and climate adaptation, and the application of project products in other priority watersheds will allow to **scale out** this project's results to a wider geographical area and population, resulting in more sustainable integrated landscape management towards LDN at the national level, with increased landscape resilience to climate change and extreme events. In fact, the project adds on ongoing national efforts and previous initiatives. It aligns seamlessly with RD's National LDN-TSP, the *National Plan to combat Desertification and Drought* (PAN-LCD 2018-2030), the *National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Variability* (PNACC-RD). It not only strengthens but complements initiatives to improve the country's capacity to combat land degradation and address climate vulnerability such as the *Plan de Operacionalización del Servicio Nacional de Conservación de Suelos y Aguas*, and the *Plan de Cuencas Prioritarias*.

46. Furthermore, the project incorporates lessons learned from previous initiatives within the country and from the wider region to ensure efficiency and efficacy. Specifically, the proposed project will build on the following baseline projects: "Integrated landscape management in Dominican Republic watersheds", implemented by the World Bank in Yaque del Norte and Yuna watersheds; the "Mainstreaming conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in productive landscapes in threatened forested mountainous areas'' project, in Sierra de Neyba, Valle Nuevo-La Humeadora-Barbacoa protected areas, and the Middle Ozama River Basin, implemented by UNDP with FAO providing technical assistance to activities for management and prevention of forest fires; and the "Promoting Climate-smart Livestock Management in the Dominican Republic'' implemented by FAO. A further initiative, funded by the World Bank (2023-2026) with technical assistance from FAO, is promoting sustainable productive systems based on agroforestry with coffee, cocoa, and sustainable livestock in the Yaque del Norte and Ozama-Isabela watersheds. The National System of Soil Conservation (SNCSA) is also being reinforced under this project, providing improved capacities to 50 extension staff to promote soil conservation practices on agricultural and livestock farms.

47. An active engagement of stakeholders from various sectors and levels of governance is sought as integral part of the project's strategy, through **participatory approaches** to land planning and collaborations such as the creation of a National Soil Partnership. Technical capacity development among the different levels of governance and including a diverse array of stakeholders (policy makers, technical staff, extensionists, farmers) is also foreseen and knowledge management and communication actions targeted at the private sector, the wide public, and specifically the youth are expected to create awareness and provide the seed for behavioral change, to achieve **effective implementation and sustainability of project outcomes**.

48. The project leverages valuable insights from the Gender Gap Analysis conducted within the REDD+[29]24 and PAGCC-RD frameworks, shedding light on **gender disparities in climate change, in particular**

in the agricultural sector and in forest management. These insights profoundly influence the project's strategy, with a strong focus on promoting inclusivity and effectiveness.

49. Among the key takeaways, one significant aspect is resource accessibility. Women, particularly those in rural areas, face barriers when trying to access essential resources, such as land ownership or tenure rights. The project is committed to addressing this issue. Financial inclusion is another critical aspect. Women often encounter challenges when seeking access to credit. The project is dedicated to championing financial mechanisms designed to meet the specific needs of women. Recognizing a gender gap in training opportunities, the project prioritizes the development of gender-sensitive training programs. These programs empower individuals, enabling them to actively participate in climate adaptation and land degradation activities. The project also aims to empower women in decision-making processes. This is a response to the limited participation of women in decision-making roles within associations and committees. Cultural norms that influence women's roles are addressed through awareness and sensitization programs, challenging and changing these norms to enable women to engage in activities traditionally associated with men.

50. The gender equality perspective will be included and addressed in a systemic and transversal manner in all the project's actions in order to contribute to the design and implementation of policies that, taking gender issues into consideration, guarantee the comprehensive management of natural resources in the project intervention area which, in turn, guarantees the sustainability of livelihoods, and equitable access to opportunities and productive assets.

51. This project aims to contribute to the increase of the resilience of the livelihoods of the rural population, including at least 20% of women on the total beneficiaries, and to the reduction of gender and poverty gaps at the local level. The involvement, participation and appropriation of the project by producers, both men and women, will help change current gender roles to generate greater equity.

52. For this purpose:

- Targets for product and result indicators are established, disaggregated by sex, taking into account the participation of women in rural areas and in the institutions involved;

- All the information collected will be disaggregated by sex and age cycle and will be processed and analyzed from a gender perspective;

- Training programs will be designed and implemented taking into account the specific needs and interests of women;

- The products developed within the framework of this intervention will be designed and implemented from a gender equality approach;

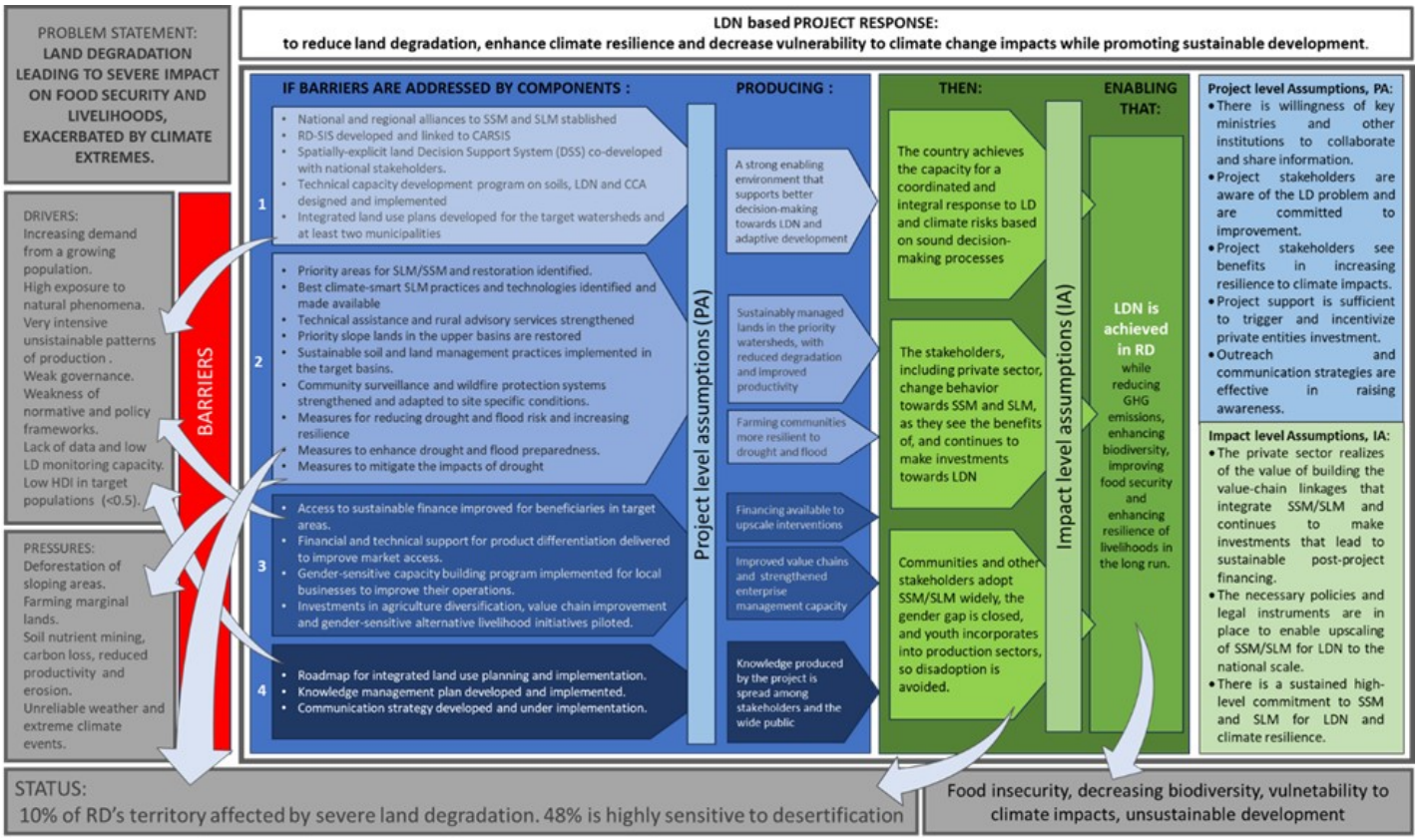
- A gender analysis will be performed during the PPG;

- A technical work team will be established that includes the gender focal points of the institutions linked to the initiative, to monitor the activities to be developed;

53. A specialist in gender and inclusion will be hired to ensure compliance with the FAO gender equality policy and will work in synergy with the gender focal point of the FAO representation in the Dominican Republic and with the counterparts designated as gender focal point of each institution involved in the intervention

54. To ensure a comprehensive approach, cross-sectoral collaboration is central to the project, engaging diverse stakeholders. Vital for creating awareness and facilitating behavioral change, knowledge management, communication, and capacity building play pivotal roles in ensuring the project's effective implementation and long-term sustainability.

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the Project's Theory of Change.



DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES

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COMPONENT 1. STRENGTHENING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR INFORMED AND INTEGRATED LAND USE PLANNING TO ACHIEVE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY AND ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT.

Outcome: 1.1. Strong enabling environment that supports better decision-making to achieve land degradation neutrality and adaptive development.

55. This project component aligns with the adaptation priorities outlined in the Dominican Republic's NDC by addressing the need for a more comprehensive approach to land degradation and integrated land use planning. It focuses on strengthening interdisciplinary, interinstitutional alliances to support the resilient and sustainable management of natural resources. This is crucial in overcoming the institutional barriers mentioned in the NDC[30] and promoting effective coordination among various stakeholders. Additionally, the project aims to address the lack of accurate and updated soil data, a challenge highlighted in the NDC, by establishing a National Soil Information System. This system will facilitate informed decision-making and integrate soil-related information into environmental and development planning processes. Furthermore, the development of a spatially explicit decision support system will help monitor land degradation and climate change-related indicators. Overall, this project component directly contributes to the Dominican Republic's adaptation goals by promoting integrated planning, data-driven decision-making, and better resource management in the face of climate change.

56. Even though the Dominican Republic is a signatory to the three Rio Conventions, as well as various other agreements, there is insufficient synergy among the national actions to implement these international instruments. Specifically, as noted in RD's LDN-TSP, there is a lack of a comprehensive approach that addresses land degradation in an integrated way. The different country institutions dealing with the issue of land degradation often have divergent perspectives and overlapping responsibilities, leading to inefficiencies in implementation. Budget allocation is usually also insufficient, with the various institutions involved lacking adequate funding to carry out their missions effectively.

57. The Interinstitutional Technical Group (GTI, in Spanish) established by Presidential Decree No. 146 in 2003, has the mission of coordinating national actions aimed at addressing the causes of desertification and degradation of natural resources in the Dominican Republic. It is composed of representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private business sector, grassroots organizations, local governments, and accredited international organizations, and functions as a facilitator, coordinator, integrator, and enabler of actions against desertification and drought in the country.

58. The GTI, however is limited in its capacity to make informed decisions on LDN and climate resilience due to the lack of accurate and updated information on soils, RD not having their soil information and data upgraded since the 1970's or earlier. This results in a huge gap in terms of decision making at all levels, including land planning, agronomic decisions, managing land for LDN and for resilience to climate impacts, for the effective operationalization of the National Soil and Water Conservation Service (SNCSA, in its Spanish acronym) under the Deputy Ministry of Soils and Waters, as established by the Resolution 036/2013 of the Ministry of Agriculture, and for implementing the National Strategy for Sustainable Soil Management in the Dominican Republic from 2014 to 2024.

59. This Component will provide the grounds for enabling RD to an improved decision making on soils and LDN through the creation of interdisciplinary, interinstitutional, and intersectoral alliances for the sustainable management and protection of natural resources. Specifically, the creation of a National Soil

Partnership (NSP) including a diversity of stakeholders, chaired by the GTI/ SNCSA and including soil-related partners from academia, productive sectors, other private initiatives and NGOs, and linked to the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), will strengthen the country's capacity to harness soil-related challenges, through the creation of synergies between stakeholders, for catalyzing cooperation within the country and in the region, and also links to international soil-related initiatives, including taking stock on GSP's programming priorities and benefitting from its training activities.

60. This will support the reactivation and strengthening of the SNCSA, that will be also highly benefited by the updating of national soil data and information foreseen under this Component. In that regard, focus will be placed on (i) the digitalization, harmonization and georeferencing of soil legacy data and environmental covariates; (ii) production of new data, including soil surveys and digital mapping of soil properties such as SOC stocks, potential for SOC sequestration and soil nutrient status, and (iii) provide accessibility to soil data and information so it can be integrated into RD's environmental and development planning processes. The information produced will take the form of a National Soil Information System (RD-SIS) under the SNCSA, that will be integrated with regional initiatives, specifically with the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS) currently being developed under the SOILCARE project[31][25], and with global initiatives such as FAO's GLOSIS. The data production will be supported by national analytical capacities; in particular, by the laboratories that form the National Soil Laboratory Network under FAO's GLOSOLAN (Global Soil Laboratory Network).

61. In addition, the RD-SIS will be integrated in a spatially explicit decision support system (DSS) that includes land degradation, soil properties and climate change related indicators. The RD-DSS will be co-developed with national stakeholders (including national institutions as well as local producers, farmer associations and *Consejos Comunitarios, Comités de Cuenca,* and others) in support of land planning and drought and flood risk reduction (in synergy with component 2 of this project). This product will boost the national capacity for monitoring land degradation and related indicators, and for tracking the implementation of plans, programs, policies, and projects for harnessing it, which is currently insufficient. A technical capacity development program on LDN and CSA will be designed and implemented, based on a gap analysis, including training on the use of the RD-DSS for land use planning and LDN. Capacity building activities aim at supporting and transferring knowledge to national and regional institutions on the use of climate data to better understand both climate variability and change impacts on land and soil, provide evidence for strategies, planning and projects and conduct climate impact assessments at the local level. Early warning systems and climate informed approaches are integrated into demonstration, training modules, and curricula on biodiversity management and conservation of landscapes for agricultural extension staff, natural resource managers, and policy makers. Different approaches for building climate resilience need to be integrated in field activities to promote capacity development among the most vulnerable groups. At the local level, training can be done through Field Visits/In-Situ Coaching/One-on-one outreach.

62. A further output of this component, which is fundamental for successful project implementation, is the RD-DSS based participatory design of integrated land use plans, based on updated soil information, for the target watersheds and at least two municipalities that update and build on existing watershed land planning instruments such as the *Plan de Cuencas Prioritarias* and the rapid action projects under it.

Outputs for achieving Outcome 1.1:

1.1.1. Interdisciplinary, interinstitutional, and intersectoral alliances are strengthened to ensure the sustainable management and protection of natural resources.
1.1.2. National Soil Information System developed as part of the National Environmental Information System and linked to the Caribbean Soil Information System.

1.1.3. A spatially explicit decision support system (DSS) integrating land degradation, soil properties and climate change related indicators is co-developed with national stakeholders.
1.1.4. Technical capacity development program, with gender transformative approach on LDN and CCA designed and implemented, based on a gap analysis, and including the use of DSS for land use planning and LDN.
1.1.5. Land use plans developed for the target watersheds and at least two municipalities.

COMPONENT 2. IMPROVING THE RESILIENCE OF ECOSYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES IN 2 PRIORITISED WATERSHEDS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE LAND MANAGEMENT IN PRODUCTIVE AREAS AND LAND RESTORATION IN TARGET ECOSYSTEMS

63. **Component 2 is designed to enhance ecosystem and community resilience in line with the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the 2020 National Determined Contributions for the Dominican Republic.** Through sustainable land management (SLM) and targeted land restoration efforts, this component addresses pressing ecological challenges, including land degradation and heightened vulnerability to climate change.

64. The planned interventions under Component 2 target the Nizao and Ocoa River basins, which have been chosen due to their outstanding value for RD´s sustainable development, as emphasised in section A of this document. The approach designed for the implementation of Component 2 represents a holistic and integrated strategy to address the land degradation challenges faced in the Nizao and Ocoa River basins of the Dominican Republic. This multifaceted strategy encompasses three key pillars: implementation of SLM in suboptimally managed productive lands, restoration of degraded lands and capacity building, all designed to support adaptation efforts in line with the NAP and NDC objectives. In addition, an **integrated Early Warning System will be established** to monitor and provide timely alerts on climate-related risks, enhancing the resilience of communities in the target areas. This needs to be based on an integrated multi-hazard (e.g., drought and flooding) monitoring system to allow the implementation of preventative resilient land and soil management practices to specific hazards. It is fundamental to integrate climate data (e.g., temperature, precipitation, wind variables), drought and flooding indicators with topography, hydrology, soil type, soil properties, and vegetation data for land potential assessments and land degradation monitoring.

65. The core of this strategy revolves around **SLM, including SSM for soil recarbonization, which plays a crucial role in enhancing land resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change** . This includes adopting climate-smart agricultural and livestock practices, optimising land use, and minimizing the adverse environmental impacts of land-intensive activities,as specified in the NAP. By implementing SLM techniques, the project aims to reduce soil erosion, enhance land productivity, and promote the sustainable use of land resources, thereby elevating the natural capital of the project areas. Consequently, this contributes to adaptation to climate variability and change, including increasing drought and flooding conditions and impacts on land and soil degradation, by also reducing the negative impacts of anthropogenic drivers of land and soil degradation.

66. Another crucial element of the strategy is the **targeted restoration of degraded lands within the priority watersheds, in line with the NDC´s climate objectives**. This involves the identification of priority areas for restoration, reforestation efforts employing native or endemic plant species, and sustainable soil management to reverse degradation and restore ecosystem health. The expected outcome is a reduction in the extent of degraded lands within the targeted watersheds that will feature improved ecosystem services, greater adaptability to climate change, increased mitigation ability, while promoting biodiversity conservation, consistent with NDC and NAP goals.

67. **Capacity-building is integral** to the success of Component 2, a fundamental aspect of adaptation strategies. The strategy includes programs tailored to empower local communities, farmers, technical assistance and rural advisory services and relevant stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to implement sustainable land management and restoration practices, supporting adaptation actions in accordance with NDC and NAP. By enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities, the project ensures

the long-term sustainability of its interventions. Capacity building should also be fostered in the use of climate services, e.g., EWS. To achieve this, the climate services value chain should be strengthened from data collection, monitoring, and forecasting to co-production of tailored agrometeorological advisories, communication of services and participatory engagement of the last mile for climate-informed actions. This would be achieved by increasing the capacity of weather forecasting models and early warning systems, and by fostering knowledge exchange through improved communication and dissemination means. It is also important to ensure direct involvement of climate and agrometeorological experts, researchers, institutions, and farmers in the decision-making process as well as to ensure a clear division of roles and responsibilities to avoid overlaps in climate and disaster risk management strategies, with a focus on active farmers' participation. Finally, climate and weather information services should be communicated according to end users' needs, by ensuring farmer engagement in assessments and production of services at all levels.

68. The expected result is increased productivity and heightened resilience to climate impacts in both basins and their inhabitants, while addressing the critical environmental challenges in the Nizao and Ocoa River basins. This not only seeks to mitigate land degradation and climate vulnerabilities but also supports the broader objectives of sustainable development, including the conservation of biodiversity. This comprehensive and interconnected approach ensures that the benefits to the target regions and their inhabitants are lasting and in line with national adaptation priorities.

69. **This component is closely aligned with key elements of the country's National Development Strategy (END) 2030[32]26 and contributes to achieving the overarching goals in the NDC.** To ensure the success of these endeavours, effective coordination and collaboration with relevant government agencies will be instrumental in integrating Component 2 into the broader national development agenda, ultimately working towards a more sustainable and resilient future for the Dominican Republic while fulfilling the adaptation priorities outlined in NDC and NAP.

Outcome 2.1: Land is sustainably managed, degradation is reduced, and productivity increased in the two priority watersheds, in accordance with NAP and NDC adaptation objectives.

70. This outcome is dedicated to the sustainable management of land in the Nizao and Ocoa River basins. The primary objective is to effectively reduce land degradation and enhance land productivity within these critical watersheds, consistent with the adaptation goals outlined in NAP and NDC. This outcome adopts a participatory and gender-responsive approach to identify priority areas for intervention.

71. It begins with the development of comprehensive selection criteria that encompass environmental, social, economic, climate, and gender dimensions. These criteria are shaped through consultations with various stakeholders, including local communities, experts, and gender-focused groups.

72. Following the establishment of selection criteria, the beneficiaries of the interventions will be carefully selected, ensuring equitable representation and inclusivity, and considering gender-specific needs. The potential beneficiary organisations encompass a diverse group within the project area. Firstly, there are thirteen coffee producer organizations situated in the Nizao watershed. Notably, two of these organisations are under the leadership of women and one organisation stands out as it exports its coffee production and has successfully established its own brand. This showcases their potential for growth and positive impact on the local economy. Furthermore, the project will also seek to engage the five livestock producer organisations operating in the Nizao and Ocoa basins, including a cooperative. Additionally, in the upper Nizao watershed, there is a woman-led Community Council. During stakeholder analysis it has been noted that it currently lacks legal formalisation, thus being a straightforward potential beneficiary of the project support towards a strengthened legal status. The project will consider all these stakeholders and others that can be identified in

further stakeholder and gender assessments during PPG, and seek to empower them to play a more active role in local land management and biodiversity conservation efforts.

73. In summary, the project's potential beneficiaries encompass a diversity of stakeholders among the producers and the governance bodies, with a particular focus on those led by females and those with potential for expanded economic contributions and improved environmental stewardship, in line with adaptation priorities. The collaborative approach ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and socially inclusive, empowering communities to take ownership of the sustainable management of their lands and of restoration efforts, thus reducing land degradation, enhancing resilience to climate impacts, and contributing to sustainable development in the region, in line with NDC and NAP adaptation objectives.

74. All these activities will be accompanied by a gender-sensitive scheme for strengthening the stakeholders' capacities for Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) and Sustainable Land Management (SLM) implementation, as specified in NAP and NDC. One of the initiatives under this scheme is the FAO's Global Soil Doctors Programme[33][27], which is a farmer-to-farmer training program that has already been successfully implemented in other watersheds of the country. Reinforcing the technical assistance to stakeholders through the strengthening of the rural advisory capacities of formal extension services is also a priority, and actions will be implemented to increase their knowledge and skills regarding sustainable soil and land management and restoration practices, in line with the adaptation objectives of NDC and NAP. Specifically, the project will target the extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, the *Instituto Dominicano del Café* (INDOCAFE) and the Livestock General Directorate (DIGEGA). By enhancing the capacity of individuals, communities and institutions, the project works towards the long-term sustainability of the interventions.

75. By enhancing the capacity of individuals, communities, and institutions, the project works towards the long-term sustainability of the interventions, as per national adaptation goals. Achieving Outcome 2.1 specifically implies:

- 1.960 hectares of forest land restored, and 15,700 hectares under best practices including agroforestry and silvopastoral systems, enhancing biodiversity, reducing erosion, and improving water cycles and quality in line with adaptation objectives outlined in NDC and NAP.

- Lowering greenhouse gas emissions from the AFOLU sector, through carbon sequestration in soils and sustainable land practices, aligning with global climate mitigation efforts and fulfilling NDC adaptation priorities.

- Empowering 150 'Soil Doctors' and benefiting 1500 farmers (CI SCCF 4) which builds local resilience against climate impacts, thereby improving food security and livelihoods, in line with NAP and NDC adaptation strategies. At least 20% of the beneficiaries will be females, taking into account the participation of women in the agricultural sector in the country. According to data from the last Agricultural Precensus of the Dominican Republic (2015) of physically surveyed producers, 16.3% are women. Similarly, it is contemplated that, if this proposal is approved by the GEF, during the project formulation phase, this target can be updated and potentially increased to parity, based on the survey they will conduct through the Socioeconomic and Environmental assessments. Additionally, during the formulation phase, affirmative actions and measures for women will be defined and included based on the results of the social and environmental diagnosis and the identified specific needs and interests of women

- Enhanced land management leads to more sustainable farming, boosting productivity, income diversification, and soil health.

- A participatory approach that enhances community ownership, defines priorities (CI11), and ensures that interventions are tailored to local needs.

Six outputs will lead to achieving Outcome 2.1:

2.1.1. Priority areas for SLM/SSM and restoration identified through participatory and gender transformative approaches in alignment with NDC and NAP adaptation objectives..

2.1.2 Best climate smart SLM practices and technologies identified and made available to farmers and local communities for addressing land degradation, as per NDC and NAP strategies.

2.1.3 Technical assistance and rural advisory services strengthened to support the achievement of global environmental benefits, in accordance with NDC and NAP adaptation strategies.

2.1.4. Priority steep lands in the upper basins are restored with native and/or endemic species, incorporating payment for environmental services and the land redistribution model, and under sustainable soil management, aligning with NDC and NAP adaptation objectives.

2.1.5. Sustainable soil and land management practices implemented in the target basins, including agroforestry, and silvopasture systems in line with NDC and NAP adaptation goals.

2.1.6. Community surveillance and wildfire protection systems strengthened and adapted to site specific conditions, fulfilling adaptation priorities outlined in NDC and NAP.

Outcome 2.2: Farming communities are more resilient to drought and flood through sustainable and inclusive land management, including soil re-carbonization, in line with NAP and NDC adaptation priorities.

76. This outcome focuses on enhancing the resilience of farming communities in the Nizao and Ocoa River basins, particularly against the adverse impacts of drought and floods in alignment with adaptation priorities outlined in the NAP and NDC. The outcome involves a series of measures to **reduce the risk** of drought and flood, to enhance community-scale **preparedness** and to improve the capacity for **mitigation** of impacts.

77. The risk reduction measures aim to increase the system's *green water* through the implementation of sustainable land management practices that include soil re-carbonization, a crucial strategy for improving the physical properties of the soil, specifically its water holding capacity and water infiltration. These measures are designed to address the risk of drought and flood, in accordance with adaptation strategies outlined in the NDC and NAP. A capacity development scheme for SLM based risk reduction will also be implemented.

78. Preparedness measures include strengthening the capacities for monitoring flood and drought risk and reinforcing early warning systems, which already exist in RD but require enhancement, in line with NDC and NAP adaptation objectives. Participatory risk management plans will be produced and will include capacity-building actions addressing enhanced preparedness, fulfilling adaptation priorities outlined in NDC and NAP. Climate risk assessments may guide the selection of resilient SSM and SLM measures for LDN through flood and drought-risk reduction (e.g., selection of drought-tolerant varieties, integrated land and water management, harvesting, and groundwater recharge, soil conservation practices, soil recarbonization, crop rotation and diversification) which will allow soil to retain water during droughts and water infiltration during heavy rainfall events to decrease the risk of water runoff during flooding. Furthermore, the selection of drought and flood-resilient practices, technologies, and services, including drought and flood-tolerant crop varieties, drought-smart land and water management, soil conservation practices, will be guided by participatory multi-stakeholder consultations on perceived climate impacts on production and post-harvest/handling stages of the value chain, as well as interests and needs for implementing climate-resilient practices, technologies, and services.

79. Additionally, the outcome involves the establishment and enhancement of an Early Warning System for drought and flood resilience, in alignment with NAP goals. It is fundamental to integrate timely information

with innovative technological solutions as well as traditional, affordable measures and technologies to manage drought and flood risks. The National Office on Meteorology was consulted in the phase of establishment and definition of the NAP and LDN goals, and an analysis of the capabilities of this institution is also planned to ensure the operability and sustainability of the Early Warning System to be implemented.

80. Measures aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate extremes focus on the system's water supply and demand. On the supply side, measures will focus on protecting and increasing water reserves, including measures for improving the governance of the watershed *blue* water reservoirs, i.e., surface and groundwater, as well as water harvesting and the safe use of *grey* waters, as specified in NDC and NAP adaptation goals. On the demand side, this will include improving access to more efficient irrigation systems, in alignment with adaptation strategies outlined in the NDC and NAP.

81. This outcome recognizes the vulnerability of rural communities in these areas and aims to equip them with the knowledge and tools needed to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, ensuring food security, livelihoods, and access to water resources, as per NDC and NAP adaptation priorities.. By promoting sustainable land management practices, Outcome 2.2 contributes to building resilience in these communities while addressing critical environmental challenges. Achieving Outcome 2.2 involves:

- Improving soil water infiltration and water holding capacity in hectares of soils, increasing agricultural resilience and water efficiency, as specified in NDC and NAP adaptation objectives.

- Supporting a growing number of communities covered by the Early Warning System and adopting and implementing effective strategies to reduce drought and flood risks, enhancing overall community resilience.

- Benefiting at least 1000 people through improved farming systems, bolstering food security, livelihoods, and sustainability, in alignment with NDC and NAP adaptation goals.

- Sequestering tons of CO2, contributing to global climate mitigation efforts and fostering environmental sustainability consistent with national adaptation priorities.

Three Outputs integrate Outcome 2.2:

2.2.1. Measures implemented for reducing drought and flood risk and increasing resilience against climate impacts through green water buildup.

2.2.2. Measures implemented to enhance community scale drought and flood preparedness.

2.2.3 Establish an Early Warning System for drought and flood resilience in alignment with NAP goals.

COMPONENT 3. PROMOTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT.

82. Acknowledging that SSM and SLM can be costly for farmers in terms of forgone opportunities for short-term income gains and recognizing that the upscaling of SSM and SLM measures will require strategic investments and policy support in a continuous basis, Component 3 of the project addresses the necessary financial aspects for facilitating a broad adoption of climate resilient agricultural measures that avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation. Particular focus will be placed on the improvement of value chains and on the creation of alternative livelihoods and initiatives for economic diversification, with a focus on climate and gender-sensitive value chain development through women participation along the agrifood value chain, particularly at post-harvest/value-adding stages and marketing. It is also important to increase the engagement of youth farmers at the regional level, which can also play a big role in promoting the adoption

of ICTs, the uptake of modern risk management practices and tools, as well as in the dissemination for climate risk information to older farmers in the communities.

***Outcome 3.1 Financing available to upscale interventions*:**

83. Investment plans will be designed and operationalized for making funds available for scaling up the approaches implemented under component 2, and to underpin value chain improvement and gender-sensitive alternative livelihood initiatives. The data and tools (e.g., soil data, RD-DSS) generated in Components 1 and 2 will make an important input for the investment planning process. In addition, since gender-based inequalities in accessing labor, financial capital, technology, and market information make women less equipped to access funding and invest in strategies that include SSM and SLM for LDN and climate adaptation, gender issues will be specifically acted upon within investment plans. Different market strategies, sustainable finance and risk reduction options will be considered, *inter alia:*

- In partnership with financial institutions, establishment of community revolving funds to expand access to technologies, including renewable energy sources, pressurized irrigation systems, for agriculture adaptation and its long-term sustainability, thus serving as a vehicle for enhanced collaborations with private entities for LDN and climate resilience. The project will build up on initiatives currently being developed such as the one by the RD Agricultural Bank, initiated through a FAO supported GEF funded project[34]28, aimed at implementing the first line of green financing to promote investments in climate-smart technologies and best practices in the livestock sector.

- Funding land exchanges for improved ecosystem services, in agreement with the REDD+ strategy and building on previous experiences in the implementation areas.

- The RECSOIL program will be considered as a possibility for incentivizing SSM. It consists of financial incentives to the adoption of SSM practices of soil recarbonization, with their continuity subject to the compliance with the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM, FAO 2017)[35]29, which is monitored using the FAO's Protocol for the assessment of SSM (FAO 2023). Additional and multiple benefits can be achieved such as an increase in yields, enhanced biotic and abiotic resilience of crops, a higher soil resilience to climate stresses, and recovered ecosystem services through traditional farming, all of which feed directly on component 2 outcome.

- Incentive Schemes for encouraging private sector investment in SSM and SLM, building on previous successful experiences carried out in other watersheds watersheds with support of Dominican Hydroelectric Generation Company (EGEHID) and in agreement with the normative for PES in the RD, currently being updated.

and in agreement with the normative for PES in the RD, currently being updated.

- Risk Transfer strategies, including insurance, bearing in mind the special needs of small farmers, foresters, and agro-processors. Options such as weather index insurance products –linked to e.g., rainfall, temperature, humidity, or crop yields, rather than actual loss–, can be considered, to enhance response and recovery from climate impacts, and to offset financial losses.

84. Improvements of agricultural value chains, after the analysis of opportunities, will be addressed under this component as an important aspect towards economic resilience and higher revenue. Approaches to be implemented encompass product differentiation strategies, including *inter alia* the creation of geographical

indications or origin designations and the strengthening of existing initiatives, such as the *Valdesia* Geographical Indication, already a successful enterprise in the area.

85. Strategies for promoting the marketing and export of fair trade, organic, and high-quality agricultural products, will be also reinforced, considering existing experiences in the Nizao and Ocoa watersheds, where farmer organisations are marketing and exporting their products (coffee, avocado) under the fair-trade mechanism. Their activity will be supported through the establishment of new market opportunities for organic products, with a special focus on coffee and fruits, including the creation of SSM/SLM/organic farming seals or labels. Furthermore, since women play critical roles in the agricultural value chain, including the availability, access, marketing and utilisation of food, specific focus will be placed in the development of gender inclusive and egalitarian marketing strategies.

Outputs leading to Outcome 3.1:

3.1.1. Access to sustainable finance improved for beneficiaries in target areas.
3.1.2. Value chains improved including product differentiation to improve market access.

Outcome 3.2 Value chains improved, and enterprise management capacity strengthened.

86. Funds under this component will be also used for piloting investments on SSM and SLM approaches tested under component 2, together with improved marketing strategies, including complementary opportunities for group marketing and for value-adding through the development of cottage industries, and the search for synergies with other economic sectors such as tourism and eco-tourism. Specifically, five community-based rural tourism enterprises will be established and/or strengthened, based on the sustainable utilization of existing tourism resources. Support will be provided for enabling new enterprises and initiatives to last through their first year of operation, with specific focus on the difficulties faced by economically vulnerable population sectors such as women and youth.

87. Formalisation strategies for improving access to funding and markets can take the form of community-private sector partnerships (CPPs), combining local communities' ownership of land and natural resources and their ability to mobilise local support and provide labour with private sector's access to finance, technology, and professional knowledge. The constitution of women's cooperatives will be also catalysed as a strategy for facilitating access to financial and non-financial services to women, thus helping to improve their economic autonomy.

88. All these actions will be supported and complemented by a gender and age responsive capacity building program for promoting entrepreneurship, and for local businesses to improve their operations through enhanced managerial capacities.

Outputs for achieving Outcome 3.2:

3.2.1. Capacity building program implemented for local businesses to improve their operations.
3.2.2. Investments in agriculture diversification, value chain improvement and gender-sensitive alternative livelihood initiatives piloted.

COMPONENT 4. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

89. The project will address several key barriers by focusing on the generation, management, and exchange of knowledge and lessons learned throughout implementation. A primary challenge in many regions, including the Dominican Republic, is the lack of comprehensive knowledge transfer and sharing that allows coordinated planning for efficient land use. This barrier will be countered by systematically generating knowledge through research, practical experiences, and targeted training initiatives across the project, including on best practices for soil health improvement, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience in land management. Component 4 focuses specifically on using the project results to foster a robust knowledge

base at the national scale through the communication of the project results and lessons learned to relevant stakeholders, so the outscaling of the project results is enabled. Another important aspect is gathering and sharing information with other LDN projects in the region through collaborative efforts, including South-South cooperation activities with SOILCARE and joint training initiatives. Actions addressed to raise awareness within the general public, including the youngest, are also planned.

Outcome 4.1. Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to enhance project results.

90. An important deliverable within Component 4 of the Project, which will be very relevant for scaling out the Project results to the rest of the national territory, will be the development of a comprehensive roadmap for climate resilient integrated land use planning and SLM implementation for LDN. This roadmap will serve as a seed document, providing clear guidance on how to plan for the effective, sustainable, and equitable management of land resources at the watershed scale It will consider the specificities of the national context and incorporate knowledge from the project's research and training activities, ensuring that lessons learned are integrated into future land use planning efforts. This roadmap will thus allow the implementation of the project's integrated approach for optimising land use to promote soil health, biodiversity, and climate resilience in other RD watersheds and beyond the duration of the project.

91. To ensure that knowledge is effectively managed and shared, the project will implement a comprehensive Knowledge Management Plan (KMP) considering all potential stakeholders and employing robust mechanisms to document and archive the knowledge accumulated over the project's lifecycle. This will ensure that the project's outcomes are not confined to its duration but instead serve as a lasting resource. The KMP will include provisions for making data on soils and land accessible to all stakeholders and to the wider audience (linked also with Component 1 data production and tools for facilitating the use of geographic information for sound decision making), in order to enable access to updated and relevant information and maximising the project benefits. Moreover, it will promote inter-project cross-fertilization by engaging with other LDN projects at the national and regional scales, maximising the collective wisdom across various initiatives. Namely, the project will seek collaboration, *inter* alia, with the SOILCARE Knowledge Management Hub, the SIDS-SIDS Green-Blue Economy Knowledge Transfer Hub and the Youth Innovation Agricultural Development Initiative, the latter created under the GEF funded CSIDS Programme on Green and Blue MSME Entrepreneurial Opportunity Enhancement for Youth.

92. In addition, the project will develop a gender and age-responsive Communication Strategy, which will play a pivotal role in the awareness raising among the population, with particular attention to vulnerable population collectives, such as women, youth and elderly. This strategy will utilise diverse communication channels to disseminate project findings, share best practices, and showcase the full potential of sustainable land management for environmental and socio-economic wellbeing. Through these approaches, the project aims not only a wide promotion of the efficient use of land resources but also a broader understanding of the benefits of investing in soil health, biodiversity preservation, and climate resilience.

93. To capture valuable lessons learned for the benefit of future projects, the project will employ robust mechanisms to document and archive the knowledge accumulated over its lifecycle. This will ensure that the project's outcomes are not limited to its duration but instead serve as a lasting resource. By adopting a solid knowledge management and exchange approach as central components of its strategy, the project aspires to leverage this GEF funding for fostering behavioural change towards SSM and SLM for LDN, leaving a significant, positive imprint on land management practices in the RD and the region, influencing not only its direct beneficiaries but also the wider community of land management stakeholders, thus ensuring long lasting and sustainable impacts.

Outputs for achieving Outcome 4.1:

4.1.1. Roadmap for integrated land use planning and implementation.
4.1.2. Knowledge management plan developed and implemented, including South-South cooperation activities with SOILCARE and other LDN projects in the region.
4.1.3. Communication strategy developed and under implementation.

[29] Banco Mundial (2021). Plan de acción de género : Programa de Reducción de Emisiones de REDD+ República Dominicana. Washington, DC: Banco Internacional de Reconstrucción y Fomento/Banco Mundial. https://cambioclimatico.gob.do/phocadownload/Documentos/cop25/Plan%20de%20G%C3%A9nero%20y%20Cambio%20Clim%C3%A1tico%20-%20RD.pdf. Accessed 2 November 2023.

[30] The NDC (2020) for the Dominican Republic identifies several institutional barriers to effective adaptation efforts. These barriers encompass issues related to governance, resource allocation, and capacity. One significant challenge pertains to institutional fragmentation and overlaps in responsibilities among different entities addressing land degradation and climate resilience. This fragmentation hampers the efficient coordination of adaptation measures. Additionally, there is a pressing need for updated and accurate information on soil quality, as the existing soil data hasn't been refreshed since the 1970s. This lack of information undermines decision-making at various levels, affecting land planning, agricultural strategies, and resilience to climate impacts. Moreover, the NDC highlights the financial barrier, indicating that institutions and projects focusing on adaptation often face sustainability challenges due to inadequate funding, hindering the continuous implementation of necessary actions.

[31] SOILCARE (*Caribbean SIDS Multicountry Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems*) is a GEF funded Project that aims to enable the use of updated country and regional soil data and knowledge to design the national LDN strategy and informed soil policies, as well as for the climate agenda in the Caribbean SIDS. Participant countries include Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia. It is expected that other 6 Caribbean countries join the SOILCARE initiative in its Phase 2, currently being designed.

[32] "Estrategia Nacional de Desarrollo 2030 (END 2030) | Ministerio de Economía, Planificación y Desarrollo." MEPyD, https://mepyd.gob.do/estrategia-nacional-de-desarrollo-2030/. Accessed 10 October 2023.

[33] https://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/soil-doctors-programme/about-the-programme/en/

[34] The GEF-6 funded project *Promoting Climate-smart Livestock Management in the Dominican Republic* was implemented by FAO in Yuna basin. It ended in November 2022, but the green financing scheme in collaboration with the RD Agricultural bank remains active.

[35] The Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management have been developed by FAO for assisting different stakeholders in the implementation of SSM. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6874e.pdf.

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

No

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

At the request of the government, FAO may help execute up to $300,000 to lead the design and implementation of processes for soil sampling, laboratory capacity analysis and the design of the decision support system in line with activities being carried out under SOILCARE I and planned for SOILCARE II. These resources will be used to hire international consultants and to cover their travel costs to carry out

capacity building activities for national experts hired by the executing agency. The tools mentioned above will be adapted to national circumstances by local experts under the guidance of FAO

The proposed project will collaborate with ongoing programs in the country, including:

- Integrated Landscape Management in Dominican Republic Watersheds (GEFID 10216), implemented by the World Bank. The proposed project will build on approaches and methodologies developed to improve watershed management.
- Promoting Climate-smart Livestock Management in the Dominican Republic (GEFID 10054). The proposal will build on livestock management models (Climate smart livestock assessment and strategy, training program to promote best practices including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions) implemented during the life of the project. The proposed project will take the lessons learned and apply them in the participatory processes in the target basins.
- CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase1: Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) multicountry soil management initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and climate-resilient food systems (GEFID 10195). The proposed project will coordinate very closely with the SOILCARE Phase I program as well as the Phase II program currently under development. Specifically, the proposed project will take advantage of the tools developed with the support of the Global Soil Partnership to collect soil data to prepare soil maps for decision making as well as the strengthened network of soil laboratories and the extension services (Soil doctors). It is expected that the data collected under the proposed project will be shared with the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS).
- The proposed project will look for opportunities to collaborate with other projects currently being developed in the context of different integrated programs. This includes collaborating and sharing knowledge with Trinidad and Tobago (GEFID 11259) and Cuba (GEFID 11253) both under the Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program. Both these projects target food and urban sectors.

- Finally, the proposed project will also collaborate with the ISLANDS Atlantic Regional Project (GEFID 10848), particularly on the methodologies being developed by FAO and UNEP to reduce the use of chemicals

- Finally, the proposed project will coordinate actions with several projects funded by the GCF, such as the Readiness and Preparatory Support ´´Developing Capacities to Advance the National Adaptation Plan Process of the Dominican Republic´´ (NAP) and Ecosystem-Based Adaptation to Increase Climate Resilience in the Central American Dry Corridor and Arid Zones of the Dominican Republic. This coordination will facilitate the exchange of information and experiences in the implementation of methodologies and institutional arrangements to develop and implement early warning systems for droughts and floods, as well as promotion of adaptation actions based on ecosystems aimed at integrated management of natural resources in hydrographic basins, including sustainable agroforestry management, soil conservation and rainwater harvesting, articulated with financial mechanisms.

Core Indicators

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1960	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1,960.00			

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
15700	0	0	0

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
15,700.00			

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Areas were calculated as follows:

- CI3: Restoration of 1,960 hectares of forest lands at a total cost of $1000 per hectare. Total cost estimated at $1.1 million dollars with the project covering $274k under component 2. Cofinancing provided by partners and beneficiaries

- CI4: Includes improvement 15,700 ha under coffee (agroforestry) and 100 hectares or silvopastoral system.

SCCF CORE INDICATORS

SCCF A – CI 1 Direct beneficiaries include people in the target basins that will benefit from land use planning activities and early warning systems. CI 4 refers to those that will be supported by the project through the Soil Doctors Program and who may receive financial benefits from the project.

According to data from the last Agricultural Precensus of the Dominican Republic (2015) only the 16.3% of national producers are women out of physically surveyed people. During the PPG phase, affirmative actions and measures to identify and include in the project women producers, women producers' organizations and CSO with a focus on women equality operating in the area, will be carried out. Results will be based on a social and environmental assessment identifying specific needs and interests of women. We expect the target to be increased closer to parity during the preparation phase.

META INFORMATION – SCCF

LDCF **false**	SCCF-B (Window B) on technology transfer **false**	SCCF-A (Window-A) on climate Change adaptation **true**

Is this project LDCF SCCF challenge program? **false**
This Project involves at least one small island developing State(SIDS). **true**
This Project involves at least one fragile and conflict affected state. **false**
This Project will provide direct adaptation benefits to the private sector. **false**

This Project is explicitly related to the formulation and/or implementation of national adaptation plans (NAPs). **false**
This project will collaborate with activities begin supported by other adaptation funds. If yes, please select below

Green Climate Fund **false**	Adaptation Fund **false**	Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) **false**

This Project has an urban focus. **false**
This project will directly engage local communities in project design and implementation **true**
This project will support South-South knowledge exchange **true**
This Project covers the following sector(s)[the total should be 100%]: *

Agriculture	80.00%
Nature-based management	0.00%
Climate information services	20.00%
Coastal zone management	0.00%
Water resources management	0.00%
Disaster risk management	0.00%
Other infrastructure	0.00%
Tourism	0.00%
Health	0.00%
Other (Please specify comments)	0.00%
Total	100.00%

This Project targets the following Climate change Exacerbated/introduced challenges:*

Sea level rise **false**	Change in mean temperature **false**	Increased climatic variability **true**	Natural hazards **true**
Land degradation **true**	Coastal and/or Coral reef degradation **false**	Groundwater quality/quantity **false**	

CORE INDICATORS – SCCF

	Total	Male	Female	% for Women
CORE INDICATOR 1 Total number of direct beneficiaries	19,732	9,866.00	9,866.00	50.00%

CORE INDICATOR 2 (a) Area of land managed for climate resilience (ha) (b) Coastal and marine area managed for climate resilience (ha)	113,346.00 0.00			
CORE INDICATOR 3 Number of policies/plans/ frameworks/institutions for to strengthen climate adaptation	2.00			
CORE INDICATOR 4 Number of people trained or with awareness raised	1,500	1,200.00	300.00	20.00%
CORE INDICATOR 5 Number of private sector enterprises engaged in climate change adaptation and resilience action	0.00			

Risks to Project Preparation and Implementation

Summarize risks that might affect the project preparation and implementation phases and what are the mitigation strategies the project preparation process will undertake to address these (e.g. what alternatives may be considered during project preparation-such as in terms of consultations, role and choice of counterparts, delivery mechanisms, locations in country, flexible design elements, etc.). Identify any of the risks listed below that would call in question the viability of the project during its implementation. Please describe any possible mitigation measures needed. (The risks associated with project design and Theory of Change should be described in the "Project description" section above). The risk rating should reflect the overall risk to project outcomes considering the country setting and ambition of the project. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low.

Risk Categories	Rating	Comments
Climate	Moderate	Extreme weather events related to climate change and climate variability may occur such as draughts, floods and landslides. While the climate risk in the project area is high, the project integrates climate-related capacity building, data gathering and exchange, and adaptation interventions to modulate the climate risk. During preparation, the project will conduct a climate risk/impact assessment to propose adaptation measures related to these risks, including community preparedness to reduce drought and flood risks, drought-resistant local crop varieties, and community

		monitoring and forest fire protection systems.
Environment and Social	Moderate	Socio-environmental conflicts of interest with local communities in the targeted areas. There are not significant conflicts of interest in the target areas. However, the project will conduct a socio-economic assessment and stakeholder and gender action plans to minimize social issues. The Project will also guarantee coordination mechanisms to reach a consensus between the productive sector and the Project coordinators on mutually agreed actions, as well as the spaces for settling and reducing controversies. Interests will be balanced in the design of actions and activities. Training and education actions will help to prevent this type of conflicts by stressing the advantages of combining both interests and ensuring synergies that will lead to the best results.
Political and Governance	Moderate	Change of authorities or key officers in the most important national counterparts. Agreements not recognized under formal and informal agreements for SLM During the PPG phase, high-level negotiations are conducted with relevant government stakeholders to effectively ensure key commitments, including co-financing. This will involve both senior and field implementing officials in project design and implementation. As soon as possible during project implementation, mainstream temporary arrangements and pilot actions into long-term public programs, with specific budget allocations for project components. Strengthen the project participants'

		networks, thereby increasing their ownership and stewardship, regardless of unexpected changes due to political/institutional factors.
Macro-economic	Low	Lack of quality investment opportunities generated by the SLM actions proposed by the project The project will encourage smallholders to increase their income through the use of SLM best practices, payments for environmental services, and other market-based incentives. Financial incentives will also be introduced, including a revolving fund for access to climate adaptation technologies. The project will improve value chains, analyze potential markets, and work with the private sector to develop robust investment plans that minimize investment risks for farmers
Strategies and Policies	Low	Existing policy and regulatory frameworks conflict with the informed and integrated land-use planning approach to achieve land degradation neutrality and adaptive development. The project design includes several outputs related to strengthening governance, including the revision of policy and regulatory frameworks. In addition, the project includes training and technical assistance for the implementation of sustainable production systems and restoration of degraded areas. During the PPG, training and technical assistance needs will be fully assessed and strategies will be defined and included in the final project design.
Technical design of project or program	Low	High turnover of personnel comprising the project team and lack of specialists in some areas of knowledge required by the Project. Rigorous selection and training will

		be provided for project team members, including the technical and time requirements in the TOR for each position. International capacities will be used, which will also strengthen national institutional capacities.
Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability	Moderate	Inter-institutional disagreements due to different visions and approaches Coordination mechanisms and inter-institutional cooperation will be foreseen. Participating institutions will be consulted during the design phase and over the course of the Project's life cycle, ensuring that their visions and approaches be taken into consideration, respecting the powers and functions established.
Fiduciary: Financial Management and Procurement	Low	Difficulties in budget planning and execution The prospective executing partner (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, MARN in Spanish) has a strong capacity of financial and procurement record. If MARN cannot execute FAO Implemented project, then FAO will make a call for Expressions of Interest to find an executing partner during the early stages of the preparation phase
Stakeholder Engagement	Low	Lack of farmers' interest and motivation to participate in the project. Participating producers with a genuine interest and motivation will be targeted during the formulation process. In addition, the selection of beneficiaries' will be articulated with the associations of local producers that will support the deployment of field activities. Local experiences will be taken into consideration and there will be ongoing consultations with the communities and key actors. The Project will also implement tested

		measures and approaches that ensure the generation of producers' economic and financial benefits. This socio-economic feature is expected to be a strong rationale for farmers to participate in proposed climate smart practices and technologies (learning, testing, and sharing).
Other	Moderate	Potential pandemic-related health risks that may arise during project implementation. In response to Covid - 19, FAO has developed and adopted a number of coping strategies at both the national and international levels to ensure that projects are able to move forward. Similarly, the impacts will be most pronounced in the short term and will diminish over time. During the project design phase, the project will consider remote working conditions, if applicable, and whether they are appropriate for conducting technical assistance activities. For field activities, the project will be designed to rely primarily on national and government staff. This will limit the requirements and constraints associated with international travel
Financial Risks for NGI projects		Not applicable
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	For moderate-risk projects, FAO requires a limited social and environmental impact assessment (ESIA) and review. The ESIA will describe the potential environmental and social risks and impacts, and the appropriate mitigation measures. The ESIA will focus on the application of recognized good practices that will ensure the relevance of the interventions. Once the potential environmental and social risks and impacts of programme or project activities are identified, measures to mitigate, monitor and manage the

		impacts need to be established. Measures to manage and mitigate risks and impacts shall be reflected in an Environmental and Social Management Plan and included in the assessment. These further assessments will be carried out during PPG phase.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

95. The proposed project is aligned with both the Land Degradation focal area, particularly with Objective 1: Avoiding and reducing land degradation through sustainable land management (SLM), and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF-A) which targets climate change adaptation. The project builds on the country's Land Degradation Neutrality Targets ,the National Adaptation Strategy , the National Development Strategy (NDS), and the territorial planning process within the Dominican Republic (RD),

96. Under component 1, the project will strengthen the enabling environment for SLM, including (i) the collection of soil data and climate change related indicators to support decision-making, (ii) the design of a decision support system using Google Earth Engine to use the data collected, in order to (iii) develop land use and investment plans to reduce degradation, strengthen resilience and climate change adaptation capacity in the target landscapes. By promoting sustainable land management practices, such as agroforestry, reforestation, and soil conservation, the project directly supports LDN objectives. It aims to reduce land degradation and enhance the resilience of ecosystems, aligning with the LDN principles and the country's commitment to achieving LDN as outlined in its national action plan.

97. Under components 2 and 3, the project will implement best practices (including regenerative agriculture practices and drought-smart land management approaches) to improve the resilience of target ecosystems and communities. The project will invest in livelihood development through the promotion of entrepreneurship and sustainable finance. The project will invest significant resources to target women and youth farmers to diversify their agricultural production and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to hazards, to improve their managerial and production capacity while improving their value chains, as well as providing renewed access to markets. The project's efforts to improve soil health, enhance biodiversity, and promote climate-smart land management are in line with the Dominican Republic's strategy for climate change adaptation. The project recognizes the interconnection between land management and climate resilience, aiming to mitigate the impact of climate change through sustainable practices. It supports the country's endeavors to adapt to changing climatic conditions, enhance ecosystem resilience, and ensure sustainable agricultural and land-use practices that are less vulnerable to climate-related risks.

98. The project is consistent with the NDS of the Dominican Republic, which outlines the country's long-term development vision. The National Development Strategy (NDS) of the Dominican Republic for the year 2030 establishes an ambitious vision of a prosperous and equitable country, committed to ethical values and

grounded in participatory democracy. With four interconnected strategic axes, the NDS addresses fundamental challenges in institutional, social, economic, and environmental areas. The emphasis on building an efficient and ethical state, promoting equality of rights and opportunities, seeking an innovative and sustainable economy, and fostering a culture of sustainable production and consumption reflects a new development model. The NDS proposes comprehensive transformation, aiming to overcome inequalities, strengthen public and private management, and promote environmentally sustainable practices. This strategic framework provides guidance for decision-making and actions involving all sectors of society, with the active and responsible participation of the population as a fundamental pillar to achieve a Dominican Republic free from poverty and inequity.

99. The proposed project not only addresses environmental and sustainability concerns but also directly contributes to achieving the goals and targets set in the National Development Strategy of the Dominican Republic for the year 2030. In particular:

a. In the first Strategic Axis (A social and democratic state of law), the project contributes to strengthening the social and democratic state of law by promoting improved environmental management and climate resilience through specific measures, such as the development of land use management plans, forest area restoration, and the adoption of climate-resilient practices.

b. In the second Strategic Axis (A society with equal rights and opportunities), the project addresses inequality by improving food security and promoting equal opportunities for agricultural communities. Sustainable development initiatives and the adoption of sustainable management practices will contribute to improving living conditions and reducing the vulnerability of affected populations.

c. In the third Strategic Axis (A territorially and sectoral integrated economy), the project fosters an environmentally sustainable and diversified economy by promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices, efficient natural resource management, and equitable economic growth.

d. In the Fourth Strategic Axis (A society with a culture of sustainable production and consumption), the project aligns with the promotion of a culture of sustainable production by addressing soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change challenges through the implementation of sustainable agricultural and land management practices.

100. The Dominican Republic in addition committed to reaching land degradation neutrality in the year 2030, through restoration of lands currently undergoing degradation and by preventing degradation of non-degraded lands within 262,000 hectares. To meet this goal, the country commits to:

- Increasing the forest cover of the country by 8.5%, through reforestation of 11,900 ha by 2030
- By 2025, improve land productivity within 30,000 hectares of dry forest, namely through sustainable forest management practices, by strengthening the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' forest management capacity, and by implementing a payment for ecosystem services program in targeted areas.
- By 2030, reduce the area affected by forest fires by 50% (42,000 ha), by improving forest management in order to prevent and control forest fires and by implementing awareness campaigns to prevent forest fires.
- By 2025, improve net primary productivity within 20,000 hectares of agricultural lands by implementing sustainable land management practices and biophysical soil conservation measures, appropriate use of irrigation water, and by improving machining practices.
- By 2030, reduce 20% (14,000 ha) of hillside agriculture in lands with high erosion potential (lands with a slope equal or beyond a 15% incline), by encouraging different production alternatives using sustainable technology

and changes to land use, implementing training and outreach programs, applying policies and direct actions according to the specifications in section 122 of Act 64-100, as well as special incentives policies for farming on land with a slope equal or beyond a 15% incline.

- By 2030, improve the net primary productivity of land over 100,000 hectares of shrubs and pasture lands, with measures promoting controlled grazing, genetic improvement of livestock, management and improvement of grasslands and conservationist soil practices.

- By 2030, induce natural regeneration with coniferous and broadleaf forests in 20,000 hectares of land dominated by shrubs and grasslands.

- By 2020, land use planning will have been promoted and supported in 30 pilot municipalities within areas critically exposed to land degradation processes[37][30].

101. The Project will help the country meet its objectives, responsibilities, and commitments under the UNCCD Convention, its LDN country commitments described above and associated national strategies. Specifically, the project directly addresses land degradation policies, plans and programs supporting the implementation of current initiatives to contribute to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submissions, national action plans (NAP[38][31]), national drought plans (NDP[39][32]) and other international commitments of the target country.

103. The territorial location of the project within the Dominican Republic is not only a matter of geographical significance but also strategic relevance. The project's focus on specific regions means that it can tailor its interventions to address the unique environmental challenges and opportunities of these areas. This targeted approach ensures that the project's activities are well-suited to the local context and align with the territorial order defined by the Dominican government.

103. Overall, the project will generate global environmental benefits such as reducing the conversion of natural habitats by strengthening the policy and adaptive environment (and following the LDN hierarchy of avoid, reduce and restore), improve soil health and reduce soil erosion, reduce risks against floods, droughts and wildfires, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The goal is to turn the target areas into resilient and sustainable agroecosystems.

[37] https://www.unccd.int/our-work/country-profiles/voluntary-ldn-targets

[38] https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/naps/Dominican%2520Republic.pdf

[39] https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/country_profile_documents/Informe%2520final%2520Plan%2520Nacional%2520Sequia%2520COMPLETO_0.pdf

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: Yes

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

104. During the preparation of the PIF, local and national coordination and monitoring meetings were held with officials from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, local actors and FAO. During these periods, workshops and bilateral meetings for broad consultation were held with the participation of public and private actors, civil society, banking entities, academia and research centers. The participation of each interest group and their definitive role in the project will be evaluated/analyzed in the PPG phase.

105. Please see below a table with a list of key stakeholders and their expected role during project implementation (Table 1) and a list of stakeholders consulted (Table 2). The participation of stakeholder and their definitive role in the project will be evaluated and analyzed in the PPG phase.

Table 1 Stakeholder list and expected role during implementation

Stakeholders	Summary of Mandates	Roles in Project Implementation
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA)	Public institution responsible for the formulation of national policies related to the environment and natural resources, and to guarantee the sustainable use and management of renewable natural resources and the environment. MMA hosts the GEF OFP and has a Directorate of Climate Change responsible for ensuring compliance and maintaining follow-up to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changed	Project executing partner and leader of the implementation through the vice ministry of Climate Change and sustainability, which will coordinate actions with other public and private institutions. The Vice Ministry of Soils and Waters and the Vice Ministry of Forest Resources will technically accompany the implementation of activities in the prioritized watersheds.
Ministry of Agriculture	The Ministry's Department of Risk Management and Climate Change is directly responsible, or in coordination with other entities, for climate change adaptation activities in the agricultural sector to support food security in the country	Participation in the project development and implementation especially with technical assistance to producers in the prioritized watersheds.

Interinstitutional Technical Group of MARN (GTI)	GTI is a coordination entity of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. It is in charge of mitigating and addressing land degradation and desertification in the country	Assist in project development and implementation
Local Governments	Responsible for overseeing land-use management at local level, within their areas of jurisdiction. They include the Provincial Directorate of San José de Ocoa and the Community Councils of Ocoa and Nizao Basins	Assist the project development and implementation in the targeted areas at community level
Dominican Agrarian Institute (IAD)	The IAD is a decentralized agency of the State, attached to the Ministry of Agriculture with the purpose of executing Agrarian Reform programs throughout the national geography, through the acquisition and distribution of land to peasants to transform the agrarian structure and production, improving living conditions in the Dominican countryside	IAD will provide technical assistance in the design and implementation of the project
Research institutions	The Center for agricultural and forestry development (CEDAF) is a foundation that promotes the sustainable development of the agricultural and forestry sector through training, information, institutional innovation and analysis of sectoral policies and strategies, backed by an image of institutional excellence and high credibility in order to stimulate a competitive agriculture that contributes to reducing poverty levels and protecting the environment. The Dominican Institute of Agricultural and Forestry Research (IDIAF) is the public institution responsible for executing the agricultural and forestry research and validation policy in the country.	They will provide technical assistance in the design and implementation of the project and will deliver trainings for producers
National Office on Meteorology (ONAMET)	Act as a specialized technical agency, in charge of providing meteorological services to the entire country and complying with all international commitments resulting from its affiliation with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).	Support the project in the design and implementation phase especially regarding early warning systems tools and instruments
General Directorate of Livestock (DIGEGA)	DIGEGA is a dependency of the Ministry of Agriculture. DIGEGA has traditionally played a key role in the protection and development of the national livestock. DIGEGA hosts the MEGALECHE Extension Program, which aim is to promote the organization of producers in associations and cooperatives.	Will be giving technical assistance to farms and producers' associations to promotes the implementation of good practices and delivers training on sustainable livestock management.
National Council for regulation and promotion of the dairy industry (CONALECHE)	CONALECHE elaborates and executes the dairy policy in order to promote self-sufficiency and to improve the sector's productivity and competitiveness levels.	Will be financing beneficiary farms on good practices and technologies for sustainable livestock.
Dominican Coffee Institute	Training farmers and coffee industry's stakeholders	Support in project implementation and assist in the development of training to farmers.
Farmer organizations	Support and organize farmers in the project area	The farmers' organizations and their members are the downstream beneficiaries of the project
NGOs and Civil Society Organizations	Local non-governmental organizations of the sector are integrated into the agricultural development of the country. They include the Association for the development of San José de Ocoa (ADESEJO), Floresta Inc., Yaque Plan, REDDOM foundation	Participate in the preparation and implementation of the project
Academica	They promote education and research on climate change and agriculture. They include the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD) and ISA University.	Support for research studies and technical consultancy, training and the implementation knowledge management platform and sharing lessons learned on sustainable agriculture, climate change and GHG emission reduction. Soil laboratory facilities to support project activities.

Dominican Hydroelectric Generation Company (EGEHID)	Dominican government company that currently manages the country's hydroelectric plants. It is aimed at generating quality electrical energy, in harmony with the environment.	Support to the project by promoting Incentive schemes for payments for environmental services (PES) based on successful experiences developed in the country's basins.
Agricultural Bank	Financing productive activities of the agricultural and agro-business sector	Participation in the design of the financial strategy to promote sustainable agriculture in the project area

Table 2 Llist of stakeholders consulted during the design process of the PIF:

Institution	Date of consultation
Association for the development of San José de Ocoa, (ADESEJO)	February 2020 / July 2021
Provincial Directorate of San José de Ocoa	February 2020
Farmer of Ocoa and Nizao basins	February 2020
Community Councils of Ocoa and Nizao Basins	February 2020
Interinstitutional Technical Group of MARN (GTI)	February 2020
Dominican Agrarian Institute (IAD)	June 2020
MARENA Fund	June 2020
Small Grants Program	June 2020
REDDOM Foundation	June 2020
Floresta Inc.	June 2020
Ministry of Energy and Mines	June 2020
Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD)	December 2020
Center for agricultural development (CEDAF)	December 2020
National Institute of Hydraulic Resources	December 2020
Yaque Plan	December 2020
National Office on Meteorology	December 2020
Dominican Institute of Agricultural and Forestry Research (IDIAF)	December 2020
Dominican Agribusiness Board	July 2021
ISA University	September 2021
Agricultural Bank	December 2021/September 2023
Ministry of environment, Viceministry of Soils and Waters	July 2023
Ministry of environment, Viceministry of Forestry Resources	August 2023
National Council for Climate Change	August 2023
Ministry of Agriculture	December 2022/September 2023
General Directorate of Livestock	September 2023
Technical Executing Unit of Agroforestry Development Projects of the Presidency	September 2023
Dominican Coffee Institute	December 2022 / September 2023

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

Yes

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant($)	Agency Fee($)	Total GEF Financing ($)
FAO	GET	Dominican Republic	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	1,766,485.00	167,815.00	1,934,300.00
FAO	SCCF-A	Dominican Republic	Climate Change	SCCF-A Country allocation	Grant	2,649,727.00	251,723.00	2,901,450.00
Total GEF Resources ($)						**4,416,212.00**	**419,538.00**	**4,835,750.00**

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount ($)

150000

PPG Agency Fee ($)

14250

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	PPG($)	Agency Fee($)	Total PPG Funding($)
FAO	GET	Dominican Republic	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	60,000.00	5,700.00	65,700.00
FAO	SCCF-A	Dominican Republic	Climate Change	SCCF-A Country allocation	Grant	90,000.00	8,550.00	98,550.00
Total PPG Amount ($)						**150,000.00**	**14,250.00**	**164,250.00**

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total($)
FAO	GET	Dominican Republic	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	2,000,000.00
Total GEF Resources					**2,000,000.00**

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing($)	Co-financing($)
LD-1	GET	1,766,485.00	3955006
CCA-2-1	SCCF-A	2,649,727.00	11201914
Total Project Cost		**4,416,212.00**	**15,156,920.00**

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
Recipient Country Government	MARENA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	5750000
Recipient Country Government	MARENA	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	1760000

Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	390357
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	150000
Recipient Country Government	Banco Agricola	Loans	Investment mobilized	5500000
Recipient Country Government	Banco Agricola	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	10000
Recipient Country Government	CONALECHE	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	500000
Recipient Country Government	INDOCAFE	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	171696
Recipient Country Government	DIGEGA	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	100000
Recipient Country Government	DIGEGA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	42500
Recipient Country Government	IDIAF	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	50000
Recipient Country Government	INDRHI	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	30000
Recipient Country Government	EGEHID	Grant	Investment mobilized	255000
Recipient Country Government	UASD	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	105000
Private Sector	ISA University	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	50000
Private Sector	Producer organizations	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	60000
Civil Society Organization	ADESJO	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	51117
GEF Agency	FAO	Grant	Investment mobilized	100000
GEF Agency	FAO	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	81250
Total Co-financing				**15,156,920.00**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

- Ministry of Agriculture investment mobilized corresponds to a technical assistance program promoting sustainable productive systems based on agroforestry and livestock

- Investment mobilized from Banco Agricola corresponds to potential loans and grants mobilized by project beneficiaries. The proposed project will work with Banco Agricola to develop new lines of credit or reduce risk in existing ones

- Investment mobilized from CONALECHE, EGEHID, and DIGEGA corresponds to grants provided by these cooperatives and associations

- Investment mobilized from FAO corresponds to Technical Cooperation Program resources to support productive practices in the agriculture sector

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	Jeffrey Griffin	10/17/2023	Hernan Gonzalez	+390657055382	hernan.gonzalez@fao.org

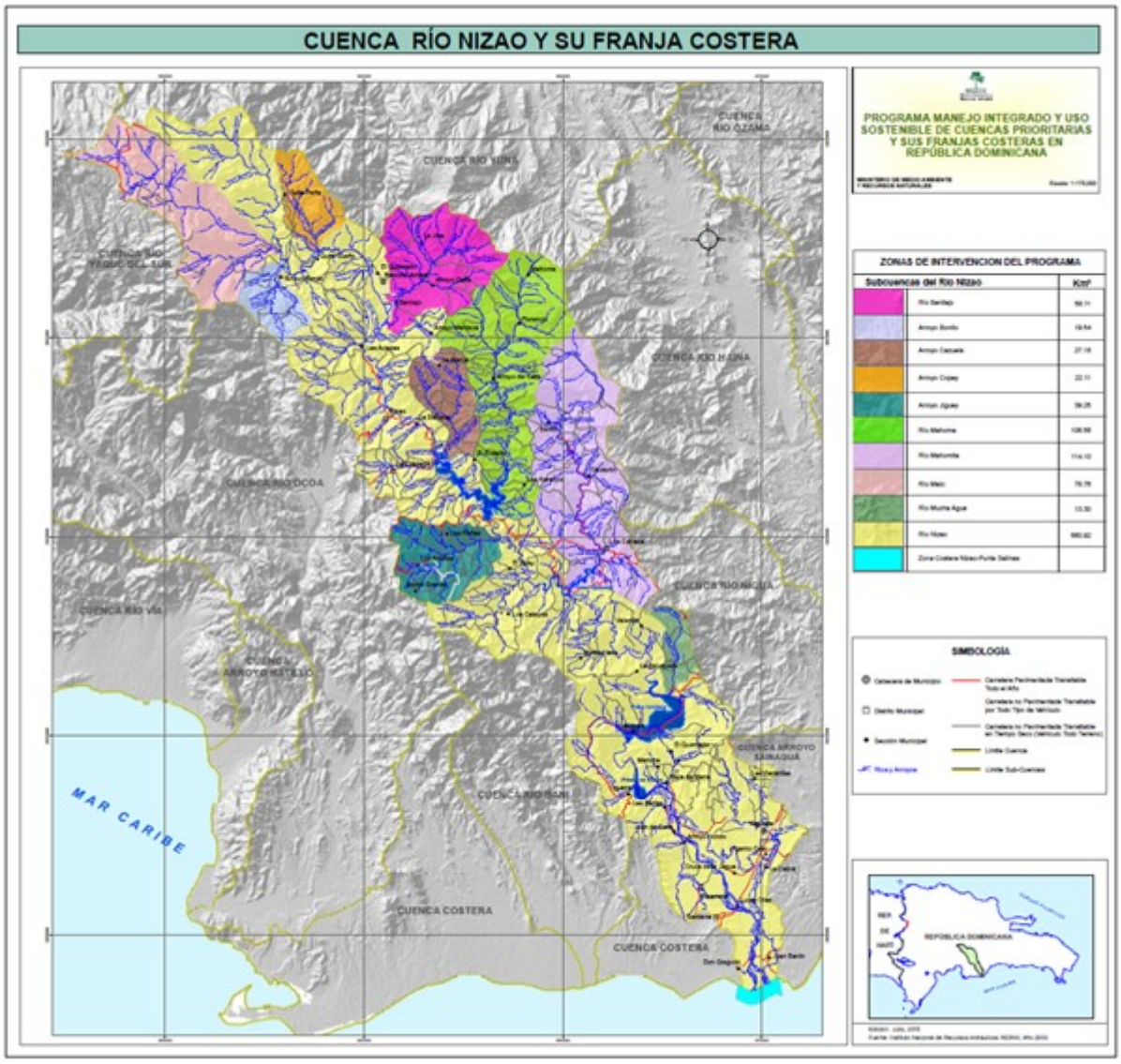
Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

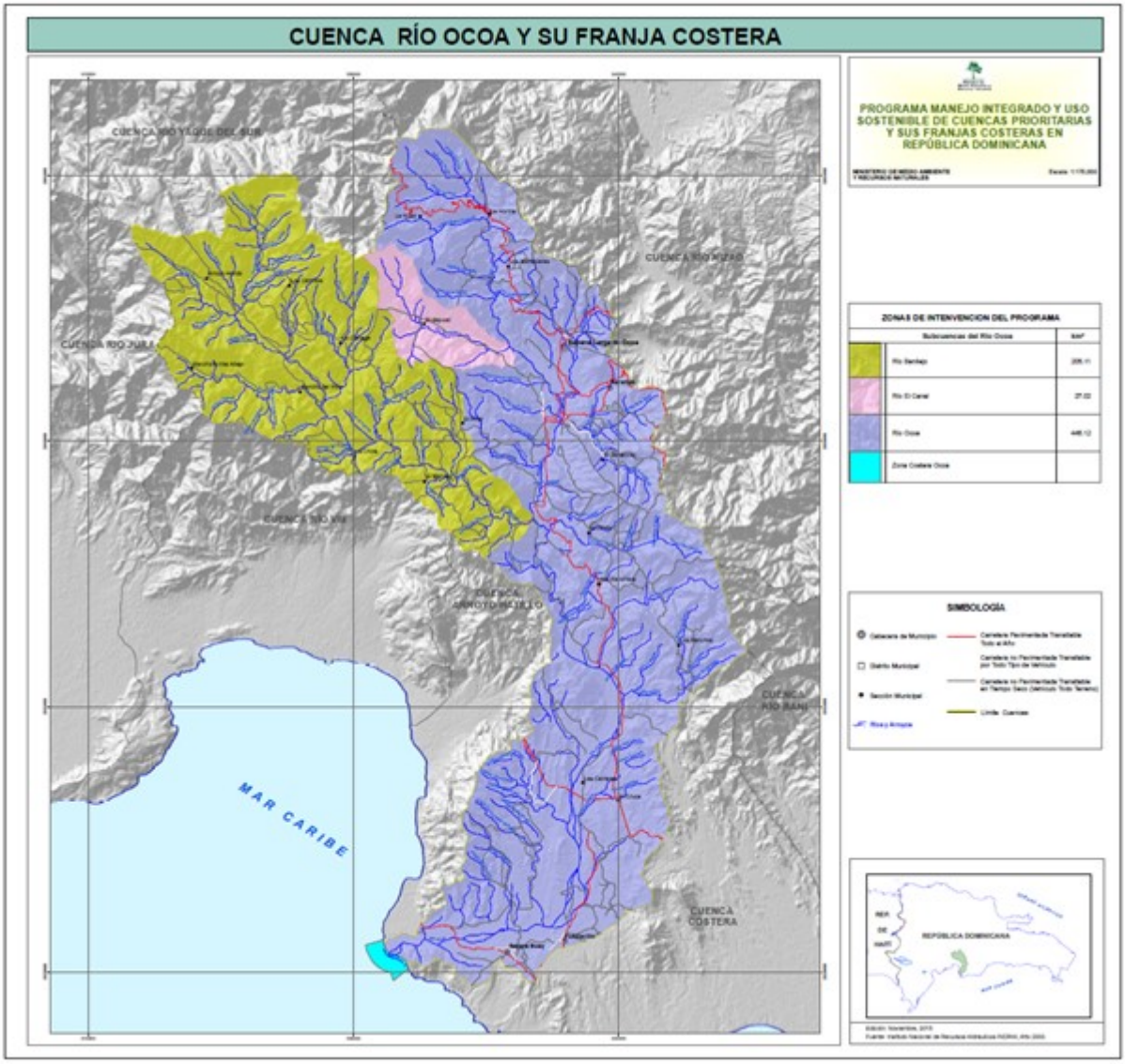
Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Ms. Milagros De Camps	Viceminister of International Cooperation	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	10/18/2023

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place

Basin	Latitude	Longitude	Area (km2)
Nizao	18°31’	18°24’	1039.84
OCOA	18°28’	70°33’	679.42


CUENCA RÍO NIZAO Y SU FRANJA COSTERA
PROGRAMA MANEJO INTEGRADO Y USO SOSTENIBLE DE CUENCAS PRIORITARIAS Y SUS FRANJAS COSTERAS EN REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA
ZONAS DE INTERVENCION DEL PROGRAMA
Subcuencas del Río Nizao
Km²
SIMBOLOGIA
CUENCA RIO YUNA
CUENCA RIO OZAMA
CUENCA RIO HAINA
CUENCA RIO DCOA
CUENCA RIO NIGUA
CUENCA RIO VÁ
CUENCA ARROYO BARIGUÁ
CUENCA COSTERA
MAR CARIBE
REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA



Number of potential beneficiaries in Ocoa and Nizao Provinces (SCCF A Core Indicator 1)

Number of potential beneficiaries in Ocoa and Nizao Provinces			
Provincies	**Producers**	**Municipalities**	**Indirect beneficiaries**
San Jose de Ocoa	5,846	Ocoa	4449
		Sabana Larga	780
		Ranco Arriba	1486
			6715
San Cristobal	18,042	Cambita	2,409
		Nigua	1,651
		Los cacaos	1,599
		Palenque	472
		Yaguate	1,824
			7,955
Peravia	5,816	Bani	2,881

		Nizao	810
			3,691
Azua	13,753	Las Charcas	477
		Estebania	894
			1,371
Total	**43,457**		**19,732**

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title

PIF Stage ES Risk Screening checklist

Dominican Republic climate risk screening

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
No Contribution 0	Principal Objective 2	No Contribution 0	Principal Objective 2

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Please refer to portal