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Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	VOLCANOES COMMUNITY RESILIENCE NORTHERN RWANDA
Project Number:	2022-0416
Country:	Rwanda
Project Description:	The project aims at improving the resilience of the population living in the northern region of Rwanda through the expansion and restoration of protected areas and productive landscapes and the construction of "grey" and nature-based infrastructure to reduce flood risks to vulnerable communities, and erosion control. EIB will finance the flood risk mitigation components and integrated catchment and landscape restoration investments.
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	yes

(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project targets the Volcanoes Region and the adjacent Vunga corridor, located in the north-west of Rwanda and spans over eight districts², being home to over 2.3 million people. The communities that live in this region are highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of floods, landslides, and soil erosion.

The project objectives are to reduce the risk of flooding, strengthen watershed management to protect people and their livelihoods from flooding. Over the longer term, the project will also contribute to the objectives of improving livelihoods of people living in the beneficiary area, enhancing biodiversity values, increasing agricultural productivity, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. The project is structured around four components: flood risk management, landscape restoration and catchment management, Volcanoes National Park expansion and project management. This is a flagship project for Rwanda and one of the top priority national projects and a presidential priority.

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Environment (MoE), through its Project Coordination Unit (PCU) that will coordinate project implementation. It will work with the Project Implementation Units (PIUs) of the other agencies involved in implementation, namely the Rwanda Water Board (RWB), Meteo Rwanda, Rwanda Environmental Management Authority (REMA), and Rwanda Development Board (RDB).

This is a co-financed project on which the EIB will focus its financing on the first two components (flood risk, landscape restoration and the related project implementation costs). The World Bank will independently finance and manage the other components.

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Carbon Footprint Exercise, as defined in the EIB Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

² Burera, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Gakenke, Muhanga, Ngororero, Musanze and part of the Rutsiro District



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At present, the specific project sites for the first two components are not yet defined with sufficient detail. The project has elaborated instruments for ensuring World Bank standards notably the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), Environment and Social management Framework (ESMF), Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF), Labor Management Plan (LMP), the Gender assessment and Gender Action Plan. Once detailed designs of the infrastructure to be built will be available, a detailed Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) will be elaborated, if required.

The Environmental and Social Management Framework has identified potential negative and positive impacts of the project during the project cycle from planning, construction and operation. The framework also spells out mitigation measures on the foreseen negative impacts. The main Environmental impacts of the project are listed below:

Positive impacts

- Reduction of erosion and flooding phenomenon in the project area.
- Rehabilitation of degraded land and conversion into productive land and increasing land area covered with vegetation.
- Building resilience to Climate Change.
- Reducing disaster risks in the project area.
- Ecological restoration of priority conservation areas.

Negative impacts

- during construction, occurrence of occasional and localized disturbances (mainly dust, noise, construction waste and traffic).

The ecological restoration of priority conservation areas component of the project will finance interventions to restore the Volcanoes National Park (VNP) expansion area and other priority areas within the broader project area. The selected activities are aligned with and support the implementation of Rwanda's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which presents a long-term vision for "national biodiversity to be restored and conserved, contributing to economic prosperity and human well-being through delivering benefits essential for Rwandan society" by 2040.

Climate change

The project will support flood risk reduction investments, including Nature Based Solutions (NBS), to convey floodwaters, trap sediments, and prevent transfer of flood risks downstream. In addition, the project will promote adoption of climate-smart agriculture approaches, aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, and helping communities to adapt to, and build resilience to climate change, while reducing GHG emissions. It will also invest in agroforestry, afforestation, reforestation, and improved forest, catchment, and landscape management.

Important co-benefits in improving the resilience of Rwanda's Volcanoes and Vunga watersheds towards Climate Change impacts in the fields of erosion (affected by more frequent extreme rain events in the southern part of the country) are expected. Through afforestation and revegetation activities, the project will also contribute significantly to mitigation actions towards climate change (see carbon footprint section).

The operation has been assessed for Paris alignment and is considered to be aligned both against low carbon and resilience goals against the policies set out in the Climate Bank Roadmap (flood protection infrastructure with no carbon footprint and positive resilience co-benefits and landscape management with substantial carbon footprint benefit and positive resilience co-benefits).

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EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The project will cause emissions due to infrastructure development (e.g. retention dams, green villages), terracing work and inputs (fertilisers, energy). These project-related emissions are smaller than the carbon sequestered through afforestation/reforestation, converting annual to perennial cropland (e.g. by planting hedgerows, introducing agroforestry), improved land management including the application of reduced tillage and organic fertiliser. The estimated emission savings of the project using FAO's Ex-ante Carbon-Balance Tool are 65 900 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year gross and 90 700 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year net (against the baseline).

For the annual accounting purposes of the EIB Carbon Footprint, the project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of project cost'.

Social Assessment, where applicable

The project will provide significant benefits to communities through avoided damages due to flooding events and soil overexploitation. In addition, the works, in large part community based, will provide employment opportunities for the local communities. Active involvement of communities to restore landscapes will also enhance their participation in nature-conserving activities, which are critical for flood risk reduction and boosting tourism activities.

The main social risks identified in the project sites are related to land acquisition, restrictions on land use, restricted access to natural resources, economic displacement, labour influx-related risks. The project related works could trigger involuntary resettlement: land acquisition or displacement of families or businesses on permanent or temporary basis.

To address these situations, the project has elaborated the required social standards instruments including the Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) Prevention Plan, Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF), Labor Management Procedure (LMP), Gender and Anti-GBV Action Plan (GAP) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) regrouped under the ESMF. Requirements for these instruments, including implementation timeframes and responsibilities have been provided in the Environment and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)

With regards to the VNP expansion, not financed by the EIB, a full Resettlement Action Plan and a livelihood restauration plan following the WB standards have been elaborated.

Other social issues

Labour standards

The project may create an influx of non-local labour; to mitigate any potential risk related to occupational and community health safety and security (OHSS), several mitigation measures have been foreseen at different levels. These include the compulsory adoption and enforcement of a code of conduct for the project staff and contractors (including on sexual harassment), the Project has developed a labour influx management plans and workers campsites plans, OHSS related plans and trainings.

Rwanda is a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) hence it adheres to its standards. The national Law N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating Labor in Rwanda as amended on 18/05/2023, was elaborated in reference to the International Labor Law. Therefore, this Labour Management Plan (LMP) was prepared and will be implemented in respect of the international labour standards. As part of the ESMF, requirements for the management of environmental and social aspects of the works in line with the applicable national requirements, ILO and international best practices, will be included into tender



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documents and subsequent agreements with selected contractors. Furthermore, the project will make a grievance mechanism available to all project personnel including contractors and sub-contractors at site level.

Gender equality

Recent research on gender, environment and climate change in Rwanda focusing on women's resilience and livelihood situation reveals that women are more substantially affected by climate change than men. Climate change heavily affects projected income from agricultural activities and broader household resilience; since women are the majority employed in the sector, but with limited access to and control over agricultural resources, they are economically and psychologically among the most affected.

In addition, and in the context of the project women's limited access to early warning systems on potential disasters and participation in the environment and natural resource sector is noted. The project will pay particular attention to designing and implementing a gender responsive FEWS and DRM mechanisms to ensure women have timely access to information on potential flood disasters, target women through the project livelihood activities and promote women's participation and decision making in the environment and natural resource sector.

The Gender and Anti-GBV Action Plan (GAP) developed for this project is in line and contributes to the implementation of the Ministry of Environment (MoE's) Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sector (2018-2024). The GAP has prescribed activities that should be undertaken to address the gender gaps such as training and job skilling of the women, youth and persons with disability, awareness creation, hiring, capacity building and provision of conducive childcare facilities at site among other recommendations. The GAP will be implemented as required in the ESCP.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan and a Stakeholder Engagement Program were developed and have been used during the preparation for the project safeguard plans including RAPs, ESIA, and ESMF.

Overall implementation of the SEP is the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment (MoE). It was confirmed during the due diligence process that the SPIUs of MoE, RWB, REMA and RDB have adequate capacity for the required implementation requirements within the respective existing human resources and operational structures.

The grievance redress mechanism will be one of the strategies put in place to monitor and resolve complaints that may arise during or after the Project implementation by the affected people or other interested parties. Therefore, the project implementation will minimize grievances throughout all its stages, following the provisions of Rwandan laws, the EIB standards and the World Bank safeguards.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The implementation of this Project will lead to improvement of living conditions, sustainability of economic infrastructure and an enabling environment for economic activities in the project areas. Possible negative environmental effects should be temporary and confined to the immediate construction sites.

Involuntary resettlement and economic displacements are potentially expected at the works sites and will be addressed by the Project's Environmental and Social Management Plans and Resettlement Action Plans. The Project due diligence has confirmed that with the aim of



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collaborating and coordinating, relying on the implementation arrangements set up by the World Bank, will not lead to deviations from the EIB standards.

The Project is considered acceptable for EIB financing from an environmental and social point of view with the following conditions relating to environmental and social matters:

- No works should start without the environmental authorization by the Rwandan authorities, all Environmental and Social Impact Assessments should be shared with the Bank for clearance and publication before the start of the works.
- Environmental and Social Management Plans and RAPs including a grievance mechanism should be implemented in compliance with the Environmental and social standards of the EIB and International best practices.
- Requirements for the management of environmental and social aspects of the works in line with the applicable national requirements, ILO and international best practices, will be included into tender documents and subsequent agreements with selected contractors.
- No works should start before compensations have been paid to the people affected by the works.
- The promoter shall ensure that independent audits are carried out to verify the satisfactory implementation of the Resettlement Action Plans.