



# Promoting the Integrated Management of Sargassum: Building Resilient Tourism and Fisheries Sectors through the Conservation of Marine Ecosystems in Caribbean countries (SargMarine)

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

11526

**Countries**

Regional (St. Lucia, Grenada, Jamaica, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, Dominican Republic)

**Project Name**

Promoting the Integrated Management of Sargassum: Building Resilient Tourism and Fisheries Sectors through the Conservation of Marine Ecosystems in Caribbean countries (SargMarine)

**Agencies**

CAF

**Date received by PM**

3/20/2024

**Review completed by PM**

10/1/2024

**Program Manager**

Andrew Hume

**Focal Area**

International Waters

**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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) No.

a1) At present, the proposed project is not aligned with the IW Focal area. The project is almost entirely focused on national level activities and lacks a compelling regional aspect aligned with the IW goal of promoting cooperation among countries. The CLME, the Cartagena Convention, and the UNEP Sargassum whitepaper, to name just a few, all provide recommendations towards regional management of sargassum and should be fully integrated into the project's design.

a2) Given the importance of sargassum impacts to the national economies of Caribbean SIDS (compared to countries that also have a Pacific coastline), it is important to include more Caribbean SIDS, like Barbados and Jamaica that are CAF members. Ideally any Caribbean SIDS should be eligible to participate in this project as many have expressed interest receiving support to address sargassum issues. If non CAF member Caribbean SIDS are interested to participate, then consider co-implementation with another GEF Agency who can support them.

b) No. On the General Project Information table, under "Project Sector (CCM Only)", please remove the text as the project is not requesting CC-M funding.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Addressed.

b) Not addressed. Please remove the text "Climate Change Adaptation Sector". The "Project Sector (CCM Only)" should be blank as this PIF is not requesting CCM (Climate Change Mitigation Focal Area) funding.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume):

b) Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

a1) The project was adjusted to meet the criteria for eligibility for GEF funding. The project's objective was redefined to address directly the aim to establish a multi-level regional governance framework consistent with the IW goal of promoting cooperation among countries. A new component, Component 1 (C1) was designed focused on regional governance, and the other three components changed to contribute directly to the overall objective. The project now contributes directly to IW objectives and focal area and is also aligned to strategic frameworks such as the Cartagena Convention, SPAW Protocol and the recent Nassau Declaration, among other key instruments.

a2) OAS and CAF promoted the revised project obtaining support and endorsement from three more countries from the CLME: Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Lucia. The original four countries ratified their endorsement as well, welcoming its revised objective and scope. In total, seven CLME countries are totally committed to the project.

b) Done.

**30/10/2024**

*B. Response: The text "Climate Change Adaptation Sector" was removed.*

#### **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

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. The summary is too long. As noted in the instructions, the summary should not exceed 250 words. The current text is nearly twice that size. Please revise the summary to fit the required length.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

### Agency's Comments

The Project Summary was revised to comply with extension and revised content.

### 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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) No, the project objective under the Indicative Project Overview is too long. A normal project objective is only one sentence and does not describe the project components. Please see other GEF-8 PIFs are examples and revise accordingly.

b) No. The project components are designed to reflect the UNEP sargassum white paper, however significant work is needed for alignment with the IW focal area:

b1) The whitepaper recommends, Forecasting, Harvesting/collection and use, and Policy and Coordination. The Policy and Coordination does not seem to be a major part of the project design. Except for one regional output, the proposed outcomes and outputs are largely national level actions, and lack alignment with IW priorities of regional cooperation for joint management. One of the key Whitepaper recommendations states that, "No regional governance framework specific to the pelagic sargassum phenomenon exists to guide appropriate responses in the Caribbean" (p.32) How is the project addressing this? How does this fit into the larger CLME governance that the GEF has supported?

b2) What is the difference between the promotion of sargassum biobusiness in Component 2 and the promotion of sargassum valorization enterprises in Component 3? How are these substantially different to warrant two components?

b3) There is no mention of participation in IW:LEARN (presumably within Component 4).

b4) There is no mention of gender activities in the project outcomes or outputs, especially in Component 2 that is focused on social protection.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Addressed.

b) Addressed.

b1) Addressed.

b2) Addressed.

b3) Partly addressed. Output 4.1.4 references engagement with IWLEARN through "technical publications and participation in conferences." Please reference the full range of participation in IWLEARN activities, including a webpage on the IWLEARN website, development of results notes, and participation in project twinings, workshops, and IW Conferences.

b4) Addressed.

c) Please explain how Outcome 1.2 will be integrated with other Caribbean-wide efforts for coordination and existing regional action plans, namely the CLME SAP and the Ocean Coordination Mechanism and associated data coordination framework. Please explain how this project will work closely with these and other key regional stakeholders during PPG to avoid duplication and ensure very close coordination to support CLME countries.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume):

b3) Addressed.

c) Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

**a)** Project objective modified to make it concise and clear. Regional scope and focus included.

**b)** As mentioned above (please see 1a1), the project was revised thoroughly to align it with the IW focal area and meet GEF eligibility criteria. The ToC was also comprehensively revised to reflect this new logic model ensuring its robustness and vertical consistency. Based on an in-depth analysis weak regional governance was acknowledged as a main barrier to effective action. The new component (C1) now includes six new outputs, two outcomes, and the project contributes directly to a new medium-term outcome aimed at the adoption of regional governance through integrated management of sargassum influxes in the wider CLME. The other three components were also revised to ensure coherence and complementary towards the project objective.

**b1)** Regional cooperation for joint management are now at the heart of the Project, overcoming its previous version's limitations -national focus-.

**b2)** Previous components 2 and 3 were merged into a revised component 3 that overcomes the identified limitations and confusion caused due to the former use of the terms "biobusinesses and valorization enterprises". Now, component 3 clearly differentiates the promotion of feasible sargassum-based biobusinesses from a next step, which is their funding through the Sargassum Biobusiness Investment Fund (SIBF).

**b3)** IW:Learn and the Sargassum HUB have been incorporated into Component 4 as well as in section VI on knowledge generation, management, and exchange. Section VI also includes a brief description of how knowledge will be disseminated, with particular attention to vulnerable groups.

**b4)** Project revision included the incorporation of gender and intercultural perspective to strengthen engagement with vulnerable populations and to develop capacities to address gender and equity gaps related to the impacts of Sargassum. Gender is now transversal and mainstreamed overcoming its previous limitations. The gender and intercultural perspective are now explicitly addressed in all project components and revised outputs and outcomes reflect this aim. Also, Component 4 now includes a gender-responsive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system using data disaggregated by sex, age and ethnicity designed and operational, as well as mainstreaming gender-sensitive approaches in all project activities, in line with CAF and GEF requirements. This will complement the project's Social and Environmental Safeguards Plan, which will include a grievance mechanism and a gender assessment and action plan, to mitigate potential negative environmental or social impacts, such as the exacerbation of gender disparities.

**30/10/2024**

**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?**  
**Partly addressed. Output 4.1.4 references engagement with IWLEARN through "technical publications and participation in conferences." Please reference the full range of participation in IWLEARN activities**

*Response: The comment has been incorporated in the proposal and explicit reference to IWLEARN website, results notes, twinnings, workshops and conferences included in outputs 4.3 and 4.4*

**Please explain how Outcome 1.2 will be integrated with other Caribbean-wide efforts for coordination and existing regional action plans, namely the CLME SAP and the Ocean Coordination Mechanism and associated data coordination framework**

*Response: Explicit reference has been incorporated to IW-GEF projects in the region and the OCM aimed at promoting the development of a collaborative framework that will ensure a regional approach to the wider CLME community. (outputs 1.1.3 and 1.2.1 have been enhanced for this purpose).*

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

**Secretariat's Comments**

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. Please see comment 3.1 above about the lack of gender activities incorporated into the project outcomes and outputs. In all activities engaging stakeholders, please ensure that gender experts and representative of women's groups are involve, and that institutional arrangements, policies, regulations, strategies, action plans, forecasting initiatives, etc. developed (e.g., Outcome 1.3, Outcome 2.1-related outputs and activities) are gender-responsive. Please ensure that Output 3.1.2 engage and benefit women. Please ensure that all KM and communications products feature good practices and lessons learned on gender mainstreaming/women's empowerment.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed. During PPG, please ensure that the Gender Action Plan presents additional opportunities for mainstreaming gender dimensions across all the technical components.

**Agency's Comments**

Please refer to b4 above, regarding the incorporation of a gender-responsive approach that is now transversal to all components. Regarding knowledge management, C4 will develop a comprehensive systematization of good regional practices and lessons learned related to sargassum management. To effectively account for the approach to gender and community issues, systematizations will include an analysis of how these topics have been addressed in the context of OAS and GEF gender mainstreaming initiatives

**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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

- a) Partly, funding is adequate though is expected to change appropriately based on revised project design in response to above comments. However, the M&E balance is empty. Even if it is part of a project component, it needs to be presented as a separate budget item when requested in the PIF. Please ensure M&E is properly budgeted following GEF policy.
- b) Yes, cofinancing ratio for PMC and overall project are both 1:7
- c) Yes, PMC is below 5%

1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Not addressed. The Portal PIF M&E line under Component Balances is still empty. Please include the M&E budget in this line as previous requested, while also being mindful to remove this balance from Component 4 to avoid double counting.

b) No. The co-financing ratio for PMC has gone down from 1:7 to 1 : 4.83. Please increase this ratio to bring it in line with the rest of the project.

c) PMC is 5% of project subtotal.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume):

- a) Addressed.
- b) Addressed. PMC cofinancing ratio is now 1:7

## Agency's Comments

a) M&E explicitly budgeted below C4 even though it is part of this component. Amount allocated is equal to 3% of total.

**30/10/2024**

**3.3 a)** *Response: M&E budget included*

**3.3 b)** *Response: Figures have been corrected to meet the 1:7 ratio*

## 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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) Yes, the situation is well documented.

b) Yes, the barriers are well documented.

#### Agency's Comments

#### 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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) Yes, the proposed approach is based on the UNEP Sargassum whitepaper

b) Yes, the focus of the project is on future resilience

c) Partly. Key baselines and associated baseline financial value (ie cofinancing) are missing. The project needs stronger integration with the CLME, Regional Seas Cartagena Convention, and CAF's blue economy planning, to name a few, as well as national baselines for each country. There is especially a lack baseline related to building on regional governance.

d) No, as noted above with more Caribbean SIDS and missing baseline, there are many key stakeholders that should be included.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

c) Addressed for PIF stage. However, during by CEO Endorsement, it will be essential that this project includes very clearly improvements in project design that demonstrate the close coordination with other GEF and non-GEF projects in the regions, especially the PROCARIBE+ and the efforts towards a Caribbean-wide ocean coordination mechanism.

d) Addressed for PIF stage. However, the project will need to clearly show how the results and services are available for all CLME countries. If possible, during PPG, new CLME countries are strongly encouraged to join the project. By CEO Endorsement, the project's updated design will need to clearly show revisions that ensure project deliverables are available to all CLME countries.

#### Agency's Comments

c) The section on the baseline of investment and national efforts has been improved. Integration with the most relevant projects, their lessons and experiences (including PROCARIBE+, BE-CLME+, and others). Financial value has been included where available. National policies, institutions and efforts have also been included.

d) Inclusion of three more Caribbean SIDS: Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Lucia has been determinant for the revised project's scope, objective and outcomes, ensuring that it now gathers relevant CLME stakeholders. The revised baseline as well has implied that previous missing key stakeholders are now accounted for and will be brought to the development of the multi-level regional governance framework.

During the PPG, socio-economic and gender experts will be hired to expand consultations of local communities and CSO as early as possible. Likewise, government institutions will participate in the design of project preparation activities and local stakeholders will be consulted at the intervention sites. A Comprehensive **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** will be developed in cooperation with these stakeholders to define and ensure their participation in the full project design as well as implementation.

**30/10/2024**

*Response: In section D Stakeholder Engagement, a mention has been included regarding the process promoted by the GS/OAS to facilitate the participation of other countries such as Antigua and Barbuda and Mexico. The latter has a sargassum monitoring system that allows tracking its volume and movement with regional potential. These will be further developed during PPG.*

## **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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) Partly. The ToC narrative does not presents a compelling case for a regional project aligned with the IW focal area. The ToC Figure is too blurry to read (in the Portal).

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

a) As described above (please see 3b response) the ToC was thoroughly revised to build a compelling case for a regional project aligned with the IW focal area. The diagram was also edited so it is no longer blurry.

**30/10/2024**

### **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

3/29/2024 (ahume): No, see above comments on missing regional baseline and alignment with the IW focal area.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Partly addressed. Please specifically reference in the text by name the justification for incremental cost reasoning. Please also note that additional cost reasoning is only for climate change adaptation (LDCF/SCCF) project. Please revise the text so that the Incremental Cost Reasoning is more explicitly stated.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

Please refer to 4.2 c, d above. Now the revised incremental cost reasoning underpins the case for a project with a regional governance objective that directly addresses a considerable barrier for effective action due to insufficient coordination between existing platforms, initiatives, and normative and institutional frameworks.

**30/10/2024**

*Response: GEF/C.31/12 Guidelines were used to improve the incremental cost reasoning. A business-as-usual scenario has been described with its implications and the GEF rationale to overcome its limitations developed in section B iii Global environmental benefits which would not have accrued without the GEF project.*

#### **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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) No. There is no presentation of the role of executing partner, IAI, in the project, nor a rationale provided. It is unclear what baseline IAI is bringing, especially in the context of strengthening regional coordination and management of the CLME in alignment with the IW Focal Area.

b) N/A. CAF is not requesting exception for self-execution.

c) No. There is no good description of the role of coordination with existing regional governance support to the CLME, Cartagena Convention, Sargasso Sea GEF project, and related efforts in West Africa. There is also the GEF IW BE-CLME project implemented by CAF that includes sargassum value chain promotion. Overall the project needs much closer alignment with past and current GEF investments in the region related to strengthening regional management.

d) No. As noted previously, the project does not mention engagement with IWLEARN.

#### 1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Addressed. However, please note many of the country LOEs list CAF as the executing partner. The LOEs will need to be revised to reflect the role of OAS as the executing partner. See LOE comment below.

c) Addressed for PIF state. However, it is essential the project is very closely integrated with existing regional coordination efforts, especially the CLME SAP, Ocean Coordination Mechanism and data framework from the GEF IW investment in the PROCARIBE+ project, as appropriate with country partners. By CEO Endorsement, it will be essential that this project clearly demonstrates very close stakeholder engagement with these partners and presents a revised project design and project governance that reflects a mutually agreed path forward for improved coordination for the CLME.

d) Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

a) Consistent with the Project's revised scope and approach OAS has been defined as the executing entity. Likewise, it will lead together with recipient countries the relationship, management, development of alliances and agreements, and political/technical coordination at the regional level of the proposal. This rationale acknowledges that GS/OAS has over 60 years of experience promoting water diplomacy in the Americas and 30 years executing GEF projects focused on international waters. IAI will be the Lead Technical Agency across the Project's components, with emphasis on Components 1, 2 and 4 due to its extensive experience in applied research on oceans, biodiversity, ecosystems, biodiversity and water resources. It must be noted that since its establishment 32 years ago, the IAI has been instrumental in advancing scientific capacity in research across the Americas, fostering collaborations both between the North and the South and among Southern peers.

c) In the section of baselines of investment and national efforts, the revision undertaken has ensured integration with GEF Funded projects, including building synergies with the PROCARIBE+ and BE-CLME. In the section of coordination and collaboration, initial governance mechanisms have been proposed. Further development and coordination with ongoing projects will be discussed during the PPG phase, as part of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

d) Please refer to response 3b3 above. As mentioned, IW:Learn and the Sargassum HUB have been incorporated into Component 4 as well as in section VI on knowledge generation, management, and exchange.

30/10/2024

*Addressed jointly with Governments, except Dominican Republic*

**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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) No. Only CI-5 and CI-11 appear to be identified in the document. What about CI-7 and CI-8?

b) No. The project contributions to GEBs are not reasonable. Additional CI targets are expected (comment above). For current CI-5 and CI-11, it would be expected that these would increase with additional countries included.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Partly addressed. Please review the Portal entry for CI 5.2, 7.3, 7.4 are empty. For CI-7, please ensure that the Caribbean LME is referenced by name.

For CI-5, it is noted in the methodology that 10% of EEZs are being used to calculate the value. Please explain the logic behind this approach. Why 10% and not 5% or 12%, for example.

Duly noted on not including CI-8 (Fisheries). However, with CRFM included as a fishing partner and the known impacts of sargassum on fishing, please continue to evaluate if CI-8 may be appropriate during PPG.

b) Addressed.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

**a) and b)** The GEF-8 Core Indicators have been integrated into the project outcomes, in line with the revised theory of change and the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework. Specifically, Core Indicators 5.2, 7.3, 7.4, 11.1, and 11.2 align with the project's goals. In addition to these, other project-specific indicators not included in the framework have been proposed. Altogether this has been enabled by the thorough project revision and the inclusion of Grenada, Jamaica and St Lucia enhancing the regional scope previously limited to 4 countries.

As the project focuses on addressing the sargassum influx challenge in the CLME and given the existence of other initiatives targeting fisheries management and marine conservation (such as PROCARIBE+), it does not directly contribute to Core Indicator 8. However, the project will establish the necessary enabling conditions for PROCARIBE+ and other conservation efforts by mitigating the impacts of sargassum in the CLME.

**30/10/2024**

*Response: Revision of CI table has been conducted and improved accordingly. Sub-indicators 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 and 8.2 (previously 5.2) have been included.*

**For CI-5, it is noted in the methodology that 10% of EEZs are being used to calculate the value. Please explain the logic behind this approach.**

*Response: The 10% has been a gross, conservative estimation of the target. Further analysis will be conducted during the PPG phase following inclusive and participatory principle to define OECMs with government agencies, coastal communities, etc.*

**Duly noted on not including CI-8 (Fisheries). However, with CRFM included as a fishing partner and the known impacts of sargassum on fishing, please continue to evaluate if CI8 may be appropriate during PPG**

*Response: Core Indicator 8 ? sub indicator 8.2 of the GEF 8 Measurement Framework (previously 5.2) has been included, which states as follow: ?Large Marine Ecosystems with reduced pollution and hypoxia? (01 LME ? specifically the Caribbean LME with reduced pollution).*

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

Secretariat's Comments 3/29/2024 (ahume): 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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) No. The climate risk only mentions potential tropical storms. What about the potential changes to the ocean, including warming, acidification, and changing currents that could easily happen during life of project? It would be expected that the forecasting and early warning focus of the proposed project are highlighted under the climate risk. There are also no risks associated with regional management, which is clearly identified as a key recommendation in the UNEP sargassum whitepaper.

b) No. All the risks are rated low and mitigation measures are generic. There is no risks related to regional management and cooperation among countries across the Caribbean.

c) No. All that is uploaded to the Portal is a 122 page CAF Safeguard manual. No safeguard document specific to this project has been provided.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume):

a) Addressed.

b) Addressed.

c) Not addressed. No specific safeguards screening has been uploaded for this project. The referenced safeguards documents in the Agency reply again point to just the CAF Safeguards manual. Please upload an initial safeguards screening that should occur at PIF stage.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume):



c) Addressed. A safeguards screening, with initial mitigation measures, has been uploaded.

#### Agency's Comments

a) Risk ratings have been complemented and updated for climate, environmental and social risks. Low and Moderate ratings have been considered given the probability of the risk as well as the regulations and actions considered in the project to address them.

b) The Risks to Project Preparation and Implementation section was revised comprehensively to reflect more accurate ratings and detailed-specific mitigation measures. Political and Governance, and Capacity risk categories now reflect risks associated with regional management. These adjusted ratings reflect the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures.

c) Minimum Standards 1 (Environmental and Social Impact Assessment), 2 (Protection of Natural Habitats), 4 (Indigenous Peoples) and 8 (Grievance Mechanism) have been raised and incorporated to the project. Further analysis and development of the Environmental and Social Safeguard System will be conducted during the PPG. Please see PIF Annex D, now incorporates a safeguard analysis specific to the Project.

**30/10/2024**

*Response: Following the GEF SD/PL/03 and CAF 2016 Environmental and Social Safeguards Guidelines the PIF stage safeguards screening has been conducted and presented in a table covering all minimum standards.*

#### 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

3/29/2024 (ahume):

a) Partly. Based on substantial revisions needed to current proposal it is too soon to tell.

b) Partly. Based on substantial revisions needed to current proposal it is too soon to tell.

c) Partly. Additional countries are expected to be included and coherence with national policies will be expected to be revised accordingly. National policies related to regional coordination are missing.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed for PIF stage. However, during PPG phase, please revise project to ensure that longer-term policy reforms are incorporated into the project that connect the improved understanding of sargassum as a result of this project with the larger national and regional climate change mitigation goals. In other words, please explore how insights from this project can help inform action on climate change due to its direct role in ocean warming that is known to be the/a major driver of the sargassum influx in the Caribbean.

#### Agency's Comments

**a), b) and c)** The comprehensive revision undertaken directly intends to improve the Project's transformational and innovative nature as well as its scaling-up potential. Its new objective and outcomes will contribute to an improved alignment of national policies.

As described in PIF's section B-vii, the Project shifts the sargassum influx paradigm from hazard to opportunity, as a catalyst for innovation and part of a sustainable and equitable blue recovery strategy, while reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience to this new phenomenon. Merging opportunity and adaptation may offer SIDS and developing countries potential solutions that are both independent of fraught global efforts on climate change mitigation and directly beneficial to their vulnerable economies. This paradigm shift requires not just developing technologies, capacities, and safeguards and creating the appropriate enabling environment on a national basis. The project's regional approach overcomes myopic interventions that fail to understand the transboundary nature of this phenomenon. Strengthening the regional governance for the integrated management of sargassum is a necessary condition to reduce its impacts on marine ecosystems, communities' livelihoods and local industries.

Scaling up of project results and successes will be achieved through the project's Knowledge Management activities under Component 4. The feasibility assessment of Component 2 seeks to make a determination in order to inform decision making and policy. This project aims to support this paradigm shift, if feasible, by promoting synergies between existing initiatives and fostering collaboration.

Regarding durability, and beyond the project's lifetime, GS/OAS and CAF Secretariat will continue to collaborate with implementing partners to establish sustainable financing mechanisms to support project initiatives. Key achievements of the project will be promoted and mainstreamed into existing institutional arrangements. Member states will be encouraged to get buy-in from policy makers to sustain initiatives. The participatory monitoring and evaluation framework established from the project inception will be used to track progress after the project is implemented to determine its impact and potential for scaling up and replicating in other impacted regions.

#### **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

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. See multiple above comments on needing improved alignment with the IW Focal Area.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

**Agency's Comments**The revised project addresses alignment with IW Focal Area as a main priority. Please see above responses

**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**

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. See above comments on need to better integrate project design with regional priorities, including but not limited to, CLME, Cartagena Convention, Sargasso Sea Commission, Early Warning for All, related coordination with West Africa countries, and others.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed at PIF stage. By CEO Endorsement, please provide evidence for how the project has been improved based on the agency response below regarding coordination and cooperation with key other initiatives and partners.

**Agency's Comments**

The revised SargMarine project is based on the key recommendations and identified gaps of the 2021 update of the UNEP-CEP Sargassum White Paper, IW focal area, the Cartagena Convention and its Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW). It also builds on the key outcomes and lessons learnt from previous projects such as the CLME and CLME+ projects.

The project will articulate with the PROCARIBE+ and other future relevant projects to provide the resources needed to implement and sustain the general recommendations articulated in the paper including:

- ? Increasing the collaboration and joint programming between the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol to the Cartagena Convention, particularly in the context of the SPAW Sargassum Working Group.
- ? Developing further cooperation with relevant organisations and initiatives in order to minimize duplication and enhance SPAW programme delivery.
  
- ? Collaborating with the Abidjan Convention (West Africa) and others such as the GEO-BluePlanet (Sargassum Information Hub) and Florida International University (SargNet) with the objective of consolidating a common platform for Sargassum management in the Wider Caribbean and West Africa.

? A Memorandum of Understanding and/or partnership agreement will be signed with ongoing and future conservation projects in the CLME+ and West Africa to formalize and catalyze synergies.

**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

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. Given the impact of sargassum on biodiversity and the project identifying CI-5, please 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).

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

The proposal now has identified its contribution to several Kunming Montreal targets, specifically 2, 6, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23

#### 7 D. Policy Requirements

##### 7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

#### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): Partly. Other than a list of consulted stakeholders, only a "Yes" is provided without additional detail. As noted in comments above, no project specific safeguard screening was provided.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Partly addressed. See comments on Agency safeguards screening at PIF.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

The section has been improved to reflect the different discussions and consultations with all seven countries and other key stakeholders. Annex D (Safeguard Screening) has also been developed. Please also note that a Gender Assessment and Action Plan together with a Stakeholder

Engagement Plan will be developed during PPG and duly incorporated to the project detailed design for CEO Endorsement. These activities and resulting plans are part of the commitments reached with the participating countries

**30/10/2024**

*Response: (ibid) Following the GEF SD/PL/03 and CAF 2016 Environmental and Social Safeguards Guidelines the PIF stage safeguards screening has been conducted and presented in a table covering all minimum standards.*

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

#### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): Partly. Consultations in each country are presented but there are no consultation presented for relevant regional initiatives and organizations.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Not addressed. Please reorganize the stakeholder list into a table that shows the date of the consultation, the name of the stakeholders, and what was agreed/discussed. As previously noted in above comment, please also include all regional stakeholders that were consulted in the development of this PIF. Especially, please be sure to include all the discussions for the many partners listed in the cofinancing table, such as the many CSOs and regional organizations.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

As mentioned above the list of stakeholders consulted has been enhanced to reflect additional consultations as a consequence of the Project's new-revised objective and outcomes and more importantly, the inclusion of three additional SIDS. However, it must be stressed that the Gender Assessment and Action Plan together with the Stakeholder Engagement Plan to be developed during PPG, will ensure that a comprehensive process is completed with all relevant stakeholders.

**30/10/2024**

*Response: A detailed table has been included as requested.*

#### **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 Comments3/29/2024 (ahume): N/A

Agency's Comments

**Focal Area allocation?**

Secretariat's Comments3/29/2024 (ahume): Yes.

Agency's Comments

**LDCF under the principle of equitable access?**

Secretariat's Comments3/29/2024 (ahume): N/A

Agency's Comments

**SCCF A (SIDS)?**

Secretariat's Comments3/29/2024 (ahume): N/A

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments3/29/2024 (ahume): N/A

Agency's Comments

**Focal Area Set Aside?**

Secretariat's Comments3/29/2024 (ahume): 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 3/29/2024 (ahume): Yes.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. Overall the cofinancing ratio of 1:7 is smaller than expected given the role of investment banks and private sector. If additional cofinancing cannot be secured then the GEF financing may need to be scaled appropriately.

- 1) The CAF and IAI cofinancing are identified as loans but incorrectly listed as "Recurrent expenditures" when it should be identified as "investment mobilized". The description of each cofinancing at the end of the table is scant and gives no helpful information. For example, what specifically are the CAF and IAI loans and private sector?
- 2) Please provide names for the co-financiers identified as ?Private sector fisheries and tourism operators and companies?
- 3) Please identify the appropriate type (recurrent expenditure *or* investment mobilized) for the source of co-financing categorized as ?in kind?.
- 4) There is \$1,437,443 of cofinancing without any name associated with it. Please identify the source of this cofinancing.
- 5) Lastly, there are multiple regional organizations and additional Caribbean countries identified in the above GEF Sec comments that are expected to be part of future cofinancing in a revised PIF.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Partly addressed.

1) Please spell out all acronyms in the cofinancing table.

Finally, please continue to closely engage with the above identified key regional partners and initiatives. As also noted above, please also continue to discuss the participation of other CLME

countries. Please revise the cofinancing to reflect the addition of these critical new partners, as appropriate.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed. The formal addition of Mexico and Antigua and Barbuda as project countries, as well as any other interested countries, is strongly welcomed and will strengthen the impact of this project.

#### Agency's Comments

**1) and 2)** CAF and IAI cofinancing were adjusted. Descriptions were complemented. Yet it must be noted that co-financing will be detailed and confirmed during detailed project preparation. Cofinancing of the SBIF will be at the core of its fundraising strategy, with targets that will likely surpass current preliminary figures in order to ensure the sustainability of the financial mechanism beyond project completion, with a cofinancing ratio above 1:7. The **SBIF's fundraising strategy** will be included to the body of documents to be prepared for CEO Endorsement for approval

**3)** Type corrected.

**4)** The \$1,437,443 amount was deleted.

**5)** Additional countries contributions have been identified, yet detailed cofinancing from regional organizations will be confirmed during the PPG phase adding up to current estimates.

**30/10/2024**

*Response: Acronyms spelled out. During PPG active engagement will be ensured with key regional partners and initiatives through a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Reference to undergoing consultations with Mexico and Antigua and Barbuda have been included, intended to add them to the project during PPG phase*

#### **Annex B: Endorsements**

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

#### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): Yes, though additional Caribbean countries are expected to be included in a revised PIF.



1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Yes, but please see comments below about LOEs.

#### Agency's Comments

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

#### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. As a regional IW project, please combine OFP LOEs into a single document and upload to Portal.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Not addressed. As previously requested, please combine OFP LOEs into a single document (PFD) and upload to Portal as one file.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

#### 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

3/29/2024 (ahume): No.

1. The LOE for Colombia uses incorrect template.
2. The LoEs indicate that the project will be executed by ?The National Environmental Authority? (Dominican Republic), and ?*The Institute of Marine Affairs?* (Panama and Trinidad and Tobago). However, in Portal there are two executing partners: ?*Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research - IAI + Organization of American States (OAS)?*. Please either (i) modify the executing partner in Portal to match the executing partner in LoEs; or (ii) get new LoEs (the executing partner can be changed during the preparation phase).

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Not addressed. As noted above, the executing entity referenced in the LOEs is not consistent across all the LOEs, with some referencing that CAF will lead project execution. Further, the LOEs do not reference OAS as the executing partner, which is what is presented in the latest draft of the PIF. Please upload new LOEs that all present consistent information and in line with the latest project proposal.

Recognizing the timing required to obtain new LOEs, we can accept either: a) new LOEs, or; b) email messages of the OFPs from these countries (Colombia, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago) informing that they endorse OEAs as the executing Partners ? those emails must be appended to the documents? tab in the Portal.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Emails from Colombia, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago were uploaded. An email or new LOE from Dominican Republic is not yet uploaded. Please ensure an revised communication from the Dominican Republic OFP is uploaded to the Portal.

#### Agency's Comments

- 1) Letters of Endorsement were revised, updated and completed for the seven countries.
  - 2) Please note that description of implementing national institutions refers to local Project partners, not to the executing entity. This is additional and relevant information as the project will directly engage with these partners during the PPG phase and throughout implementation
- 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 3/29/2024 (ahume): 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 3/29/2024 (ahume): Yes

#### Agency's Comments

##### **Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating**

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

**Secretariat's Comments**

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. We note that CAF attached the overall ESS risk of the program is classified as low. However, CAF just uploaded a 122 page Manual CAF-GEF project Environmental and Social Safeguards and no project specific environmental and social screening information was provided. Please provide:

1) environmental and social screening information including risk screen by 9 minimum standards of GEF and;

2) appropriate actions to mitigate potential impact.

Please also note that we need to review the environmental and social screening information again based on the revised project design suggested by the project manager.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Not addressed. As previously noted, CAF has only attached Manual CAF-GEF Project Environmental and Social Safeguards, however, there is no environmental and social screening information including risk screening by 9 minimum standards of GEF. Please provide: 1) environmental and social screening information including risk screening by 9 minimum standards of GEF and 2) appropriate actions to mitigate potential impact.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

**Agency's Comments**

1) Environmental and social screening information including risk screen by 9 minimum standards of GEF were included as referred above, consistent with the revised Project design.

2) The revision included a description of appropriate actions to mitigate potential impact for all risk categories (please see Risks to Project Preparation and Implementation section).

**Annex E: Rio Markers**

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

### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): No Rio Markers were identified

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

### Agency's Comments

Rio Markers have now been included. Given that the PIF focuses on the sargassum influx challenge in the CLME, the proposal scores 2 for biodiversity (integrated management of sargassum) and 1 for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Combating Desertification scored 0.

### Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

#### **8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?**

### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. The IW Focal Area is not identified at all.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): Addressed.

### Agency's Comments

Annex F has been thoroughly revised, including IW focal area - Objective on sustainable blue economy development has been listed (including level 4 keywords).

### 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 3/29/2024 (ahume): N/A

## Agency's Comments

### 9 GEFSEC Decision

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

#### Secretariat's Comments

3/29/2024 (ahume): No. The proposed project requires significant revisions, including an expanded scope with more Caribbean countries and an improved project design by integrating with existing regional coordination in the Caribbean better align with the IW Focal Area.

1 OCT 2024 (ahume): No. Please quickly address the above comments and resubmit.

31 OCT 2024 (ahume): The PIF is recommended for technical clearance.

#### Agency's Comments

The proposed project has undergone a comprehensive and thorough revision that encompasses an improved design at the heart of its ToC and logic model, the inclusion of three more Caribbean countries for which sargassum management is a national priority, alignment with the IW focal area and integration/coordination with existing regional coordination in the CLME.

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

#### Secretariat's Comments

*Comment by Yibin Xiang, Convention Secretariat, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) made on 3/25/2024*

**Comment:**Regarding C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES The proposal aimed to achieve marine conservation. Please elaborate potential links with the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), if possible, in terms of primary links and secondary links with the KM-GBF targets

**ahume:**

1) it is essential the project is very closely integrated with existing regional coordination efforts, especially the CLME+ SAP, Ocean Coordination Mechanism and data framework from the GEF IW investment in the PROCARIBE+ project, as appropriate with country partners. By CEO Endorsement, it will be essential that this project clearly demonstrates very close stakeholder engagement with these partners and presents a revised project design and project

governance that reflects a mutually agreed path forward for improved coordination for the Caribbean.

2) The project will need to clearly show how the results and services are available for all Caribbean countries. If possible, during PPG, new CLME countries are strongly encouraged to join the project before the end of GEF-8. By CEO Endorsement, the project's updated design will need to clearly show revisions that ensure project deliverables are available to all Caribbean countries.

3) During PPG, please ensure that the Gender Action Plan presents additional opportunities for mainstreaming gender dimensions across all the technical components.

4) During PPG phase, please revise project to ensure that longer-term policy reforms are incorporated into the project that connect the improved understanding of sargassum as a result of this project with the larger national and regional climate change mitigation goals. In other words, please explore how insights from this project can help inform action on climate change due to its direct role in ocean warming that is known to be the/a major driver of the sargassum influx in the Caribbean.

#### Agency's Comments

As mentioned above, links to the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) were elaborated.

#### Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
<b>First Review</b>	<b>3/29/2024</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>10/1/2024</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>10/31/2024</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		