I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Ghana’s economy remains heavily reliant on renewable natural resources. Over 70 percent of Ghana’s population depends on directly on natural resources for food, water, and energy. Ghana’s GDP in 2011 was almost US$40 billion, and GDP per capita US$1,300. The agriculture sector – which relies on natural resources such as land and water, and includes forestry and agroforestry – contributed 40 per cent of GDP in 2000-04. Agriculture, forestry, and agroforestry account for more than 50 percent of all land use, and employment for an estimated 60 percent of the population and 53 percent of women. Almost half of the population lives in rural areas, and two-thirds of rural livelihoods rely to some extent on forest-related activities (for example, fuel wood and charcoal producers and bush meat hunters). Rapid growth (over 7 percent) in recent years was driven by strong cocoa production, rising construction, continued increases in gold output, and the
commercialization of oil. Although agriculture, dominated by cocoa, has been the backbone of the economy for decades, more recently gold and oil production have become a larger share of the economy.

2. Ghana has experienced impressive poverty reduction while rapidly urbanizing. Between 1991 and 2006, poverty decreased from 52 to 28 percent (based on 2006 household survey) and decreased further to 23.6 percent by 2012 (based on CPS estimates). These gains resulted from job creation outside of agriculture, and redeployment of resources in construction, transport, and financial services. However, there are significant income disparities between southern and northern Ghana, where more than half the poor are concentrated. Overall, Ghana expects to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goals for income, poverty reduction, ending hunger, primary education, gender equality, and access to clean water. Environmental sustainability, however, is a continuing challenge, with rapid forest loss from land use change. Population growth and urbanization contribute to demand for land for agriculture, timber for construction and fuel wood and charcoal for cooking.

3. Natural resource wealth has a critical role in contributing to sustainable growth and continued poverty reduction efforts. Renewable resources, such as forests and fisheries, that could contribute to revenues and economic development sustainably, are being depleted. Forest resources are critically important for jobs, incomes and livelihoods, particularly for poor communities and women. However, Ghana faces challenges in natural resource governance, volatility in commodity prices, falling agricultural competitiveness and geographical disparities in the distribution of resources, people and water. To sustain natural resource contributions to development and people’s welfare, institutions and policies need to be strengthened to plan and manage their use in an efficient, equitable and sustainable manner, particularly with the rapid expansion in some sectors, such as oil, and the potential for destructive practices in others, such as small scale gold mining.

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

4. The Government of Ghana (GoG) recognizes both the growing costs of natural resource degradation and the developmental threat of climate change. The cost of environmental degradation is estimated to be as high as 10 percent of GDP annually (about half of Ghana’s Official Development Assistance). In 2008, the GoG launched a five-year Natural Resources and Environmental Governance (NREG) program to help ensure economic growth, alleviate poverty, increase revenues and improve environmental protection. The GoG has a comprehensive National Climate Change Policy (2012), which aims to achieve a climate resilient economy while achieving sustainable development and equitable low carbon economic growth.

5. Forest cover has almost halved since 2000: only 4.6 million hectares remain today with 1.6 million hectares as forest reserves. Ghana’s deforestation rate is about 2% per year, representing a loss of 65,000 ha of closed forest per year. Recent assessments indicate that rates may have been accelerating in Brong Ahafo and the Western Region. The major direct causes of deforestation as summarized in Ghana’s Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP, 2010) are: (i) agricultural expansion, including for cocoa and ranching; (ii) harvesting for fuel wood and charcoal, illegal logging, wildfires and biomass burning; (iii) population and development pressure; and (iv) mining and mineral exploitation. In addition, the complex tree tenure and benefit sharing regime fails to provide incentives to communities to protect trees. The domestic market absorbs about 85% of timber production, mostly supplied by informal sources using inefficient and unsustainable practices. Although timber demand is high, there is very limited investment, because policy and
market failures hinder private sector engagement.

6. Community members are both actors in and victims of forest decline. Mining, timber harvesting, and agriculture are critical economic activities. Agricultural expansion – led by the production of cocoa, but also including cassava, plantain, cocoyam, oil palm, and rubber – accounts for about half of deforestation and degradation. Cocoa production occupies about 1.6 million ha (7 percent of all land), and employs about 800,000 small farmers. Recent expansion has been greatest in the Western Region which now accounts for over half of production. Increasingly, farmers are shifting from shaded cocoa cultivation (under primary or secondary forests) to open cocoa cultivation, as well as encroaching into forested lands.

7. The GoG plans improvements in forest sector governance, incentives, benefit-sharing, tenure and institutional effectiveness. The GoG has prepared a new Forests and Wildlife Policy (2012) and a Strategy for Plantations (2013). Under this legal framework, the GoG is working to improve the complex tree tenure system to provide better incentives to maintain trees off-reserve. To improve governance and law enforcement, Ghana has established a Voluntary Partnership Agreement, which requires verification of legality for timber exports to the European Union. The Bank-supported NREG TA will address certain policy and institutional weaknesses, improving the enabling environment for increased private sector, farmer and community involvement, and enhancing the capacity of state agencies to deliver forest management services. Ghana is engaged in readiness for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) with support from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the World Bank. REDD+ readiness aims to build the legal, institutional base as well as the awareness and constituency needed to participate in global performance based payment systems for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

8. Civil society engagement and dialogue on the natural resource sectors, climate change, and the REDD+ process has been increasing. In 2010, the Civil Society Review of the Natural Resources and Environment Sector was established to provide a forum for CSO inputs into the government’s own review of the sector. A National Forest Forum is a platform to influence policy formulation, promote good governance and sustainable forest management. Much of the engagement and dialogue occur in Accra with representation of advocacy and technical civil society organizations. Some observers see a need for more engagement at grass roots level and with field-based organizations. The Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Local Communities – a FIP-financed mechanism to promote dialogue, capacity, and engagement – aims to address that need.

9. All forest sector issues converge in Ghana’s high forest zone (HFZ), where deforestation rates and carbon stocks are highest. The HFZ is also a core cocoa production area with significant degradation. There is good potential to move toward more sustainable forest and land management (and reduce emissions and store carbon) by enhancing policies, incentives, and practices for better stewardship, agroforestry, and farming approaches. The GoG has initiatives to reduce the cocoa frontier expansion by providing incentives for rejuvenating old cocoa plantations and bringing old cocoa falls under more sustainable agroforestry-based cultivation. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture also promotes certification of sustainable cocoa production, but there are several different systems and standards advocated by different organizations.

10. Financing from the Forest Investment Program (FIP) provides an opportunity to finance transformative co-management and benefit sharing approaches. The FIP will finance policy and
institutional reforms, capacity building, and communication (building on NREG TA and FCPF). The FIP-supported program will also pilot test innovative applications of community based planning and management, including tree management rights with communities and farmers. Based on a consultative process, FIP investments (implemented by World Bank, IFC and African Development Bank) will focus on results-based interventions on the High Forest Zone in the Western and the Brong Ahafo regions, where deforestation rates and carbon stocks are high. The proposed FIP-financed project will also complement and enhance the NREG TA effort (approved in June 2013), and build on consultation and measurement work that began under the FCPF (approved in November 2012).

Relationship to CAS

11. This proposed FIP operation is fully consistent with the World Bank Group’s strategic goals – to end extreme poverty and to promote shared prosperity and to achieve this with environmental, social, and fiscal sustainability – and with the Country Partnership Strategy for 2014 to 2016, which aims to assist Ghana in the transition to middle-income status by the end of FY16. Under the CPS, the WBG will assist Ghana to diversify its economy, and generate jobs for its young labor force. The CPS recognizes that Ghana’s natural resource wealth is a platform for economic and social development, but needs prudent and transparent management, as well as strategic actions to prevent negative outcomes. The proposed operation is also aligned with the Africa Strategy, which gives special attention to natural resources management. The strategy emphasizes the need to ensure that local communities benefit from natural resource extraction and that sustainable management of forests is critical for development and climate change. The Bank aims to support country-led activities through results-based efforts to the extent possible.

12. The proposed project is also in line with Ghana’s Medium Term National Development Policy Framework: “Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda” (GSGDA), 2011-2013. The GSGDA is structured around seven thematic pillars, the most relevant of which is (3) “Accelerated Agricultural Modernization and sustainable Natural Resources Management”. The project further contributes to the country’s National Climate Change Policy Framework (NCCPF) whose objectives are: (i) adaptation to and reduction of vulnerability to impacts of climate change; (ii) mitigation of the impacts of climate change; and (iii) low carbon growth. The NCCPF targets reductions in carbon emissions and enhancement of carbon stocks through Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) interventions. The project will also contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy 2012.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)

13. The FIP finances three inter-related projects in Ghana, implemented by the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Finance Corporation (WBG), respectively. The overall goal of FIP-financed activities in Ghana is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, while reducing poverty and conserving biodiversity. The FIP set of activities collectively aims to (i) ensure the integrity, restoration, and sustainable management of forest reserves by introducing more inclusive management and benefit sharing models, financial incentives, and investments; (ii) restore forest cover in off-reserve areas by securing tree tenure and benefits, forest plantations and landscape restoration, and rehabilitation of degraded forest land; (iii) increase trees and enhance carbon stocks in the farming system by promoting sustainable cocoa and agriculture practices; and (iv) develop viable alternative
livelihoods for local communities by addressing a broad range of technical, financial and market incentives, to reduce pressure on existing forests.

14. Project Development Objective: The Bank’s FIP-financed project aims to strengthen policy implementation, institutional capacity and local practice with community engagement to reduce forest loss and land degradation in selected landscape corridors in Ghana's High Forest Zone.

15. Key PDO indicators (proposed at concept stage) include:
• Policy implementation and institutional practices related to forest/land use are improved to engage communities in promoting sustainable forest management and climate smart agroforestry.
• Community based natural resource management institutions strengthened with training, access to information, improved incentives, rights and responsibilities for managing landscapes sustainably.
• Land area in targeted landscape corridors where more sustainable agroforestry and climate smart cocoa practices are adopted by community institutions, user groups and farmers.
• Reforms and practices enhanced and reinforced through improved, efficient and targeted communication methods and materials.
• Reduced levels of deforestation and forest degradation and increased levels of tree establishment relative to 2012 baseline level (can be converted to emissions reduction estimates).

**Key Results (From PCN)**

16. Beneficiaries. The ultimate beneficiaries of this operation are the communities (current and future generations) in the Western and Brong Ahafo Regions who manage land and forests for their livelihoods, and will have access to new skills, opportunities and markets. The Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) in charge of natural resources and environmental management will also benefit from improved policies, capacity development programs, and outreach and communication programs. Other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, will benefit through the institutional and policy reforms, and improved resource management practices in the key regions and sectors of focus. Both investors and communities will gain from the clarification of rules and processes needed to promote investment in landscapes, trees and timber that will contribute to Ghana’s development in the future. The project will also contribute to climate change mitigation with global benefits.

17. Expected Results and Benefits. The project will support interventions toward more sustainable forest and land management by enhancing policies, incentives, and practices for better stewardship and reduced degradation in both forest reserves and off reserve areas, which will also enhance carbon stocks. The project also aims to enhance and increase social benefits and community empowerment by focusing on groups that depend on natural resources. The community level institutional strengthening and pilot activities (related to rights, benefit sharing and landscape planning) are expected to build social capital, and empower communities and their institutions, including for women. The project expects to contribute to economic benefits, and help to reduce poverty by creating opportunity for revenue generation and job creation through empowerment of community-based resource management institutions, improvements in the cocoa landscape, forest restoration, plantation and agroforestry development in off reserve areas. Wider benefits will include contributions to global public goods, including enhancing agricultural biodiversity, soil conservation, habitat connectivity and ecosystem services, such as sustaining water supplies.

**III. Preliminary Description**
Concept Description

A. Context: Ghana’s Forest and Land Use Challenges

18. Ghana’s Shared Growth and Development Agenda provides the strategic direction for addressing forest and natural resource management challenges with more community engagement. The key sectoral challenges are to: (i) improve the enabling environment and incentives for better stewardship and investment by local institutions, communities, and farmers; (ii) improve and diversify livelihoods for communities as an alternative to forest degrading activities; (iii) coordinate and harmonize incentives across multiple layers of institutions and stakeholders for improved livelihoods; and (iv) capitalize on climate change as a focal initiative and financing opportunity. The Government recognizes the central economic importance of timber and non-timber forest products, cocoa and other tree crops, charcoal and other commodities, as well as water and other environmental services generated both on and off forest reserves, plantations, and small farms. It also recognizes the complex inter-relations among policy barriers and distortions, levels of administration and traditional leaders, and community livelihood strategies and economic opportunities.

B. Project Description

19. The Ghana FIP-financed World Bank Project, Enhancing Carbon Stocks in Natural Forests and Agro-forest Landscapes, is designed to address these challenges through upstream policy interventions, practical landscape level pilot demonstrations, capacity building, and communications efforts to improve understanding and practices and to prepare for wider replication and scale up. The project will have four main components.

- Comp. 1: Policy Reforms and Institutional Strengthening ($3 million)
- Comp. 2: Pilot Investments for Improved Forest and Landscape Management ($22 million)
- Comp. 3: Innovation, Capacity Building, and Communications ($3 million)
- Comp. 4: Project Management, Monitoring and Coordination ($1.5 million)

20. The organization and relations among the four components are illustrated below. The core of the project (Component 2) is a set of pilot activities implemented in a few target landscapes, designed to address key drivers of deforestation. The policy reforms, institutional strengthening, capacity building, and communications activities in other components aim to support and sustain the pilot/demonstration activities and lay the ground work for later replication and scale up. The final component provides resources for management, monitoring, and coordination across the range of FIP financed activities. Each of the components is further described below.

21. Component 1: Policy Reforms and Institutional Strengthening ($3 million). This component consists of efforts to advance implementation of reformed policies, improve the enabling environment, and strengthen the institutional means/efforts to achieve/promote sustainable forest management. This will involve two subcomponents. The first will help the GoG to pursue changes in policy “practice” – that is, translation and interpretation of the way policies are deployed on the ground – as well as incentives (including delivery of services, capacity, inputs, and information) to improve the enabling environment for sustainable landscape and forest management. This work will build on the work of FCPF and the NREG TA, and prior assessments to identify practical recommendations for changes in procedures, practices and rules to improve tree tenure, devolve
farmer/community resources management rights and institute more equitable benefit sharing arrangements. It will also include inputs to the design of pilot-demonstration approaches (implemented under component 2), for example guidelines and training to enable assessment of the effectiveness of changes in policy/practice, and planning and resource mobilization for those with potential for replication and scale up. It will also include support to sustain, refine and expand consultation and governance platforms initiated under NREG and FCPF at both national and local level. The second subcomponent will focus on developing and improving the institutional procedures, guidelines and institutional models to enhance the quality of service delivery by the Forestry Commission to support the rollout and extension of demonstration activities at landscape level. This will also involve assessment and improvement of institutional capacity for delivering improved services for improved landscape, forest and tree management.

22. Component 2: Pilot Investments for Improved Forest and Landscape Management with Communities ($22 million). As noted, pilot demonstration investments are the core of this Ghana FIP project. These will aim to establish and test different interventions and options for improved landscape management approaches in practice, while at the same time laying the groundwork for replication and scaling up. These pilots represent up-front investments required to restore/protect/reduce deforestation, and thus build on the REDD+ Readiness Process. Pilots will be supported by efforts to consolidate lessons from implementation to improve policy implementation and institutional practices, as well as outreach efforts that encourage replication of improved practices to landscapes beyond the target corridors. Pilot demonstration activities will be implemented in two main landscape areas: on farms and in communities and on forest reserves as follows.

23. Pilot 2.1: Enhancing Trees and Climate-Smart Practices in Agroforestry Corridors and Cocoa Landscapes on Farms with Communities ($14 million). This pilot will focus on drivers of deforestation and land degradation on community managed agroforestry and cocoa cultivation landscapes in selected corridors in the target regions. It aims to secure and enhance trees in corridors with community based institutions, enhance trees and climate smart cocoa with farmers both in corridor landscapes and on admitted farms, and to deploy integrated landscape planning in support of community based resource decisions. These activities will enhance carbon stocks in the agroforestry and cocoa landscape by scaling up support (a combination of extension, inputs, certification, price incentives) to smallholder farmers to increase protection of existing trees, planting of new trees, practicing agroforestry and shade grown climate smart cocoa production in selected landscape corridors. It will aim to re-align incentives for the care and maintenance of trees on private farmland, to improve extension and communication efforts, and to formalize resource management rights at community/farmer level. Pilot efforts will be developed in consultation with communities and land users in targeted zones in relatively degraded landscapes.

24. The transformative nature of this activity will come from giving community level institutions and cocoa farmers the incentives, knowledge, and tools to improve farm level outcomes and gain local benefits from managing trees and forest mosaics within the larger landscape, while also enhancing co-benefits of associated with increased tree cover and carbon sequestration. This pilot will build on two key entry points: (i) the current willingness of GoG to revise implementation practices and devolve key management responsibilities to community level, particularly through Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA); and (ii) the alignment of interests among cocoa producers, buyers and regulators to ensure a more sustainable and climate-friendly supply/value chain.
25. Activities to be financed will include: (i) community implemented investments in land and tree management; active testing, demonstration, and assessment of new practices and policies for land and tree management and ownership with greater community benefit; (ii) provision of improved inputs (e.g., tree seedlings) as incentives for improved practices; (iii) delivery of improved and integrated extension services on climate smart cocoa in cooperation with supply chain players; (iv) support for risk reduction measures for smallholder farmers; and (v) engagement with admitted farms on forest reserves to raise yields and reduce environmental impact. These efforts will be enhanced by innovative communication approaches to facilitate the delivery of practical, timely and useful information to farmers and community level institutions. As part of CREMA establishment, participatory planning will help to engage and inform local communities about the nature of their resource base, the priority management issues, the competing interests and needs for livelihoods, production and protection. District level authorities, traditional authorities, community representative, local institutions, vulnerable and disenfranchised groups will be engaged in a structured planning process that prioritizes landscapes, establishes commonly held management goals, and develops specific local land use plans, that can be nested within larger district level plans. Low-cost geo-referenced mapping technologies will be employed to assist stakeholders to identify and delineate local land uses and important landscape features. There is strong potential here for coordination with the DGM-financed effort at community and landscape level; these links will be developed during implementation.

26. This work will be led by the Forestry Commission under the management umbrella of MLNR. The Forestry Commission will work with partners with skills in communication, community engagement, landscape management practices, etc. Likely partners are those already engaging with CREMA development and scaling up in Western Region and Brong Ahafo, as well as professional communication enterprises, plus other intermediate service providers that may bring skills in training, visual communication, survey design, and M&E approaches. This will also involve work with stakeholders in the cocoa supply chain (COCOBOD, Licensed Buying Companies, other private agents, extension agents and service providers), and research institutions (FORIG and CRIG) and existing information and extension service providers (e.g., Solidaridad, NCRC, IUCN and others). This can also lay the groundwork for future piloting of performance-based payments under REDD+.

27. Pilot 2.2: Pilot Investments on Forest Reserves for Reducing Degradation, Enrichment Planting, Nurseries, and Plantation Development for Restoring Degraded Forest Landscapes ($8 million). This pilot will aim to reduce further degradation of permanent forest estates; enhance habitat and carbon stocks through enrichment planting and nursery development with ecologically and commercially important native species to restore degraded landscapes, and facilitate plantation investment in severely degraded landscapes in selected forest reserves and demarcated plantation zones, with community involvement. This will help to address the imbalance in timber supply and demand, improve the enabling environment and investment climate for sustainable forest management and plantation development, particularly on severely degraded forest reserves. This activity will augment the supply of important native species within the high forest ecosystem, while also creating incentives and employment opportunities and markets for native seed stock, for communities and farmers to engage in the planting and preservation of native tree species, rather than encroachment into forests.

28. Activities will include: (i) development of criteria and procedures for identifying and screening forest reserve areas for enrichment planting or plantation investment; (ii) participatory
planning and outreach activities to engage communities and local authorities in this process; (iii) documentation and dissemination of enabling policies, procedures and models for securing SFM investments and for benefit sharing arrangements with local land users and communities; (iv) clarification of the roles, responsibilities, and benefit shares for communities, investors, and local governments and traditional authorities; (v) planning and demarcation of plantation investment zones and enrichment planting target areas; and (vi) establishment of native tree nurseries and out-grower/collector systems to augment knowledge about and supply of native species; (vii) securing forest reserves and reducing further degradation and encroachment by demarcation, pillaring and mapping of admitted farms and settlements in collaboration with the Survey Department of Ghana; (viii) targeted training and logistical support for FC field staff to undertake more effective monitoring and to improve community relations; (ix) Close collaboration will be fostered with forest-fringe communities, especially through training and support to Community Based Organizations (e.g., Community Fire Volunteers, Community Forest Committees (CFCs), Community Biodiversity Action Groups (CBAGs) and other recognizable community groups) to assist in increasing public awareness on the need to protect the forest reserves. Communities near plantation zones and enrichment areas will gain access to employment in site preparation, maintenance of planted seedlings, and monitoring of forest reserve areas against encroachment and illegal logging. This activity will support the procedures and land use demarcation to enable plantation investments, but it will not finance establishment of plantations.

29. The Forestry Commission, together with Ghana Investment Promotion Centre and local government will implement this activity, with engagement of private sector interests, local government units, and local communities and CBOs interested in improved benefit sharing approaches, improved forest protection and clearer guidelines for plantation establishment. Enrichment planting in forest reserves will be implemented by the Forestry Commission, including provision of inputs, training, and extension where communities are engaged in implementation. The transformative nature of the pilot is to provide clear models and procedures for enhancing investment, including clear designation of target areas. Increased private sector investment in sustainable forest management can help to generate local employment opportunities in planting, maintenance, seedling production, service delivery and out-grower arrangements.

30. Component 3: Innovation, Capacity Building and Communications ($3 million). This component will support communication, capacity building, and monitoring activities to support innovation, engage communities, and provide information relevant for improved landscape management and restoration. This component will support the pilot activities described above by supplying information, improved approaches, and training materials needed to achieve the pilot goals. Activities in support of innovation will involve consolidation of economic, environmental and social assessments to provide knowledge and specific cultivation techniques to improve the acceptability and uptake of native trees in landscapes and in plantations. Communication, outreach and dissemination will be supported with development of strategic communication approaches, improving existing communication channels and capacities (in GoG), improving and targeting communication materials aimed at local institutions and stakeholder groups, using practical and efficient dissemination technologies (e.g., mobile phone, radio, etc). Communication efforts will be supplemented by technical know-how developed for practical uptake by farmers and landscape managers at the local institutional level. Research and dissemination efforts will be informed through surveys and feedback from target groups, so that information materials can be constantly improved and aimed at the people who need to apply the information to effect change on the ground. This activity will also explicitly support the proposed pilots with information materials and
campaigns and will aim to engage locally appropriate delivery agents. Links with DGM-financed activities and related institutions will be developed and defined. Finally, this activity will support the scale up and localization of Ghana’s National MRV/forest monitoring system, where needed to supplement the work initiated under FCPF. This may involve additional training, institutional support, community involvement, and regular data collection in line with appropriate indicators.

31. Component 4: Project Management, Monitoring and Coordination ($1.5 million). This component will support project management and oversight, project monitoring and evaluation system, and wider coordination of the range of FIP-financed activities, including reporting at the international level. Monitoring and oversight will be handled by the project management unit located within the MNLR and includes fiduciary management, procurement, performance monitoring and status reporting, as well as appropriate application of safeguard requirements to all activities. Monitoring and evaluation activities will support project aims but also be integrated into existing M&E activities and systems carried out by the MLNR and subsidiary agencies in line with requirements under FCPF, NREG, and partner FIP projects. Collection of baseline data and regular updates will be supported. The project will also support the GoG in regular communication and coordination among FIP-financed interventions and related activities, to promote synergies among all FIP projects (WB, AfDB, IFC, DGM), as well as information and knowledge sharing with other FIP countries.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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