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INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS DATA SHEET
CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: ISDSC7782

Date ISDS Prepared/Updated: 19-Mar-2014

Date ISDS Approved/Disclosed: 24-Mar-2014

I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country:	Belarus	**Project ID:**	P147760
Project Name:	Forestry Development Project (P147760)		
Task Team Leader:	Andrew Michael Mitchell		
Estimated Appraisal Date:	28-Jul-2014	**Estimated Board Date:**	30-Jan-2015
Managing Unit:	ECSEN	**Lending Instrument:**	Investment Project Financing
Sector(s):	Forestry (100%)		
Theme(s):	Other environment and natural resources management (65%), Climate change (15%), Water resource management (5%), Environmental polici es and institutions (10%), Biodiversity (5%)		

Financing (In USD Million)			
Total Project Cost:	50.00	Total Bank Financing:	50.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		

Financing Source	**Amount**
Borrower	0.00
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	50.00
Total	50.00

Environmental Category:	B - Partial Assessment
Is this a Repeater project?	No

B. Project Objectives

The project objective is to enhance the sustainable use of forestry resources in targeted project areas thereby providing additional employment opportunities, while continuing to provide global public goods.

C. Project Description

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The proposed forestry development project has two main components:

- improving silviculture and the sustainability of forest management: through increasing the intensity of silvicultural thinning of young stands, increasing the use of logging residues for production of woody biomass (this will be complementary to the newly approved Biomass District Heating Project), and improving the quality of seedling production for afforestation and reforestation. By thinning the stands at an earlier stage, the forest becomes more productive, in that it reduces the competition among the stems resulting in an increase in the volumes removed, whilst improving the value of the growth in the forest post thinning. This improvement in silviculture is both sustainable and economically viable. The increase in thinning intensity in young and middle aged stands, and the utilization of woody biomass that would otherwise be left in the forest will create additional skilled and semi-skilled employment opportunities in rural areas over and above the current situation. Creation of rural jobs will help contribute to the economic development of the presently poorer rural areas of Belarus hence contributing to shared prosperity;

- improving forest fire prevention monitoring, detection and suppression, improving forest management information systems including development of web interfaces; supporting training in modern technologies and further research into the treatment of radioactively contaminated forests.

Project implementation will be mainstreamed within a Ministry of Forestry subsidiary enterprise. The UE (Unitary Enterprise) “Bellesexport” of the Ministry of Forestry has been designated as the PIU for the new project. UE “Bellesexport”, founded in 1995, promotes the sale of the domestic timber products in foreign markets as well as procurement of international equipment for the State Forest Enterprises.

Component 1: improving silviculture and the sustainability of forest management:

Sub-component: increasing the intensity of silviculture

By 2015, all harvesting operations are to be tendered openly and to include the private sector. However many younger aged thinning operations will not be attractive to the private sector or cost effective for the State Forest Enterprises to tender out. The yield from the thinning of young stands frequently does not cover the cost of actually undertaking the thinning, with the operations being more of a maintenance operation than production. These operations are necessary, and economically justified by the improvement in the quality of the residual stand (through silvicultural selection), and the increase in the residual stand growth and value of later thinnings. Regular and timely thinning also helps maintain stand stability to wind and snow events, and improves the benefits for wildlife by increasing the light hitting the forest floor thereby encouraging an understory which will provide both habitat and food. The machinery required for thinning young stands with smaller size stems is specialized and not currently commonly used in Belarus. 67% of the forested land in the forest fund is currently young or middle aged and requires thinning.

Changing demographics and lifestyle choices in Belarus means that there is currently and increasingly a lack of people willing to work in the more labor intensive forestry activities. To undertake the silviculturally necessary early and middle aged thinnings, and to increase the efficiency and productivity, it is proposed to invest in modern thinning machinery for young and middle aged stands in terms of harvesters (a cutting head that can fell, trim and cross cut trees, which is mounted on an articulated boom on a low impact tractor) and forwarders (low impact machines which pick up and carry the felled production to a site where it can be either stacked or loaded onto a truck). To thin younger aged forests smaller, more maneuverable machines are required than the heavy bigger

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machines required for final thinnings and selection fellings more traditionally used in Belarus. Use of this machinery will increase the productivity and at the same time improve the health and safety of forest workers. At the same time use of machinery will increase the opportunities for the employment of women in the forestry harvesting operations. The project will provide training for operators for these tasks, and generate worthwhile skilled and semi-skilled employment thereby helping to increase the prosperity of rural communities. The thinning material generated is likely to be used for either increasing the production of woody biomass, firewood, or pulpwood. Much of this production is currently lost as deadwood within the stands. There are therefore carbon benefits from both the production and increased productivity of the stands, while also boosting the rural economies.
By supporting the State Forest Enterprises develop the capacity to undertake thinning of the young and middle aged stands, it will also support them shift away from undertaking the more commercial thinning of older stands and selection and final fellings which will be increasingly tendered to the private sector.
To create the enabling environment for the introduction of this more intensive forest management, standards will be developed and adopted in one of the regions of Belarus. This will include the development of draft legislative acts for implementation of intensive forest management standards.

This approach of actively thinning young and middle aged stands is not currently common practice in Belarus. Through the project, Belarus will develop the guidelines, the enabling environment and the capacity of undertaking these operations as standard practice. These operations will be economically viable in the long run, and will become part of normal operating procedures. These developments are therefore sustainable and will be replicated throughout the sector(depending on the availability of financing) and will continue post project. This more intense silviculture is now common practice in the more developed forest economies in Scandinavia and Western Europe.

Sub-component: developing the use of woody biomass from logging residues
Currently most of the logging residues (i.e. the tops and branches) from final and selective fellings are simply left in the forest. This creates bot h a fire hazard and is also wasteful of the calorific value which could be used for energetic purposes. In Scandinavian countries, the logging residue is frequently left for a year, so that the nutrient rich needles fall from the branches and the woody parts dry and are then chipped for use in furnaces. In Belarus there is currently increasing demand for woody biomass to supply combined heat and power and heat only district heating systems and in industrial and agricultural enterprises round the country. To meet this increasing demand for woody biomass, Belarus needs to maximize all sources of woody biomass.

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It is proposed to introduce advanced logging technologies to increase the use of logging residues and to develop the use of modern measuring devices and equipment to enhance productivity and the sustainability of forest management to strengthen their economic and ecological role, and to develop and replicate technologies new to Belarus. This will optimize and rationalize the use of the forest resources and increase the sector’s contribution to the increasing demand for woody biomass. There will be a broader application of selection fellings and in some instances increasing of the final felling age. By utilizing production that is currently wasted, and by investing in new machinery and processes, there are both carbon benefits and an increase in rural economic activity.
To create the enabling environment, regulatory, legal and technical standards will be developed based on the best international practices.

Sub-component: development of improved forest nurseries
In Belarus wherever possible, restocking of selectively felled areas is done through the use of natural regeneration. However in some cases this is not the most appropriate approach as sometimes the

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areas need to be restocked with different species, there is a need to restock damaged areas (wind falls, snow, fire, drying spruce and ash stands etc.), and in some areas natural regeneration may not be successful. There is therefore continuing need for production of good quality seedlings from selected plus trees of known origin.
To improve the survival rates and increase the efficiency of seedling production it is proposed to modernize four forest nurseries, to produce container grown seedlings of improved quality. It is proposed to increase the proportion of container grown seedlings from currently less than less than 1% of seedling production to 11% by 2017. Increasing the nursery production will also increase skilled and semi-skilled employment opportunities, for both men and women again in rural poor areas.

At the same time the legal and regulatory framework will be updated and an equal opportunity training program will be implemented to ensure technical and nursery staff can operate the new equipment.
As part of this component instruments will be introduced which will include considerations of gender and other vulnerable groups, to engage beneficiaries and civil society participation in policy formulation and in monitoring the implementation of the project, thus contributing to enhancing transparency of the MOF and improving responsiveness of forestry enterprises to the needs of beneficiaries.

Component 2: improving forest fire prevention, monitoring, detection and suppression, improving forest management information systems

Sub-component: improving forest fire prevention and management
To reduce the incidence, extent and severity of forest fires three main interventions are proposed:

- Prevention through increasing public awareness and education, improving fire danger and hazard ratings and informing the public through work with mass media, and prevention activities through creation of mineralized strips and clearing logging residue and other fire hazards within compartments and cleaning compartment boundaries and road edges
- Improving fire detection and monitoring through establishment of video surveillance with specialized software, improving communications
- Improving suppression activities through provision of forest fire-fighting equipment and training, and improving the network of water points.

The local authorities and CSOs will be involved in the information dissemination and awareness activities as well as in the monitoring of the fire protection measures at the local level. The awareness and information campaigns will also have a specific gender focus.
As part of this sub-component the study of the best technologies and methods of detecting and extinguishing forest fires in EU countries will be undertaken. At the same time draft legislation will be developed to support implementation of the new fire-fighting technology and approach in the Republic of Belarus.

Sub-component: improvement of the forest management information system
Under this sub-component software tools, application of modern metering devices and equipment in the process of forest surveying and inventory operations will developed. This will contribute to improving the accuracy of the data collected and will hence improve information on the availability of timber resources in the country. This component will include the development of a web-based interface to allow for sharing of information at different levels (through password protection where necessary) and will increase transparency and access to data for different stakeholders.

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Sub-component: development of and training in the use of advanced technologies
Training of forestry specialists in the advanced forest management technologies provides a basis for their successful implementation in forest management practice in the Republic of Belarus. This component will include development of the training and production facilities at the State Institution for Further Adult Education " Republican Center of Competence for Forestry Managers and Specialists". All training undertaken will be equally available to both men and women.

Sub-component: developing the rational use of radioactively contaminated forest
This component will include the development and maintenance of a decision support system "Radioactive Contamination of Forests. RadFor", to be performed by the State Institution "Bellesozaschita" in partnership with forestry enterprises, as well as improvement of the system of protective measures and optimization of radiological monitoring activities in the forest fund.

D. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

The location of where the project investments will be deployed will be determined during preparation. Most forest in Belarus is located in rolling hillsides and gentle terrain. Ground conditions can be boggy and soils are frequently peaty. To avoid damage to soils and ground conditions it is necessary to use the correct forest machinery for the location and at the correct time of year and ground conditions. This project is all about improving this environmental performance.

E. Borrowers Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

While the borrower has some safeguards capacity as it has previously implemented another WB project, its current capacity will be assessed during the project design and if needed, the project will provide relevant training in this regard.

F. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Alexei Slenzak (ECSEN)

Klavdiya Maksymenko (ECSSO)

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II. SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/ BP 4.01	Yes	OP 4.01 is triggered. Some of the activities are expected to involve small scale construction (e. g. at the tree nurseries, forest fire monitoring and prevention posts, ponds to provide water for fire-fighting). As it is not expected that the specific nurseries and/or forest fighting facilities to be supported will be identified prior to Appraisal, an Environmental Management Framework will be prepared which will provide guidance for the preparation of site/activity-specific EMPs as needed.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	No civil works will be carried out inside protected or environmentally sensitive areas. For that purpose all locations for proposed civil works will be screened during the project design. The results of the screening will be

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		submitted to the Ministry of Environment for its review and approval.
Forests OP/BP 4.36	Yes	OP 4.36 is triggered because the project will support forest management. Although the objective of the thinning operations is silvicultural improvement the production will be sold wherever possible. Similarly the production from woody biomass will be sold. All State Forest Enterprises are currently PEFC certified and most also have FSC certification.
Pest Management OP 4.09	Yes	This is OP is triggered as improving forest nurseries might stimulate increased use of pesticides, and also because the project could provide an opportunity to promote Integrated Pest Management methods in the nurseries. This will be addressed in the EMF, rather than in a separate pest management plan.
Physical Cultural Resources OP/ BP 4.11	No	N/A
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	N/A
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	No	All project activities will be implemented within state own nurseries and/or state own forest Fund and thus none resettlement issues is anticipated.
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	N/A
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	

III. SAFEGUARD PREPARATION PLAN

A. Tentative target date for preparing the PAD Stage ISDS: 15-Oct-2014

B. Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed. The specific studies and their timing[1] should be specified in the PAD-stage ISDS:

The client will design an EMF which will be disclosed and consulted in the country prior Appraisal.

IV. APPROVALS

Task Team Leader:	Name: Andrew Michael Mitchell	
Approved By:		
Regional Safeguards Coordinator:	Name: Agnes I. Kiss (RSA)	Date: 24-Mar-2014
Sector Manager:	Name: Kseniya Lvovsky (SM)	Date: 24-Mar-2014

[1] Reminder: The Bank's Disclosure Policy requires that safeguard-related documents be disclosed before appraisal (i) at the InfoShop and (ii) in country, at publicly accessible locations and in a form and language that are accessible to potentially affected persons.