



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(ESRS Concept Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 06/28/2021 | Report No: ESRS02065



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Region	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)
Liberia	AFRICA WEST	P173677	
Project Name	Liberia Women Empowerment Project		
Practice Area (Lead)	Financing Instrument	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Social Sustainability and Inclusion	Investment Project Financing	4/11/2022	7/21/2022
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)		
Republic of Liberia	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP)		

Proposed Development Objective

The development objective is to improve gender equality attitudes and livelihood opportunities for women in project areas.

Financing (in USD Million)	Amount
Total Project Cost	20.00

B. Is the project being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project [including overview of Country, Sectoral & Institutional Contexts and Relationship to CPF]

The project will address the economic and social dimensions of gender inequality by integrating community-led livelihoods opportunities for women with social initiatives to build voice and agency and change harmful norms. This approach aligns with the growing evidence that bundled interventions are more impactful for women than singular ones, and that combined initiatives can be effective in both strengthening women’s economic position and improving gender attitudes, violence and women’s voice and agency. Integrating these concepts is a promising pathway for both gender equality and economic growth in Liberia. The project will generate key learnings on “what works” to empower



women, and how economic strengthening and norm change activities can be implemented together at scale by government and donor actors.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1. Detailed project location(s) and salient physical characteristics relevant to the E&S assessment [geographic, environmental, social]

The project will enhance women’s livelihoods to address women’s voice, agency and social capital while addressing social norms and building capacity of key Ministries (MGCSP and MoA) to close gender gaps. The geographic focus of the project will be decided together with the Government. Parameters will include feasibility of implementation of components in different locations, and alignment with GoL priorities and initiatives along with those of other development partners.

Liberia enjoys a favorable climate with significant arable land and abundant water and natural resources, a high reliance on climate-dependent activities like agriculture leaves the country vulnerable to climate change. Liberia’s flat coastal lowlands predicted to be negatively impacted by rising sea levels, causing flooding, land erosion and potentially economic and social harm. Liberian coastal regions are home for almost 60% of the population, rising sea levels could increase migration to higher land, and flooding may worsen as increased heavy rains and storm surges place health, infrastructure, and livelihoods at risk and this may affect vulnerable population who are suffering under COVID-19, thus, exacerbating their vulnerabilities. Liberia covers 40% of West Africa’s forest cover with rich biodiversity, and forest resources are used for food, fuel, and energy and one of the highest shares of water resources per capita in Africa, creating favorable conditions for agricultural development. Environmental degradation threatens biodiversity in the form of over-exploitation of resources, excessive fuel wood harvesting and logging, encroachment by human settlement, and unsustainable mineral and sand mining activities. Liberia’s environmental vulnerability to climate change closely link to social conditions, which are marked by high levels of poverty, acute urban-rural disparities, and human capital development gaps. Liberia one of the poorest countries, placed 175th of 189 countries, national headcount poverty rate increased to an estimated 55.5% in 2019 with higher poverty rates observed in rural areas. Rural populations face even greater cultural, logistical and physical barriers in accessing economic, social, cultural, medical, and educational services and opportunities. Liberia, a post-conflict country, is particularly vulnerable to unrest and instability. The economy was under strain as a result of difficult macroeconomic reforms and the Ebola health crisis. Rural poverty often goes hand in hand with subsistence agriculture, which is the source of livelihood for most of the people in rural areas, 77.2% of HH headed by smallholder farmer live below poverty line and education, healthcare, and infrastructure are significantly worse.

Human capital development also suffers from significant gaps, food insecurity persists and remains a serious public health concern. Government efforts to promote literacy and gender parity in education have achieved meaningful results, but rural-urban disparities are significant, literacy rates for women in rural areas is just 34%. Adolescent pregnancy and maternal mortality continue to hinder human capital development, 23% of female deaths related to pregnancy or childbearing and 30.3% of adolescent girls having begun childbearing (2020: DHS). A continued focus on prioritizing human capital investment is needed to help young population—42% of the population is below 15 years old—power a dividend to the country.

Gender inequality and GBV are widespread, early marriage remains common, 29.5% of women aged 20 to 49 married before 18 (2020: DHS). Female genital cutting remains widespread and varies from 2% in River Gee to 77.8% in Gbarpolu. Women and girls face high rates of IPV and NPV. 60% of women and girls aged 15-49 experienced physical violence in 2019-20 significantly more than 49.3% in 2007, 34.8% experienced physical or sexual IPV and 9.1% experienced sexual violence from any perpetrator in last 12 months.



D. 2. Borrower’s Institutional Capacity

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) will be the Implementing Agency and will take the overall responsibility of ensuring the effective implementation of the project, with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) serving as a technical partner in the implementation of activities with an agricultural focus and as the focus of capacity-building under Component 3. During project preparation, the project will determine the appropriate mechanisms for technical partnership between agencies to ensure there are well-defined avenues for coordination and implementation between MGCSP, MoA and any other agencies. However, management of the project and monitoring and reporting will be the responsibility of a Project Implementation Unit within MGCSP.

Liberia’s weak institutions hinder the quality of its public service delivery, and this also applies equally to MGCSP. While MGCSP has some experience implementing World Bank projects (and has been implementing the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project (P155293) project for several years), the Ministry’s overall capacity is limited in terms of staffing, resources and technical training. As discussed above, one of the major objectives of the project is to build the technical and operational capacity of MGCSP and MoA to deliver programs that strengthen women’s economic and social position and operationalize existing gender policies. However, MGCSP will require significant support to prepare, implement and monitor the project’s components. MoA will similarly require support for the design and implementation of the agricultural activities (in keeping with their role as a technical partners), although the Ministry does have some experience with World Bank projects (including the Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (P160945) and the Rural Economic Transformation Project (P175263) currently under preparation).

Significant support will also be required on environmental and social risk management. MGCSP is not conversant in the World Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), which will apply to the project (the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project is being implemented under OP/BP), and may require support to fill technical and operational capacity gaps. MoA’s experience with the ESF is likewise very limited. Therefore, intensive support will be required, which will begin with a series of trainings provided to MGCSP as the Implementing Agency on E&S risk management (with the potential to include MoA, if relevant), beginning during project preparation. The project will also ensure that the PIU (which may be the same PIU as the one currently implementing the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project) includes in its staff two safeguards specialists - one environmental and one social (with experience in gender and GBV risks management) to oversee project implementation and ensure alignment with the requirements of the ESF, and in particular follow and implement the commitment of the ESCP.

The full capacity of the current MGCSP PIU will be assessed during project preparation and enhanced providing them training and other capacity building measures as suggested.

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II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

Environmental Risk Rating

Moderate

The environmental risk classification for the Project is moderate. Component 2 will finance interventions that support women’s economic opportunities, which will include investments to enhance agricultural productivity, value chains and access to markets (along with strengthening life skills, social capital and voice and agency). The activities may result in both direct and indirect environmental risks, but they are expected to be site specific, local, reversible, mainly temporary and capable of management through appropriate risk mitigation measures. The enhancement of agriculture productivity could trigger the following: a. Land clearing and planting: The primary negative



environmental impact of agriculture activities will likely arise from clearing and planting of crops. However, it is anticipated that agriculture activities will not occur on land that has pristine/good quality natural forest, but rather on existing farmed areas. b. Risks of soil erosion: Exposure of land to surface, due to vegetation clearing and surface runoff during the rains can lead to soil erosion and consequent run-off to local waterways. c. Pest and chemical management: agricultural activities may contribute to an increase in the use of pesticides, fertilizers or other agrochemicals, with potential adverse impacts related to contamination and pollution of water resources and soil, and health impacts for residents of surrounding communities. The use of agrochemicals would also require procurement, transport, storage and application equipment. d. Biodiversity risks: while the project is not anticipated to involve activities with significant negative impacts on biodiversity and natural resources, there is the risk that some livelihood agricultural activities and associated value chains could impact natural habitats and biodiversity, or lead to land degradation through activities such as land clearing or pesticide use. The project is not envisioned to finance infrastructure or civil works. Further, Component 3 envisions strengthening the capacity of government actors to implement gender policies and deliver programs to enhance women’s social and economic well-being. Activities are not anticipated to include construction but to focus on training, capacity-building and similar resources. To address the environmental and social concerns of the proposed activities, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) will be required of the borrower for review by the World Bank Safeguard Specialists.

Social Risk Rating

Moderate

The project is expected to have a positive social impact at the individual and community level in that it will promote gender equality, economic opportunities, and address the social norms that contribute to GBV and stand as a barrier to women’s empowerment. However, there is a risk that activities that are designed to challenge long-standing norms and beliefs about gender and power relations could be negatively perceived and result in backlash. The project intends to use established, proven methodologies which take a phased approach to changing beliefs, attitudes and behaviors to be more gender-equitable, working progressively through topics in a manner that is designed to help participants examine the ways in which restrictive gender roles can limit the lives of both men and women, harming everyone. However, the project will pay close attention to these risks, and in particular the risks to women that can arise as further discussed below. Furthermore, with respect to the economic strengthening intervention under component 2, there is a risk of exclusion of deserving women and a risk of vulnerability to elite capture. To the extent that the project provides support to enhance women’s access to credit, strengthens agricultural extension services to women, provides grants or capital to enhance access to key agricultural inputs, business registration and other assistance there is a risk that these benefits may not be distributed equitably, and there is a risk that these supports could benefit those with connections and influences. Thus, the risk of exclusion and elite capture under component 2 need to be mitigated upfront. The activities under Components 1 and 2 will also involve women’s economic and social empowerment and in-depth engagement on social and gender norms that can have implications for relationships between men and women if they alter existing gender and power relations. This may have the potential to impact household dynamics, and will require sensitization for participating households in the targeted communities to be prepared for accepting or working with potential changes to come (these considerations are part of evidence-based methodologies to for changing norms, attitudes and beliefs to be more gender equitable). Further, project activities aimed at enhancing women’s voice and agency can create unexpected risks for women, as traditional roles for men and women are challenged and shaped. Such changes could result, in the short term, in attempts to strengthen men’s traditional roles, which may be associated with increased GBV risks. While the evidence suggests that these risks are low to moderate (and that combining women’s economic support with gender-transformative approaches can positively impact both norms and some forms of

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GBV), the project will conduct thorough preparatory analytical work on all aspects of gender and GBV so that the design takes into account these risks. The project will also establish clear risk mitigation measures for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH), including SEA/SH risks that may arise from interactions between project workers and beneficiaries.

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESSs) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1. General Assessment

ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Overview of the relevance of the Standard for the Project:

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This ESS is relevant to the project and clarifies the Borrower/Implementing Agency's responsibilities in evaluating, identifying, and managing the E&S risks of the project. Component 2 as indicated above will finance interventions that support women's economic opportunities with a potential focus on investments to enhance agricultural productivity, value chains and access to markets. The activities may result in both direct and indirect environmental risks, but they are expected to be site specific, local, reversible, mainly temporary, and capable of management through appropriate risk mitigation measures.

While the project location has not been identified at this stage, the project will provide group-based livelihoods support and social empowerment/life skills training to women (Component 2) and will also fund social and gender norm change activities aimed at the harmful norms that drive gender inequality and GBV at the community level (Component 1). The project will also build the capacity of MGSP and MoA to design, supervise and implement gender programs to close gender gaps. These interventions present both environmental and social risks, making ESS1 relevant, although the project is not expected to involve any activities that could generate significant and irreversible environmental and social risks or impacts.

In terms of environmental risks, the agricultural activities envisioned as part of Component 2 (subject to discussion and confirmation with the Implementing Agency, MGCSP) will likely focus on smallholder agricultural supports, which may increase the use of pesticides, fertilizers or other agrochemicals. The irresponsible use of these agrochemicals can lead to potential adverse impacts related to contamination and pollution of water resources and soil, farmers' health safety and health impacts for residents of surrounding communities. The use of agrochemicals would also require procurement, transport, storage and application equipment. It is not envisioned that the project will finance infrastructure or civil works, or require resettlement or land acquisition. The agricultural activities will require site-specific environmental assessment, and an Environmental and Social Management Framework will be developed prior to appraisal to guide the individual assessment for any sub-projects, including any other environmental and social risks not identified here (such as noise, dust, air pollution, generation of e-waste or hazardous waste, etc.). In terms of social risks, Liberia's high levels of inequality, including gender inequality, interhousehold and cultural dynamics, and the role of traditional institutions in improving gender equity will require careful assessment. The project design and management will also consider how harmful gender norms and practices has been enabled or perpetuated by traditional institutions, and the role of these institutions in bringing about change. While the project will seek to directly address inequality through its focus on women's economic and social empowerment, there remain risks of exclusion of vulnerable groups as beneficiaries (including those with disabilities), which will require careful attention to the beneficiary identification and selection process, with meaningful participation in the design of the selection process from stakeholders including communities.



Gender-related and GBV risks will also require in-depth assessment and consideration during project preparation. Given Liberia's high rates of GBV particularly among young and vulnerable women and children, including high rates of exploitative transactional sexual relationships, risks related to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) must be carefully considered. SEA and SH may arise in light of interaction between project staff, workers, consultants and agents of the Implementing Agency (MGCSP) or their contractors and targeted community members. This level of interactions may be significant, given that the project envisions community-based social norm change and livelihood support activities with beneficiaries. Their interactions may give rise to power imbalances that increase SEA/SH risks. Further, because the project will be directly addressing women's economic and social empowerment with a focus on the social and gender norms that drive inequality and violence, there are risk and implications for women if men (particularly spouses or partners) perceive their traditional roles are threatened. These issues are central not just to the management of risks and impacts but the design of the project itself, and accordingly the project will conduct thorough preparatory analytical work on all aspects of gender and GBV so that the design takes into account contextual issues.

To further identify, assess and manage the environmental and social risks and impacts of the project, the Borrower/Implementing Agency (MGCSP) will prepare an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) which will be consulted upon and disclosed before appraisal. The ESMF will provide guidelines on processes and procedures to follow during project implementation to screen, identify, assess, and manage environmental and social risks and impacts once details of project activities are known and site(s) are confirmed. The RPF will guide the development of site-specific Resettlement Action Plans (RAP) or Abbreviated Resettlement Action Plans (ARAP) when specific sub-project locations are identified during implementation and prior to commencement of agriculture activities to mitigate project potential risks and impacts on people and communities.

In line with ESF requirements, the Borrower/Implementing Agency (MGCSP) will develop by appraisal (i) a draft ESMF, (ii) a draft Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP); (iii) a draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) (see discussion of ESS10 below), (iv) a draft Gender Analysis and SEA/SH Action Plan, (v) a draft Labor Management Procedure (LMP); and (vii) a draft Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF). The project will also design and implement a grievance mechanism to collect, manage and respond to complaints and grievances that are project-related, and will ensure the inclusion of gender-and GBV-sensitive channels within the mechanism as discussed below.

In line with ESF requirement, all project-applicable Environmental Social Standards will be addressed, as further set out below under Section B.2 ("Specific Risks and Impacts"), including ESS1, ESS2 (Labor and Working Conditions), ESS3 (Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management); ESS4 (Community Health and Safety), and ESS6 (Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources).

Areas where "Use of Borrower Framework" is being considered:

The Borrower's E&S framework is not being considered for the project.

ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

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Stakeholder engagement will be central to the design and implementation of the project, given the project's focus on direct engagement with women and men at the community level. This will require broad consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the selection and design of interventions is community-driven and in line with local need and community preferences. Considering the project's focus on social and gender norms, it will also require localized



discussions to understand how gender norms manifest in targeted communities and how to adapt and contextualize evidence-based interventions so that they fit the needs of the beneficiaries. Consultations will also be held with government at national and local levels as well as with development partners and NGOs/CSOs working in the fields of women’s economic strengthening, social norm change, and gender and GBV. These consultations will be critical given the project’s envisioned collaborative approach with other empowerment activities occurring in Liberia.

As a result, early stakeholder identification, mapping, and analysis to determine levels of interest and influence will be conducted and a subsequent plan to engage the stakeholders will be developed. The consultations will focus on the project components and in particular on the forms of economic strengthening most needed and the ways in which social and gender norm change activities can be adapted to the context, including any concerns or lessons learned from existing or previous programs or interventions. These engagements may begin with key institutional stakeholders, local authorities and communities in the beneficiary counties. Prior to appraisal, the Implementing Agency will consolidate the outcome of the consultations into a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) to be implemented throughout the project’s life. It will be prepared as part of the ESCP and will be updated during implementation.

In light of the project’s focus on gender and the key social risks identified, in particular risks related to the participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups and the risks of GBV/SEA/SH, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) will include special procedures for safe and ethical engagement with women and girls and with identified vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. The SEP will also include a social inclusion and citizen engagement strategy to mitigate risks of exclusion of any groups and to overcome potential cultural and situational barriers.

The SEP will also include procedures and mechanisms for information disclosure and the development of a project Grievance Mechanism (GM) to be developed by the Borrower which will be set up to receive, record, address, communicate and advise on issues raised in relation to the project, with various channels for reporting complaints. The Grievance Mechanism will include specialized procedures for addressing issues of SEA/SH using a survivor-centered approach with a focus on confidentiality, survivor safety and a clear referral pathway to service providers. The Implementing Agency shall establish a structured approach to engagement with stakeholders that is based upon meaningful consultation and disclosure of appropriate information, taking into account the specific challenges and limitations associated with COVID-19. A key source of guidance on communications and stakeholder engagement that the Borrower shall draw on is the WHO’s “COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan Operational Planning Guidelines to Support Country Preparedness and Response” (2020). These guidelines outline the approach in their Risk Communication and Community Engagement - Pillar 2. It will lay the basis for the Project’s stakeholder engagement approach. The project will also draw on other recently-available resources for carrying out stakeholder engagement in the context of COVID-19, including the World Bank’s “Technical Note: Public Consultations and Stakeholder Engagement in WB-supported operations when there are constraints on conducting public meetings” (March 20, 2020).

Given the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situation and the need for physical distancing and other measures, future stakeholder engagements need to follow COVID-19 protocols and instead of face-to-face contact use of technology and media (online meetings, radio and local TV broadcasts, web-based information sharing, mobile platform and SMS) will be used. If face-to-face interaction is necessary for consultation, required distancing protocols will be followed. The updated project implementation manual will include the protocol for physical distancing and measures related to COVID. Various channels of communication will be used and broadcast so that maximum beneficiaries can come under the purview of information sharing and raising of concerns.

The draft SEP will be publicly disclosed in-country and on the Bank’s website prior to appraisal. The Implementing Agency will engage in meaningful, inclusive, and culturally appropriate consultations with all stakeholders throughout



the project life cycle, paying attention to the inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. If major changes occur in the scope of activities during implementation, the SEP will be revised and publicly disclosed.

B.2. Specific Risks and Impacts

A brief description of the potential environmental and social risks and impacts relevant to the Project.

ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions

Under Component 1 and 2, the project will provide direct livelihood support to women in the form of economic and social support packages, and will also fund social and gender norm change activities aimed at the harmful norms that drive gender inequality and GBV. Component 3 seeks to build the capacity of MGCSP and MoA to design, implement and supervise gender policies and empowerment efforts. These activities will require both direct and contracted workers that will include technical consultants, government staff, and may also include community workers.

The Implementing Agency (MGCSP) shall prepare Labour Management Procedures (LMP) that sets out the procedures, in accordance with the requirements of Liberian national laws and ESS2, to be followed by the project workers. The procedure will include requirements for: occupational health and safety, including for COVID19 prevention, working conditions and terms of employment; non-discrimination and equal opportunity; worker's organizations; child labour and minimum age; forced labour; grievance mechanisms; maintenance of training records and documentation and reporting of occupational accidents, safe transport conditions, diseases and incidents, emergency prevention and remedies for injuries, disability and disease.

Sub-contractors and direct workers will be required to update and comply with these requirements during project implementation. This will ensure non-discrimination and promote gender sensitivity in the recruitment process of consultants or specialized workers needed during the implementation of identified sub-projects, including sensitization related to the availability of worker's Grievance Redress Mechanism and to abide by the code of conduct to prevent and address potential harassment, child labour, gender or GBV/SEA issues during the implementation of the activities financed under this project.

With the specific locations of the project have yet to be identified, quantification of the labour force to be employed by the project is not possible at this early stage of the project preparation process, but it will be estimated during the appraisal ESRS. Labour influx is not anticipated as the project is likely to use local contractors and local labour.

Other risks includes OHS risk related to the transmission and contagion of COVID19 during the implementation of project activities, as well as OHS risks related to the potential use of pesticides and agrochemicals, which can have an adverse effect if they enter the body through inhalation, dermal absorption or ingestion or localized ill effects on contact with skin or eyes.

OHS measures will identify and address potential hazards to workers, technical consultants and entrepreneurs to develop preventive and protective measures to avoid COVID19 transmission. A redress mechanism for work-related grievances will be provided to project civil servants and consultants, with necessary considerations for confidentiality and whistle-blower protection.

ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Given that the project may provide smallholder agricultural supports as part of Component 2's livelihoods activities, it may increase the use of pesticides, fertilizers or other agrochemicals. The irresponsible use of these agrochemical can lead to potential adverse impacts related to contamination and pollution of ground and surface water resources, soil



air, biodiversity and health impacts for residents of surrounding communities. Though these agrochemicals are beneficial to the user as in the case of pesticides which is used for killing insects or weeds, they can also be toxic to a host of other organisms including birds, fish, beneficial insects, and non-target plants. Insecticides are generally the most acutely toxic class of pesticides, but herbicides can also pose risks to non-target organisms. Pesticides can reach surface and ground water through runoff from treated plants and soil. Once ground water is polluted with toxic chemicals, it may take many years for the contamination to dissipate or be cleaned up.

Potential environmental risk associated with the project will be further assessed and mitigation measures will be included in the site-specific environmental management plan. GHG emission estimation is not relevant for the project. If planned to use substantial amount of chemical i.e. pesticide and herbicide in the project, the management will be addressed through an agro-chemical management action plan that addresses issues linked to agro-chemical pollution minimization to avoid potential impact to human health and the environment. Handling and usage of agro-chemical should be consistent with national regulation, ESF requirements, WBG EHS Guidelines, international best practices and pertinent Multi-Lateral Agreements (MEAs) guidelines and requirements/obligations.

ESS4 Community Health and Safety

The key community health and safety risks identified for the project include (i) risks related to the potential social and economic exclusion of vulnerable groups from the project and/or from selection as beneficiaries; (ii) risks related to gender, GBV and SEA/SH, and (iii) risk related to the transmission and spread of COVID-19. Other health and safety risks may include risks stemming from pesticide use and agrochemicals, depending on the package of economic activities implemented under Component 2.

Risks related to social and economic exclusion and the participation of vulnerable groups will be managed by ensuring that the Stakeholder Engagement Plan incorporates social inclusion and citizen engagement strategy. Further, criteria for the selection of beneficiary communities and individuals will be developed using a social inclusion and disability lens, and will be finalized in consultation with impacted groups. The beneficiary selection process and implementation of the project will be monitored for social inclusion impacts.

Issues of gender and GBV are at the heart of the project's objectives and activities. The project will assess and mitigate risks of SEA and SH that can arise in the context of interactions between project workers and beneficiaries, and among project workers themselves. Beyond the issues of managing the risks of SEA/SH, the project will be engaging with beneficiaries on issues of gender and power that have the potential to create conflict over shifting gender roles. As a result, an preliminary analysis of the risks posed by such activities will be conducted prior to appraisal, and will inform the design of the project (the project will subsequently fund additional gender and GBV analysis under Component 1). In addition, the Borrower will develop a draft SEA/SH Action Plan to include (but not limited to): (i) the use of Codes of Conduct for project workers, contractors, consultants and other agents of the Borrower; (ii) a Grievance Mechanism with gender-sensitive channels specifically designed to address GBV using a survivor-centered approach that prioritizes confidentiality, safety and survivor choice and with a clear referral pathway for services; (iii) community sensitization and engagement on issues of GBV, SEA and SH; (iv) capacity-building for the Borrower on addressing GBV/SEA/SH risks in the context of the ESF and World Bank projects; and (v) other measures deemed appropriate in light of a preliminary/draft GBV/SEA/SH risk assessment to be conducted prior to appraisal and subsequent gender and GBV analyses.



ESS5 Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

Although unlikely, there may be land acquisition or land restriction under Component 2 if the intervention is agricultural investments to boost women's participation. The project shall screen the activities under component 2 for related risks and impacts. The project will prepare a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) to be disclosed prior to appraisal. The RPF will contain a checklist for screening subprojects during implementation. Where required, subproject specific Resettlement Action Plans (RAP) consistent with the guidelines established in the RPF will be prepared and submitted to the Bank for approval and disclosed, the RAP shall be implemented and the PIU shall submit a RAP implementation report to the Bank and NO to be obtained before civil works commences.

ESS6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

The project is not anticipated to affect or involve activities with significant negative impacts on biodiversity or natural resources. However, there is always a potential risk that some livelihood agriculture activities and associated value chains may lead to some impacts on natural habitats, biodiversity and land degradation, such as activities associated with land clearing or pesticide use which can lead to soil erosion or water pollution. The Project will avoid any subprojects that have impacts on natural and critical habitat through application of the E&S screening tool as part of the ESMF. The ESMF will include provisions to avoid and mitigate the risks of adversely affecting biodiversity and habitats, as well as to promote sustainable management of living natural resources through agricultural activities. The relevance of this ESS will be further discussed and assessed during project preparation.

ESS7 Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

The project area does not have population of Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities/ ethnic minority meeting the criteria mentioned in ESS 7 who will be affected.

ESS8 Cultural Heritage

It is not likely that any project activity would adversely affect cultural heritage as defined under the policy. Any such activities will be excluded from project eligibility. However, the relevance of this ESS will be further discussed and assessed during project preparation, particularly as the Borrower carries out and documents consultations with stakeholders in accordance with ESS10. These consultations will seek to identify any cultural heritage that may be relevant to the activities and location, and Borrower actions will be guided by ESS8. Further, the ESMF will also include a chance find procedure to guide actions in the event of any unanticipated discovery of cultural heritage.

ESS9 Financial Intermediaries

The project does not intend to utilize Financial Intermediaries.

B.3 Other Relevant Project Risks

The project is likely to be implemented in settings where the COVID-19 pandemic may persist. If so, the project will need to establish COVID-19-related protocols that take into account physical/social distancing, which has previously been implemented by the government (though given the adverse impact on the national economy, the government



has opened offices, markets and malls, and public transport system urging everyone to follow COVID-19 protocols). If pandemic conditions persist, further social risks and tensions may also manifest. As a result, the project will need to closely monitor pandemic developments and, where necessary, adjust social risk management measures and potentially provide training and skill development to ensure that project interventions are aligned with WHO and Government guidelines.

C. Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Projects on International Waterways No

OP 7.60 Projects in Disputed Areas No

III. WORLD BANK ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DUE DILIGENCE

A. Is a common approach being considered? No

Financing Partners

While the project is open to exploring co-financing with bilateral and/or multilateral development partners and envisions a collaborative approach, these explorations are in very early stages. A common approach to mitigating and managing environmental and social risks is not envisioned and the project will be prepared and implemented in accordance with the ESF.

B. Proposed Measures, Actions and Timing (Borrower’s commitments)

Actions to be completed prior to Bank Board Approval:

- Preparation and disclosure of Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP);
- Preparation, consultations and disclosure of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP);
- Preparation and disclosure of a draft Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), including Labor Management Procedures (LMP), an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP) and Agro-Chemical Management Plan (if deemed necessary);
- Preparation of Gender Analysis and GBV/SH/SH Risks Assessment and Environmental Health and Safety Plan;
- Preparation and disclosure of Institutional Capacity Assessment and Institutional Capacity Strengthening Plan;
- Preparation and disclosure of the draft Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF).

Possible issues to be addressed in the Borrower Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP):

- Updating and Implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
- Screening of sub-projects as per ESMF and implementation of Environmental and Social Management Plans (and associated sub-plans including Health and Safety Plan, Waste Management Plan, Integrated Pest Management Plan and an Agrochemical Management Action Plan as deemed necessary)
- Institutional Capacity Assessment and Institutional Capacity Strengthening Plan
- Implementation of Institutional Capacity Strengthening Plan
- Timeframe for development and implementation of a GBV/SEA/SH Action Plan

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- Timeframe for Implementation of Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF)
- Implementation of Labor Management Plan
- Required analytics for Components 1, 2 and 3 (i.e., gendered market/value chain assessment)
- Hiring of environmental and social safeguards specialists within the PIU.

C. Timing

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage ESRS

21-Feb-2022

IV. CONTACT POINTS

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower: Republic of Liberia

Implementing Agency(ies)

Implementing Agency: Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP)

V. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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VI. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Jana El-Horr
Practice Manager (ENR/Social)	Senait Nigiru Assefa Recommended on 21-May-2021 at 08:02:34 GMT-04:00
Safeguards Advisor ESSA	Nathalie S. Munzberg (SAESSA) Cleared on 28-Jun-2021 at 16:56:19 GMT-04:00

Public Disclosure