



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(**ESRS Concept Stage**)

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I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P500390	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	CWRM in Lebanon	2024
Operation Name	Community-based Wildfire Risk Management in Lebanon’s Vulnerable Landscapes		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Lebanon	Lebanon	MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Ministry of Environment of Lebanon	Ministry of Environment		20-Mar-2024
Estimated Concept Review Date	Total Project Cost		
18-Oct-2023	3,458,000.00		

Proposed Development Objective

The project development objective (PDO) is to improve sustainable forest management for reduced wildfire risks in selected fire hotspots in Lebanon.

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

[Description imported from the Concept Data Sheet in the Portal providing information about the key aspects and components/sub-components of the project]

According to data from the 2015 Global Forest Resources Assessment (FAO, 2016), forests and other woodlands cover 23.4% of Lebanon’s land area. There are several direct and indirect drivers of forest degradation in Lebanon, including drivers (e.g. urban expansion, pests and diseases, overgrazing) that have negative feedback loops leading to an increase



in the numbers and intensity of forest fires; climate change has further exacerbated this trend. Forest fires are often attributed to inadequate forest management, lack of fire prevention initiatives, poor law enforcement, insufficient resources for civil defense and the poor awareness amongst the public. The lack of implementation of the current national forest fire strategy and increasing fire incidences due to development and agricultural activities have further degraded and destroyed Lebanon's forest landscapes. The project will reduce wildfire risks by improving sustainable forest landscape management in selected fire hotspots in Lebanon. The project will support Lebanon to manage (i) forest fire risks and actual occurrences in a more timely and effective manner; and (ii) integrating forest fire risk considerations into the sustainable management of selected forest landscapes. The project is consistent with the (i) National Forest Plan (NFP) 2015-2025 which forms the main forestry policy instrument; and (ii) the updated National Forest Fire Management Strategy (2023). The project will have three components: • Component 1 will enhance the enabling environment for wildfire management to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation at the national, regional, & local levels. • Component 2 will provide investments to support forest fire management activities in the context of community-based forest management. • Component 3 will focus on establishing a gender-responsive M&E system; implementing a KM/L plan and communications. A Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Ministry of Environment will be established which will closely collaborate with relevant stakeholders, incl. MoA, the DRM Unit, the General Directorate of Civil Defense and participating municipalities. The targeted landscapes (Akkar, Minieh-Dinniye, Aley-Shouf – incl. areas from Metn-Baabda) are categorized by the MoE as “fire hotspot” areas which are assessed with a high risk for forest fires and very high exposure to land degradation. These areas are important not only from an environmental point of view but also contribute significantly to peoples' livelihoods, economic activities and biodiversity conservation.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

[Description of key features relevant to the operation's environmental and social risks and opportunities (e.g., whether the project is nationwide or regional in scope, urban/rural, in an FCV context, presence of Indigenous Peoples or other minorities, involves associated facilities, high-biodiversity settings, etc.) – Max. character limit 2,000]

This \$3.7 million GEF project aims to reduce wildfire risks by improving sustainable forest landscape management in selected fire hotspots in Lebanon and in consistence with the National Forest Plan (NFP) 2015-2025 and the updated National Forest Fire Management Strategy (2023). The proposed project is comprised of four components as mentioned above where Component 1 aims to enhance the enabling environment for wildfire management to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation at the national, regional, & local levels; Component 2 will provide investments to support forest fire management activities in the context of community-based forest management; Component 3 will focus on establishing an inclusive M&E system and; Component 4 will finance the operation of a Project Management Unit (PMU) which will be housed at the Ministry of Environment (MoE).

The project will target landscapes in areas of Lebanon which are categorized by the Ministry of Environment (MoE) as “fire hotspot” areas and these include north Lebanon (Akkar and North governorates) and Aley-Shouf situated in Mount Lebanon— including areas from Metn-Baabda,). Lebanon is divided into four distinct physiographic regions: the coastal plain in the west, the Lebanon mountain range in the middle, the Beqaa valley in the east, and the Anti-Lebanon mountains in far east near the borders with Syria. Forest cover of Lebanon has been consistently reported to be above 13% of the total area of the country (FAO, 2020). Naturally, regenerated forests occupy 142,930 ha (FAO, 2020), whereas dense forest cover reaches 79,200 ha (Faour and Abdallah, 2018). Other wooded lands cover around 10% of



the national territory; when these are considered, natural ecosystems embedding forest tree species are estimated to cover around 24% of the total area of Lebanon (FAO, 2020) (Lebanon State of Environment Report, 2020).

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

[Description of Borrower’s capacity (i.e., prior performance under the Safeguard Policies or ESF, experience applying E&S policies of IFIs, Environmental and social unit/staff already in place) and willingness to manage risks and impacts and of provisions planned or required to have capabilities in place, along with the needs for enhanced support to the Borrower – Max. character limit 2,000]

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) will be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the project where a small project management unit will be located and directly report to the Minister of Environment (MoE). However, the execution arrangements for various project activities will need to be discussed during project preparation, including the M&E arrangements. The MoE has had previous experience working on World Bank financed projects under the safeguards policies such as the Lebanon Environmental Pollution Abatement Project (P143594) with satisfactory performance while it will be experiencing its first project under the ESF for a recently approved GEF project “Reduction of Unintentional POPs through Waste Management in a Circular Economy (P172770)”. Prior to project implementation, the MoE will recruit or assign an Environmental and Social Specialist who is familiar with the World Bank’s ESF/Safeguards policies and to ensure monitoring and follow up of the implementation of the E&S instruments. The Bank team will provide capacity building and training as needed throughout the project life cycle.

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

Moderate

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 2,000]

The environmental risk is moderate considering that: (i) it is located in a sensitive area; (ii) the risks and impacts are temporary, reversible, spatially limited, and low to medium in magnitude; (iii) mitigation measures can be readily designed and implemented; and (iv) the limited experience of the implementing agency can be readily addressed through implementation support and capacity building activities. There will be many environmental benefits from the project such as improved forest management with fire management considerations, reduced area of annual forest fires; reduced greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced biodiversity protection through the creation of bio-corridors linking forest fragments and restored degraded forest lands, enhanced and safer access to forests and natural habitats, improved community health and safety, and long-term positive impact of stakeholders enhanced environmental awareness about nature conservation priorities and wildfire risks management. Adverse risks and impacts include noise and vibration causing disturbances to wildlife and residents; generation of non-hazardous waste; OHS-related risks; public safety risks associated with movement of heavy-duty vehicles and roads closure; impacts on biodiversity, caused by clearing forest land which may constitute habitat or biological corridors for threatened wildlife, or critical habitat for endemic floristic species. Such risks can be mitigated through E&S screening of the proposed wildfire risk management investments and activities against the World Bank ESF (ESS1), conducting

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biodiversity baseline study (ESS6) to identify relevant biodiversity protection priorities, and to inform the planning and implementation of the proposed wildfire risk management, developing and implementing site-specific biodiversity conservation measures when needed to protect endemic and and threatened species (ESS6), and implementation of the EHSs and Good International Industrial Practices.

A.2 Social Risk Rating

Moderate

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 2,000]

The social risk is rated moderate. There will be many social benefits from the project such as improved community health and safety due to improved forest fire management, improvement of livelihoods through creation of job opportunities from forest-based activities like nature based tourism (ecotourism), enhanced enabling environment through establishment of a forest fire academy in collaboration with universities and non-governmental groups with focus on youth and women, capacity building activities through components 1 and 2, capacity building to vulnerable refugees to acquire skills in agriculture and forestry that help them in acquiring seasonal jobs in the sectors and establishment of an inclusive responsive monitoring and evaluation system. The project will also develop a strategic communication and outreach plan to communicate with relevant stakeholders and groups on implementation progress and with particular focus on women and youth. Some adverse social impacts may result due to ineffective communication and consultations to include all identified stakeholders and particularly the more vulnerable communities affected by the project and a weak grievance mechanism. The project may also be associated with potential community health and safety risks associated with potential sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment (SEA/SH) due to female workers/beneficiaries working in close proximity to male workers/beneficiaries (low). These social risks can be readily and effectively mitigated through continuous and inclusive consultations sessions and an effective communication campaign, a robust grievance mechanism with multiple uptake channels that are widely and effectively disseminated, awareness raising sessions on prevention and control of SEA/SH, signing of codes of conduct, and strengthened project GM which is sensitive to SEA/SH complaints.

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating. This attribute is only for the internal version of the download document and not a part of the disclosable version – Max. character limit 2,000]

B. Relevance of Standards and Policies at Concept Stage

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

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

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Project activities may have impacts on air, dust, land, and water pollution and on biodiversity, especially threatened and endemic species within the implementation areas caused by clearing certain areas of forest land which may constitute habitat or biological corridors for threatened wildlife, or critical habitat for endemic floristic species. These environmental risks can be mitigated through assessment of key risks against the ESS1 and using the mitigation hierarchy. Adverse social impacts may result due to ineffective communication and consultations to include all identified stakeholders and particularly vulnerable communities, and a weak grievance mechanism and SEA/SH. These social risks can be mitigated through continuous, effective and inclusive consultations sessions, widespread

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communication, and a robust GM. Under ESS1, and once subproject investments are known, MoE will prepare site specific ESIA/ESMPs as per the provisions of the ESCP.

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Project stakeholders include forest guards and first responders, municipalities, civil defense centers, and communities affected by forest fires also involved in community-based forest management, and women and youth who will be beneficiaries of capacity building activities of the project. Other interested parties include MoE, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Disaster Risk Mitigation (DRM) Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for monitoring and addressing disaster risks (the latter two organizations will not be involved in project implementation), General Directorate of Civil Defense (GDCCD) under the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities oversees fighting fires, municipalities, Academic centers, NGOs, and local community groups. Vulnerable communities in poorer regions affected by forest fires like North Lebanon and people who do not know how to read or write, the elderly, persons with disabilities. MoE will prepare an SEP by the appraisal stage and will detail the GM.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

The project will include government civil servants at the MoE who will be members of the project implementation team. ESS2 will not apply to such government civil servants, except for the provisions of paragraphs 17 to 20 (Protecting the Work Force) and paragraphs 24 to 30 (Occupational Health and Safety). The project will include: (i) direct workers who will be comprised of the consultants of the PMU at the MoE (ii) contracted workers who will be involved in construction activities associated with the sub-project investments for improved forest and fire management and which will be identified during the implementation phase of the project; (iii) community workers who will be involved in the subproject investments where identified on a voluntary basis. The Borrower will prepare an LMP before commencement of project activities. A GM will be established specifically for all identified project workers, and this will be clearly outlined in the LMP.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Subproject investments which will support forest fire management activities in the context of community-based forest management might have impacts on air, dust, land, and water pollution. The activities may also result in waste generation and utilization of raw materials for construction activities. Materials will be sourced through measures specified in the EHSs and other Good International Industry Practices (GIIPs). The site-specific ESMPs will determine the source, type, and risks associated with the waste likely to be generated and, if such waste cannot be avoided, the ESMPs will propose appropriate measures to minimize, reduce and, where not possible, mitigate, the risks associated with the waste in line with the ESS3 requirements.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant

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[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Investments under component 2 of the project which will be identified during project implementation and which will support forest fire management activities in the context of community-based forest management may be associated with OHS impacts which can be readily mitigated through the preparation and appropriate application of good practices to avoid and minimize traffic and road safety risks and by having fire emergency procedures in place . These safety measures will be addressed in the site-specific ESMPs which will be prepared before commencement of project activities. In addition, the risk of SEA/SH will be mitigated through awareness raising, signing of codes of conduct by all project workers as identified in ESS2 and a GM sensitive to SEA/SH. The project will not include any security forces. These requirements will be incorporated as part of the LMP and in line with the provisions of the ESCP.

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

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is not currently relevant. If the project activities are implemented within already designated areas, then there will be no physical removal, land acquisition or loss of livelihoods/assets and no privately owned land with encumbrances will be impacted. Therefore, ESS5 will be considered not currently relevant. However, the project will be reassessed during preparation and appraisal to determine if project activities will restrict community access, then, if determined, a process framework (PF) will be prepared, consulted and disclosed.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is relevant as most of the activities will be carried out in the forest areas. As part of the project activities, a biodiversity baseline study will be conducted after appraisal but before the subproject investments to identify relevant biodiversity protection priorities, and to inform the planning and implementation of the proposed wildfire risk management (species diversity, threatened species, biological corridors, and critical habitat).

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

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

ESS7 is not currently relevant for this project because there are no indigenous peoples in Lebanon

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage Not Currently Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

ESS8 is not currently relevant for this project.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries Not Currently Relevant

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[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

No FIs will be used to disburse the funds

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

No

[Optional explanation – Max. character limit 1,000]

Borrower Framework is not considered under this project

Use of Common Approach

No

[Optional Explanation including list of possible financing partners – Max. character limit 1,000]

The common approach is not being considered

B.4 Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

[Description provided will not be disclosed but will flow as a one time flow to the Concept Stage PID – Max. character limit 5,000]

The environmental risk is rated moderate considering that: (i) the project is located in a sensitive area, (i.e. project activities are planned in forest environment, including protected areas); (ii) the environmental risks and impacts from the activities are mostly temporary, reversible, spatially limited, and low to medium in magnitude; (iii) mitigation measures can be readily designed and implemented; and (iv) that the limited experience of the implementing agency in developing and implementing projects under the Bank’s ESF can be readily addressed through implementation support and capacity building activities. The social risk is rated moderate. While there will be many social benefits from the project such as improved community health and safety due to improved forest fire management, some adverse moderately rated social risks are expected due potentially to ineffective communication and consultations to include all identified stakeholders and particularly the more vulnerable communities affected by the project and a weak grievance mechanism. The project may also be associated with potential community health and safety risks associated with potential sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment (SEA/SH) due to female workers/beneficiaries working in close proximity to male workers/beneficiaries (low).

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