Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary

Appraisal Stage

(ESRS Appraisal Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 06/19/2026 | Report No: ESRSA04870

I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P510360	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	SUPAWEP	2026

Operation Name	
	Sustainable Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture for Women Empowerment Project

Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Liberia	Liberia	WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA	Farming and Agribusiness

Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Board Date
Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Government of Liberia	Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Liberia	15-Aug-2026

Estimated Decision Review Date	Total Project Cost		
12-May-2025	4,730,000.00		

Proposed Development Objective

The development objective of the project is to enhance the productivity, resilience and access to market by beneficiary women and youth vegetable farmers in selected urban and peri-urban communities in Liberia.

B. Is the operation 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 Activities

The project aims to enhance the productivity, resilience, and market access for women and youth vegetable farmers in urban and peri-urban Liberia. This is crucial because Liberia's agri-food sector, despite being a major economic pillar, suffers from low horticultural productivity and heavy reliance on food imports, leading to food system inefficiency and poor nutrition. Rapid urbanization is increasing demand for fresh vegetables, but domestic production is hampered by climate stressors like erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and flooding, which undermine productivity and resilience, especially for smallholder farmers dependent on rainfed systems. Additionally, the sector faces challenges such as low productivity, weak production systems, food safety gaps, fragmented markets, institutional capacity deficits, and significant gender and youth exclusion. The project seeks to address these issues by promoting climate-smart agriculture, improving market linkages, and empowering women and youth in the vegetable value chain. It complements the ongoing World Bank support for community vegetable and kitchen gardening under RETRAP. The proposal is to focus on urban and peri-urban horticulture as this offers the highest potential to simultaneously advance food and nutrition security, jobs, and climate resilience objectives. First, over 52 percent of the Liberian population now lives in urban hubs, creating concentrated demand for fresh food. Second, focusing investments around these areas, rather than in deep rural areas, helps bypass Liberia’s road infrastructure gap, by positioning production proximate to the consumer which effectively reduces post-harvest losses and greenhouse gas emissions associated with produce transportation. Third, it offers the best prospects for reducing foreign exchange outflows associated with horticultural imports as most of these are destined for urban consumption. Fourth, because urban retail food markets in Liberia are dominated by "market women", whose profit margins are suppressed by the erratic pricing of imported produce, localizing production gives them direct, stable access to cheaper, fresher inventory, which is key to their economic empowerment. Finally, Liberia’s urban and peri-urban areas are flooded with underemployed youth. Peri-urban horticulture can leverage agile technology, transforming agriculture into attractive job opportunities for the youth. The proposed operation is firmly anchored in Liberia's national development priorities, directly supporting the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID) 2025–2029, specifically Pillar 1 on economic transformation, which envisions a competitive, diversified, and resilient private sector-led economy with agriculture at its center. This vision is operationalized through the National Agricultural Development Plan (NADP), which identifies horticulture, and vegetables in particular, as a priority value chain for income growth, food and nutrition security, and productive employment. The support is also consistent with Outcome 4 (Increased private investment, with a focus on agroindustry and forestry) of the World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Liberia (FY2025–2030), especially the intention to improve the productivity of select agriculture value chains. To the extent that the project contributes to food and nutrition security, as well as job creation, it is also aligned with the Mission AgriConnect, which aims to create more and better jobs, raise smallholder incomes, and strengthen food security. Finally, the project supports the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) objectives by empowering vulnerable groups through targeted training and capacity-building for urban and peri-urban vegetable farmers. The activities under the grant application will be organized around 3 components: Component 1: Support for Development of Smart Modern Community Vegetable Gardens. The component will support the establishment market-oriented, modern community vegetable gardens (5–10 hectares each) across 30 communities, equipped with climate-smart irrigation systems (drip or sprinkler) and solar-powered water systems, along with multipurpose sheds and sanitary facilities. This activity will also support the formation and strengthening of gardeners’ associations, including capacity building in organizational management and the installation, operation, and maintenance of irrigation systems. It will provide tailored training for urban and peri-urban women and youth in market-oriented horticulture production, focusing on sustainable and climate-smart practices, modern inputs and technologies, and improved market linkages, including hands-on capacity building for irrigation infrastructure operation and maintenance. The project will also promote nutrition-sensitive interventions for vulnerable groups to increase the availability, access, and utilization of nutrient-dense vegetables, supporting behavior change and awareness initiatives to improve dietary diversity and nutrition outcomes. Component 2: Support for Farmer Coordination, Institutional Strengthening and Market Linkages. The component seeks to improve market access by organizing farmers into groups, strengthening cooperatives, supporting business skills, enhancing food safety and quality standards, and building linkages with supermarkets, hotels, hospitals, and regional markets. It also invests in private sector partnerships, post-harvest infrastructure, certification systems, and digital market tools. Component 3 covers project management, monitoring and evaluation—linked to RETRAP—and knowledge dissemination. It ensures effective implementation, learning, and visibility of support from the Government of Japan. The project will be implemented in urban and peri-urban communities across six counties in Liberia—Montserrado, Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Bomi, and Nimba—where horticulture represents a predominant livelihood activity for rural households. The primary target beneficiaries of the project are women and youth groups, including persons with disabilities, who are engaged or able to participate in urban and peri urban vegetable gardening in Liberia. The project is expected to directly benefit approximately 15,000 urban and peri urban vegetable value chain actors, many of whom currently face constraints related to seasonal production, overreliance on rain fed agriculture, low productivity, and limited access to markets due to poor product quality. It will strengthen the capacity of a broader set of actors within the vegetable value chain, including SMEs, aggregators, traders, and public and non public service providers who support production, aggregation, and market linkages. By addressing these systemic constraints and enhancing the skills and market readiness of beneficiaries, the project is expected to significantly improve food and nutritional security, as well as the income levels of women, youth, and their households.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

The project aims to improve livelihoods and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable urban and peri-urban households. The project targets women and youth involved in vegetable gardening in six counties. The project benefits 7,000 smallholder farmers. Liberia is recovering from past civil wars and economic challenges, including the Ebola outbreak and declining global commodity prices. Despite recent economic growth, poverty, hunger, and malnutrition remain high.

Agriculture, which accounts for 35% of GDP, is crucial for poverty reduction, as more than half of poor Liberians rely on it for livelihoods. Increased demand for vegetables due to rising urban populations provides an opportunity for local farmers, but Liberia imports over 60% of its staple food. Local farmers produce less than 50% of fresh vegetable requirements despite favorable growing conditions. The sector is smallholder-based with minimal inputs and localized marketing channels, cultivating crops like pepper, potato leaves, okra, and cabbages. Intensive vegetable cultivation offers profit opportunities and job creation. The sector has potential for increased production, export expansion, nutrition enhancement, and income growth.

Liberia's young population faces employment challenges, especially in urban areas, with nearly 70% under 35. Peri-urban vegetable farming provides employment, improves incomes, and enhances diets, addressing widespread malnutrition. Utilizing peri-urban land reduces food miles and improves the ecological performance of the food system. The six targeted counties have unique ecological attributes. Montserrado is characterized by coastal environments and urban landscapes. Margibi has fertile agricultural land and diverse ecosystems. Bong is covered by dense tropical rainforests. Nimba has mountainous terrain and rich biodiversity. Gbarpolu has extensive forests and river systems, and Rivercess is distinguished by riverine environments and lush forests.

D.2 Overview of Borrower's Institutional Capacity for Managing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) will oversee the project's implementation over a four-year period through the existing Project Implementation Unit (PIU), which coordinates the World Bank-funded Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP – P175263). Utilizing the current PIU will ensure readiness for implementation due to its familiarity with the

Bank's fiduciary and environmental and social procedures and its ability to complement ongoing projects. The PIU will have adequate human and other resources necessary to meet JSDF fiduciary requirements.
The MoA has gained experience working with the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), thereby building its capacity to assess, manage, and monitor the environmental and social risks and impacts associated with the project. The MoA is well-equipped to effectively coordinate the implementation of environmental and social risk mitigation measures at both national and subnational levels. The MoA's PIU has managed the Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP – P175263) in Liberia, demonstrating some safeguards management experience in World Bank-funded projects. The PIU already has in place an Environmental Specialist who will support environmental risks management of this Project. A Social Specialist is being recruited to manage the social risk management aspect. The PIU of MoA will be adequately resourced to support the management of environmental and social risks and impacts.

II. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC) — Moderate

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating — Low

The project focuses on developing sustainable vegetable gardens in urban and peri-urban areas, targeting micro-level interventions with small land holdings ranging from 5 to 10 hectares. These activities are designed to be manageable for vegetable farmers, ensuring that the level of effort required remains reasonable. Importantly, the E&S risks and impacts associated with these activities are expected to be relatively benign compared to conventional agricultural practices. This is largely due to the project's commitment to utilizing environmentally friendly technologies and input packages, which include improved seeds and seedlings, bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides, solar dryers, and other appropriate equipment aimed at enhancing sustainability while minimizing environmental harm. A key aspect of the project is the adoption of more efficient agricultural practices, particularly in water use. The introduction of practices like drip irrigation is expected to improve water management, optimize water use and improve the water balance. Additionally, these methods will help reduce soil erosion and loss of fertility further contributing to environmental sustainability. The use of these technologies reflects the project’s focus on ensuring that environmental impacts are kept to a minimum while boosting productivity. The existing Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has the necessary capacity to effectively manage environmental risks. The PIU is familiar with the Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework, ensuring that potential risks are carefully managed. As a result, the environmental risk associated with the project is assessed to be low, with strong mitigation measures in place to safeguard the environment and promote sustainable practices throughout the project's lifespan. This is type 3 TA with minimal E&S impacts. Preliminary assessment suggests adverse impacts will be minimal, predictable, temporary, and reversible, with low magnitude and site-specific footprints. The Program will prepare the Project Implementation Manual (PIM), to provide guidelines and procedures for assessing environmental and social risks and impacts during implementation. The PIM will be consulted upon, approved and disclosed prior to Project effectiveness. During implementation, the Borrower will develop a simplify site- specific ESMPs.

A.2 Social Risk Rating — Moderate

Social risk rating for the proposed project is moderate. Project activities are beneficial for women and youth. This classification is mainly due to the country's social context in relation to gender equality and equity issues. Ministry of Gender, Children & Social protection, responsible for the empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups, has capacity gaps and limited resources. Ministry of Agriculture has a gender and social inclusion unit but it also faces capacity constraints. The project will ensure meaningful engagement & inclusion considering vulnerable populations, e.g. female headed households, widows, single mothers, young women, women from ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. Comprehensive social inclusion criteria will be developed and considered in the selection process to ensure that vulnerable populations are involved in the proposed project to avoid social conflicts in project communities. Component 1 will require available land previously acquired for the establishment of the modern gardens. Relevant land acquisition titles, including deeds, leases and other agreements that establish ownership rights will be properly screened. Component activities will offer agricultural innovation trainings to smallholder women and youth vegetable farmers. Component 2 will address market access, skills, and organizational challenges that affect smallholder farmers' inclusion in organized supply chains, as well as enhance their financial literacy. The project will carefully assess the selection of smallholder farmers for market linkages, capacity enhancement and skills development to avoid elite capture. The potential risk of inequality in the selection process will be addressed through comprehensive stakeholder engagement. The project will assess GBV risks within project components activities and will include mitigation. The project will coordinate with Liberia Women Empowerment Project to ensure synergies and improved outcomes on WEE & GBV.

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

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

ESS1 - Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts Relevant

ESS1 is relevant. Component 1 will support market-driven vegetable production for women and youth by financing improved water management and related infrastructure such as storage tanks, drip/sprinkler systems, greenhouses, vertical farming setups, and smart irrigation tools. It will also fund land preparation and basic facilities, including boreholes and infrastructure like greenhouses, and sanitary facilities. The project will leverage the Environmental Protection and Management Law of Liberia and the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Procedural Guidelines. A single consolidated Environmental and Social (E&S) guidance document will be prepared and seamlessly integrated into the Project Implementation Manual (PIM). This E&S document will include: • Application of E&S exclusion principles through E&S screening procedures to ensure E&S risks remain low (e.g., no synthetic fertilizers/pesticides) • Promotion of Good Agricultural Practices (e.g., bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers) • Community-based institutional mechanisms • Relevant Environmental Codes of Practice • Application of Exclusion criteria for land acquisition • Grievance redress mechanism • Labor management guidelines and codes of conduct

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure Relevant

The proposed project stakeholders include national and subnational government agencies, local communities, smallholder women and youth farmers, including vulnerable groups; private sector entities in the agribusiness value chain; civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, male and female farmer groups, farmer-based organizations and other services providers. Vulnerable groups are expected to include the poor, marginalized smallholder farmers and those at risk of social exclusion such as female headed households, single mothers, young women, and persons with disabilities. The MOA will prepare a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) to ensure early, continuous, and inclusive (including vulnerable/disadvantaged groups) stakeholder engagement using appropriate and culturally sensitive approaches and frequency to engaging for relevant information disclosure as required by ESS-10. SEP will be the planning and management instrument for the proposed project stakeholders.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions Relevant

ESS-2 is relevant as the project will have PIU staff and project workers. Agriculture workers and agri-actors might be exposed to some degree of occupational health and safety risks. These risks may range from dust pollution, animal, reptile bites, accidents from using farm tools, sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment and other forms of Gender Based Violence, forced labor or the use of child labor (under the age of 18) for hazardous work in the project .The project will ensure that the Decent Work Act, and Children's Act is adhered to, for workers' safety in project implementation activities. The project will use the ESCP to commit to the guidelines of the Liberia Labor Laws to ensure workers protection and safety at all times. This will be explicitly laid out in the POM to be developed and adhered to by the implementing agencies. Project GM will ensure adequate handling and referral of SEA/SH complaints. SEA/SH action plan will detail steps for adequate risk management.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management Relevant

ESS3 is relevant even though the project is neither a significant user of energy, water and raw materials. The project's micro-level interventions are unlikely to cause significant negative impacts to air and/ water quality. The project doesn't require to prepare a Pest Management Plan given that the project will not involve the use of any artificial and/synthetic manures and pesticides, etc. However, the ESS3 is considered relevant to ensure that in case the farmers chose to use pesticide, this provision will ensure a specific management plan is prepared.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety Relevant

ESS4 is relevant because of the SEA/SH risks. The Project will incorporate measures for mitigating risks related to SEA/SH which includes training PIU staff, contractors and contract workers on GBV related risks and mitigation measures, requiring contractors and workers to sign a workers' code of conduct that prohibits GBV. A SEA/SH Action plan will also be prepared following project effectiveness.

ESS5 - Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement Not Currently Relevant

ESS5 is not currently relevant as there will be exclusionary criteria related to land acquisition to ensure displacement does not occur.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources Not Currently Relevant

ESS6 is not relevant as the project is not anticipated to affect or involve activities with negative impacts on biodiversity or natural resources and won't involve the development of any new agriculture lands. The Project will avoid any subprojects that have impacts on natural and critical habitats through application of the E&S screening tool and exclusionary criteria developed as part of the PIM.

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities Not Currently Relevant

ESS7 is not relevant.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage Relevant

ESS8 is considered relevant, on a precautionary basis, however, the relevance of the standard will be further assessed when locations for sub-projects are identified. Local communities and traditional authorities know cultural sites and artifacts, and these can be ascertained during the stakeholder consultations. The Project will adopt and implement the Chance Finds procedure which will be incorporated in the POM expected to be prepared and adopted under the Project. In the event of a Chance Find or the observation of a cultural practice, the Project will follow protocol and contact the relevant government agencies that are entrusted with the management and preservation of cultural heritage in Liberia to assist to preserve such finds.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries Not Currently Relevant

ESS9 is not relevant. The Project does not intend to utilize Financial Intermediaries.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways	No
OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas	No

B.3 Other Salient Features

Use of Borrower Framework In Part

The Borrower has a well-established framework for assessing and managing environmental and social risks, which will be partially utilized alongside additional gap-filling measures to ensure a thorough evaluation. Key documents, including the ESCP and the PIM, will include provisions for the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to apply an environmental and social screening checklist and exclusionary criteria. This approach will ensure adherence to the Decent Work Act and the Children’s Act, safeguarding workers' safety throughout project activities. To address any existing gaps, measures related to OHS, codes of conduct, and the GRM will be incorporated into the PIM. The MOA/PIU will receive capacity-building support to ensure that its staff are adequately trained to supervise and monitor project implementation.

Use of Common Approach No

The use of Common Approach is not being considered for this Project.

C. Overview of Required Environmental and Social Risk Management Activities

C.1 What Borrower environmental and social analyses, instruments, plans and/or frameworks are planned or required by implementation?

The Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) will be developed and disclosed prior to the Project appraisal. The Project Operations Manual will detail further actions needed to ensure adherence to the ESF.

III. CONTACT POINT

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IV. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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V. APPROVAL

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