



Strengthening human and natural systems resilience to climate change through mangrove ecosystems conservation and sustainable use in southern Benin

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10166

Countries

Benin

Project Name

Strengthening human and natural systems resilience to climate change through mangrove ecosystems conservation and sustainable use in southern Benin

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

3/3/2022

Review completed by PM

9/29/2022

Program Manager

Aloke Barnwal

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

FSP

PIF

CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

The indicators are not necessary to be included in the objective statement. Please consider removing it.

There is no proportionality between GEF and co-financed PMC: GEF financed PMC represents 5% of GEF project financing, while less than 3% of co-funding devoted to components is allocated to PMC. Please correct.

The components, outcomes and outputs are exactly the same for both LDCF and GEFTF. At the CEO ER stage, we would more specific articulation of the outcomes and outputs relevant to each focal area. In other words, for the LDCF, please specify what are the specific adaptation targets, outcomes and outputs which deliver adaptation benefits considering the current and future climate scenario.

GEFSEC June 21, 2022

Comments 1 and 2 are cleared.

Comment 3- Thanks for the elaboration. The justification provided has a simpler argument that biodiversity conservation and management will naturally lead to improved adaptation. This is not likely the case unless adaptation is a clear intended objective and a climate hazard is clearly targeted from an intervention. There is a very light reference that mangroves could support flood resilience but not a clearly targeted objective. It would have been ideal to clearly distinguish adaptation components and outcomes for LDCF resources. However, given that the PIF was approved based on this design, at this stage, we would like the project component 1 adaptation benefits are more clearly elaborated in the Adaptation Benefits section.

GEFSEC July 8, 2022

Thanks. Comment cleared.

Agency Response

21 June 2022

The Adaptation Benefits have been further detailed in the relevant section. Mangrove ecosystems? resilience considers future climate-induced increased soil salinity and SLR.

19 May 2022

- 1) The Indicator was removed under the objective in Table B.
- 2) The proportion has been corrected.
- 3) An integrated approach has been adopted throughout the project. The targeted landscapes have high potential for both biodiversity conservation and the reduction of climate vulnerability and proposed interventions, practices and options have been selected because of their potential to simultaneously deliver multiple benefits, in particular BD and CCA benefits. For example, mangrove conservation and restoration will enable increased capacity of these ecosystems to buffer against climate change, provide more opportunities for income generation for local communities (e.g. ecotourism) and enable the conservation of biodiversity in these ecosystems. Agroecology interventions will enable increased resilience of the production systems through the integration of production systems, income diversification, and soil and water conservation. Agroecology practices will also promote increased above- and under-ground biodiversity which will benefit both conservation and further increase the resilience of these systems.

Note, however, that the language of the outcomes has been amended in order to strengthen the alignment with BD and CCA further.

3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

While the increase in co finance is welcomed, FAO's co finance decreased by close to 50%. Please explain.

GEFSEC June 1, 2022

Thanks for the explanation. Comment cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

At PIF stage, the GCF funded/FAO executed OCRI project was believed to have a similar timeline to the LDCF/GEF project. This project was therefore expected to co-finance the LDCF/GEF project. However, the approval process of the OCRI project

appears lengthier than foreseen. Moreover, the geographical overlap is scarce. The project design team decided to leave the OCRI project out of the baseline investments for now. Other, more relevant investments were identified as co-financing during PPG, including the WACA. Also, the design team believes that the diversity of investments in the CER is a more solid basis for a lasting and impactful project.

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes.

Agency Response
Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes.

Agency Response
Core indicators

7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1. There is a very significant decrease in core indicator 4's target (from 120,000 ha to 50,000 ha) and in the number of people benefiting from increased income (from 42,000 to 5,000), when the funding request remains identical and there was a strong increase in co-finance. We note the very short explanation provided in section 1.a.8 but the cost-effectiveness of the project to deliver GEBs is now very low and, at a very minimum, requires a more thorough justification. In particular, why are the targeted landscapes not larger to ensure sufficient buffer around the remaining mangrove? It seems to be considered that very local planning would be sufficient. Aren't there drivers of mangrove degradation that stem from land use and management decisions taken outside the targeted 50,000 ha, e.g. land use elsewhere indirectly generating mangrove

loss or remote activities generating point and diffusion pollution threatening water quality and mangrove health ?

2. It is also noted that 50,000 ha is the target for LDCF core indicator 2. Please clarify if this is in addition to the 50,000 ha supported for BD or is it the same landscape. If it's the same, please clarify what are specific adaptation outcomes which are different than the BD related outcomes.
3. We note output 1.4 includes activity related to the creation of Protected Areas. Hence please consider adding a target under core indicator 1.1.
4. Please add target under core indicator 6. There indeed must be mitigation co benefits from avoided mangrove loss and natural mangrove restoration. We notably note that section 1.a.8 mentions that "An indicator was added to account for the carbon benefits from the project." But we failed to find it and core indicator 6 was not filled.
5. Please add a short narrative under table F explaining how targets were derived (main methodology / assumptions)
6. Core indicator 11- please clarify if these beneficiaries overlap with the core indicator 1 of the LDCF

GEFSEC June 21, 2022

Please see further comments

COMMENT 2:

We are concerned that there is very significant decrease in core indicator 4's target (from 120,000 ha to 50,000 ha), when the funding request remains identical and there was a strong increase in co-finance compared to PIF stage.

We noted the argument that there is less mangrove left than expected at PIF stage and the cost is less than 60 \$/ha. However, we have the following further questions:

(i) please elaborate how the funds that were planned for the 70,000 ha (120,000 ha ? 50,000 ha) will be used?

(ii) Why the integrated planning remains restricted to 50,000 ha and not on a larger perimeter around the mangroves is unclear (given funding should not be a limitation as 120,000 ha were planned at PIF stage and there are likely mangrove degradation threats that originate outside of the vicinity of mangroves),

(iii) the cost per hectare is higher than claimed. \$60/ha is obtained when counting only component 1's GEF funding (GET and LDCF) over the 50,000 ha. When co-financing to component 1 is added, it reaches 487 \$/ha. And this is looking only at component 1's budget, when the logic of the project is that other components also contribute to better mangrove landscape management over these 50,000 ha.

Therefore, we would like to see more improved GEB cost effectiveness of the project by increasing the surface area benefiting from integrated, sustainable management; or to more thoroughly justify the apparent low cost-effectiveness of the project with regards to GEBs.

•COMMENT 4

We could not find the EX-ACT spreadsheet with the new submission, so we are unable to check the calculations.

GEFSEC August 23, 2022

1. On the reduction of core indicator 4 from 120,000 ha to 50,000 ha

We understand that the effect on 140,00 ha is due to: i) building local (e.g. communal) and national capacity of government institutions in integrated development planning and participatory processes for sustainable management of natural resources taking into consideration ecosystem good and services, and future climate conditions, ii) supporting the revision of the PDCs (Communal Development Plans) and other existing plans, iii) strengthening the institutional and policy framework for the sustainable ecosystems? management, and iv) facilitating and promoting the creation of CBNRM systems such as the ACCBs.

Our understanding is that these effects are ?indirect?, because the project will not fund direct on-the-ground work on these areas, but rather capacity building, planning and other soft/enabling environment measures. If that is the case, fine, but please:

- clarify in relevant parts of the CER what is meant by ?indirect? effects

- clarify what are the indirect effects and what surface will be impacted (is it 140,000ha including the 50,000 ha already reported under CI4, or 90,000ha with ?indirect? effects plus 50,000 ha with direct effects), including in the GEB section

- add indicator(s) and corresponding targets in the results framework (not in the core indicators) to capture these indirect effects

2) EX-ACT: The calculations seem overall fine but please

- clarify in the CER to what correspond the different surfaces used in the calculations (e.g., 32,305ha of cropland, 1,303 ha of mangrove, 16,392ha of shrubland in the ?direct? effects) and link them to specific project outputs.

- confirm there is no double counting in the surface area used for the direct and the indirect effects (e.g. both have exactly 1,303 ha of mangrove)

-

3) Please add core indicator 6 (GHG mitigation) in the Results Framework.

GEFSEC: Thanks for addressing the comments. Cleared now.

Agency Response

14 September 2022

1. Language has been amended and/or added in the results matrix, GEB sections, and relevant annexes of the project document.

2. Thank you for catching the error in calculations, as there was indeed double counting. Indirect benefits have been updated throughout the document. Furthermore, note that the surfaces arise from the GIS work that was conducted during the PPG phase and informed the project formulation team on the exact state of the mangrove landscapes in Ramsar sites 1017 and 1018, including land cover. The areas therefore correspond to the areas under improved land use, directly benefiting from project investments (i.e. 50,000 ha mentioned earlier) and the area of concern in particular under output 1.4.

Carbon benefits have been added in the results framework.

21 June 2022

Comment 2: (i) We appreciate the concern, but do consider that the project covers the entire area covered by mangrove ecosystems in the western part of the country. Allow us to elaborate further. The GEFTF/LDCF intervention directly concerns 50,000 ha, which is the area for demonstration in 9 selected communes, which are all the communes that still have mangroves. Together, the target communes represent a large area of the Ramsar 1017 and 1018 sites. Considering the GEFTF/LDCF investment without its baseline investments, direct benefits will be felt on 50,000 ha. However, the direct consequential project benefits will have a bearing on the total 140,000 ha, the area of the Ramsar sites 1017 and 1018, discounting the urban areas and area covered by water bodies. There is no reduction in project ambition, rather a clarification on land cover and

areas directly concerned by GEFTF/LDCF investments for demonstration. During project implementation, the project team will monitor and report on direct and direct consequential global environmental benefits.

(ii) 50,000 ha is the total surface of the project target communes. This area includes the mangrove forests and their buffer areas (where indeed major threats to the mangrove ecosystems originate from), in a connected mosaic landscape with mixed land uses. However, the Ramsar sites cover a larger area, wherefore the direct consequential benefits of the GEF investment will be concerning a total 140,000 ha, thanks to: i) building local (e.g. communal) and national capacity of government institutions in integrated development planning and participatory processes for sustainable management of natural resources taking into consideration ecosystem good and services, and future climate conditions, ii) supporting the revision of the PDCs and other existing plans, iii) strengthening the institutional and policy framework for the sustainable ecosystems? management, and iv) facilitating and promoting the creation of CBNRM systems such as the ACCBs. The project is expected to contribute to improved management and resilience of natural ecosystems and their biodiversity across the nine communes (50,000 ha) and beyond (140,000 ha). In addition, the strong collaboration with the PADAAM project will enable the project to support improved production practices following an agroecology approach and more sustainable value chains that support biodiversity across the country.

This was clarified in the CEO Endorsement Request.

(iii) In our GEB calculations, baseline investments were not considered, also because these baseline investments have impacts on areas beyond the GEFTF/LDCF project target communes. For instance, the baseline for Component 1, WACA focuses on nine countries. This regional approach is logical and is necessary to have a significant impact on coastal protection in each individual country. WACA will build high-cost infrastructure on the coastline in Benin and neighboring countries which will support the maintenance of mangrove ecosystems in Benin and beyond, and vice versa.

The contribution of the project interventions towards improving the management of natural resources at the country scale is now clarified in the text.

Comment 4: Please, see the excel sheets now uploaded into the Portal, for both the direct and the indirect carbon benefits.

19 May 2022

1) The targeted communes include a total 1,303 ha of mangroves which is far less than initially expected. During PPG, extensive mapping work was done, ground truthing satellite imagery, resulting in the notion of small, disconnected and degraded mangrove patches covering limited areas of land. The mangrove landscapes include these patches of mangroves and their immediate buffer areas. These mangrove landscapes are estimated to cover approximately 20% (50,000 ha) of the total surface of the communes that have mangroves, i.e. the total area to be covered by the integrated management plans. A large set of complementary interventions must be undertaken in these landscapes to sustainably address the identified threats and enable the preservation of mangrove ecosystems and increased resilience to climate change for local communities under the integrated approach. A wider surface is considered too optimistic.

Additionally, please do note the cost per ha is less than USD60. It costs the project roughly USD 58.9 /ha to sustainably manage (management includes regeneration and securing connectivity which are to be considered 'establishment' costs, but also the recurring annual maintenance/management and monitoring costs) the mangrove ecosystem for improved resilience and biodiversity conservation. This figure is aligned (and rather at the lower end) with reported costs in literature (FAO estimates the cost of restoration alone to be exceeding USD200/ha, while a reasonable range is USD200-700/ha, and WOCAT SLM database references some mangrove SLM practices in Western Africa with costs well above the USD60/ha in the GEF/LDCF project).

The target of 5,000 people corresponds to the direct beneficiaries from the interventions to strengthen value chains: 50 business plans directly benefitting a total of 2,000 individuals and the training sessions on sustainable income-generating opportunities for an additional 3,000 people to improve their sources of income. If we account for interventions on improving practices more broadly, an additional 4,000 people will benefit from training on improved agricultural, fishing and forestry practices which will increase and stabilise their income. Thanks to the demonstration approach, peer-to-peer learning activities and awareness raising, it is expected that the beneficiaries will be increased by a factor 3 (replication of demonstrated practices and engagement in target value chains/new and growing businesses). In total, it is estimated that 27,000 people will benefit from improved sources of income as a result of the project. Therefore, the target has been increased in the CI worksheet and throughout the document.

2) 50,000 ha is the total surface of the targeted mangrove landscapes targeted by the project. The adaptation benefits within these landscapes are increased resilience of surrounding communities to climate change and shocks thanks to the development of resilient production practices and sustainable value chains, and through increased capacity of mangrove ecosystem to buffer the effects of climate change. The biodiversity benefits within these landscapes are increased biodiversity in agricultural land and plantations (resulting in increased resilience of production systems, that become more productive and therefore lower the incentive to expand production land further into natural land); increased biodiversity in mangrove buffer zones and corridors (through improved forest cover and management); and increased biodiversity in coastal areas through improved fishing practices. Therefore, LDCF and GEFTF benefits are not additional, but fully integrated.

3) Based on the consultations undertaken during the PPG phase, the community-based management systems (ACCB, ACP, sacred forests...) work better than the government-based PA management system. Therefore, the project strongly focuses on community-based PAs.

Activity (ii) was reformulated. The project land management planning will provide an opportunity to explore options to expand the PA / sanctuaries and other estate. However, it will not formally engage in the PA planning.

4) The direct and indirect mitigation potential has been calculated using EX-ACT.

5) The approach to identify core indicators was added in Annex F of the project and the relevant space in the Portal, under table F.

6) Yes, 300,000 is the total number of beneficiaries of the project. It is the population of the targeted landscapes. These people will benefit from both increased resilience (as a result of mangroves restoration, buffers and corridors creation, and resilient production practices and resilient value chains) and increased biodiversity in production landscapes and mangroves ecosystems (including coastal areas).

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

The description of impacts due to climate change currently and in the future needs to be elaborated a bit more. While there is some basic information, please provide more context specific analysis in relation to this project design. For example, how the current and future climate scenario is leading to a set of specific vulnerabilities which this project will address. In the current form, it is very generic.

GEFSEC June 1, 2022

Thanks. This comment is cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

Please, consider the Annex M of the project document.

Furthermore, the main baseline project, WACA, focuses on increasing knowledge on the vulnerability of coastal areas and addressing coastal vulnerability with a focus on hard infrastructure. The proposed project focuses primarily on increasing climate resilience of mangrove ecosystems, their landscapes and the communities that depend on them. There are significant knowledge gaps remaining regarding mangroves' capacity to adapt to the expected effects of climate change such as increased salinity, sea level rise and droughts among others. Research projects on species and ecosystem resilience will be launched under the project to address knowledge gaps to support the design of future climate-resilient restoration efforts. For now, the main interventions identified to increase the resilience of mangroves ecosystems: the use of species-sites combinations presenting the highest chances of long-term success in each sub-site (e.g. *Avicennia germinans* is more resilient to high salinity than *Rhizophora racemosa*), the creation of buffer zones and increased connectivity between mangrove patches, and the integration of future suitable habitat into the integrated management planning exercise.

Probably, the most significant and long-term result of the project would be the buffer zones in the management plans, that allow mangroves to move inland as sea level rises. It is fully aligned with literature, reporting that mangrove systems may be able to adapt to sea level rise due to climate change, if they are able to retreat landward with rising seas. Proactive management would enable this migration (Erwin, 2009).

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

The Ou?m? Climate Resilience Initiative (OCRI, GCF project) and the Global Transformation of Forests for People and Climate: a focus on West Africa projects were part of the PIF baseline and supposed to provide co-finance. Please clarify why there are no longer in the baseline, even if they do not provide cofinance anymore.

There is very limited elaboration of the baseline vis-a-vis climate change adaptation and resilience both in terms of issues, current context of adaptation action as well as baseline projects. Please add.

- GEFSEC 21 June 2022
- First part of the comment is cleared. Please respond to the second part of the question which is related to adaptation related baseline.
-
- GEFSEC 8th July 2022
- Thanks. Comment is cleared.

Agency Response

21 June 2022

Baseline climate change adaptation and resilience is further clarified in the corresponding section.

Please, note that the baseline situation specific to each output is described directly under Part II 1.a. Section 3 3.2 Proposed alternative scenario. In particular, the baseline situation regarding the current use of agricultural practices that are more resilient to climate change (e.g. agroecology) are described under the baseline situation for Output 1.4.

19 May 2022

Please see response regarding OCRI above. The timing and geography do not make this a suitable co-financing opportunity.

The Global Transformation of Forests for People and Climate: a focus on West Africa projects has been re-introduced as co-financing from FAO, as it does provide a solid baseline for component 3 of the project. Therefore, the co-financing has been updated, and FAO letter amended.

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

Please refer to the comments above on Table B.

- The Theory of Change is not readable. It is too detailed. Please note that TOC doesn't necessarily need to have list of outputs and outcomes. It should clearly articulate the change process instead of just a pictorial representation of the entire project design. Also, please provide a short narrative describing the TOC.

- Component 1 doesn't clearly articulate adaptation specific interventions despite using nearly 1.5 million USD of LDCF. Similarly component 3 also doesn't have explicit adaptation related interventions. Only component 2 refers to alternative climate resilient livelihoods but they do not necessarily link with climate resilient management of mangroves. For the later, the project should include specific interventions that factors in climate change risks and impacts and associated solutions.

- Output 1.1: Please clarify the scope and anticipated methodology of the assessment and potential delivery partners. Within the description of component 3, the PIF notably announced that output 1.1 would carry out Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting (NCAA) for a number of priority accounts, with the extent of the NCAA and the accounts to be confirmed during PPG. This activity seems to have disappeared. Please justify or include explicitly a proper NCAA exercise in the project, clarifying the scope and anticipated methodology.

- For the training and capacity building activities to be developed by the project under outputs 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2 please clarify anticipated trainers, targeted trainee, volume (number of trainees) and plans to institutionalize them (within existing extension services or other national or local partners?) or at least foster replication.

- GEFSEC June 21, 2022
- Comment 1 cleared.
- Comment 2, please elaborate a bit more on how mangroves restoration will address climate related hazards e.g. flooding, drought, or other vulnerabilities due to climate change. As commented above, please elaborate this under the GEB/Adaptation Benefits sections.
- Comment 3 and 4 cleared.
-
- GEFSEC 8th July 2022
- Thanks. Comment 2 is also cleared.

Agency Response

21 June 2022

Please, see the additions in the GEB/Adaptation Benefits section.

19 May 2022

1) The Theory of Change diagram was simplified (the outputs were summarised and the Components? name removed as they seemed a bit redundant). A narrative description of the ToC was also added.

2) The contribution of Component 1 to increasing communities? resilience to climate change is now clarified in the text. The integrated management plans will include the adoption/upscaling of resilient agricultural, fishing and forestry practices. The wording for Outcome 1, Output 1.3 and Output 1.4 were also clarified to emphasise the climate resilience and biodiversity benefits. Similarly, the climate resilience benefits from Component 3 were highlighted in the text, in alignment with the incremental cost reasoning. A major focus of policy strengthening and knowledge-sharing interventions is to increase capacity to take into consideration current climate trends and future climate conditions to enable the sustainable management of mangroves? landscapes.

As mentioned above, specific interventions to increase the capacity of mangrove ecosystems to adapt to changing climate conditions were integrated in the Project (e.g. the use of species resilient to expected climate change effects, the integration of future suitable habitat in the integrated management plans, increased connectivity between mangrove patches to facilitate the inland migration of mangroves needed to cope with sea level rise, etc.). In production land, resilient practices will be promoted under the agroecology approach. These practices are more water efficient, cope better with saline soils, drought, and therefore be more resilient to increased temperature and future water scarcity. The increased crop diversity, and improved integration of production systems (agro-forestry in particular) will also significantly increase the climate resilience of the production systems and corresponding livelihoods.

3) It was considered that undertaking a full NCAA exercise was not adequate under the project because of the required financial and human resources required. This exercise would have to be led by an overarching ministry such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance to ensure that it is used adequately thereafter to inform public budget allocation. This work could be a project per se. It was therefore decided to conduct assessments instead, not using the SEAA AFF approach, but rather assessments that consider a wider range of values (not only monetary value) attributed to mangrove forests, including cultural values. These assessments address knowledge gaps on mangrove ecosystems? values attributed by local communities within the targeted landscapes to directly inform the awareness-raising and advocacy interventions, and provide the data and information to create investment opportunities. This is now clarified in the Changes to PIF section.

4) Please, see a table with details on the training proposed in section 7) Innovativeness, sustainability, potential for scaling up and capacity development.

4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Please elaborate the alignment with adaptation strategy further.

- GEFSEC 21 June:
- Thanks. Please elaborate the benefits further as requested in the previous comments.
-
- GEFSEC 8th July 2022
- Thanks. No further comments.

Agency Response

21 June 2022

Adaptation benefits are now further described in the corresponding section.

19 May 2022

The contribution of the projects' interventions to adaptation to climate change for both mangrove ecosystems and local communities is further clarified in the text.

5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes. The details of the GEF support on adaptation under different components is described well in this section. However, this is not reflected in the project outcomes and outputs. We suggest to refine the outputs and outcomes based on the elaborations provided in this section.

- GEFSEC 21 June:
- Thanks, the revised outcomes/outputs are fine.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

The description of the Outcomes, Outputs and Activities has been refined to highlight more clearly the benefits for climate change adaptation and for biodiversity conservation.

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes. Please clarify if the targets of beneficiaries and people are overlapping for both BD and adaptation.

- GEFSEC 21 June:
- Thanks for clarifying. Cleared. We typically do not double count same benefits, but since this was approved at the PIF stage, we are clearing this on an exceptional basis.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

Please see response above. 300,000 individuals will benefit from both increased resilience (as a result of mangroves restoration, buffers and corridors creation, and resilient production practices and resilient value chains) and improved biodiversity in

production landscapes and mangroves ecosystems (including coastal areas). The figures are therefore not cumulative.

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

There is no map. Please add.

•GEFSEC 21 June: Thanks. Cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

A map of the sites was now added in the corresponding section.

Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

Stakeholders

**Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase?
Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Per STAP guidance, please provide a more detailed climate risk screening of the project.

Also, please include a COVID-19 assessment for the project per GEF's guidance. This should include the COVID context, risks and opportunities for the project to contribute to green/resilient recovery.

•GEFSEC 21 June:

•Thanks. Comments cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

1) A screening was added as a separate document and as Annex M in the project document.

2) The contribution of the project to green recovery in Benin particularly for agricultural communities by supporting self-reliant local production systems and local trade was further developed in the corresponding section. Sections on context and risk were already present in the document.

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Please see comments on the budget below:

1. Judging from the budget presentation, there is a strong reliance on consultants (\$1.8 million, i.e. 25% of the budget) and thus apparently relatively weak use of established partners present on the ground. Only LEA is identified for a \$40,000 sub-contract. Please explain.
2. Please clarify to what correspond the \$2.4 million budget line "Equipment and training for Value Chains strengthening" and break it down, moving all training to the dedicated section (there is already \$782,500 of trainings and workshop).
3. There is \$90,000 worth of vehicle purchase in the budget which is not permissible per GEF policy unless there are exception circumstances. Please remove or thoroughly justify the need.
4. Likewise, there are for \$120,000 of drivers (120 months). Please justify why full time drivers are needed.

- GEFSEC 21 June:
- Comments cleared for further review by the PPO.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

- 1) Several NGOs and research institutions were identified as Operating Partners (EcoBenin, Action Plus, CORDE, REED, LEA, LAAEDD). Letters of Agreement will be defined with these partner organisations during project inception. Experts budgeted for in the budget will be as much as possible experts that are part of the teams of these partner organisations rather than independent consultants. The subcontract with LEA was already defined because of their specific involvement in the inventories undertaken under the RBT-Mono project and the expand and update this work.
- 2) This budget line was corrected to remove the training element. An average budget of USD 48,000 is set aside for each group/association to purchase the equipment and services required for the implementation of their business plans.
- 3) We appreciate the request to reduce costs of vehicles. However, the existing MCVDD carpool does not guarantee a smooth execution of project activities that rely heavily on fieldwork and therefore presence of project staff. The 2 cars will therefore be at the exclusive disposal of the project management unit. For larger and ad hoc field visits (from MCVDD and partner delegations) vehicles from the MCVDD and FAO carpools will be made available, as part of the in-kind contributions to the project. The per-

vehicle cost has been reduced from USD45k to USD30k each, as can be seen in the updated budget.

4) The reasoning was to have 2 full-time drivers engaged. However, it is reasonable to assume that during inception and project closure, only 1 driver is needed. Therefore, the number of units has been reduced from 120 months to 80 months.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1. Please reformulate indicator 1 (Number of ha of vulnerable and degraded mangrove landscapes under climate-resilient and sustainable management to benefit biodiversity) as it seems it is actually just the number of ha covered by a sustainable management plan and the actual management will not be assessed. Please consider splitting this clearly for BD and adaptation related support in the project.

2. It appears that, on biodiversity, there are only process indicators (# or ha of plans, # of maps, etc.) and no indicator to measure actual results. Please consider adding indicators that attempt to assess the targeted biodiversity outcomes (e.g. extent, connectivity, diversity and/or functioning of mangrove ecosystems), not just the processes and delivery of outputs. In particular, the project objective is to increase resilience of mangroves and it is not clear how the proposed RF would measure if mangrove resilience has indeed been increased.

•GEFSEC 21 June: Thanks for the detailed clarification. Comment cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

1) Thank you for these suggestions. Please, note the indicator has been reformulated, and an additional indicator, with BD and resilience specific sub-indicators, added.

2) Allow us to share an important baseline study we have been conducting, but felt was not ready for submission. We have used B-Intact in order to quantify and qualify the impact of the project interventions on the biodiversity in coastal Benin. The 4-page baseline report is shared now and relevant BD indicators integrated into the results matrix. These are the mean species abundance and the area of BD loss. The study conducted to date allowed us to develop the baseline situation, showing an aggregate MSA value of 0.24 (mainly due to land use changes and ecosystem fragmentation),

while the area of BD loss is 158,465 ha (however to be further defined during inception). Only during project inception, when land use planning is conducted in a participatory fashion, will the project team be able to accompany the planning process in order to maximise BD benefits, and maximise MSA and minimise area of BD loss.

As for the resilience of the mangrove ecosystems, 1 indicator is added into the results matrix from a comprehensive framework proposed by WJ Ong and JC Ellison (2021, Elsevier). The indicator proposed measures the robustness of the mangrove ecosystem through the mangrove condition proxy. This mangrove condition ? to improve over time, therefore showing improved ecosystem resilience ? measures mangrove community structure, tree height, tree diameter, and biomass per area (English et al., 1997, 160?184; Ellison et al., 2012, 17?20) on control and test plots. These permanent plots can show evidence of detailed change related to climate change impacts, such as preferential decline and mortality of one species and succession by another. For this indicator, baseline needs to be identified, and targets set. The baseline and monitoring costs have been foreseen in the project budget.

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1. On project information: please adjust the expected implementation start to a future date.
2. On co-financing: MCVDD: change ?Grant? to ?Public Investment?
3. On table B: the sum of the amounts in component 3 ($605,197 + 375,500 = 980,697$) do not match the total stipulated in the overall project budget in Annex E (756,197). Please review and clarify.
4. Budget Table is off the margins ? please adjust to fit in the portal.
5. On the purchase of vehicle: GEF policy doesn't allow purchase of vehicles in its projects. Please consider financing it through one of the co-financing sources.
6. A chief technical advisor is being charged across components. Per Guidelines, the costs associated with the project?s execution have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC. For this project,

the co-financing portion allocated to PMC is 3.0 Million, of which 4.224 million is represented in grants from FAO and 58.6 million in grants from the Government. Please use some of these funds to cover this position.

GEFSEC 18 October

Thanks for addressing the comments. Cleared for final review by the PPO team.

Agency Response

1. The dates have been updated.
2. Co-financing nature has been updated.
3. Please, know that the discrepancy is due to the fact that in table B there is no separate M&E budget. Indeed, M&E has been absorbed into component 3 in table B. The total USD980,697 is the sum of USD756.197 component 3 costs, plus USD 224,500 M&E costs.
4. The budget table has been re-inserted, and changes have been made as the cost of the vehicle has been eliminated.
5. The cost of the vehicle has been eliminated entirely from the project budget.
6. Please, note that the CTA has no management tasks, and therefore does not feature in the PMC. Furthermore, the CTA is not a full-time position financed out of the GEF grant. Only an estimated 3 months per year are paid out of the GEF grant in order to have state-of-the-art technical inputs delivered on a regular basis. The TORs of this person are annexed (Annex N) to the ProDoc, showing a breakdown of tasks per technical component.

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Response to Council comment / Germany:

- Please further justify the removal of FNEC from the PSC.
-
- GEFSEC June 2 2022
- Thanks. Comment cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

The FNEC was removed from the PSC following discussions with national stakeholders because it is not an institution per se but a funding mechanism under MCVDD which is part of the PSC. The FNEC will however be specifically targeted under Output 2.1.3 together with other national funding processes. Cooperative members and entrepreneurs will be supported in the development of projects eligible to FNEC to access this funding source in order to sustain, replicate and/or upscale the good practices demonstrated under the project. This was now clarifying in the corresponding section.

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes.

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Please add a map. We see only coordinates.

GEFSEC June 1 2022

Thanks. Comment cleared.

Agency Response

19 May 2022

A map of the sites was now added in the corresponding section.

Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Not yet. The agency is requested to address comments provided in the review sheet and resubmit the project.

- GEFSEC 21 June: The agency is requested to address additional comments provided in the review sheet.
-
- GEFSEC 23 August 2022: Please address one final comment under the core indicators question number 7 in the review sheet.
- GEFSEC 12 October 2022: Please address additional comments from PPO under GEF Secretariat comments section and resubmit the project for consideration.
- GEFSEC 18 October 2022: The Agency has addressed the comments provided by PPO. It is now technically cleared for final review by the PPO team.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	4/27/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	6/21/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	8/23/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/27/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/12/2022	

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

The "Benin: Strengthening Human and Natural Systems Resilience to Climate Change through Mangrove Ecosystems Conservation and Sustainable Use in Southern Benin" project aims to strengthen the resilience of mangrove ecosystems and their dependent agricultural, forestry, and fishery communities in southern Benin by integrating both conservation and adaptation principles. The project will achieve its objective through the implementation of three components with complementary financing from the Biodiversity allocation of the GEFTF and the LDCF - (i) Increased adaptive capacity of the natural systems; (ii) Increased adaptive capacity of human systems from livelihood diversification and development; and (iii) Enabling environment for sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems in a context of climate change. The project will support improved management and resilience of 50,000 ha of mangrove landscapes land

in Ramsar sites under more climate resilient management, including 70,000 ha within Ramsar sites and 50,000 ha of surrounding smallholder production land, directly benefitting 305,800 people (of which 50 percent are women). The project will also build capacity of 10,200 people in improved climate adaptation planning, result in 2.8 million tons of direct GHG reduction and improved management of additional 90,000 ha of land through institutional capacity building and strengthening of national policy frameworks for more sustainable mangrove ecosystem management.

The multi-trust fund project will generate these adaptation and biodiversity benefits in the target landscapes for people and the ecosystem through the following:

- The adaptation benefits will be increased resilience of surrounding communities to climate change and shocks thanks to the development of resilient production practices and sustainable value chains, and through increased capacity of mangrove ecosystems to buffer the effects of climate change.
- The biodiversity benefits within these landscapes will be increased biodiversity in agricultural land and plantations (resulting in increased resilience of production systems); increased biodiversity in mangroves, buffer zones (through improved forest cover and management) and corridors; and increased biodiversity in coastal areas through improved fishing practices.

The proposed interventions will complement the West Africa Coastal Areas Resilience Investment Project in Benin and will mobilize nearly 59 million dollars investment from this to complement the GEF project. By funding the additional costs of interventions necessary to integrate the expected impacts of climate change on conservation and restoration of mangrove ecosystems, the project will contribute to ensure that the risks related to climate change, including variability, are integrated into biodiversity restoration and conservation management plans in mangrove areas.

The project adopts various innovative approaches. In addition to introducing innovative conservation and adaptation solutions, the proposed public-private partnerships that will aim at strengthening Value Chains through private investments will be an innovative feature of the project which hasn't been attempted in the coastal areas of Benin in the past.

The project systematically addresses gender in the project design and proposes a gender action plan. The project will also support the Government of Benin in contributing to green recovery. In particular, the project will support green recovery and resilience of agriculture communities to the impact of future pandemics or other crisis by strengthening local markets and reducing the reliance of the production system on national, regional and international trade. The production of local inputs and diversification of the production under the agroecology approach will reduce communities' vulnerability to external factors such as containment measures. Overall, the integrated landscape-level planning approach that will be demonstrated under the

project will provide a model that contributes to addressing simultaneously multiple objectives: food security, livelihoods? resilience to climate change, livelihoods? resilience to pandemics and other global crisis, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation. Knowledge sharing will support the replication of this model in other landscapes to build back better in Benin.