



Rehabilitation and restoration of ecosystems in the Gum Arabic belt and sustainable use of forest resources in Mauritania

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11551

Countries

Mauritania

Project Name

Rehabilitation and restoration of ecosystems in the Gum Arabic belt and sustainable use of forest resources in Mauritania

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

3/21/2024

Review completed by PM

4/1/2024

Program Manager

Pascal Martinez

Focal Area

Land Degradation

Project Type

FSP

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

1. General Project Information / Eligibility

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

a) and b) Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments Thank you, noted.

2. Project Summary

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

In the last paragraph on the Global Environmental Benefits, please add the expected results for each relevant GEF Core Indicators including the number of beneficiaries.

April 29, 2024:

Thank you for the additional information. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

Added to summary section: The project is expected to directly benefit 60,000 community members, across the target wilayas, with 50 percent women targeted to be direct beneficiaries. The seven target wilayas have a total population of approximately 2 million people. Restoration and community-driven activities are planned for the wilayas of Assaba, Gorgol, and Brakna, where 80.000 ha of agro-silvopastoral land will be rehabilitated, within which 40.000 ha will be under improved practices. All wilayas will benefit from improved land-use planning and governance. At the end of the project implementation (2029), the climate change mitigation potential is expected to increase to around 52 000 tCO₂-e, and -313 000 tCO₂-e 20 years after project implementation (2044) (FAO, NEXT analysis, April 2024). Fully recognizing the high proportion of transhumance communities, which often move across different wilayas, restoration activities under this GEF8 project are planned to geographically complement other projects such as the "Support for the Implementation of the Great Green Wall (GGW) Project" (CMR1245), which focusses on restoring forest cover in the wilayas of Hodh Gharbi and Hodh Chargui.

3 Indicative Project Overview

3.1 a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?

b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

a) Yes, cleared.

b) The components are well structured with clear outputs/outcomes. Two comment though:

b.1 The component 2 type should be Investment rather than Technical assistance considering the outputs (restoration of forest and pastureland, Forest seed centers re-enforced ...). Please amend accordingly.

b.2. Please clarify what "FFS model" means.

April 29, 2024:

b.1 and b.2. Thank you for the amendment and clarification. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

a) thank you

b.1. Amended in PIF accordingly, in the LF.

b.2. FFS means Farmer Field School (model), this is now clarified in the PIF.

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Knowledge management and M&E are well included within the project components and appropriately funded.

1. We take note that a detailed gender strategy and action plan will be developed during the PPG phase. Nevertheless at this PIF stage, while gender considerations are briefly described, they are not clearly reflected in the description of the components/outcomes/outputs (except in output 3.1.2 and 4.2.2). Please consider further highlighting gender considerations in other parts of the project description wherever it is relevant, and notably in the outputs 2.2.1, 3.1.3, and 4.2.1 which are cited in the "Gender considerations" section.

2. In addition, we would like to underscore the need to ensure that policies, plans, and strategies developed are gender-responsive (e.g. Outputs 1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3.). Please indicate that when developing the GAP, it will be budgeted, reported, and monitored on.

April 29, 2024:

1. Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

2. The response to this comment is not explicit in the PIF. Please address this comment in the PIF (and clarify indicate where exactly it is done).

April 30, 2024:

2. Thank you for the inclusion in the PIF. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

1. Thank you for the comment. Please find it addressed in the LF of the PIF.

2. Outputs have been amended in the LF, to reflect the focus on gender equality. When developing the GAP, this will be reported, budgeted, and monitored on.

2. This is now explicitly mentioned in the PIF, in paragraph 25 (section B): A detailed gender strategy and action plan will be developed during the PPG phase to uncover the underlying gender dynamics hindering women and girls, as well as people with specific

needs from equally benefiting from project interventions, and lay out a clear road map for empowering women and youth including through the use of gender-sensitive budgeting to proactively support and benefit from the project's transformational approach to rehabilitating the mosaics of agro-silvopastoral landscapes along the Gum Arabic Belt. **The Gender Action Plan (GAP) will clearly report, budget and monitor policies, plans, and strategies as detailed in the LF from a gender-sensitive perspective.**

3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?

b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

a)

b) and c) Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments Thank you.

4 Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

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

b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

a)

a.1. The current situation regarding the involved stakeholders, their land rights and the value chains are unclear: please elaborate further on these aspects for a better understanding of the current baseline.

a.2. The illustration provided is interesting. Nevertheless the maps of Land cover (2020) and land cover degradation (2001-2020) in the Gum Arabic Belt have a low definition and are difficult to read. Please provide maps with higher resolution. Also, the text below the picture of acacia landscape mentions "Satellite imagery" but there isn't such satellite image. Please clarify.

a.3. Please clarify what "RCP 2.6 and 8.5" means.

a.4. Please clarify what "BDC" means.

b) Yes, cleared.

April 29, 2024:

a) Thank you for the maps and clarification. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

a:1: Thank you, please see new section A, **paragraph 8**, of the revised PIF.

a.2: The satellite image is added. Kindly note that we produced the higher resolution maps (in png), but were not able to upload them to the portal (in the text where they belong). We therefore opted to uploading them in the document repository section (see : map 1: land cover and map 2: land cover degradation).

a.3: RCP stands for "Representative Concentration Pathway". Of these RCPs, four are recognized by the scientific community. These pathways consider different levels of GHG emissions and timescales, which are then translated into climatic indices (changes in rainfall, temperature) over time. This gives important implications on whether an intervention is durable over time, in the light of climate change (at least when considering abiotic factors). RCP 2.6 is the low emission scenario and 8.5 is the highest emission scenario of these four RCP scenarios. The RCP is now spelled out in the revised PIF (**section A, para. 6**).

a.4: This is deleted now. Apologies for the oversight in the last PIF version.

b. Thank you.

4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT

a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?

b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?

c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?

d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

a) While clarifying the type of restoration as requested below, please justify why this type has been selected among other potential options.

b) Through restoration and improved governance, capacity and livelihood, the project is expected to enhance the resilience of the landscapes. Cleared.

c) It's unclear how the project design builds on lessons and experiences from previous investments and initiatives. Please elaborate further on this aspect, particularly using the lessons from the SAWAP. This project was very similar and operating in the same geographies so it is important to clarify why this new investment for a similar project is required.

d) Partially. Beyond the government agencies, the relevant stakeholders and their role remain vague ("CSOs", "private sector"...). Please identify clearly the stakeholders and provide a description of their respective role in the project.

April 29, 2024:

a), c) and d). Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

a) please see section A, **paragraph 7**, in the revised PIF.

b) Ok, well noted. Thank you.

c) please see section A, **paragraph 9**, in the revised PIF.

d) please see section A, **paragraph 17**, in the revised PIF, for additional details on the stakeholders.

5 B. Project Description

5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?

b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

a) Yes, cleared.

b)

b.1. The baseline description indicates that "An increase in environmental expenditures assuming the country's capacity to mobilize greater domestic revenues, will enable the project to sustainably scale up its transformational approach throughout the Gum Arabic Belt". Is this scaling up part of the project activities (it is explicit in the TOC) and if yes, how the increase of resource mobilization will be assured?

b.2. In addition to the Gum Arabic, the project also focuses on "other NTFPs". Please clarify what these other NTFPs are and their value chains.

b.3. There is a section titled "Risks to the Project" with the project description. Please consolidate and move this part in the Risk section of the Portal entry.

b.4. The component 5 is included in the same paragraph as component 4. Please separate the description of the 2 components in 2 different paragraphs.

b.5. The forest restoration will not be made only with native species. Please clarify the justification for and the proportion of the use of non-native species and ensure such activity is aligned with the objective of forest restoration and biodiversity conservation.

b.6. The numbers of the outputs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5 in the Indicative Project Overview table are different from the project description (2.2.1 and 2.2.2). Please correct.

b.7. The type of restoration used is unclear. We learn in the components description the "reforestation scale will be possible by using innovative technologies (such as drones), in combination with direct seeding" and below the core indicators table that "interventions include but are not limited to reforestation, assisted natural regeneration...". Please align the description of the outputs accordingly and explain the approach that will be used to select the restoration methods the most adapted to target sites.

b.8. The project plans to facilitate the access to micro-finance (output 3.1.3). Please clarify how and who are the stakeholders who will provide funds.

b.9. Please clarify in the PIF to what extent the presence of KBAs (noting that the KBA assessments for most if not all KBAs in Mauritania date back 2001 and may no longer be accurate) and protected areas will be taken into account in the land use and forest ecosystem management plans to be developed by the project. Please also clarify how

KBAs and PAs will be taken into account in the type and location of project-supported on-the-ground activities.

b.10. Please clarify what "nature-positive" NFTP/Gum Arabic production means in practice in the context of this project or please consider removing this unnecessary jargon.

b.11. - The PIF refers to a participatory approach, but it is unclear how it relates to activities under component 1 that includes all the strategic planning (LUP, national strategy for NTFPs, forest ecosystem management plan). Please clarify in the PIF what the participatory approach means in practice in the context of this project. Please also explain how the plans (iLUP of output 1.1.1, management plan of 1.1.3, livestock corridor of output 2.1.5) and governance mechanism (e.g. the community clubs of output 2.2.1) to be developed by the project relates to, and builds on, existing territorial governance arrangements.

April 29, 2024:

b.1 and b2. Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

b.3. Not addressed: There is still a section titled "Risks to the Project" after the components description while there is a specific section on risks in the Portal entry. Please consolidate and move this part in the Risk section of the Portal entry.

b.4, b.5, b.6, b.7, b.8, b.9, b.10 and b11. Thank you for the amendments and clarification. Cleared.

April 30, 2024:

b.3. Thank you for the amendment. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

a) thank you

b.1. Revised and added to PIF (**section A, para.14**): The Government is currently working towards mobilizing additional resources to support environmental sustainability across agro-silvopastoral landscapes as well as the Gum Arabic (and NTFPs) value chains. For this, the Government is developing key bilateral relations with other countries that are expected to mobilize additional resources. Implementing this GEF8 project resources in support of agro-silvopastoral livelihoods and ecosystems will greatly support the Government of Mauritania is mobilizing resources with additional partners in the present and future, which will be crucial for further upscaling the GEF8 project activities to other project locations.

b.2. Please find this info in [section A, para 7](#), as for example. (In short: the other two main NTFPs? value chains the project

will look at and consider during the PPG phase are Balanites and Jujube. Balanites NTFPs could for example be used to produce essential oils. However, these options would be considered together with local communities (also considering their role in functioning ecosystems), during the PPG phase.)

b.3. This is noted. Thank you. [This is now moved to the risk section and consolidated.](#)

b.4. This is noted. Thank you.

b.5: All trees proposed for restoration activities are native to Mauritania, including Acacia, Balanites, and Jujube. For fodder trees and other shrubs, the project will make sure to focus on species that traditionally grow in the Sahel context. This focus on native tree species that are well adapted to the semi-arid conditions in South-West Mauritania will also contribute to biodiversity conservation. This is re-iterated [in section B, para.3.](#)

b.6. Thank you, addressed.

b.7. Thank you. The following text has been added to the PIF [\(section A, para 7\)](#): A combination of approaches will be applied. In support of agro-forestry systems, direct seeding with communities will be the prevalent restoration method. The rehabilitation and restoration of agro-silvopastoralist landscapes (beyond agro-forestry systems) will be supported via aerial seeding with drones, to reach the vast and often remote areas of Mauritania. Natural-assisted regeneration will be supported in close engagement with local communities. During the PPG stage, the project designer will identify, in collaboration with local authorities and communities, which technique is best to use, as per the individual project sites.

b.8. Thank you, addressed in [section B \(para 8\)](#): The project will support smallholders in accessing micro-finance resources, which are available through, for example, the Government entity CDD (Caisse des D?p?ts et de D?veloppement), which provides micro-finance for rural stakeholders, to support sustainable use of the agro-silvopastoral landscape. During the PPG phase, additional micro-finance opportunities will be identified, focussing on the private sector, such as Gum Arabic and NTFP exporting companies.

b.9. Thank you, addressed in [section B \(para 7\)](#): In sum: KBAs (Key Biodiversity Areas) and PAs (Protected Areas) will be considered in the land use and forest ecosystem management plans to be developed under this project. As pointed out by the GEF reviewer, most KBA assessments in Mauritania date back to 2001. During the PPG phase, the project designer will commission a small study on their status and relevance, regarding this GEF8 project. Based on the results of this assessment, and feedback from the local communities and administration, this GEF8 project will integrate these KBAs and PAs as

project locations, for on-the-ground activities. The focus would be to closely engage with communities as well as Government authorities from the Ministry of Environment, to sustainably maintain and utilize natural resources in the KBAs, while restoring PAs where required.

b.10. Thank you, addressed.

b.11. Thank you, addressed in **section B, para 7**: In sum: the strategic frameworks under component 1 will benefit from the participatory engagement of communities as the project will organize workshops and surveying exercises with local communities to collect their feedback, concerns, and needs for such frameworks. Related meetings are planned to also be attended by local authorities to facilitate discussions and mutual understanding about natural resource use in the project locations, and best strategies for sustainable resource use. The collected information from these workshops and surveys will be considered in the strategic planning. The existing territorial governance arrangements will be mapped out during the PPG phase and will inform/ be considered in outputs 1.1.1, 1.1.3, and 2.1.5. The community clubs (2.2.1) will also consider the present arrangements while providing space for discussing and proposing local resource use arrangements that are sustainable with regard to the future.

5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

1. The incremental cost reasoning is unclear. As presented, it is mostly a repetition of what each component will do. Please complete adding briefly what is the situation without GEF investment and how the co-financing will contribute to each component.
2. Considering previous investments on similar topics in the same geographies, please confirm this project is not a duplication of existing initiatives by clarifying its the added value.
3. As mentioned in the core indicators section, please assess the climate benefit and complete the "xx" in the expression "xx tons of CO₂e avoided".

April 29, 2024:

- 1, 2 and 3. Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

1. **Added to para 19, section B:** Without GEF, the government is working on different activities such as protections against bushfires, reforestation campaigns, drones purchase for aerial seeding etc. However, the government lacks financing to scale up these activities and has limited technical capacity to implement these more efficiently. Co-financing from the government will be provided through human resources, local offices, and well as equipment (such as additional drones) - which will be made available for the implementation of all components.

2. **Added to para 18, section A:** It is confirmed that the project is not a duplication but complements existing initiatives, in terms of geography. For example, the SAWAP project is also implemented in Trarza and Gorgol. However, the project sites of SAWAP and the GEF 8 will be different and complement each other, allowing to cover larger geographical areas. The final locations will be decided with communities and local authorities, during the PPG stage.

3. Ok, addressed. **Paragraph 21, section B.**

5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?

b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).

c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area

d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

a) Yes, cleared.

b) According to the implementation framework, FAO doesn't plan to execute any role in the project. Nevertheless, in the risk section, the description mentions "OPIM QA mechanism". Please clarify and if FAO plans to execute some role, then indicate the consequence in the project budget (if any).

c) Yes, cleared.

d) The Agency mentions that "We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)". Nevertheless, we don't find a clear and complete description of the approach (component 4 description is very succinct). Please clarify and complete as needed the description

presenting the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication.

April 29, 2024:

b) and d) Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

a) thank you.

b) Added to PIF (**risks table**): FAO does not intend to execute. In fact, FAO's OPIM modality serves as a contractual tool to allow for direct implementation by the OP (Operational Partner), which would be MEV (previous MEDD) in the case of Mauritania. However, in support of the OP, FAO provides technical backstopping and technical support to the OP, which is financed under the fee. OPIM QA elements to be executed by FAO, e.g. spot checks, will be included into the project budget during the PPG phase.

c) thank you.

d) Please see revised **paragraph 9**, section B.

5.4 a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?

b) Are the project's indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

a) The expected Global Environmental Benefits derived under this project include maintaining and improving the carbon sequestration potential (which is normal through restoration and reduced land degradation). Nevertheless there is no expected target for this benefit. Please estimate and add a target for the core indicator 6.1.

b) The project plans to have a measurable direct impact over a total of 80,000 ha, which, depending on the restoration method, may be small relative to a \$5.3 million GEF project financing. To assess the relevance of the targeted restoration area, please indicate the forest restoration cost per hectare based on the type of restoration and existing similar experiences and eventually revise the target.

April 29, 2024:

a) Thank you for the consideration. Nevertheless, the duration of accounting should be 20 years (and not 5 years) and the anticipated start year of accounting should be 2025 at the

soonest. Please correct the 3 information provided for the indicator 6.1 accordingly (target, duration of accounting and anticipated start year of accounting). Also, please upload in the Portal the Ex-ACT tool used for the calculation.

b) Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

April 30, 2024:

a) Thank you for the amendments. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

a) thank you. This has now been added to the table of core indicators. Thank you for this comment from 29 April. With the anticipated start year of accounting being 2025, 313.000 tCo2-eq would be sequestered, after 20 years. This is now adjusted in the PIF. Kindly note we use NEXT (not EXACT), the calculations (PDF and word) are now attached to the submission of this PIF.

b) thank you. Kindly note the following:

The baseline of degradation (and final applied method of restoration) varies across the 80.000 ha that are targeted for restoration. Currently, the project plans with 2.1 USD million in support of component 2 (this equates to approximately to 26 USD/ hectare).

The cost per hectare of the different restoration methods depends on the level of degradation, which will be fully identified during PPG stage, for the different project locations. Averaging out the cost for the different restoration approaches, results in approximately 25-400 USD/ hectare, with lower costs associated with less eroded landscapes and innovative approaches such as aerial seeding.

It must be noted that the final composition of restoration methods applied will be decided together with local authorities and communities during the PPG stage. The estimates provided above are informed by data generated under the FAO GEF6 project as well as national expert estimation.

NB: as the aerial seeding with drones is an innovative approach in Mauritania, the final and exact cost needs to be determined during the PPG phase for this restoration method, and the total number of hectares covered under the project will be potentially adjusted.

This has been added to para 1, under the core indicator chapter.
5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKS

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

- a) Please review and confirm the "Substantial" risk rating for the Capacity for Execution risk category with a focus on ensuring that the residual risk rating is provided by accounting for anticipated mitigation measures.
- b) There is no risk identified under the category "Financial and Business Model". Nevertheless the access to microfinance is an important element of component 3. Is this access ensured? Please clarify.
- c) Yes, an ESS supporting document is uploaded with one low risk identified at this stage. Cleared.

April 29, 2024:

- a) and b) Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

- a) thank you, noted and addressed.
- b) The access is not yet ensured, but it is realistic, as micro-finance is available via the CDD, and the project will support smallholder in accessing it. Alternative micro-finance routes that can be utilised during the project implementation (and after) will be identified during PPG phase.
- c) Thank you.

5.7 Qualitative assessment

- a) **Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?**

b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?

c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

a), b) and c) Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments Thank you.

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Beyond the mentioned presence of KBAs across the large geographic area targeted by this project, the PIF does not articulate how it would deliver benefits for biodiversity of global significance. While the project is likely to have co-benefits for biodiversity of local relevance and on ecosystem services, it is unclear that the proposed interventions would benefit biodiversity of global significance. The section on alignment with GEF Programming directions only refers to the LD FA strategy. As such, the project is not eligible for BD FA financing. Please shift the entire programming of funds under the LD FA.

April 29, 2024:

Thank you for the consideration. Nevertheless, this comment is not addressed in the PIF: the financial tables still identify resources used to achieve BD FA objectives and in the General Project Information (at the very beginning of the Portal entry), the project is still presented as a "Multi Focal Area" project. Please address this comment.

April 30, 2024:

Thank you for the consideration. Cleared.

Agency's Comments The entire programming of funds is now shifted under the LD FA.

The PIF is adjusted accordingly. **Thank you, now the financial tables do not identify**

anymore resources to achieve BD FA objectives and the project is not presented anymore as MFA.

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Please clarify the alignment of this project with the country voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets.

April 29, 2024:

Thank you for the additional information. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

Added to para section C, para 4: In 2002, Mauritania has established its voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets with the ambition to achieve LDN by 2030. This GEF8 PIF is contributing towards achieving this target and complements other LDN initiatives that are also underway in Mauritania.

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments thank you.

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

On Private Sector, please answer to the question: "And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?"

April 29, 2024:

Thank you for the clarification. Cleared.

Agency's CommentsAdded to **section A, para 7**: The private sector will be involved across the value chain, collaborating with community cooperatives to ensure quality, and then supporting the development of the final product by providing added value to it. It will ensure the preparation of the finished product and endorse the role of the retailer. Most of these partners from the private sector are part of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture from Mauritania. In addition, microfinance institutions will be engaged to support community cooperatives and start-ups businesses. The detailed private sector entities will be identified during PPG stage.

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Yes, cleared

Agency's CommentsThank you.

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

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

STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Yes, using with this project nearly all the country remaining STAR allocation. cleared.

Agency's CommentsNoted.

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Yes, using full flexibility (CCM and BD resources for LD FA objectives). cleared.

Agency's Comments Noted.

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Annex B: Endorsements

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

1. Title in the Letter of Endorsement (?Rehabilitation and restoration of ecosystems in the Gum Arabic belt and sustainable use of forest resources in Mauritania?) is different than the title in Portal (?Integrated landscape management for the rehabilitation of the Gum Arabic Belt in Mauritania?). Please change the title in portal to match that in LoE or to get a new LoE that matches the title in Portal.

2. The LoE template utilized for this project removed the footnote that conditions the selection of the executing partner to the following: ?Subject to the capacity assessment carried out by the GEF Implementing Agency, as appropriate?. While the removal of the footnote seems to be trivial, it is not: this footnote reduces the chances of having an executing partner that does not meet the fiduciary and procurement standards required to safely execute the project. Please provide an email from the OFP accepting this footnote to be part of the LoE (this is an alternative to request a new LoE).

April 29, 2024:

1. Thank you for changing the title in the Portal so that it is now consistent with the OFP LoE. Cleared.

2. Thank you for providing an email from the OFP accepting the footnote to be part of the LoE. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

1. Addressed. Thank you.

2. The respective email has been kindly requested by the OFP.

8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

Annex C: Project Location

8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project's intended location?

Secretariat's Comments

March 27, 2024:

1. The picture of the map has a low resolution so it is difficult to read. Please provide a picture with a higher resolution.
2. Please locate in the map all the project intervention sites that has been identified: we don't see the wilaya Guidimakha, as well as Kiffa, Mederdra, and Atar (Forest seed centers re-enforced).

April 29, 2024:

1 and 2. We don't see the difference from the previous map under Annex C. Please address both comments above under Annex C.

April 30, 2024:

Thank you for improving the map. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

1. A new map is being produced, including the all wilayas and the forest seed centres. **A**
new map is now uploaded under documents, this new geo-referenced map is high resolution and includes the three forest seed centres and clearly mentions the project wilayas, including Guidimakha.

Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating

8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

We note that FAO attached the Project Risk Certification and overall ESS risk of the program is classified as low. However, the environmental and social section of the Key Risks section in the Portal said Moderate risk. 1) Please make these risks consistent and revise. The environmental and social section of the Key Risks section in the Portal mentioned the mitigation measures as undertaking a detailed stakeholder assessment and gender analysis to develop a stakeholder engagement plan, a gender action plan as well as a Grievance Redress mechanism to address any social risks. However, it fails to mention environmental and social risks in the table. 2) Please describe a summary of environmental and social risks here in the risk table.

April 29, 2024:

2) We don't see the summary of environmental and social risks here in the risk table as requested above. Please complete.

April 30, 2024:

Thank you for completing the information. Cleared

Agency's Comments This is noted and addressed. This is now addressed, see now description: The environmental and social risks related to this GEF8 project are considered low. To mitigate any potential social risks that could occur during project implementation, the project will be implemented in line with FAO's Framework for Environmental and Social Management. It will undertake a detailed stakeholder assessment and gender analysis to develop a stakeholder engagement plan, a gender action plan as well as a Grievance Redress mechanism to address any social risks. Finally, it will educate project beneficiaries on how to report on any misconduct or misbehaviour by project management staff, through official channels.

Annex E: Rio Markers

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Considering the shift to a full LD FA project, please change the BD Rio Marker as "Significant Objective 1".

April 29, 2024:

Thank you for the consideration. Cleared.

Agency's Comments Thank you. addressed.

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Considering the shift to a full LD FA project, please change the BD Rio Marker as "Significant Objective 1".

April 29, 2024:

Thank you for the consideration. Cleared.

Agency's Comments Thank you addressed.

Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes

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

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

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

Secretariat's Comments

April 1st, 2024:

Not yet. Please address the comments raised above.

April 29, 2024:

Not yet. Please address the remaining comments. In doing so, please remove the previous highlights in yellow and only highlight in yellow the new text resulting from this 2nd review.

April 30, 2024:

The remaining comments have been addressed. The PIF and PPG are now recommended for technical clearance.

Agency's Comments **All yellow highlights removed from last review, new changes highlighted in green.**

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

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	4/7/2024	4/22/2024
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/29/2024	4/30/2024
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/30/2024	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		