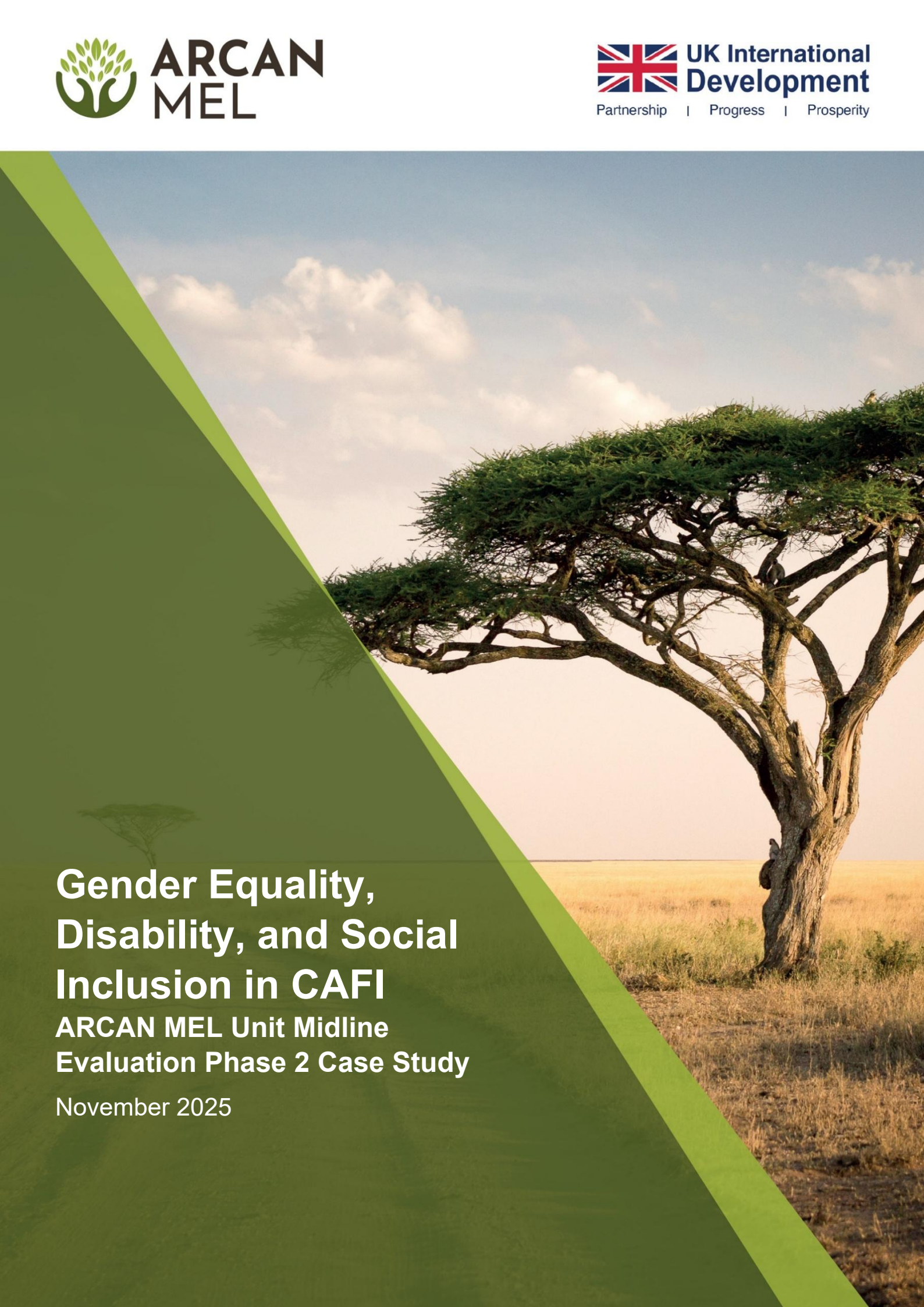




Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion in CAFI

ARCAN MEL Unit Midline Evaluation Phase 2 Case Study

November 2025



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Acronym List

Acronym	Definition
ARCAN	Africa Regional Climate and Nature Programme
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CLD	Local Development Committees
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EB	Executive Board
Enabel	Belgian Agency for International Cooperation
EQ	Evaluation Question
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FONAREDD	DRC's National REDD Fund
FP	Family Planning
GEDSI	Gender, Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GIZ	German Development Agency
IP	Implementing Partner
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MPTF-O	Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PES	Payments for Environmental Services
PIREDDs	Regional Integrated REDD projects in DRC
PROMIS	Scaling Up Family Planning project
PROREP	Project to strengthen the sustainable wood energy potential in the Republic of Congo
RoC	Republic of Congo
SYNA-MNV	Operationalising the National Measurement, Reporting and Verification System
TNC	The Nature Conservancy



UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN-REDD	United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation

Acknowledgements

This report has been produced by the Africa Regional Climate and Nature Programme (ARCAN) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Unit. This material has been funded by UK International Development from the UK government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

The case study was led by Lilli Loveday (Case Study Leader, ARCAN MEL GEDSI Expert), with support from Mugay Gédéon (International Researcher) and Thomas Bowe (ARCAN MEL Nature Pillar Lead Analyst).



Executive Summary

The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation and reduce poverty across six Central African countries. Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) integration within CAFI is important given that marginalised groups are often most adversely affected by deforestation/degradation but do not benefit equally from efforts to tackle deforestation/degradation.¹ Furthermore, identifying and addressing the specific needs of these groups – and involving them in the activities/processes to address those needs – is essential in achieving CAFI's aims of preventing deforestation and tackling poverty. For instance, evidence highlights that securing land rights and tenure for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities incentivises people to invest and improve stewardship of land, critical for reducing deforestation/degradation.²

This case study provides a progress update of where/how GEDSI has been integrated into CAFI operations and reflected in project activities, identifies where there are gaps for GEDSI integration, and points to opportunities for strengthening CAFI's GEDSI efforts to support GEDSI-responsive/sensitive projects.

Key Findings

GEDSI integration in CAFI appears to be mostly regarded as including people in activities, with reporting limited to measuring the percentage of participants/beneficiaries who are women (sometimes youth). Though some projects identify the specific needs of other marginalised social groups and design activities to address them, this occurs inconsistently. Further, there is limited explicit understanding of how supporting GEDSI can support broader CAFI outcomes at the project-level, but this is also reflected at the fund/Executive Board level to some extent.

GEDSI outcome reporting is limited by CAFI's requirements of projects to integrate GEDSI in their programming and reporting, where often projects report only quantified indicators on participant numbers split by gender and sometimes youth, with little contextual information. Currently, requirements for gender plans and monitoring are seen as box-ticking exercises by project delivery teams (given there is very little feedback on and/or requirement for review/alteration of gender plans, despite inconsistencies in quality). Additionally, the level of ambition for gender responsiveness across CAFI projects is set by the Executive Board and based on the Gender Marker assessments.

Limitations in GEDSI outcome reporting means CAFI's Executive Board members have varying degrees of understanding of how GEDSI is integrated across the portfolio. Further, the line of sight and level of accountability on GEDSI integration within projects is restricted, based on existing accreditation/grant selection processes, grant agreements, and reporting requirements.

Use of the UN REDD Gender Marker provides a 'point in time' assessment of gender integration across projects. However, it is not used as a project management/accountability tool or to guide implementation (with little evidence that assessment information is fed back to project delivery teams). Further, whilst the UN REDD Gender Marker is used by the Executive Board to set an annual 'target' on the proportion of projects across the portfolio that score higher, it does not track actual GEDSI outcomes and does not inform decisions.

There is limited scope within existing agreements and with available capacity across the CAFI secretariat to hold projects that have low Gender Marker scores or inadequate gender plans held to account. Whilst a gender target is set across the fund, this is based on the Gender Assessment scores, but this is applied at the point projects are already funded. Further, scoring below a certain level does not carry any implications/there is limited pressure placed on 'under-performing' projects (GEDSI-wise) to improve. Whilst the CAFI Secretariat, and the MEL team

¹ ARCAN MEL Unit. (2025). Midline Evaluation Phase 1 Report.

² Sarfo-Adu, G. K. (2021). Forest Tenure and Sustainable Forest Management: Drawing Lessons from the Literature. *Environmental Management and Sustainable Development*, 10(2), 1-16.



specifically have limited capacity to provide more targeted support on a one-on-one basis to projects. At the project-level, capacity to integrate GEDSI is mixed.

Recommendations

1. Driven by the Executive Board, the CAFI Secretariat (and FONAREDD in DRC) should encourage projects to identify the needs of different social groups (not just women, but Indigenous Peoples, peoples with disabilities, youth, and others) from project design, throughout implementation.
2. Relatedly, and again directed by the Executive Board, the CAFI Secretariat and FONAREDD, supported by the Executive Board, should review GEDSI plans in more detail as part of project selection (see recommendation 3), and review progress against these plans throughout implementation. As part of this, projects should be encouraged to think about GEDSI-specific indicators e.g., numbers of women/Indigenous Peoples with land titles, as well as more systematically encouraged/required to provide qualitative evidence to contextualise quantitative indicators.
3. Similarly, there is need for greater incentivisation around and accountability on GEDSI integration, and more proactive management to ensure projects uphold 'minimum' expectations on GEDSI. The Executive Board, supported by the CAFI Secretariat and FONAREDD, should be more explicit about the degree to which GEDSI integration influences funding allocations/selection both in the first place as well as ongoing (noting that some projects falling within the broader scope/mandate of CAFI's outcomes will have a more limited / discrete GEDSI contribution).
4. Empowered by the Executive Board, the CAFI Secretariat can better hold 'low-GEDSI scoring' projects to account by agreeing/establishing expectations within projects more explicitly at their outset and, importantly, determining what it means if projects fall short of these (without needing to alter ToRs between CAFI and projects, noted as difficult to do 'ad hoc' by fund-level interviewees).
5. Implementing partners (IPs) could be encouraged to produce nuanced qualitative 'success stories' in their reporting, to showcase best practice in CAFI annual reports and Gender Assessments. The CAFI Secretariat could push IPs to think about how such success stories link to projects being able to achieve their broader outcomes. This would help improve project- and fund-level comprehension of potential to contribute to GEDSI outcomes/actual contribution to GEDSI outcomes across projects.
6. In turn, however, there is need to reflect what any increased ambition on GEDSI integration translates to in practice in terms of capacity/resources required to be more proactively supporting projects. A clear commitment across the Executive Board to GEDSI (as pointed to in recommendation 3) should also reflect in greater GEDSI resourcing at the Secretariat-level to adequately review and support projects' GEDSI integration.

1.0 Introduction

The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation and reduce poverty across six Central African countries (Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo (RoC), The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), The Central African Republic (CAR)), as well as regionally. Mechanisms of delivery include national reforms (policy influencing), rural development projects, governance/coordination, monitoring systems, as well as research. There are eight pillars guiding action covering both direct drivers of deforestation (agriculture, wood energy, forestry, and infrastructure/mining) as well as indirect drivers of deforestation/degradation (land use planning, secure land tenure, governance, and demography). Annex 4 presents the CAFI theory of change.

The Phase One ARCAN Midline Evaluation which was based on a review of secondary literature, found there was limited evidence of CAFI being implemented in ways that reflect gendered needs and little evidence of CAFI projects recognising the needs of other social groups.³ More widely, global evidence reviewed as part of the Phase One report, identified a lack of Indigenous Peoples' and women's inclusion in projects aimed at tackling deforestation more widely, both in their design as well as their implementation, highlighting that this exclusion can lead to negative socioeconomic impacts on these groups.⁴ In sub-Saharan African countries, women are often only permitted to use low-value resources whilst their male counterparts control more profitable products like timber, as a result of patriarchal social structures.⁵ There is very limited evidence around the impact of deforestation programmes on disabled peoples. The literature suggests that community-based forest management can help to negate some of these issues, particularly around inclusion, but this is not a panacea. Insecure land tenure, gender inequalities and resource and capacity issues persist.⁶ Securing land rights and tenure for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities incentivises people to invest and improve stewardship of land, critical for reducing deforestation/degradation.⁷

The 2024 CAFI Annual Review notes: "*mainstreaming gender equality into CAFI programming is part of a human rights-based approach to development*", indicating that gender equality is prioritised through accrediting implementing organisations, at project approval/mid-term evaluation stages, assessing gender annually/reporting the outcomes, and setting annual gender targets. The emphasis on gender equality in CAFI is important given that marginalised groups are often most adversely affected by deforestation/degradation but do not benefit equally from efforts to tackle deforestation/degradation.⁸ CAFI projects are assessed annually using the UN-REDD Gender Marker on a score from gender blind, to gender sensitive, to gender responsive and against four criteria (context, implementation, monitoring/evaluation, budget/expertise). Gender Assessments have been undertaken since

³ ARCAN MEL Unit. (2025). Midline Evaluation Phase 1 Report.

⁴ Independent Commission for Aid Impact. (2021). International climate finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss.

⁵ Foncha, J. N., & Eforkwe, T. H. (2024). Empowering Rural Women through Agroforestry Practices; The Case of The Mount Oku Forest Region, Cameroon. *East African Journal of Forestry and Agroforestry*, 7(1), 227-239

⁶ Bernhard, K. P., Shapiro, A. C., d'Annunzio, R., & Kabuanga, J. M. (2024). Transboundary Central African Protected Area Complexes Demonstrate Varied Effectiveness in Reducing Predicted Risk of Deforestation Attributed to Small-Scale Agriculture. *Remote Sensing*, 16(1), 204; Kleinschmit, D., Wildburger, C., Grima, N., & Fisher, B. (2024). International forest governance: A critical review of trends, drawbacks, and new approaches. *International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)*; Duguma, L. A., Nzyoka, J., Obwocha, E., Minang, P., Wainaina, P., & Muthee, K. (2022). The forgotten half? Women in the forest management and development discourse in Africa: A review. *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, 5, 948618.

⁷ Sarfo-Adu, G. K. (2021). Forest Tenure and Sustainable Forest Management: Drawing Lessons from the Literature. *Environmental Management and Sustainable Development*, 10(2), 1-16.

⁸ ARCAN MEL Unit. (2025). Midline Evaluation Phase 1 Report.

2020. There is no specific approach or commitment across CAFI to reflecting on/integrating other characteristics of exclusion/marginalisation, such as disability, age, or indigenous status.⁹

Despite CAFI's stated commitment to gender equality, understanding how ambitions translate into action and what outcomes/meaningful change projects are/can contribute to in terms of gender equality as well as broader GEDSI outcomes (i.e., not only focused on gender but wider and, often intersectional, issues of social exclusion/marginalisation, including disability, indigenous status, age etc.), requires a deeper review. As noted in FCDO's 2024 ARCAN Annual Review,¹⁰ this is an important focus for FCDO both within the context of ARCAN (and the ARCAN programme requirement for interventions to reach, deliver for, and benefit marginalised populations, building their resilience) as well as in terms of FCDO's wider commitments for ODA to support gender equality.¹¹ Furthermore, delivering a GEDSI review to understand whether the approach adopted through CAFI is 'fit for purpose' (i.e., delivering benefits for the most marginalised) during the UK's Presidency of the CAFI Secretariat (anticipated to run to spring 2026) is an important commitment and it is understood that the Executive Board would welcome this assessment.

As such, the objectives of the case study are twofold:

- ▶ To provide a progress update of where/how GEDSI has been integrated into CAFI operations and reflected in project activities, identify where there are gaps for GEDSI integration, and point to opportunities for strengthening CAFI's GEDSI efforts to support GEDSI-responsive/sensitive projects.
- ▶ To contribute evidence towards the ARCAN MEL Unit's Midline Evaluation being conducted between March and November 2025. Specifically, the Case Study will contribute to Evaluation Questions (EQs) on Relevance (EQ1), Effectiveness (EQ2), and Impact (EQ3), focusing on transformational change (EQ4), with a view to supporting improvements during the portfolio's lifetime. This will build on assessment of GEDSI undertaken during Phase 1 of the Midline.

The approach and methodology of this case study is provided in Section 2. Section 3 presents findings from the case study against each evaluation question, before key learnings and recommendations are provided in Section 4. Annex 1 contains the case study terms of reference; Annex 2 provides the ARCAN MEL Evaluation Framework; the bibliography is provided in Annex 3; Annex 4 showcases the CAFI Theory of Change; Annex 5 provides a list of interviewees consulted and Annex 6 details the overarching topic guides used in interviews. Project overviews, including evidence from documents and interviews are provided in Annex 7 and our Ethics and Safeguarding Policy is presented in Annex 8. Finally, Annex 9 presents our Use and Influence Plan, with details on how our findings and recommendations have been refined and validated with the CAFI Secretariat.

⁹ CAFI used to have a specific intervention focussed on Indigenous Peoples (Projet d'appui aux communautés dépendantes des Forêts) which aimed to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in REDD+ policies and activities in the DRC, and to enable them to better benefit from the REDD+ mechanism, but this ended in 2023 and has yet to be replaced by a similar programme.

¹⁰ FCDO. (2025). Annual Review: Africa Regional Climate and Nature (ARCAN) programme. September 2025.

https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Ffiati.fcdo.gov.uk%2Ffiati_documents%2FS30080836.odt&wdOrigin=BR_QWSELINK (08/12/2025)

¹¹ See the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/9/contents>

2.0 Approach and Methodology

2.1 Case Study Evaluation Questions

In order to explore FCDO's priority evidence gaps for CAFI in relation to GEDSI, we developed specific case study evaluation questions (EQs), building on the existing ARCAN MEL evaluation framework (Annex 2). These were as follows:

1. How/to what extent is GEDSI mainstreamed across CAFI operations and delivery/projects?
2. What GEDSI outcomes is CAFI intended to contribute towards?
3. How effective is the current approach to GEDSI across CAFI?
4. Are there opportunities to support GESI contributions/outcomes (within CAFI operations and/or specific projects)?

A set of guiding sub-questions were developed alongside these overarching EQs to define the scope of the research and inform research tools/lines of enquiry. The sub-questions are detailed in the case study outline in Annex 1.

2.2 Research Design

To respond to the objectives and questions, a staged approach was taken that combined document review with a series of stakeholder interviews. Evidence from documents and stakeholder interviews was used to inform both the fund-level review (i.e., of CAFI operations/policies/processes for GEDSI integration) and portfolio/project level review (i.e., how policies/processes translate into practical action and the contributions towards GEDSI observed through projects and policy dialogue). Stakeholder engagement was especially important for generating insights to respond to questions 3 and 4 outlined above, as well as 1 and 2 (moving beyond the document review undertaken already as part of the ARCAN Midline Evaluation Phase I).

2.2.1 Data Collection Methods

High-level document review: Initially, a high-level review of CAFI fund-level documents was undertaken to generate a list of questions / issues to discuss with FCDO CAFI Advisors and the CAFI Secretariat, as well as to highlight additional documents required and begin to develop a sample list of projects for more detailed review. Information from key documents was extracted against the key case study EQs (outlined above) and formed the basis for developing further lines of enquiry for project level review and interviews.

- Documents included the 2024 CAFI and FONAREDD Annual Report; the 2022-2024 CAFI Gender Assessment reports; CAFI M&E Policy, gender overview on the CAFI website and gender search results¹², project annual reports, plus evidence from the Midline Phase 1 Evaluation Report which was based on an extensive review of secondary literature.¹³

Mapping of projects and gender assessment scores: Following the broader document review and discussion with FCDO, the team developed an approach to collate information on projects from Gender Assessments back to 2022 (including the most recent assessment from 2024), cross-referencing this with GEDSI-relevant spotlighted projects from Annual Reports (which provided further detail of contribution to GEDSI than the Gender Assessment

¹² <https://cafi.org/topics/gender/>; https://cafi.org/search/?sf_s=gender

¹³ ARCAN MEL Unit. (2025). Midline Evaluation Phase 1 Report.



alone, although this was limited) and through a search of the website. The collation of assessments organised projects by different criteria (e.g., country/geography, gender score/change in gender score between years, implementing partner, and thematic focus across the CAFI pillars). The mapping demonstrated the different ways gender/inclusion are/are not incorporated into CAFI projects.

Sampling of projects for further review: The mapping was used to select a sub-set of projects for further review (as it was not possible to review all projects in greater detail, given the number/number of documents per project). Selection was purposive across projects that reflected greater integration of/contribution to gender and ideally broader considerations of inclusion (i.e., those likely to have scored 'gender responsive') as well as projects where opportunities to integrate gender may have been missed or not maximised (i.e., low scoring gender sensitive, or gender blind), based on the gender assessments. In addition, projects that had improved their gender score between years were included to understand how any improvement came about (e.g., whether this was based on feedback/support from CAFI). Projects reflected the different CAFI pillars and countries to the extent feasible, although a greater proportion were in the DRC due to the level of funding/number of projects overall that are active there. We confirmed our selection with FCDO and shared the selection with CAFI to check relevance of selected projects (noting that no explicit confirmation was received).

Sample list of projects:

- ▶ Energie Durable (DRC)
- ▶ PIREDD Equateur (DRC)
- ▶ PIREDD Kwilu (DRC)
- ▶ PIREDD Mongala (DRC)
- ▶ Scaling up Family Planning (PROMIS) (DRC)
- ▶ Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon
- ▶ Land Use Planning and Monitoring (Gabon)
- ▶ Operationalising the National Measurement, Reporting and Verification System (SYNA-MNV) (Republic of Congo)
- ▶ Project to strengthen the sustainable wood energy potential in the Republic of Congo (PROREP) (Republic of Congo)
- ▶ Preparatory Grant IFAD-FODECC (Cameroon)
- ▶ Projet d'assistance préparatoire (Central African Republic)
- ▶ Assessment of deforestation and forest degradation and related direct drivers using SEPAL (Regional)
- ▶ Scaling-up commercial investment in deforestation-free central African commodity supply chain (Regional)

We also added PIREDD Maniema (DRC) to this sample as we were put in contact with the German Development Agency (GIZ), the implementing partner, by a German Executive Board contact.

Out of the sample of 13 projects, we interviewed and received information for 9. This included the additional project (PIREDD Maniema). Out of the original sample list, the following projects were not reviewed because we either did not acquire contact details, or did not receive responses to requests for interview: Land Use Planning and Monitoring (Gabon), Preparatory Grant IFAD-FODECC (Cameroon), Projet d'assistance préparatoire (Central

African Republic), Assessment of deforestation and forest degradation and related direct drivers using SEPAL (Regional), and Scaling-up commercial investment in deforestation-free central African commodity supply chain (Regional).

Project level document review: For the sub-set of selected projects, we collated relevant documents for review, including project design documents/proposals/applications, annual reports to CAFI / FONAREDD, results frameworks for projects, spotlight examples/write-ups, public descriptions of project activities, GEDSI strategies and results (where shared); and project evaluations where available. Project documentation was reviewed against the case study EQs. The application of the UN-REDD marker/assessment through CAFI was also reviewed against available evidence, although validating these assessments was not within the remit of this case study. See Annex 3 for a full list of documents reviewed.

Stakeholder consultations: Stakeholder interviews were a critical source of evidence for the Case Study. A selection of stakeholders from the below stakeholder groups were reached, with interviews being undertaken remotely in English (by Lilli Loveday and Thomas Bowe) and French (by Mugay Gédéon). In total, interviews were conducted with 32 stakeholders, 10 at the fund level and 22 at project level. See Annex 5 for a full list of interviewees consulted per stakeholder group. Interviews were semi-structured – with guides and areas of exploration/inquiry developed for different stakeholder groups, drawing from the overarching case study EQs, and the portfolio level document review/early discussions with FCDO/the CAFI Secretariat, as well as project level document review and gender assessment mapping. However, these were adapted based on the specific function/focus – particularly for fund-level interviewees. Topic Guides are attached in Annex 6.

► Fund-level Interviewees:

- ▷ FCDO – Regional Advisors for CAFI, MEL staff
- ▷ Executive Board members and observers
- ▷ CAFI Secretariat staff (e.g., Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists, Programme Specialists, Specialist on Gender, Technical Specialists)
- ▷ National entities/government bodies participating in Steering Committees (e.g., FONAREDD)

► Project-level Interviewees:

- ▷ Implementing organisations for selected projects
- ▷ Project delivery teams for selected projects

2.2.1 Data Analysis and Synthesis

Evidence from documents was extracted against case study EQs. This was combined with evidence from interviews (which was collated and relevant information extracted). The team checked in regularly throughout the process to identify themes, and/or gaps, as well as to highlight emerging insights/issues to explore. Findings against each case study EQ are presented below in Section 3, before key learnings and recommendations are provided in Section 4. Project summaries are provided in Annex 7 which provide an overview of key evidence collated from documents and interviews undertaken per project, in line with the methodology.



2.2.2 Limitations

As noted above, a key limitation was the availability of interviewees, particularly at project-level. Nevertheless, a good sample was achieved, covering a broad range of projects. However, the reviewed sample did not include any regional projects or projects from CAR or Cameroon.

Availability of data was also a limitation. Many projects could not provide GEDSI-specific information, so we often had to rely on annual reports and other, more sporadic information, such as project summaries on the CAFI website, or internal project documents.

There was also a limitation in that some projects included in the sample had just started implementation, whilst some had ended. We deliberately selected projects at different stages of delivery, in order to get a sense of GEDSI integration over time. However, some projects early in implementation did not feel comfortable undertaking an interview/providing documentation as they did not feel they had adequate GEDSI information to provide (although, as much as this was a limitation, it is also a finding). Where projects had ended, some key staff no longer worked for implementing partners and were not contactable.

3.0 Findings

3.1 How/to what extent is GEDSI mainstreamed across CAFI operations and delivery/projects?

3.1.1 How is GEDSI mainstreamed across CAFI?

Evidence suggests that GEDSI ‘goal setting’ in CAFI is a top-down process. Fund-level interviewees described how the CAFI Executive Board sets out the GEDSI goals CAFI projects should aim to achieve. The CAFI Secretariat then translates this into tools and guidance to project IPs, such as the requirements that each project has a section in their annual report on gender and underrepresented groups including gender disaggregated indicators (see Section 3.2.2 for perceptions of the usefulness of this guidance). In the DRC, FONAREDD is an additional layer between the CAFI Secretariat and Project IPs. FONAREDD has its own GEDSI guidance that links to the CAFI Guidance, but project IPs in DRC are not necessarily as aware of the CAFI Secretariat’s advice – some respondents had only seen the FONAREDD guidance. In DRC The Secretariat has more limited individual contact with these IPs as this is the role of FONAREDD.

Multiple fund-level stakeholders identify a lack of capacity at the CAFI Secretariat to concentrate on GEDSI as an issue. The CAFI Secretariat team is widely viewed to be doing the most they can within the resources they have available, but the Secretariat does not currently have the capacity to have even one person fully dedicated to GEDSI issues. As a result, junior CAFI personnel, often without specific gender expertise, are responsible for scoring projects against the Gender Marker (the main mechanism for assessing project integration of gender considerations). Up to three people do the assessments, but for the 2024 reporting, only one was available. Most fund-level stakeholders identified capacity constraints within the CAFI Secretariat MEL team, whilst a minority thought the CAFI Secretariat as a whole had adequate capacity. CAFI is a pooled fund and the mandate and resources made available to the CAFI Secretariat are administered by the Executive Board, this is a critical note when considering what the Secretariat can currently do, and what it may be able to do in the future.

Capacity constraints are also critical to a lack of detailed review of IPs gender plans and how they are applied, with stakeholders warning that implementation of policies can vary significantly in practice/between IPs. Before an IP has access to any UN funding, it goes through an accreditation process which



includes a review of gender policies and procedures; there is a minimum standard IPs must pass to gain accreditation. The UN accreditation process is viewed by the CAFI Secretariat as stricter than the CAFI application process (i.e., where UN-accredited IPs then apply for specific CAFI funding) in terms of checking internal processes, policies and systems relating to gender. However, despite this, interviewees suggested that revisions needed to pass the accreditation process may simply involve e.g., stating “*we will apply our gender policy, period*”. Fund-level interviewees pointed to the UN accreditation process as the critical way CAFI ensures IPs have the resources to mainstream GEDSI, but beyond accreditation, further assessment of gender strategies and their implementation is minimal. After accreditation, there is an assessment of project documents before a project is approved for CAFI funding. Interviewees identified how this includes examining whether a Gender Action Plan is provided with sufficient detail. There is then a back and forth between the project and CAFI Secretariat who make comments and then revisions before the project is presented to the FONAREDD governance body or the CAFI Executive Board. CAFI then relies on IPs applying their GEDSI policies and procedures (with those reviewed in this case study primarily focused on gender, which may reflect the focus on gender in CAFI reporting requirements). Fund-level interviewees warned that, whilst on paper IPs GEDSI/gender policies may look comprehensive, how they are implemented in practice varies greatly between IPs.

3.1.2 To what extent is GEDSI mainstreamed across CAFI?

Some stakeholders identified an increased focus on GEDSI in CAFI programming in recent years, pointing to the CAFI Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Guidelines that were updated in 2022 to include increased guidelines on gender reporting, however guidelines on reporting against other social groups are less clear. These guidelines state that CAFI projects should “*provide, successfully implement and report on a sound strategy for integration of the gender dimension, and of women in particular, based on CAFI's five criteria: (i) delivery of a gender analysis at the stage of programme conceptualisation aimed at identifying ways in which the programme can generate socio-economic benefits for women, (ii) allocation of budgetary resources to measures that generate socio-economic benefits for women, (iii) implementation of planned measures that generate socio-economic benefits for women, (iv) definition and reporting on results indicators regarding the generation of socio-economic benefits for women, and (v) definition, implementation and reporting on measures that ensure the participation of women in programme governance structures.*”¹⁴ In these guidelines there is evidently a focus on gender compared to other aspects of GEDSI, which explains the overall focus on gender identified in this report. However, the M&E Guidelines also state that projects should demonstrate and report on “*actions taken to integrate and benefit underrepresented groups*”. Criteria on what constitutes an underrepresented group is not provided, again perhaps a reason why projects’ integration of GEDSI beyond gender into project design and reporting is so mixed.

Overall, considerations of gender are mainstreamed much more than other GEDSI considerations. CAFI projects are encouraged to meet minimum targets for including women in project activities and ensuring they make up a significant proportion of beneficiaries. For instance, interviewees from PIREDDs, PROREP and SYNA-MNV indicated that they were required to ensure at least 30% of beneficiaries were women. Beyond this target, PIREDDs were not aware of any further GEDSI-related targets set by FONAREDD/CAFI that they must abide with. Among fund- and project-level interviewees, it was recognised that social inclusion is not a term used often in CAFI. Engagement of civil society and/or Indigenous Peoples is considered to varying degrees across projects and across the portfolio overall. However, this was not done consistently, perhaps because there are no reporting requirements for reaching/working with civil society and/or Indigenous People, and the presence of Indigenous Peoples varies between areas of CAFI project implementation. Some project-level interviewees took gender sensitivity to include indigenous and/or disabled people, whereas others did not. Indeed, disability was considered

¹⁴ CAFI. (2022). Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Policy. Version of December 22, 2022. Adopted via decision EB.2022.28.

even less among our sample of project interviewees/documents. Interestingly, it was noted by several interviewees that GEDSI is an agenda which is getting harder to talk about due to the volatile international political environment.

Whilst goals are set at the CAFI fund-level, it was evident that the strength of GEDSI integration at the project-level is reliant upon IP's GEDSI expertise and implementation of GEDSI strategies. However, not all projects have GEDSI targets to begin with. Projects that successfully integrate GEDSI (principally gender considerations) are those that have clear GEDSI targets and strategies to achieve them from the project design stage, as opposed to projects that try to report against GEDSI indicators halfway through implementation. See Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 for more details on how IPs in our sample have applied their GEDSI policies as well as challenges they have faced in doing so.

Many of the projects interviewed stated that they address GEDSI needs in their design, but evidence of how they do so was mixed (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Summary of GEDSI Implementation in project design and implementation across the case study sample

Project Name and Principal IP(s)	GEDSI considerations in project design and implementation
Energie Durable United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	▶ The project lacks GEDSI-related objectives but has indicators disaggregated by gender. ▶ Interviewees outlined that they encourage the project's implementing agencies to ensure that women and youth are engaged in activities, that they take on leadership roles, and that they access employment opportunities. However, precisely how this is ensured in practice was unclear.
PIREDD Equateur United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO)	▶ The project ensures that 40% of each Provincial Directorate is female and by providing capacity-building support to women. ▶ The programme also has a demography component and, as part of this, 3,000 beneficiaries – of whom approximately 90% were women - received training on entrepreneurship, tailoring, contraceptive use, and culinary practice to enhance infant nutrition. ▶ Local development plans encourage Indigenous Peoples to establish business activities such as pisciculture and the commercialisation of <i>fumbwa</i> (a type of vegetable in the DRC). ▶ People with disabilities are not specifically considered in project design.
PIREDD Kwilu Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	▶ The project developed a provincial gender action plan as part of its safeguarding component. This plan includes a situational gender analysis of DRC and of the Kwilu province, as well as a proposed action plan, which includes various activities to support women's participation.¹⁵ These include popularising legal texts favourable to women, training and capacity building on gender stereotypes, and sensitising local authorities on women's access to land. ▶ In terms of GEDSI outcomes, the team noted that they intend to contribute to women's and youth's empowerment by training them in sustainable charcoal production, beekeeping, and saponification.¹⁶

¹⁵ PIREDD Kwilu. (2025). Plan d'Action Provincial pour la Promotion de Genre.

¹⁶ FONAREDD. (2025). Rapport Annuel 2024.



PIREDD Maniema GIZ	▶ PIREDD Maniema follows GIZ's comprehensive gender strategy.¹⁷ The strategy is tailored to PIREDD Maniema following a gender analysis which was undertaken to determine the roles, responsibilities, and needs of men and women, as well as understanding the influence of gender on environmental practices and decisions at the community level. ▶ This is followed by inclusive planning, which aims to include gender aspects, such as methodologies, indicators, and targets, in the activity planning process. ▶ GIZ provides implementing partners/local grantees with capacity-building support, allowing them to effectively implement the gender strategy. ▶ The strategy suggests various ways to promote gender inclusion, participation in leadership and decision-making, and entrepreneurship among women, such as through training, sensitisation, and material support.
PIREDD Mongala Belgian Agency for International Cooperation (Enabel)	▶ Required public institutions to include women and youth in their collaborative work, as well as encouraging women's representation in different committees. ▶ PIREDD Mongala also engaged women and youth in various agricultural activities, supporting them in commercialising their products.¹⁸ ▶ Despite this, women and youth engagement was low. For instance, only 6 out of 27 persons included in Hevea plantation activities were women, and out of 178 people that participated in the Community Forest Concessions (CFC) process, only 6% were women.¹⁹ No details explaining these figures were provided in the project's annual report beneficiary matrix. This exemplifies how relying on quantitative data misses key contextual information which would be helpful both in explaining the reason for low reach as well as understanding how to rectify such issues (see Section 3.2 for more information on how GEDSI is monitored).
Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	▶ Not designed with a specific GEDSI integration approach and CAFI did not set any related objectives according to interviewees. ▶ Interviewees pointed to TNC's GEDSI framework that is used in this project.²⁰ However, its application in ensuring the project's activities are GEDSI-aligned is unclear. Interviewees only pointed to including men, women, youth, and other social categories in the project team itself as a way to integrate GEDSI (but not through specific activities). ▶ Additionally, the project team highlighted that a lack of dedicated resources affected the project's ability to identify gender-related issues and inform mitigation strategies.
PROMIS I and II United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	▶ CAFI gender reporting requirements (as they are now) were brought in after PROMIS I was designed and began implementation. However, PROMIS is a demography-based project and, unlike the rest of the CAFI projects, includes women as the primary beneficiaries. Interventions are gender equity-oriented, and include family planning (FP), contraceptive provision, and nursing/education (brought in for PROMIS II). ▶ PROMIS II is guided by a Gender Integration Action Plan requiring IPs to (i) ensure gender representation of at least 30% women in all leadership and technical coordination positions and in the selection of contractors; (ii) support improved access to and voluntary use of FP among women and adolescent girls regardless of age, matrimonial status, ethnicity, among other factors, and the training of service

¹⁷ GIZ. (2024). Stratégie de genre dans les Projets de Maintien de la Biodiversité et Gestion durable des Forêts.

¹⁸ PIREDD Mongala. (2025). Rapport Annuel 2024.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Not provided to the case study team.



	providers on gender considerations; and (iii) activities to raise awareness of the links connecting FP and education, empowerment, political involvement, access to resources, and sustainable environmental management for women.
PROREP UN FAO	▶ PROREP undertook a study on the barriers to women's access to land involving 47 women and 34 Indigenous People, following which it designed a gender integration plan.²¹ ▶ The project aims to ensure at least 30% of project participants and beneficiaries are women, by prioritising sites including women, youth and Indigenous Peoples when planting sustainable wood energy plantations. ▶ Project staff reported having received role-specific instructions on gender integration to ensure the 30% inclusion targets are met (although the specific details on what these entailed was not outlined).
SYNA-MNV UN FAO	▶ No specific GEDSI objectives – its principal aim was to operationalise a tool that allows the national government to monitor the performance of REDD+ projects across the country. ▶ Interviewees noted that the project ensures the inclusion of 30% female representation in all training, workshops, technical meetings, recruitment processes, and related activities. For instance, the project includes a ten-member technical committee “MNV Cell”, of whom six are women.

The varying degree to which projects had developed and/or integrated gender action plans, where these were available, appears to be linked not only to capacity but also a perception amongst stakeholders that developing these action plans is a tick-box requirement. For example, in the DRC, project stakeholders reported that they have not seen any engagement from FONAREDD on gender action plans. It seems that, if FONAREDD see that a project has such a plan in place, it is adequate, and there was no evidence that FONAREDD interrogate the plans in detail/or provide feedback/guidance. Further, fund-level stakeholders reported not being aware of any cases where a project was not funded because it lacked a gender (or broader GEDSI) plan. Evidence from interviewees suggested that projects are passed with the recommendation that they include a plan.

3.2 What GEDSI outcomes is CAFI intended to contribute towards?

GEDSI outcomes across CAFI appear limited to achieving minimum proportions of women (and sometimes youth) in participant and beneficiary numbers. However, outcomes are not necessarily related to activities that focus on the specific needs of women and other social groups (see Annex 7 for details on the types of indicators disaggregated by gender/youth within specific projects). That said, some projects do specifically address GEDSI needs positively, as described in Section 3.3.1.

3.2.1 How are GEDSI outcomes being monitored/tracked?

CAFI utilises the UN-REDD Gender Marker, a simple standardised tool to assess the way gender is integrated into projects' design and implementation. Projects are assessed against 4 criteria, as follows:

²¹ PROREP. (2025). 2024 Rapport Annuel PROREP.

- **Context:** are gender issues identified and integrated into the project?
- **Implementation:** are there gender-targeted or responsive activities?
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** are there gender-disaggregated results reporting?
- **Budget and expertise:** is there an explicit budget for gender (activities), is there evidence that gender expertise is integrated?

Based on these criteria, projects are categorised as gender blind (do not meet any of the 4 criteria); gender sensitive (meet 1-3 of the 4 criteria) or gender responsive (meet all 4 criteria). In 2024, 3 projects were scored as gender blind, 22 as gender sensitive, and 6 projects were marked as gender responsive (see Table 2 below).²²

Table 2: 2024 CAFI UN-REDD Gender Marker Scoring Summary

2024 UN-REDD Gender Marker Score	Number of projects
0 criteria met	3
1/4 criteria met	4
2/4 criteria met	12
3/4 criteria met	6
4/4 criteria met	6

In our sample, the Gender Marker score fell over the course of implementation for four projects (SYNA-MNV, Energie Durable, PIREDD Equateur and the Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon), whereas 2 improved their score over the course of implementation (PROREP and PIREDD Kwilu). PIREDD Mongala, PROMIS I and PIREDD Maniema maintained the highest score possible throughout implementation (PIREDD Maniema scored a 3 in one year – 2023).

The Gender Assessments provide a useful tool for identifying particularly well or poor performing projects when it comes to gender integration, but they do not adequately capture/reflect on whether actual outcomes are being achieved that support gender, nor reflect systematically on broader GEDSI considerations. Whilst it was not within the scope of the case study to validate Gender Assessment scores, our review did consider whether the scores aligned with evidence on GEDSI integration from the case study document review/interviews. In that sense, the highest scoring projects matched with the projects identified by stakeholders through case study interviews as contributing particularly positively to GEDSI-relevant outcomes (see Section 3.3.1). Similarly, low-scoring projects correlated with our findings in terms of projects with minimal GEDSI-related strategies/contributions in place (Section 3.1). However, in reviewing projects' scores and brief accompanying texts in the Gender Assessments, it is difficult to get a full picture of the extent projects integrate GEDSI considerations *and* the assessments predominantly identify where projects are supporting gender outcomes, whilst other factors related to GEDSI (e.g., youth and Indigenous considerations) are identified to a *much* lower extent. The assessment tool is useful as a snapshot to identify projects with greater potential to support gender. See Annex 7 for the gender assessment results per project reviewed.

²² CAFI. (2025b). Annual Report Annex: Gender Assessment 2024.



It was unclear amongst interviewees at both the fund- and project-level why the UN REDD marker in particular is used and there were mixed opinions about whether it gives sufficient information to key stakeholders. Whilst the Gender Marker is the main assessment tool for gender responsiveness in CAFI, there were concerns among interviewees that not all fund- and project-level stakeholders completely understand each of the categories projects are marked against (and the criteria applied). Furthermore, fund-level interviewees believe that FONAREDD does not communicate gender assessment scores to downstream IPs. In our interviews, PIREDDs Kwilu and Maniema were unfamiliar with the application of the UN-REDD Gender Marker for their programme. They noted that they infrequently receive feedback or guidance on gender integration from CAFI/FONAREDD. Some stakeholders suggested quantified indicators may be more useful for decision making alongside the Gender Marker, such as the disaggregated indicators on beneficiaries reported at the project-level, as the Gender Marker and Assessments do not (fully) capture results – these are only captured in project-level reporting. However, as per section 3.2.2 below, quantitative indicators alone do not provide an adequate understanding of GEDSI integration or, importantly, the outcomes any integration is (or is not) supporting.

There are minimal implications of being assessed with a low Gender Marker score. The CAFI Secretariat cannot hold partners to account on GEDSI specific contributions, beyond the legal agreements that are in place with partners. Achieving a minimum Gender Marker score is not part of grant agreements between CAFI and IPs, so CAFI cannot require improvements or impose any implications (e.g., withholding funding) for low-scoring projects. In 2025, The Executive Board requested that low Gender Marker scoring projects (0-1 criteria achieved) should provide updated gender action plans outlining plans to improve their low gender assessment score. The Executive Board requested that these be submitted to the CAFI and FONAREDD Secretaries by September 2025 but, as of November 2025, the Executive Board has only seen one, from PIREDD Plateau. Given the limited reporting requirements and limited sharing of results, it is unsurprising that many project stakeholders stated they have not adapted their programming accordingly.

Beyond the Gender Marker scoring undertaken at CAFI Secretariat-level, the only thing projects are required to report against contractually is their annual report. Project stakeholders identified how they tracked GEDSI primarily through disaggregated indicators on participants and beneficiaries of various activities such as training events, committee make-ups and agricultural activities: *“Numbers, numbers, numbers, almost no text, and you just send six, seven different tables with numbers on all sorts of indicators”* – Project-level stakeholder.

Beyond PROMIS, very little qualitative reporting is undertaken on GEDSI integration, making it difficult to understand the extent of GEDSI integration at the project-level. PROREP conduct focus group discussions with women and Indigenous Peoples when monitoring results. In meetings with FONAREDD, DRC project stakeholders note that GEDSI information requests are limited, principally to questions on numbers of beneficiaries and how many are women. The FONAREDD reporting template, which DRC projects have to follow, provides space for reporting against activities that directly target gender, Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups.²³ However, as many projects reviewed did not target many, if any, activities directly at these groups, this may explain the overall lack of qualitative reporting on GEDSI.

Energie Durable's annual report disaggregated indicators only by women, men, and youth, such as attendance and beneficiary lists.²⁴ Interviewees found this approach to be appropriate because it allows the team to capture the proportion of male and female beneficiaries and take action to mobilise greater female participation, when necessary, but considerations beyond participation statistics were not provided. Similarly limited tracking of GEDSI integration was identified through interviews and reporting of PIREDDs Mongala, Equateur and Kwilu, though a FONAREDD interviewee suggested these approaches were appropriate. Positively, a focus and push from

²³ FONAREDD. (2024). Canevas de rapport des projets financés par L'Initiative Pour La Forêt de L'Afrique Centrale (CAFI) et le FONAREDD.

²⁴ Programme de Consommation Durable et Substitution Partielle au Bois-Energie En ROC. (2024) 2023 Rapport Annuel.



FONAREDD on ensuring a minimum percentage of female beneficiaries did encourage PIREDDs Equateur and Kwilu to increase the number of female beneficiaries in their programmes, but clear considerations of why/whether activities tackle gender-specific issues remain limited.

3.2.2 Perceptions of GEDSI reporting requirements and support

Some stakeholders considered the current gender reporting requirements to be an unhelpful box-ticking exercise that does not relate to activities on the ground. Stakeholders suggested that current GEDSI reporting requirements are not applicable in the contexts where CAFI projects are being implemented, where populations think differently and concepts related to gender equality have nuanced meaning. These stakeholders advocate for more of a conversation around the importance of gender throughout CAFI/FONAREDD, in terms of shaping programmes and activities from the start. These perceptions are exemplified by the sentiments of project stakeholders, such as:

“Sit down and listen to what your beneficiaries tell you about being a woman, being a mother, the relationship with men, because do not assume that they have the same aspiration as we do, I'm going to say in the Global North or the West.” – Project Stakeholder

“I'd be lying if I said it's [GEDSI reporting requirements] not a tick box exercise because it's formulated in a way that cannot really be directly applied to the situation we're seeing on the ground.” – Project Stakeholder

Beyond reporting requirements, CAFI and FONAREDD GEDSI support to projects is limited. Project stakeholders did not report any particular training provided on GEDSI integration, reflected by CAFI Secretariat members identifying the annual reporting/MEL guidelines as the main way they ensure projects integrate GEDSI. FONAREDD reflect the CAFI MEL Guidance in their own guidance, including gender mainstreaming guidance. However, some project interviewees did not find these particularly useful, with one describing the gender guidance as “*very buzzword soup*”. They explained that the guidance missed opportunities to discuss intersectionality and currently, gender is a standalone section in FONAREDD reporting templates despite gender being relevant everywhere.²⁵ When DRC projects meet with FONAREDD, GEDSI issues are very infrequently considered, which may be reflective of FONAREDD's GEDSI expertise, which was widely recognised by stakeholders to be limited.

3.3 How effective is the current approach to GEDSI across CAFI?

There are mixed views within the Executive Board and across fund-level stakeholders on whether the current approach to GEDSI integration / reflection in projects is effective. According to fund-level interviewees, some donor countries feel that the current approach is sufficient – often this was the case for donors who see CAFI's primary function being to prevent deforestation, despite poverty alleviation and demography being key impact areas in CAFI's theory of change (see Annex 4). Others, see significant room for improvement, not only in terms of how GEDSI considerations are integrated, but how they are reported. Regarding the former, some donor countries want to see GEDSI better integrated in all programming, rather than as a box-ticking exercise at the end of annual reporting. In terms of the latter, donor countries identify how they are not able to read each project report, but the CAFI annual report does not provide an adequate picture of how CAFI projects are meeting GEDSI needs, or not. Beyond the annual reporting, Executive Board members do not recall there having been any deep dives into GEDSI. Furthermore, there are concerns that projects are taking a backwards step, given that in the most recent assessment, more projects scored lower on the Gender Marker than in previous years, with four

²⁵ FONAREDD. (2024). Canevas de rapport des projets financés par L'Initiative Pour La Forêt de L'Afrique Centrale (CAFI) et le FONAREDD.



projects classified as gender blind. Finally, the focus on gender prevents a full understanding of broader social context and power relations that are critical to tackling deforestation, e.g., Indigenous Peoples' rights to access and own land.

GEDSI outcomes at the portfolio-level appear limited to achieving numbers of women participants and beneficiaries, whereas some projects identify and address critical GEDSI needs. Activities targeted directly at women's needs relate principally to family planning (FP) (e.g., PIREDDs and PROMIS). Indeed, multiple PIREDDs target young women on education around FP and contraception, whilst PROMIS focuses on FP and nursing education. However, although there is some overlap between the areas of implementation of these programmes (thematically as well as geographically), work through the PIREDDs is undertaken separately to the PROMIS programme (see Section 3.3.1. below). Beyond gender, projects appear mostly reactive rather than proactive in addressing other social groups. In many cases, projects stated that they addressed needs of other social groups like Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities indirectly. Projects did not focus activities on these groups' needs, but where activities could benefit different social groups, they tried to, such as inviting them to participate in activities/trainings where possible. Some stakeholders suggested there are not the resources available to target GEDSI needs sufficiently, whereas others suggest it is not only a question of resources, but a lack of strategic GEDSI integration from project design.

3.3.1 Examples of promising contributions to GEDSI outcomes

Fund-level stakeholders widely pointed to PROMIS as the key CAFI project that contributes to GEDSI outcomes.²⁶ PROMIS is considered to be one of CAFI's most successful projects in achieving its outcomes, which are primarily focused on (young) women. From 2019-2023, PROMIS I distributed contraceptive methods to 3,193,965 people, trained 13,571 healthcare providers in contraceptive provision and informed choice, and supported the national Strategic Family Planning Plan.²⁷ PROMIS I also scored the maximum Gender Marker score between 2021 and 2023. PROMIS II (started implementation in 2025) increases the emphasis on training midwives and healthcare workers for sustainable health systems and reducing maternal mortality. PROMIS also undertakes communications campaigns on the benefits of FP and contraception, engaging (male-dominated) communities at large. PROMIS is regarded by interviewees as closely aligned with national priorities, particularly DRC's sexual and reproductive health and rights commitments.

There has been some questioning of PROMIS' position within the CAFI portfolio. Although CAFI does not solely aim to reduce deforestation, many stakeholders, including DRC ministers, see this as CAFI's primary goal. Stakeholders reported how PROMIS has needed to strongly defend its position and levels of funding in particular with DRC officials, as they were hesitant about PROMIS' links to achieving CAFI's broader outcomes (see section 3.4.2). More widely, there remain neo-colonial critiques of PROMIS amongst stakeholders, related to the fact that, within the context of CAFI, PROMIS' contraception provision and FP are designed to reduce the number of children Congolese families have (rather than being based on rights/empowerment goals). However, proponents argue that this argument is not made by many in-country and is itself reductionist. To them, PROMIS activities *are* primarily about providing agency and choice to (young) women, as well as educating men on the benefits of FP, in terms of protecting maternal health and ensuring (young) women can better access education and employment opportunities, with benefits for women and men.

²⁶ Evidence on PROMIS's impact on reducing deforestation rates is limited to interviewees' views on how effective family planning can lead to reduced pressures on forests. There is no data available linking PROMIS activities to reduced deforestation e.g., hectares of land saved from deforestation.

²⁷ CAFI. (2024). Support to Family Planning. <https://cafi.org/project/support-to-family-planning-1/> (Accessed 17/11/2025)



“[PROMIS] is focused primarily on women and girls, but it doesn't exclude men. It's quite the opposite, actually. I know our healthcare workers are trained to have these conversations with men.” – Project Stakeholder

However, there are gaps in PROMIS' programming, acknowledged by their staff. Notably, PROMIS has not been hugely successful in targeting the most vulnerable populations in the DRC, as identified by the 2022 PROMIS I final evaluation.²⁸ As a result, within PROMIS II, interviewees are working to create disability-specific strategies, including tailoring project materials to the entire community, such as people with hearing impairments.

PIREDD Maniema was also identified as generating positive GEDSI outcomes. PIREDD Maniema has also been awarded maximum Gender Marker scores between 2022 and 2024. There is no FP component to PIREDD Maniema, but it focusses on reducing pressure on native forests through agroforestry; creating community-based restoration or zones for communal management; law enforcement; capacity development of partners and beneficiaries and political partners. Fund-level stakeholders identified how the project provided a thorough analysis of gender risks including cultural resistance and showed how the project would address them. Stakeholders also identified how activities were also well documented and had a gender strategy related to developing women leaders, with results reported against gender-disaggregated indicators. When it comes to working with beneficiaries in the communities, PIREDD Maniema described that the process for deciding which lands are reforested is based on participatory, gender inclusive consultation, and the project purposively selects sites where beneficiary make up is split evenly by gender as much as possible. There is also a specific component targeting women-led village savings groups of 15-20 members. So far 10,200 members (86% women) comprise these groups which receive capacity building in entrepreneurship, savings, and finance. Members are able to make small capital investments in agribusinesses – the groups have raised USD 802,235 so far.²⁹

PIREDD Maniema is not specifically designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, but stakeholders noted how they take their needs into account on a practical basis – however, specifics of how they do so were not evidenced. In terms of Indigenous Peoples, PIREDD Maniema targeted some areas with high proportions of Indigenous people to include them in activities, but there does not appear to be a specific strategy to engage and benefit Indigenous Peoples (though their broad approach to inclusive/participatory decision-making was reflected across the populations they engage).

PIREDD Mongala also noted contributions to GEDSI-positive outcomes. Interviewees identified that within this programme, women have been introduced to home-based farming, which has reduced their workload and time burden and increased their income to meet household expenses and support their children's education. Additionally, the annual report indicates that the programme contributed to addressing the case of land seizure from women by introducing it into Local Development Committees (CLD).³⁰ Land rights is a key issue identified by interviewees across CAFI that needs to be supported so land users can become owners and have incentive to care and improve their land, reducing the pressure on forests from slash-and-burn agriculture.

3.3.2 Examples of contextual challenges limiting contributions to GEDSI outcomes

Low gender scoring projects are not specific to any country or IP, instead this is driven by projects that are not specifically focused on gender and/or social inclusion-type activities (e.g. SYNA-MNV). That said, fund-level stakeholders identified that the two CAFI projects implemented by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Gabon mention issues of women and gender very minimally if at all. This is reflective of our findings relating to the Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon in Section 3.1. Stakeholders

²⁸ UNOPS. (2024). Evaluation indépendante finale du Programme de mise à l'échelle de la planification familiale en RD Congo (PROMIS-PF)

²⁹ GIZ. (2025). GESI 2024 PIREDD Maniema

³⁰ PIREDD Mongala. (2025). Rapport Annuel 2024.



considered that this may be due to the current US political context, and the fact TNC is a US headquartered NGO (i.e., backlash against equity, diversion and inclusion and the broader shifts related to US overseas development aid). Furthermore, under the new Gabonese government, there is a preference to move away from international NGOs more broadly. However, this political atmosphere is also being reflected across some other donor countries and their prioritisation of GEDSI (beyond mainstreaming), with other governments restricting or reducing funding to gender equality initiatives in more recent times.

Whilst projects did not report specific examples of activities that negatively contributed to GEDSI outcomes, multiple contextual issues were reported. In some cases, projects have (aimed to) address these, whilst in others they have not. For example, recipient country contexts are crucial in projects' ability to address GEDSI issues. Both fund- and project-level stakeholders identified the social and political context of the DRC as a key factor in limiting and/or shaping programmes. For instance, where programmes aimed to build the capacity of female civil servants in local and national governments, this relied on there being women in such positions in the first place, whilst very few women are hired by governments: *"You cannot train civil servants that don't exist."* – Fund-level stakeholder. PIREDD Kwilu's annual report points to this challenge reporting that, despite aiming for 50% female representation in capacity building activities, only 7 out of 184 government officials that have benefited from capacity-building activities and participated in working groups are women.³¹ It is unclear if the low number of women in DRC government is the only reason behind such figures, however. Although there is a gender focal point in each ministry, interviewees recognise that they do not have large budgets and are mostly tokenistic positions, whilst strategies such as the Positive Masculinity Strategy appear poorly defined. Additionally, one fund-level stakeholder reported that social and cultural norms and beliefs may constrain gender considerations among some CAFI project staff, who perceive the whole concept of gender and gender rights as 'Western'/imposed upon them (although this was not echoed across other interviewees).

Interviewees noted that – although working to address them – PROMIS is particularly affected by social norms that challenge gender equality. Stakeholders identified how FP decisions are seen to be those to be made by husbands, and in terms of contraception there is a dominant perception/narrative that women who use contraception are women that cheat on their husbands. PROMIS aims to address this by providing self-injective contraceptives that are undetected by men, as well as undertaking communications campaigns that target men and community leaders on the economic and health benefits of contraception (detailed further in Section 3.3.1). These campaigns are seen to have been successful at the community-level, as well as within the national DRC government. However, reversing dominant narratives against contraception across DRC remains an issue, and not one that PROMIS can address/be responsible for alone: *"We are not going to be able to change centuries of social structures."* – Fund-level stakeholder.

Additionally, PROMIS stakeholders identified how western country-led perceptions of female empowerment do not always translate to contexts in beneficiary countries, reflecting a level of resistance to externally imposed/donor-demanded changes. For example, one stakeholder noted that the idea of individual autonomy as the 'ultimate aim' is a Western notion, and one that is not shared in Congo Basin countries. This is because so much of the social support in these countries relies upon community networks, and that being your own person and acting independently is not necessarily a good thing. This was exemplified by a stakeholder who noted: *"A woman in the DRC who's independent and autonomous can also be a woman who's abandoned."* – Project Stakeholder.

Other CAFI-funded projects that did not have strategies focussed on addressing or responding to underlying gender-unequal norms reflected limited gender results. In a similar way to PIREDD Kwilu, PIREDD Mongala struggled to achieve its targets in terms of female representation across all its activities. Project

³¹ PIREDD Kwilu. (2025a). 2024 Rapport Annuel.



stakeholders felt as though they did not have the timeline and resources to adopt appropriate gender strategies. As a result, the latest annual report showed that the programme had a marginal impact on the social roles assigned to men and women in daily life, with women still disadvantaged in terms of the allocation of domestic and extra-domestic work as well as family responsibilities.³²

Stakeholders pointed to issues with how previous payments for environmental services (PES) strategies within PIREDDs had led to conflicts within communities and families (which works against GEDSI, in terms of driving exclusion and potentially leading to inequality). Under PIREDDs, project staff gave out cash to community members for protecting/enhancing forested areas. However, one interviewee noted that they often needed the support of the army when doing so, such were the tensions between those receiving cash and those not. Additionally, multiple stakeholders identified challenges in PES systems generally, where men end up controlling physical PES payments, even where women were responsible for the environmental service, due to patriarchal norms. CAFI is piloting a new PES strategy where cash is transferred digitally, partly to negate such issues (See Section 3.4).

3.4 Are there opportunities to support GESI contributions/outcomes within CAFI operations and/or specific projects?

It was widely recognised that achieving GEDSI outcomes beyond realising proportions of participant/beneficiaries who are women included in activities requires more targeted action. Stakeholders reported wanting to see projects thinking about the specific needs of women in a specific society and how they can be addressed. For instance, women in rural areas have different needs than those in peri-urban areas, whilst women are subject to different laws and customs across DRC, where customary laws settle 75% of disputes.³³ Stakeholders suggested that projects should engage communities openly with these questions rather than going in and saying, “we know you have this problem and we have this solution”.

The needs of other social groups should also be considered alongside those of women. Beyond occasionally disaggregating indicators by youth, GEDSI approaches among sampled projects, and overall, according to fund-level stakeholders, are focussed primarily on gender as noted elsewhere. Integration of more disability- and youth- friendly approaches to interventions should be proactively considered, with many stakeholders recognising this, particularly given DRC’s young population (the median age is 15.8 years old³⁴). Some project-level stakeholders admitted they had not thought of such considerations prior to our interviews but were interested to do more if resources allowed which, as noted in 3.4.2, is an indication of the degree to which GEDSI has been considered up front across certain projects. Additionally, the needs of Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable social groups need to be identified and addressed. CAFI used to have a specific intervention focussed on Indigenous Peoples which aimed to increase Indigenous Peoples’ participation in REDD+ policies and activities in the DRC, and to enable them to better benefit from the REDD+ mechanism, but this ended in 2023 and has yet to be replaced by a similar programme.³⁵

There are opportunities to embed GEDSI contributions within CAFI’s updated PES work. As identified in Section 3.3.3, previous PES projects exacerbated conflict within communities as PIREDDs provided cash

³² PIREDD Mongala. (2025). Rapport Annuel 2024.

³³ Zongwe, D. P., Butedi, F. and Clément, P. M. (2025). Overview of the Legal System of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Research. NYU Law GlobalLex. https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/democratic_republic_congo1.html (Accessed 08/12/25)

³⁴ Worldometer. (2025). DR Congo Population. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-population/> (Accessed 17/11/2025)

³⁵ Projet d'appui aux communautés dépendantes des Forêts. <https://peuplesautochtones.cd/> (Accessed 24/11/2025)



physically to participants. CAFI's new PES approach aims to transfer payments digitally to avoid these issues.³⁶ Furthermore, beneficiaries will be paid a premium if they are women or an Indigenous Person according to fund-level stakeholders. The idea is that this will put a value on women and Indigenous People's achievements which could change dynamics around control of resources according to some interviewees. Other interviewees are more cautious and believe men will still take control over digital accounts, and/or the premium paid to women and Indigenous Peoples may drive conflict as men will ask why they are not getting paid as much as others. However, many stakeholders recognised that the CAFI team were well aware of these issues and hoped they will be addressing them, including through robust risk assessments (which will be important to continue revisiting throughout implementation, as well as during the design). The CAFI Secretariat confirmed that gender risks of the PES approach are being thoroughly considered, but the approach is in its pilot stages and its development continues, so evidence is to be seen of its implementation in practice.

Stakeholders also identified that GEDSI considerations should apply to the selection of IPs, not just beneficiaries. Fund-level stakeholders identified how the CAFI is now open to funding national NGOs for the first time. There is an opportunity to favour organisations led by women, Indigenous People and other vulnerable groups. However, this needs to be balanced with donor concerns of how money is used. Passing the UN accreditation process should negate such concerns, but the challenge will remain in ensuring that IPs deliver against GEDSI commitments in implementation.

Stakeholders also noted that there are opportunities for CAFI and FONAREDD to support IPs in GEDSI integration. Project-level stakeholders noted their interest/desire for more opportunities for exchanges of experience, including on GEDSI, as well as lessons learned workshops and sharing of GEDSI materials/guidance.

3.4.1 What is needed to fulfil these opportunities?

There is a recognisable lack of capacity within the CAFI and FONAREDD Secretariats to substantially increase GEDSI capacity building internally and among IPs. Furthermore, the CAFI Secretariat get very little one-on-one time with projects to provide support.

Stakeholders identified how the Executive Board ultimately have the power to push both the CAFI and the FONAREDD Secretariats to do more, and increase the resources available to them. However, stakeholders point to limited understanding across the Executive Board of GEDSI across CAFI as a reason why the Board has not pushed for more resources in this area. Beyond the UN REDD Gender Marker, the main source of information is the CAFI Annual Report, where there are small case studies and interviews with project beneficiaries including women, but these are infrequent and lack detail. As a result, Executive Board members are somewhat aware that women are participating in projects like improved cookstoves, FP and PIREDD cookstove and charcoal projects but gendered implications are not being reported to the point of being able to determine GEDSI outcomes.

"I think there's definitely a potential for a bit more data as well, because we know that there are positive implications for a lot of the work that we're doing, but that's not being communicated or quantified necessarily." – Fund-level stakeholder

³⁶ There is broader evidence on how cash transfers can be done in a gender-sensitive way, such as conducting gender-sensitive context assessments beforehand, targeting specific groups of women, using clear messaging/awareness campaigns in the broader affected communities, and combining cash transfers within village savings and loans associations. See <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Discussion-paper-Effect-of-cash-based-interventions-on-gender-outcomes-en.pdf> and https://www.calpnetwork.org/gf-uploads/2025/10/ICI_How-gender-equality-and-financial-inclusion-shape-the-impacts-of-cash-transfers_Summary-report_Oct-2025.pdf



3.4.2 How could supporting GEDSI contribute to CAFI outcomes?

In particular, stakeholders from PROMIS articulated how supporting GEDSI through its work contributes to the effectiveness of CAFI's overall outcomes. This may be in part due to the project's proponents having had to justify its position in the CAFI portfolio to multiple ministers in the DRC who see CAFI as primarily a programme tackling deforestation. Project stakeholders reflected how FP and contraceptive use is critical to maternal health and allows young women a greater opportunity to finish education and enter the workforce. Furthermore, a secondary consequence of reduced fertility and poverty rates is a reduced pressure on forest resources, critical in the Congo Basin where deforestation is driven by smallholders rather than industrial agriculture.³⁷ As such, PROMIS stakeholders are clear on how the project supports CAFI's goals of tackling deforestation and poverty.

"You cannot have sustainable rural development without family planning... Contraception is one of the greatest and most effective poverty tools we have in our arsenal." – Project-level stakeholder

Beyond PROMIS, there is limited explicit understanding of how supporting GEDSI can support broader CAFI outcomes at the project-level. Some fund-level stakeholders identified how supporting women is critical to ensuring the health of the Congo Basin, given that women make up half the population and are involved in forest activities and agriculture, are in charge of the cooking, and are responsible for childcare and a lot of FP. However, such reflections were not widely considered among project-level interviewees. Some had not thought about connections between GEDSI and project outcomes before, whilst others had but only briefly and/or limited to considerations of women's importance in the agricultural workforce – there was very little consideration of how supporting other social groups like youth and Indigenous Peoples would contribute to project outcomes. These interviewees stated that they appreciated our interview questions in this area as it helped them to consider why GEDSI should be integrated comprehensively.

4.0 Key Learnings and Recommendations

Evidence reviewed for this case study has highlighted a number of the key learnings which are pertinent for FCDO, the Executive Board, and the CAFI Secretariat (FONAREDD). These include:

- ▶ GEDSI integration in CAFI appears to be mostly regarded as including people in activities, with reporting limited to measuring the percentage of participants/beneficiaries who are women (sometimes youth). Though some projects identify the specific needs of other marginalised social groups and design activities to address them, this occurs inconsistently. Further, there is limited explicit understanding of how supporting GEDSI can support broader CAFI outcomes at the project-level, but this is also reflected at the fund/Executive Board level to some extent.
- ▶ Currently, GEDSI outcomes are limited by CAFI's requirements of projects to integrate GEDSI in their programming and reporting. Currently, requirements for gender plans and monitoring are seen as box-ticking exercises and the level of ambition for gender responsiveness across CAFI projects is set by the Executive Board and based on the Gender Marker assessments.
- ▶ Limitations in GEDSI outcome reporting means Executive Board members have varying degrees of understanding of how GEDSI is integrated across the portfolio. Further, the line of sight and level of

³⁷ CAFI. (2025a). 2024 CAFI Annual Report.



accountability on GEDSI integration within projects is restricted, based on existing accreditation/grant selection processes, grant agreements, and reporting requirements.

- ▶ Use of the UN REDD Gender Marker provides a 'point in time' assessment of gender integration across projects, it is limitedly used as a project management/accountability tool or to guide implementation (with little evidence that assessment information is fed back to project delivery teams). Further, whilst the UN REDD Gender Marker is used by the Executive Board to set an annual 'target' on the proportion of projects across the portfolio that score higher, it does not track actual GEDSI outcomes and does not inform decisions.
- ▶ There is limited scope within existing agreements and with available capacity across the CAFI secretariat to hold projects that have low Gender Marker scores or inadequate gender plans to account. Whilst a gender target is set across the fund, this is based on the Gender Assessment scores, but this is applied at the point projects are already funded.
- ▶ Scoring below a certain level does not carry any implications/there is limited pressure placed on 'under-performing' projects (GEDSI-wise) to improve. Whilst the CAFI Secretariat, and the MEL team specifically have limited capacity to provide more targeted support on a one-on-one basis to projects. At the project-level, capacity to integrate GEDSI is mixed.

Drawing from evidence reviewed for this case study and the key learnings, a number of recommendations provide consideration for better reflecting on/integrating GEDSI within the CAFI portfolio:

1. **Driven by the Executive Board, the CAFI Secretariat (and FONAREDD in DRC) should encourage projects to identify the needs of different social groups (not just women, but Indigenous Peoples, peoples with disabilities, youth, and others) from calls for proposals and project design, throughout implementation.** Broader considerations of the needs of different social groups are critical in addressing deforestation e.g., Indigenous Peoples' rights to access and own land. This could be supported through further guidance on GEDSI/what it means across CAFI, as well as aligning accreditation and project review processes at selection stage to consider broader GEDSI issues.
2. **Relatedly, and again directed by the Executive Board, the CAFI Secretariat and FONAREDD should review GEDSI plans in more detail as part of project selection (see recommendation 3), and review progress against these plans throughout implementation.** For example, the UN REDD Gender Marker could be used as a tool at project 'start' to identify gaps that could/should then be tracked as projects move into delivery and in a more proactive way to guide decision-making/management of projects against GEDSI commitments. As part of this, projects should be encouraged to think about GEDSI-specific indicators moving beyond 'reach' to track the benefits, and whether/how different groups have been empowered as a result of activities e.g., numbers of women/Indigenous Peoples with land titles, indications of changed attitudes related to forestry management etc.³⁸ In addition, projects should be more systematically encouraged/required to provide qualitative evidence to contextualise quantitative indicators (see also recommendation 5).
3. Similarly, there is need for greater incentivisation around and accountability on GEDSI integration, and more proactive management to ensure projects uphold 'minimum' expectations on GEDSI. **The Executive Board should be more explicit about the degree to which GEDSI integration influences funding allocations/selection both in the first place as well as ongoing** (noting that some projects falling within the broader scope/mandate of CAFI's outcomes will have a more limited / discrete GEDSI contribution). With changes making direct funding to NGOs possible, CAFI has the opportunity to fund in-country NGOs led by

³⁸ Also see <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/b3640f67-6ed4-4040-b4af-93672774d955> - this document has a useful framework and some specific indicators that FCDO/CAFI might find useful.

women, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups who have contextual understanding and expertise, critical to aligning project activities with local needs.

4. **Empowered by the Executive Board, the CAFI Secretariat can better hold ‘low-GEDSI scoring’ projects to account by agreeing/establishing expectations within projects more explicitly at their outset and, importantly, determining what it means if projects fall short of these** (without needing to alter ToRs between CAFI and projects, noted as difficult to do ‘ad hoc’ by fund-level interviewees). As noted in recommendation 2, this could be done, e.g., by using the UN REDD Gender Marker, and incorporating GEDSI considerations into upfront assessment of projects. However, there are associated capacity/resourcing considerations to operationalise this, see recommendation 5.
5. **Nuanced qualitative ‘success stories’ could be encouraged to be produced consistently by IPs in their reporting, to showcase best practice in CAFI annual reports and Gender Assessments. The CAFI Secretariat could push IPs to think about how such success stories link to projects being able to achieve their broader outcomes.** This would improve project- and fund-level comprehension on how supporting GEDSI is not just good in of itself, but important in projects’ overall success. Practically, this could include supporting IPs to develop ‘stories of change’ through examples, discussions as part of reporting cycles, and considering knowledge exchange opportunities between partners. Better and more consistent reporting and assessment from the point of selection, as outlined above, would improve the Executive Board’s understanding of potential to contribute/actual contribution to GEDSI outcomes across projects.
6. **There is need to reflect what any increased ambition on GEDSI integration translates to in practice in terms of capacity/resources required to be more proactively supporting projects. A clear commitment across the Executive Board to GEDSI (as pointed to in recommendation 3) should also reflect in greater GEDSI resourcing at the Secretariat-level to adequately review and support projects’ GEDSI integration.**



Annex 1: Original ToR: Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion in the Central African Forest Initiative: Midline Evaluation Phase 2 Case Study Summary Proposal

Implementing Partners to be targeted: Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI)

Proposed theme of the Case Study: The ARCAN Midline Phase 2 Case Study will look closely at the extent to which Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) have been integrated into the Central African Forest Initiative's (CAFI) operations and delivery, with an emphasis (where feasible) to exploring effectiveness.

Context for the Case Study: CAFI aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation and reduce poverty across six Central African countries³⁹. Mechanisms of delivery include national reforms (policy influencing), rural development projects, governance/coordination, and monitoring, systems, research. There are eight pillars guiding action covering **direct drivers of deforestation** (agriculture, wood energy, forestry, and infrastructure/mining) and **indirect drivers of deforestation/degradation** (land use planning, secure land tenure, governance, and demography). The 2024 CAFI Annual Review notes: “*mainstreaming gender equality into CAFI programming is part of a human rights-based approach to development*”, indicating that gender equality is prioritised through accrediting implementing organisations, at project approval/mid-term evaluation stages, assessing gender annually/reporting the outcomes, and setting annual gender targets. The emphasis on gender equality in CAFI is important given that marginalised groups are often most adversely affected by deforestation/degradation but do not benefit equally from efforts to tackle deforestation/degradation (ARCAN Phase 1 report, 2025).

CAFI projects are assessed annually using the UN-REDD Gender Marker on a score from gender blind, to gender sensitive, to gender responsive and against four criteria (context, implementation, monitoring/evaluation, budget/expertise). Gender Assessments have been undertaken since 2020.

Despite CAFI's stated commitment to gender equality, understanding how ambitions translate into action and what outcomes / meaningful change projects are/can contribute to in terms of GEDSI requires a deeper review.⁴⁰ This is an important focus for FCDO both within the context of ARCAN (and the ARCAN programme requirement for interventions to reach, deliver for, and benefit marginalised populations, building their resilience) as well as in terms of FCDO's wider commitments for ODA to support gender equality. Further delivering a GESI review to understand whether the approach is ‘fit for purpose’ (i.e., delivering benefits for the most marginalised) during the UK's Presidency of the CAFI Secretariat (anticipated to run to spring 2026) is an important commitment and it is understood that the Executive Board would welcome this assessment.

Objectives of the Case Study: The Case Study will serve two purposes:

- 1) **To provide a progress update** of where/how GEDSI has been integrated into CAFI operations and reflected in project activities, identify where there are gaps for GEDSI integration, and point to opportunities for strengthening CAFI's GEDSI efforts to support GEDSI-responsive/sensitive projects.

³⁹ Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo.

⁴⁰ A review of CAFI's work to integrate gender into their operations and implementation was planned to be undertaken by the ARCAN MEL Unit in 2023/2024 but postponed due to other reviews on a similar timeline.

- 2) **To contribute evidence towards the ARCAN MEL Unit's Midline Evaluation** being conducted between March and September 2025. Specifically, the Case Study will contribute to Evaluation Questions (EQs) on Relevance (EQ1), Effectiveness (EQ2), and Impact (EQ3), focusing on transformational change (EQ4), with a view to supporting improvements during the portfolio's lifetime. This will build on assessment of GESI undertaken during Phase 1 of the Midline.

There is complementarity between the two objectives. However, the framing of outputs may be different to respond to Objective 1, as opposed to Objective 2. This will be considered during discussions with FCDO and the CAFI Executive Board as the Case Study is undertaken and how outputs are presented.

Further, the draft terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Review of CAFI (currently being commissioned) have gender equality as a cross-cutting focus, but mainly from the perspective of understanding whether/how gender and social inclusion are considered in the fund management and design/implementation/monitoring of projects, rather than unpacking the extent to which this is supporting GESDI contributions/opportunities to do so. Nevertheless, depending on the timing of any Mid-Term Review activities, it will be important to ensure there is coordination with the team undertaking that assessment (particularly when it comes to stakeholder engagement). The ARCAN GESDI Case Study team would expect to coordinate with FCDO (and CAFI) in order to align activities with the Mid-Term Review team's activities, if/as relevant.

Review period: The Case Study will focus on the period since 2022 (marking the inception of ARCAN, as well as the publication of gender ambitions at the CAFI fund level). However, gender assessments back to 2020 may be reviewed to trace whether/how the approach has changed/to what effect.

Time frame for conducting the Case Study: mid-June-September 2025

Potential evaluative research questions. FCDO prepared an outline for the GESI Case Study of CAFI which provides an indication of the type of questions the review should answer in order to inform recommendations / actions for the CAFI Executive Board and the CAFI Secretariat (responding to Objective 1 above). In addition, and responding to Objective 2, a set of evaluative questions will guide the Case Study. Questions will be further developed as the Case Study gets under way and in discussion with FCDO/CAFI. However, some indicative framing questions include:

5. How/to what extent is GESDI mainstreamed across CAFI operations and delivery/projects
 - a. What is the current approach to GESDI in CAFI operations, policy dialogue/influencing, and projects? (How are organisations accredited? Is the process/approach being implemented consistently? How is the UN-REDD Gender Marker being applied (when, how, who) and used to inform implementation?
 - b. Who is responsible for GESDI mainstreaming across (i) CAFI operations (e.g., CAFI Secretariat, Executive Board, MPTF-O), and (ii) in CAFI activities/projects (e.g., national entities (e.g., FONAREDD), implementing partners) and in what ways?
6. What GESDI outcomes is CAFI intended to contribute towards? **(EQ 1)**
 - a. How relevant/aligned are these to GESDI needs (national and community-level) and how are needs being determined? Who is not being considered/reached?
 - b. How are outcomes being monitored/tracked and are approaches appropriate? Are approaches demonstrating the contribution to GESDI meaningfully (i.e., moving beyond numbers reached)? How is GESDI assessed annually by CAFI/projects, and how are gender targets set?
7. 3. How effective is the current approach to GESDI across CAFI? **(EQs 2, 3, and 4)**
 - a. Are there examples of 'promising practices' / contributions to GESDI outcomes across operations, and projects?
 - b. Has learning from Gender Assessments been used to inform programming/how?

- c. Are there examples of negative contributions? Or implementing partners that are not supported based on GESI considerations? Is support provided to gender blind projects?
8. Are there opportunities to support GESI contributions/outcomes (within CAFI operations and/or specific projects)?
 - a. What is needed (including, e.g., capacity training) and for who to fulfil these opportunities?
 - b. How could supporting GEDSI contribute to CAFI outcomes?

Outline of Proposed Approach. To respond to the objectives and questions, a staged approach will be taken that combines **document review** with a series of **stakeholder interviews**. Evidence from documents and stakeholder interviews will be used to inform both the fund-level review (i.e., of CAFI operations/policies for GEDSI integration) and portfolio/project level review (i.e., of how policies translate into practical action and the contributions towards GEDSI observed through projects and policy dialogue). Stakeholder engagement will be especially important for generating insights to respond to questions (and sub questions) 3 and 4 outlined above, as well as 1 and 2 (moving beyond the document review undertaken already as part of the ARCAN Midline Evaluation Phase I). Early engagement with FCDO to further discuss the Case Study approach will be essential.

- **High-level document review:** Initially, a high-level review of CAFI fund level documents will be undertaken to generate a list of questions / issues to discuss with the FCDO CAFI Advisors and (as appropriate) the CAFI Secretariat, as well as to detail additional documents required and begin to develop a list of projects (see below). Information from key documents will be extracted against the key Case Study questions (outlined above) and will form the basis for developing further lines of enquiry for project level review and interviews.
 - Documents will include the CAFI M&E Framework, CAFI Fund Terms of Reference, Annual Reviews (2021-2024 (when available)), the most recent Gender Assessment (2023, 2024 forthcoming?), CAFI Manual of Operations, CAFI Website Spotlight Examples linked to Annual Review; Gender overview on CAFI website and gender search results; governance/organisational documents; Letters of Intent; CAFI Legal Framework, and any relevant policies; Gender Mainstreaming and Analysis Evaluation of CAFI from 2020; Mid-term Evaluation of CAFI Fund 2020-2021.
 - In addition, guidelines on the UN-REDD Gender Marker will be reviewed.
- **Mapping of projects and gender assessment scores:** Following the broader document review and discussion with the FCDO CAFI Advisor (and CAFI Secretariat, as appropriate), the team will develop an approach to collate information on projects from Gender Assessments back to 2022 (including the most recent assessment from 2024, if this is available), cross-referencing this with GEDSI-relevant Spotlighted projects from Annual Reports (which may provide more detail of contribution to GEDSI than the Gender Assessment alone) and through a search of the website. The collation of assessments will organise projects by different criteria (e.g., country/geography, gender score/change in gender score between years, implementing partner, and thematic focus across the CAFI pillars). The mapping will be insightful for demonstrating the different ways gender/inclusion are/are not incorporated into CAFI projects. For example, in 2023, 25 projects were assessed – with 12 of these in DRC, 5 in Gabon, 4 in Republic of Congo, and 4 regionally. Of the 23 assessed, 8 were gender responsive, 17 were gender sensitive (but with different criteria scores), and 0 were gender blind. Two projects had ‘improved’ their gender score between years (from gender sensitive to gender responsive).
- **Sampling of projects for further review:** The mapping will also be used to select a sub-set of projects for further review (as it will not be possible to review all projects in greater detail, given the number/number of documents per project). Selection will be purposive and across projects with greater integration of/contribution to gender and ideally broader considerations of inclusion (i.e., those likely to have scored

‘gender responsive’/’) as well as those where opportunities to integrate gender may have been missed or not maximised (low scoring gender sensitive, or gender blind). In addition, including projects that have improved between years will be interesting to understand how any improvement came about (e.g., whether this was based on feedback/support from CAFI). Ideally, projects will reflect the different CAFI pillars and countries to the extent feasible (although a greater proportion will be in DRC due to the level of funding). **We anticipate selecting a total of 9-14 projects across geographies for deeper review (to include stakeholder interviews).** We would discuss this selection with FCDO and seek engagement with CAFI to discuss relevance of selected projects at a check-in point during the Case Study.

- **Project level document review:** For the sub-set of selected projects, we will collate relevant documents for review, including e.g., project design documents/proposals/applications to CAFI fund, annual Reports to CAFI / FONAREDD, Results Frameworks for projects, Spotlight Examples/write-ups, public descriptions of project activities, and project evaluations where available. It is anticipated that the majority of these documents will be in French. Review of projects will be with a view to understanding how GEDSI has been integrated and whether there is evidence of contribution to outcomes. The application of the UN-REDD marker/assessment through CAFI will be reviewed against available evidence. Further, issues to explore through targeted interviews will also be identified. Evidence will be extracted against guiding questions for each project. We will require inputs from FCDO and the CAFI Secretariat to ensure we have full documentation available quickly.
- **Stakeholder consultations:** As noted, stakeholder interviews will be an important/vital evidence source for the Case Study. Ideally a selection of stakeholders from the below stakeholder groups will be reached, with interviews being undertaken both remotely and in person (by a regionally based consultant) / and in French as required. Interviews will be semi-structured – with guides and areas of exploration/inquiry developed for different stakeholder groups, drawing from the overarching Case Study questions, and the portfolio level document review/early discussions with FCDO/the CAFI Secretariat, as well as project level document review and gender assessment mapping. The GEDSI lead will develop the guide and brief the regional consultant on using the guide via Teams meetings.
- The Case Study team will seek input from FCDO CAFI Advisors to elaborate a stakeholder list at an early stage and to support outreach/coordination of interviews. The implementing organisations for the selected projects will be interviewed and be requested to facilitate engagement with project delivery teams for further interviews.
 - **Fund level:**
 - **FCDO** – Regional Advisor for CAFI, MEL staff
 - **Executive Board members** (e.g., Norway), and observers
 - **CAFI Secretariat staff** (e.g., Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists, Programme Specialists, Specialist on Gender, Technical Specialists)
 - *Note: speaking to the staff/individuals who undertake the gender assessment will be important early on.*
 - **National entities/government bodies** participating in Steering Committees (e.g., FONAREDD, Permanent Secretariat of the Congo-CAFI partnership)
 - **Implementing organisations** (covering UN/World Bank; Bilateral organisations; NGOs, e.g., One Acre Fund, Farm Africa, IUCN, UNCDF, UNOPS, FAO).
 - **Project-level:**
 - **Implementing organisations for selected projects**
 - **Project delivery teams for selected projects** (NGOs, including Indigenous People’s Groups)

- **Data Analysis and Synthesis:** As noted, evidence from documents will be extracted against Case Study questions. This will be combined with evidence from interviews (which will be collated and relevant information extracted). The team will check in regularly throughout the process to identify themes, and/or gaps, as well as to highlight emerging insights/issues to explore. A report format responding to the objectives for FCDO/the CAFI Executive Board as well as the ARCAN Midline Evaluation requirements will be developed. It is anticipated that mini case studies (1-2 pages) for the selected projects will be an important output from the Overall Case Study. A summary of anticipated outputs is presented below (aligning to the FCDO Case Study overview shared).

Outputs: Indicative outputs are summarised below.

1. Written report (approx. 15-20 pages) summarising findings, recommendations, and actions for Executive Board and CAFI Secretariat (with mini write-ups of selected projects)
2. Adapted summary and specific FCDO recommendations (to feed into ARCAN Midline Evaluation)
3. Presentation of methods and findings to CAFI Executive Board and (combined/separately tbc) FCDO MEL Unit
4. Follow-up discussions (tbc) to support uptake / integration of recommendations



Annex 2: ARCAN Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Questions and OECD-DAC Criteria	Criteria and supporting questions	Evaluation Activity/ MEL Product/Data Source	Analysis
Relevance To what extent are ARCAN programmes' delivery country-led (i.e., responding to local community and national priorities) and strengthening national or community leadership, capacity, and commitment (in what ways, for whom – with specific focus on the most vulnerable including women/girls and other excluded groups - and in what contexts)? [EQ3]	ARCAN delivery is informed by and responds to local community and national needs, policies and priorities; including those specific to gender and social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups Programme delivery/design is sensitive and responsive to context, including: - ARCAN delivered in ways that is informed by and responds to (local and national) gendered needs and priorities, recognising differential starting points - ARCAN implementation builds and strengthens national/ community leadership, capacity and commitment - ARCAN adapts to changing needs and contexts - ARCAN implemented in ways that reflect needs of different social groups (most vulnerable including women/girls and other excluded groups), recognising different starting points on the basis of, inter alia, age, disability, indigeneity	Evaluation Midline/ Endline: Phase 1 - Document analysis building on programme documents, annual reports etc, external evaluations; context-specific literature - Select KIIs with FCDO (remote) Phase 2 - Continued document analysis - Select KIIs and FGDs (remote and in-country) - Interviews with FCDO/ IPs (process evaluation style questions) - Interviews with key external stakeholders [NB relevance refers to beneficiary and stakeholder needs, relevance to context, relevance to UK govt priorities]	Thematic Analysis Context Analysis Contribution Analysis
Efficiency 1. Are the ARCAN portfolio and programmes using resources efficiently and effectively to achieve their goals? [New overarching] <i>Key questions to help answer this EQ:</i> What are the opportunities to enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness across the ARCAN portfolio? (midline) [EQ8] What key lessons (positive and negative) have been learned from ARCAN's experience with regards to VfM that can inform the design and implementation of future portfolio programmes? (endline) [EQ10]	- How do the returns on investment compare to the ones proposed in the Business Case (ARCAN)? For programmes: design/ economic appraisal? - To what extent, and how, have resources been efficiently allocated between work streams? - How do the different cost effectiveness data from different pillars/ programmes compare? - What are the processes of compiling VfM data in the pillars/ programmes? - Are there adaptive management examples that drive VfM in programmes? - For those IPs with existing VfM framework/ reporting: how does VfM fit in the wider delivery frameworks (s)? - What kind of mechanisms exist in programmes to control costs and/ or maximise benefits? To what extent is there commitment to consideration of equity goals alongside effectiveness and equity, and what trade-offs are made?	Evaluation Midline/Endline: - Financial reporting from IPs - KIIs: Interviews with IPs, FCDO (remote and in-country) Evaluation: Portfolio VFM Deep Dive (Y2) Monitoring: Programme specific VFM case study; Building on Results Framework/ ARCAN VfM framework/ AR	Cost effectiveness data analysis (VfM indicators, results, other CE study findings from pillars, etc) Analysis of VfM case study findings Cost efficiency analysis Qualitative assessment on lessons learned



Effectiveness

2. How and to what extent does ARCAN contribute to strengthening people's resilience, improving management of natural resources, and increasing access to renewable energy, for the most vulnerable to climate change? For whom – with specific focus on the most vulnerable including women/girls and other excluded groups -and in what contexts? [EQ2]

Key questions to help answer this EQ, plus potential deep dive focus (ii-iv)– selecting three deep dives.

- i. How effective was the ARCAN portfolio at mobilising additional and or more effective climate- and nature-related investment, for whom, and in what contexts? (All IPs except FFF)
- ii. How, and to what extent, has the ARCAN portfolio contributed to the improved management of natural resources (particularly sustainable land management), for whom, and in what contexts? (CAFI, FFF)
- iii. How, and to what extent, has the ARCAN portfolio contributed to strengthened resilience of populations to climate shocks, for whom and in what contexts? (WISER, CIWA, FFF, AAAP)
- iv. How, and to what extent, has the ARCAN portfolio facilitated greater access to clean energy, for whom, and in what contexts? (SRMI, SEFA)

- Resource allocation processes/ mechanisms, including the extent to which equity is represented
- Cost effectiveness indicators from ARCAN VfM Framework

Delivery of programmes under thematic pillars – relevant outcomes and Programme ICF KPI results:

- Number of people supported to better adapt to the effects of climate change (ICF KPI 1)
- Number of people with improved access to clean energy (ICF KPI 2)
- Number of people (disaggregated by key GESI groups) whose resilience has been improved (ICF KPI 4)
- Volume of emissions reductions avoided/supported by ICF TA (ICF TA KPI 5)
- Finance mobilised (£) for climate change purposes (ICF KPI 11 & 12)
- Area under sustainable land management practices (ICF KPI 17)

Evidence for pathways to outcomes in the theory of change:

- Design and implementation of national and subnational plans, policies and strategies supported;
- Increase in no. of countries with regional, national, subnational (local) plans, policies, strategies, sectoral plans (energy, integration of climate, NRM etc)
- Innovation approaches embraced [e.g. ARCAN contribution to greater availability of innovative approaches and technologies to deliver positive impacts on poverty and the environment in sectors such as energy, natural resource management, agriculture, and environmental degradation]
- Capacity to access new and existing climate finance strengthened
- New investment mobilised for Climate (amount and extent, influence of ARCAN on new and existing funding)
- Improved natural resource management and protection including transboundary water
- Increased sustainable land management
- Improved availability and (capacity to) access and use of climate information

Evaluation Midline/Endline (sub-Q 3i):

Phase 1

1. Document analysis building on programme documents, annual reports etc, external evaluations; context-specific literature
2. Select KIIs with FCDO (remote)

Phase 2

3. Continued document analysis
4. Select KIIs and FGDs (remote and in-country case studies)
 - i) Interviews with FCDO/ IPs (**process evaluation style questions**)
 - ii) Interviews with key external stakeholders

Evaluation Deep Dives in order to confidently demonstrate what FCDO/ARCAN has achieved in relation to **OUTCOME 1** in the theory of change. Are the pathways to desired changing working or not? How, for whom and in what context? (**sub-Q 3ii-iv**)

Focus on socio-economic outcomes and impact: Who is expected to benefit? Has this been achieved? If so, how? If not, why not? What has been the contribution of ARCAN?

Contribute to the global evidence base on what works and what doesn't work in building adaptation and resilience to CC.

Suggested Deep Dives: 1) Energy; 2) Resilience; 3) Sustainable land management.

1. **Document analysis:** programme documents, annual reports etc, external evaluations; context-specific literature

2. In-country and remote data collection, primary and secondary data:

KIIs and FGDs (in-country and remote)

- a) Interviews with FCDO/ IPs
- b) Interviews with key external stakeholders (at all institutional levels)

Case Study approaches to focus on evidence gaps in the ToC through deep dives (thematic and contribution analysis)

Analysis of Monitoring data

Analysis of independent evaluations of ARCAN programmes

Meta-analysis and Synthesis (endline)



- Use of climate data to inform investment decisions, programme focus etc
- Improved resilience capacities (including climate adaptation)
- Improved availability and access to clean energy

For all areas: Effectiveness-related outcomes reflect gender equality and social inclusion

Unintended results and alternative pathways

Enablers and barriers ('mechanisms' of change), including: Political economy factors (incentives, interests, beliefs, power of partners and external actors); contextual factors (economic, social, political will and commitment; funding; conflict risk etc)

'For whom?': ARCAN portfolio contributes to gender equality and social inclusion

Review and synthesis of upcoming IP

independent evaluations: (2023: CAFI, WISER, 2024: SEFA – assume available for midline. 2024: CIWA – assume available for endline. Annual: AAAP)

Endline Synthesis across deep dives and other primary and secondary data sources/evidence

Building on Monitoring data. The monitoring overarching question is '*to what extent are IPs delivering against programme outputs and outcomes*'. This contributes towards answering a foundational evaluative question: are the conditions in place for activities to lead to desired/intended outcomes for those expected to benefit?

1. IP Monitoring Data/ Results Framework outcome data
2. Monitoring visits reports: progress report of project level implementation against IP ToC and project specific stories of change on IP progress (co-developed with IPs)
3. Programme-specific GESI and VfM case studies (in collaboration with IP)

Evaluation Midline/Endline:

Phase 1

1. Document analysis building on programme documents, annual reports etc, external evaluations; context-specific literature
2. Select KIIs with FCDO (remote)

Phase 2

3. Continued document analysis
4. Select KIIs and FGDs (remote and in-country)
 - i) Interviews with FCDO/ IPs (**process evaluation style questions**)
 - ii) Interviews with key external stakeholders

Building on and validating Monitoring Data: M team working with IPs to track progress against key indicators including KPI15, and develop project-specific stories of change on IP progress (co-developed with IPs)

Impact

3. How, and to what extent have the ARCAN portfolio and programmes catalysed transformational change (for whom – with specific focus on the most vulnerable including women/girls and other excluded groups - and in what contexts)? (endline)

Key questions to help answer this EQ:

- i. **How and to what extent are ARCAN projects achieving (or where results not yet evident due to timeframes) likely to achieve transformational change? [KPI15]**
- ii. **Sustainability: How effectively do ARCAN programmes support sustainability of outcomes and impacts?**

4.i KPI15 Scorecard: likelihood of transformational change. Drivers, Mechanisms, Barriers/Enablers:

- Political will and local ownership: need for the change is agreed locally and the process is locally owned and inclusive.
- Capacity and capability can be equitably increased: countries and communities have the capacities and capabilities necessary to bring about the change;
- Innovation: innovative technologies are equitably piloted, with the potential to demonstrate new ways of doing things, which could lead to wider and sustained change;
- Evidence of effectiveness is shared: approaches which have proved successful in one location are made widely available and lessons on their usefulness are credible and shared widely
- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: ARCAN programmes actively contribute to GESI by identifying and tackling barriers to gender inequality and social exclusion in formal institutions (e.g. policy) and informal institutions (practices), and working to transform power relations positively and support

KPI15 scorecard analysis

Thematic analysis of evaluation data

Contribution Analysis

Synthesis/ meta-analysis



collective action by marginalised people where appropriate.

- Leverage / create incentives for others to act: the costs of climate action are reduced to the point that acting on climate is a sensible decision for commercial firms, private individuals and governments. These cost reductions may need to be steep enough to overcome behavioural inertia;
- Replicable: good ideas piloted by the ICF are replicated by others in the same country and more widely;
- At scale: interventions (such as national, sectoral or regional programmes) that have sufficient reach to achieve institutional and policy reform, or drive down costs of technology deployment; ARCAN is tackling different levels of scale in concert.

Equitable; recognising the reality of gender inequality and social exclusion, and ensuring that use of the approach is equitable and contributes to gender equality and social inclusion

- Sustainable: change is likely to be sustained once ICF support ends.

4.ii ARCAN programmes' contribution to fostering (inclusive and equitable) enabling environment including:

- Capacities
- Ownership
- Political Will
- Resources/ budgetary commitments of relevant stakeholders

- Increased regional, national and local collaboration and partnerships due to ARCAN
- Key stakeholders draw from evidence and learning generated by the programme to support improvements in programming; examples of adaptive management based on programme-level learning. Learning shared formally and informally within and across IPs and outside of ARCAN. Drawing on learning from other programmes/the knowledge and experience of stakeholders at all levels
- Complementarities: ARCAN Activities, projects, or policy efforts build on the strengths and account for the limitations of each other.
- Synergy: The interaction of two or more ARCAN programmes such that the overall result is greater than the sum of its parts. Examples that

Evaluation Midline/Endline:

Phase 1

- Document analysis building on programme documents, annual reports etc, external evaluations; context-specific literature
- Select KIIs with FCDO (remote)

Phase 2

- Continued document analysis
- Select KIIs and FGDs (remote and in-country)
 - Interviews with FCDO/ IPs (**process evaluation style questions**)
 - Interviews with key external stakeholders

Thematic Analysis

Contribution Analysis

Coherence

- How and to what extent are ARCAN programmes contributing to complementarities, synergies, knowledge sharing and learning between within and beyond ARCAN, including through benefits from being more than the sum of their parts in the ARCAN portfolio? For whom – with specific focus on the most vulnerable including women/girls and other excluded groups – and in what contexts? [EQ6]



programmes deliver more outcomes and impacts than working in isolation including: e.g. reaching more people; mobilising more finance than targeted, or delivery greater analysis than planned (e.g. WISER adding value to CIWA)



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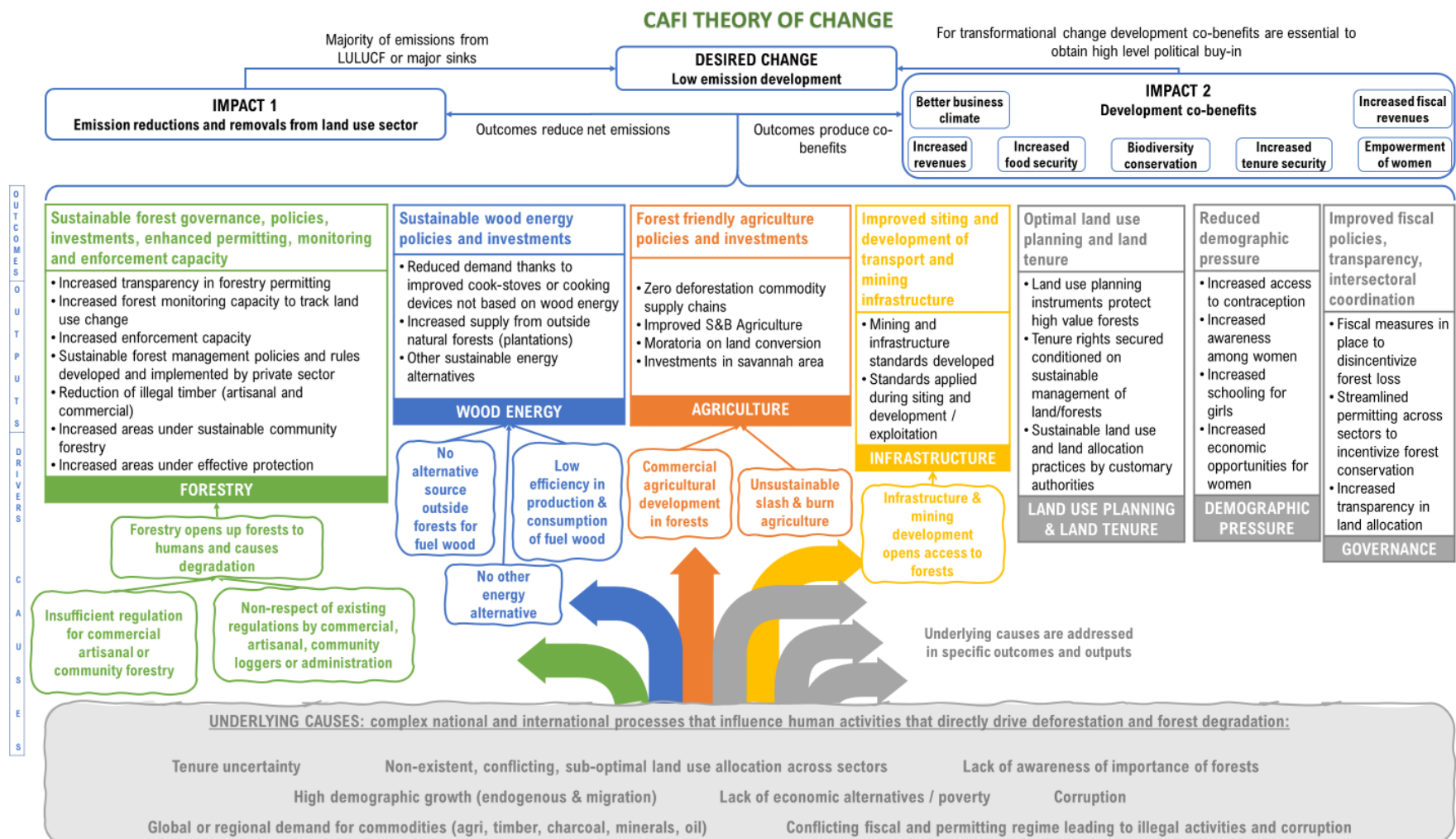
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Annex 4: CAFI Theory of Change





Annex 5: List of Interviewees

Table 3: Fund-level interviewees

Organisation	Number of interviewees
CAFI Secretariat	2
FCDO	6
FONAREDD	1
CAFI Executive Board (non-FCDO)	2
Total	10

Table 4: Project-level interviewees

Project	Number of interviewees
PROMIS	4
PIREDD Maniema	3
PIREDD Mongala	1
PIREDD Kwilu	3
SYNA-MNV	1
PIREDD Equateur	3
PROREP	4
Energie Durable	1
Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon	2
Total	22



Annex 6: Interview Topic Guides

CAFI GESI Case Study Interview Protocol – Fund Level (CAFI Secretariat, FCDO Advisors, Executive Board Members)

Purpose of the interview and consent

Who we are: We are part of a team undertaking a case study review of how / to what effect gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations have been integrated into CAFI's operations/delivery.

Objectives of the case study: This case study has been requested by FCDO as part of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for the Africa Regional Climate and Nature (ARCAN) Programme (through which funding is channelled to CAFI). GEDSI is an important focus under ARCAN (which aims to deliver for, and benefit, marginalised populations through building their resilience) and for FCDO more widely, given commitments that Overseas Development Assistance will support gender equality.

The case study is intended to provide a progress update on GEDSI within the context of CAFI's delivery, as well as contributing evidence for the midline evaluation of ARCAN (contributing to relevance, effectiveness and impact). We are keen to understand where/how GEDSI efforts can be strengthened to support GEDSI-responsive/sensitive projects that contribute to outcomes.

Who we're talking to: As part of this, we are keen to speak to CAFI Fund-level stakeholders (e.g., FCDO Advisors, Executive Board Members, CAFI Secretariat Staff) to learn more about:

- the approach to GEDSI integration
- contributions to GEDSI outcomes
- effectiveness of the current GEDSI approach, and
- opportunities for strengthening the GEDSI approach going forward.

We will also be speaking to a selected number of implementing partners related to selected projects, to understand how CAFI fund-level approaches to GEDSI are translating into GEDSI integration/outcomes at project level.

Use of information (data privacy/confidentiality): All information is confidential and will be anonymised in any write-up of the case study (which will be shared with FCDO). However, due to the number of fund-level stakeholder interviews we are undertaking and the specific roles/areas of focus of different stakeholder groups, there is a change your views may be recognisable. We will be careful in terms of attributability – but please also note now/after the interview if anything you have shared should not be used. We would like to record the interview to assist with note taking/analysis. All information shared will be stored and subsequently deleted in compliance with data protection legislation. Information will only be accessed by members of our MEL team.

Timeframe: Our case study is taking place from July 2025 over the course of a few months. The interview will last between 45-60 minutes.

Consent/recording consent:

- Before we start, do you have any questions? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Can you confirm that you consent to this interview and are happy to proceed? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Are you happy for me to record our discussion today? Yes ☐ No ☐

Background

1. Please can you briefly tell me about your role related to the management/delivery of CAFI?
2. Do you have any specific responsibility for GEDSI integration across CAFI? *Please explain.*

Note to interviewer: Adapt questions/framing based on specific stakeholder (e.g., CAFI can dig deeper into processes, with others more overarching perspectives)

Context on GESI Integration across CAFI

3. Can you describe the approach to integrating GEDSI in CAFI operations? What happens/when/by who? How is a human-rights based approach mainstreamed across CAFI?
 - a. *Prompt for:*
 - i. approach in guiding project delivery under CAFI
 - ii. approach in guiding policy dialogue/influencing
 - iii. approach in guiding CAFI-level policies and processes
 - b. **Follow-up for CAFI:** How are organisations accredited? (This is mentioned in your Annual Review, and we are curious what it means) How are gender targets set?
4. Can you explain how the UN-REDD Gender Marker is being applied in CAFI operations (when, by who, how)?
 - a. **Follow-up for CAFI:** Can you tell us more about the gender ambition for CAFI and how this was agreed?
 - b. **Follow-up:** How is the UN-REDD assessment used by CAFI delivery teams? Does it inform implementation/feedback AND/OR support to projects? Why/why not?
5. Can you tell us more about who is responsible/in what ways for GEDSI mainstreaming across CAFI operations?
 - a. **Follow-up:** What is the responsibility amongst the CAFI Secretariat? How are the Executive Board, and the MPTF-O involved?
6. Can you tell us more about who is responsible for GEDSI mainstreaming across CAFI projects/activities?
 - a. **Follow-up:** How do you engage with national entities and/or implementing partners on GEDSI issues?
 - b. **Follow-up:** What is FCDO's responsibility? Does FCDO share specific guidance?

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

7. What GEDSI outcomes is CAFI intended to contribute towards? Please explain.
 - a. **Follow-up:** How are these aligned to national/regional needs? How is need determined? Is anyone being missed, in your opinion?
 - b. **Follow-up:** How do you reflect on CAFI level GEDSI outcomes in projects funded through CAFI?
8. Can you explain how GEDSI outcomes are being monitored / tracked? Does this happen at a project/CAFI-wide level? How?
 - a. **Follow-up:** Do you think approaches to monitoring/tracking GEDSI are appropriate? Are they capturing contributions to GEDSI meaningfully? Please explain with examples.
 - b. **Follow-up:** How is GEDSI assessed annually by CAFI? How are gender targets set?

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

9. How effective do you think the current approach to GEDSI integration is across CAFI? What are the strengths and limitations? Can you explain with examples?
 - a. **Follow-up:** Do you think the 'right' things are being prioritised? Why/why not? What's missing?
10. Are there examples of 'promising practices' / contributions to GEDSI outcomes across operations and projects? Can you explain with examples (if possible, of specific contributions to outcomes)?
11. Are there examples of negative contributions to GEDSI (e.g., where projects are delivering unexpected negative consequences for marginalised populations)? Can you explain with examples (if possible, of specific negative contributions)?

12. Is learning from the Gender Assessments that are undertaken annually being used to inform programming? Why/how?
 - a. **Follow-up:** If Gender Assessments are not being used, what is the reason for this? Please explain.
13. What support does CAFI provide to projects to integrate GESI? In particular, if projects are assessed as gender blind, what does this mean in terms of CAFI support?

Future considerations

14. What are the opportunities to further support GESI Contributions/outcomes within CAFI Operations and/or projects?
 - a. **Follow-up:** What is needed to fulfil these opportunities (e.g., capacity building, resources)?
15. How do you think supporting GEDSI outcomes could contribute to CAFI's broader outcomes?
 - b. **Follow-up:** Is there interest/understanding of the potential contribution of supporting GEDSI outcomes to CAFI's work? Are there barriers/limitations? Please explain.

Closing

16. Do you have anything else you feel it's important we are aware of that you would like to share?

Resources/next steps

17. Is there any **documentation** you think we should have that we might not have access to?
18. Is there anyone else you think we should speak to who we might not have on our list already (note who we are talking to)?
19. We're continuing our interviews into early Autumn and will be preparing a case study for FCDO. It is anticipated this will be made available to CAFI/the Executive Board.

Thank you!



CAFI GESI Case Study Interview Protocol – IP and Project-level Stakeholders

Purpose of the interview and consent

Who we are: We are part of a team undertaking a case study review of how / to what effect gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations have been integrated into CAFI's operations/delivery.

Objectives of the case study: This case study has been requested by FCDO as part of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for the Africa Regional Climate and Nature (ARCAN) Programme (through which funding is channelled to CAFI). GEDSI is an important focus under ARCAN (which aims to deliver for, and benefit, marginalised populations through building their resilience) and for FCDO more widely, given commitments that Overseas Development Assistance will support gender equality.

The case study is intended to provide a progress update on GEDSI within the context of CAFI's delivery, as well as contributing evidence for the midline evaluation of ARCAN (contributing to relevance, effectiveness and impact). We are keen to understand where/how GEDSI efforts can be strengthened to support GEDSI-responsive/sensitive projects that contribute to outcomes.

Who we're talking to: As part of this, we are keen to speak to CAFI Fund-level stakeholders (e.g., FCDO Advisors, Executive Board Members, CAFI Secretariat Staff) as well as selection of implementing partners / project delivery teams to learn more about:

- the approach to GEDSI integration
- contributions to GEDSI outcomes
- effectiveness of the current GEDSI approach, and
- opportunities for strengthening the GEDSI approach going forward.

With selected project teams and implementing partners, we are interested to understand how CAFI fund-level approaches to GEDSI are translating into GEDSI integration/outcomes at project level.

Use of information (data privacy/confidentiality): All information is confidential and will be anonymised in any write-up of the case study (which will be shared with FCDO). However, due to the number of fund-level stakeholder interviews we are undertaking and the specific roles/areas of focus of different stakeholder groups, there is a change your views may be recognisable. We will be careful in terms of attributability – but please also note now/after the interview if anything you have shared should not be used. We would like to record the interview to assist with note taking/analysis. All information shared will be stored and subsequently deleted in compliance with data protection legislation. Information will only be accessed by members of our MEL team.

Timeframe: Our case study is taking place from July 2025 over the course of a few months. The interview will last between 45-60 minutes.

Consent/recording consent:

- Before we start, do you have any questions? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Can you confirm that you consent to this interview and are happy to proceed? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Are you happy for me to record our discussion today? Yes ☐ No ☐

Background

20. Please can you briefly tell me about your role related to [name of project]?

21. Do you have any specific responsibility for GEDSI integration on the project? *Please explain.*

Note to interviewer: Adapt questions/framing based on specific project context and any information previously reviewed based on documents (where feasible).

Context on GEDSI Integration across Project

1. Can you describe the approach to integrating GEDSI in your project? What happens/when/by who? Who is responsible/in what ways for GEDSI mainstreaming across your project?

- a. **Follow-up:** Was your organisation accredited by CAFI? Was a gender target set with CAFI for your project? How?
2. Do you think the [name of project] is aligned to the GEDSI needs/priorities of the communities where you work? How and how is this ensured?
 - a. **Follow-up:** What needs to be done to align to the needs/priorities of communities?
3. Are you familiar with how the UN-REDD Gender Marker is being applied in CAFI operations / to your project (when, by who, how)?
 - a. **Follow-up:** Do you receive the Gender Assessment outcome from CAFI? Do you receive any feedback or guidance based on the assessment to inform your implementation? Can you explain with details.
4. Can you tell us more about the type of guidance/support/feedback on GEDSI you receive from CAFI (if any)? Is it useful/what's needed? Why/why not?
 - a. **Follow-up:** What is the general level of understanding/awareness of GEDSI across [name of project/organisation]?

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

5. What GEDSI outcomes is [name of project] intended to contribute towards? Please explain.
 - c. **Follow-up:** How are these aligned to national/regional/community needs? How is need determined? Is anyone being missed, in your opinion?
 - d. **Follow-up:** How do you reflect on CAFI level GEDSI outcomes in your project? Is the expectation on how to do this clear? Why/why not?
6. Can you explain how GEDSI outcomes are being monitored / tracked in [name of project]?
 - a. **Follow-up:** Do you think approaches to monitoring/tracking GEDSI in [name of project] are appropriate? Are they capturing contributions to GEDSI meaningfully? Please explain with examples.
 - b. **Follow-up:** How is GEDSI in [name of project] assessed annually by CAFI? How are gender targets set?

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

7. How effective do you think the current approach to GEDSI integration is across within [name of project]? What are the strengths and limitations? Can you explain with examples?
 - b. **Follow-up:** Do you think the 'right' things are being prioritised? Why/why not? What's missing?
8. Are there examples of 'promising practices' / contributions to GEDSI outcomes from [name of project]? Can you explain with examples (if possible, of specific contributions to outcomes)?
9. Are there examples of negative contributions to GEDSI within [name of project] (e.g., where activities are delivering unexpected negative consequences for marginalised populations)? Can you explain with examples (if possible, of specific negative contributions)?
10. Is learning from the Gender Assessments that are undertaken annually used to inform programming on [name of project]? Why/how?
 - b. **Follow-up:** If Gender Assessments are not being used, do you know the reason for this? Please explain.
11. What support does CAFI provide to projects to integrate GEDSI? Is it aligned to what you need? Can you explain further.

Future considerations

12. What are the opportunities to further support GEDSI Contributions/outcomes within [name of project]?
 - c. **Follow-up:** What is needed to fulfil these opportunities (e.g., capacity building, resources, guidance from CAFI, etc.)?
13. How do you think supporting GEDSI outcomes could contribute to [name of project's] broader outcomes?
 - a. **Follow-up:** Is there interest/understanding of the potential contribution of supporting GEDSI outcomes to [name of project's] work? Are there barriers/limitations? Please explain.

Closing

14. Do you have anything else you feel it's important we are aware of that you would like to share?

Resources/next steps

15. Is there any **documentation** you think we should have that we might not have access to?
16. Is there anyone else you think we should speak to who we might not have on our list already (note who we are talking to)?
17. We're continuing our interviews into early Autumn and will be preparing a case study for FCDO. It is anticipated this will be made available to CAFI/the Executive Board.

Thank you!



Annex 7: Project Summaries⁴¹

SYNA-MNV Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: Operationalising the National Measurement, Reporting and Verification System (SYNA-MNV)
- Implementing partners/partners: UNFAO
- Country/ies: Republic of Congo
- Value: USD 2 million
- Theme: Government capacity building

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 Gender score	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 3	Score: 2 Context: The PRODOC emphasises FAO's strong commitment to gender integration, guided by the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The PRODOC further refers to the	Score: 2 Context: The ProDoc states its conscientiousness of gender mainstreaming, and the project additionally states its alignment with gender mainstreaming guidelines of FAO, UNFCCC and UN-SWAP. Yet, it also directly cites that there are few measures to guarantee	Score: 2 Context: No gender analysis has been fully developed in this report. However, the project is aligned with the FAO's institutional framework for gender equality, which also draws on the guidelines of UNFCCC. A brief analysis is provided to explain the

⁴¹ For each project summary, 'Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment' data derives from the latest 2024 CAFI Annual Report and 2022-2024 Gender Assessments annexed to the respective annual reports. Gender assessment text in tables is copied directly from the Gender Assessment documents. The rest of data comes from interviewees, triangulated as much as possible with project-level documentation.

FAO's Strategy on Climate Change, which alludes to the specific vulnerabilities, needs and capacities of women and men as well as integrates the gender equality perspective.

The PRODOC further includes a gender action plan specific to the program, as well as a control list for gender sensitive workshops developed by the UN-REDD project.

Finally, the PRODOC includes links to FAO's policies for complaints related to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Implementation: The gender aspect was taken into account when recruiting staff.

The candidate selection process took place during the final months of the reporting period and will be finalized in the first quarter of 2023.

The selection committee paid particular attention to the presence of women in the shortlists of candidates called for job interviews. The objective is to have at least 30% of the staff composed of women within the PMU.

No workshops or implementation activities took place as part of the project, however, so no follow-up can be reported.

gender integration in the project (pg. 17). No form of monitoring/evaluation is evident in the document, M&E indicators are said to be implemented next year (2024).

Implementation: Pro Doc states the following statistical targets, among additional qualitative gender-related targets, in terms of implementation. Monitoring of these targets is lacking.

Monitoring/Evaluation: Disaggregated gender evaluations are missing throughout document Table 5.1.1 incomplete, no disaggregated gender indicators.

Budget/Expertise: No budget allocation to gender, but justification is cited.

barriers to women's participation in certain activities mentioned in the report.

Implementation: The document clearly states that no activity is specifically designed to promote gender equality or women's empowerment. However, attention is given to the level of women's participation in the project's activities.

For example, women represented 60% of participants in activity data production (MRV Unit / CNIAF), 50% in the technical workshop reviewing the technical assessment report, and 30% in the second technical committee. A minimum target of 30% female participation is set for all activities, although this is not always achievable in practice.

The communication plans incorporate a gender dimension, notably through awareness-raising on gender issues in the forestry sector and by highlighting women's perspectives in communication efforts.

Monitoring/Evaluation: Some indicators in the results framework are directly related to women's representation in specific project activities. However, no further information is provided regarding gender-specific monitoring and evaluation.

The beneficiary calculation table contains limited gender-disaggregated data, with the



Monitoring/Evaluation: The project's gender action plan includes indicators and objectives for integration of the gender dimension. But FAO did not complete Table 9 on gender aspects monitoring in Annual Report 2022.

No gender disaggregated indicators or data were provided by the program.

Budget/Expertise: There are no budget posts specific to gender in the project budget; however, the project team will include a gender expert.

exception of the forestry theme, which reports 60% female beneficiaries—though this figure is based on a very small sample of only 10 individuals.

Mandatory training on sexual abuse and harassment has been implemented by FAO, and 100% of participants have completed the course.

Budget/Expertise: The document explicitly states that no activity is specifically focused on gender equality, and consequently, no dedicated budget has been allocated for this purpose.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

The National Measurement, Reporting, and Verification System (SYNA-MNV) is a methodological tool used by the Ministry of Forest Economy (MEF) of the Republic of Congo in the context of REDD+. This system allows the country to evaluate, according to the Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL), the national performance in reducing emissions related to deforestation and forest degradation throughout the National Forest Estate. It is being deployed under the "Operationalisation of SYNA-MRV" project implemented since 2022 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the MEF and through funds allocated by the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI).

Regarding the GEDSI approach, the interviewee noted that the project aims for the inclusion of 30% female representation in all training, workshops, technical meetings, recruitment processes, and related activities. They also stated that the project includes a technical committee "MNV Cell" of ten members, of whom six (60%) are women. Similarly, the project proposal specified the need for 30% female representation across all activities (p. 43).⁴² It also indicated that the FAO includes various strategies for gender integration, including one for climate change interventions (p. 42). This strategy for climate change recommends (1)

⁴² Document du projet, [Operationalising the MRV System of the Republic of Congo - Central African Forest Initiative \(CAFI\)](#)



integration of GESI into planning processes, (2) assistance to countries to integrate gender perspectives in National Development Plans, and (3) consideration of gender dimensions in capacity development approaches (p.43).

The interviewee noted that the project is implemented within the MEF and does not include community or local beneficiaries. They also noted that it was not recommended that the project incorporate GESDI-related objectives. Both factors limited their ability to align the project with the community GESDI needs. Notably, the project proposal indicated that, among other activities, the project would evaluate the data-related needs of universities, civil society organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations, and other stakeholders (p. 17).⁴²

The interviewee noted a lack of awareness of the UN REDD Gender Marker in the CAFI's operations. However, they pointed out that the project reports gender inclusion aspects in accordance with CAFI requirements.

EQ 1: GESDI results/outcomes

In the 2024 project annual report, it is indicated that a considerable proportion of females were involved in different project technical meetings, such as 50% for the FREL Technical Evaluation and Report Review Workshop (p. 21).⁴³ The annual report also confirmed that the project technical committee or MNV cell includes six women out of ten men (pp. 20-21).^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} However, the interviewee emphasised that these women were not included in the committee to promote gender. They further stated that this project does not include GESDI outcomes. Likewise, the project proposal did not indicate any intended outcomes specific to underrepresented groups, such as women and indigenous peoples.⁴²

The project proposal indicated that the SYNA-MNV would implement appropriate measures to enhance gender inclusion in all activities (p. 43).⁴² However, the interviewee indicated that implementing entities are encouraged, but not obligated, to meet gender targets. Additionally, the project proposal showed that the project would contribute to strengthening women's capacity to utilise geospatial data in forest cover dynamics (p. 44).⁴² However, the interviewee stressed that the project's priority is to produce the intended data and statistics, and that gender outcomes are incidental.

Regarding the GESDI monitoring approach, the project proposal showed that checklists could be used to ensure a gender-balanced representation in all training sessions and workshops. However, the interviewee stated that most attendance lists used by the national team are not disaggregated by gender. They further noted that the team relies on attendees' first names and contact information to assess male and female participation. However, this may hinder record-keeping and programmatic accountability regarding gender inclusion in the long run.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GESDI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

⁴³ SYNA-MNV 2024 Annual report; [Operationalising the MRV System of the Republic of Congo - Central African Forest Initiative \(CAFI\)](#)



Effectiveness:

When asked about the effectiveness of the project's GEDSI approach, the interviewee stated that a quota of 30% female representation is achievable even though women are under-represented in many technical fields. In the project document, it is mentioned that the project would guarantee equitable access to project benefits for men and women (p. 43).⁴² Regarding limitations, the interviewee indicated that national partners are not held accountable when they do not achieve 30% female representation and face no consequences.

Impact/transformational change:

The interviewee noted that the six female members of the MNV cell are competent and likely to train others in the future. Regarding the CAFI's contributions to GEDSI integration, the interviewee indicated being unaware of any. Notably, oversight in adhering to GEDSI integration, as discussed above, may be reinforced by a lack of CAFI support.

Future Considerations

The interviewee expressed the need to mobilise women through university campaigns to pursue climate change-related studies and careers. This will contribute to increasing the number of female technicians in the Ministry of Environment. Moreover, they indicated the need to mobilise women, youth, indigenous peoples, and local communities to take ownership of project results for their land use and environmental management activities.



PROREP Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: Project to strengthen the sustainable wood energy potential in the Republic of Congo (PROREP)
- Implementing partners/partners: UNFAO
- Country/ies: Republic of Congo
- Value: USD 7 million
- Theme: Energy

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 Gender score	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 2	Score: 4 Context: The PRODOC contains a section on gender mainstreaming on pages (49-51) including gender plan, implantation and monitoring and evaluation. The Results Framework includes gender outputs and activities. Logical framework of the PAG: The project will integrate gender-disaggregated objectives and indicators with the objective of ensuring the participation of at least 30% of women in all its activities. At the implementation level: The project team will rely on the diagnostic analysis (the assessment)	Score: 4 Context: PROREP's PRODOC contains a dedicated gender implementation section (10.2, pg. 49) which includes a "Gender Action Plan," providing a framework for gender implementation, project impacts concerning gender equity, and plan of gender monitoring/evaluation. One main goal of PROREP is to ensure at least 30% participation of women in all of its activities. These Gender dimensions are to be integrated into the project performance and impact evaluation missions through: (i) Integration of	Score: 4 Context: Despite the lack of contextual information, the project states that it systematically takes gender-specific issues into account. An analysis of the barriers to women's participation and strategies to overcome them and shift behaviors has been conducted. Implementation: The project emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all its activities have a direct impact on women, whether through improved access—such as to training opportunities—or through their inclusion in

and other qualitative and quantitative data (disaggregated by sex) to assess the gender impacts of the project interventions on the targets.

At the monitoring-evaluation level: The Gender dimension will be integrated into the project performance and impact evaluation missions through: (i) Integration of gender objectives into the outline of the evaluation terms of reference (factors to consider in all assessments); (ii) Recruitment of a gender consultant in the evaluation missions (final and/or mid-term); (iii) The disaggregation by sex of all the data in the various reports, specifying the data on the “youth” category; and (iv) Publication of reports of successes or failures of initiatives or achievement of gender objectives

Implementation: The gender aspect was taken into account when recruiting staff. It was also decided jointly with the MEF to extend the validity period of the call for applications to ensure greater representation of women in the pool of candidates. The candidate selection process took place during the last months of the reporting period and will be finalized in the first quarter of 2023. The selection committee paid particular attention to the presence of women in the shortlists of candidates called for job interviews. The objective is to have at least

gender objectives into the outline of the evaluation terms of reference (factors to consider in all assessments); (ii) recruitment of a gender consultant in the evaluation missions (final and/or mid-term); (iii) the disaggregation by sex of all the data in the various reports; and (iv) the publication of reports of successes or failures of initiatives or achievement of gender objectives.

Implementation: PROREP's 2023 Annual Review includes a completed Table 9.1, showcasing active practice of gender-sensitivity in the project. As of June 2023, UPG's female representation hiring goal was fulfilled. Additionally, the project's beneficiaries consist of 20% females, on track to meet its 30% goal by 2025.

Monitoring/Evaluation: "The monitoring of gender is to be completed by the implementing partners (FAO, GRET, MEF) with the support of UPG (pg. 48). Disaggregated gender stats provided throughout Annual Review 2023, 5-year target of 30% of women beneficiaries is either on-track or surpassed in all categories, with the exception of agroforestry technique building (pg. 10)"

Budget/Expertise: "No breakdown of budget for gender, but noted in 2023 Annual Review that budget for gender equality is included in the main budget framework for the project (pg.

project activities. Some training sessions have achieved a female participation rate of 52%.

Recruitment is also gender-sensitive, and to date, 25% of the staff are women.

Monitoring/Evaluation: Gender-disaggregated data is presented in both the outcomes and beneficiaries tables, showing very positive results: 56% of women now have land access rights (compared to 30% at the beginning of the project), and 45% of the project's direct beneficiaries are women.

The project's Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist places strong emphasis on gender and monitors risks related to discrimination against women and gender-based violence (GBV).

A survey on women's access to land, which interviewed 47 women, helped identify the main barriers to such access.

Budget/Expertise: It is specified that the gender budget is included within the overall project budget, which is justified by the integration of gender considerations across all project activities.

Additionally, a gender and safeguards specialist has been recruited, and gender focal points have been established in the villages.

30% of the staff composed of women within the PMU.

With regard to field activities, the integration of the gender perspective occupies a prominent place in the actions undertaken by PROREP. The project has taken the course of integrating women up to 30% in the governance structures (COPIL, COTECH) but also within the coordination team of the PMU. The FAO has encouraged its partners and in particular the GRET to co-opt women to certain positions where they are under-represented. Their presence is also strongly encouraged within the local selection committees for the identification of the beneficiaries and the workforce to be recruited within the framework of the plantations.

Finally, the sensitization of members of local communities and indigenous peoples to be able to benefit from project support paid particular attention to women and the most vulnerable groups of local communities.

Monitoring/Evaluation: Gender section in Annual Report 2022 was completed and Table 7 on gender aspects monitoring was filled by the project.

Budget/Expertise: Gender activities were budgeted in the Results Framework (P 57-64). A gender expert will be recruited.

25). Would be beneficial to have a gender-spending breakdown. "



Context of GEDSI Integration across project

The “Project to strengthen the sustainable wood energy potential in the Republic of Congo,” or “PROREP Wood Energy Plantations” aims to strengthen the sustainable wood energy potential of Brazzaville through the establishment of 2,700 hectares of quick-start agroforestry plantations for wood energy production. This project co-finances a larger project, PREFOREST, implemented by FAO, which aims to establish approximately 11,800 ha of agroforestry and forestry plantations, particularly to produce wood fuel, with the financial support of the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

The interviewees indicated that they ensure that GEDSI aspects are incorporated across all project activities. As additionally noted, the project team prioritises under-represented groups such as women, Indigenous Peoples, and youth during beneficiary selection. They also stated that the relevant project staff receive role-specific instructions on gender integration. For instance, when implementing tree-planting activities, the coordination team requires community mobilisers to always recruit at least 30% female field workers. Notably, the interviewees indicated that this project includes a gender integration plan and is focused on a quota of 30% female representation.

The project’s 2024 annual report showed that a study involving 47 women and 34 members from Indigenous communities enabled the identification of barriers to women’s access to land (p. 22).⁴⁴ Likewise, the interviewees stated that the project conducted a preliminary assessment that identified various forms of GBV and land tenure challenges among women. This study facilitated the elaboration of the gender integration plan, and the challenges identified were prioritised during the design and implementation of the project.

According to the interviewees, this project focuses on three gender marker dimensions: women, Indigenous Peoples and youth. The interviewees emphasised that the government recommended the inclusion of youth, underscoring its influence on fostering gender and social inclusion. The interviewees noted that during the most recent midline evaluation, CAFI looked at the area of land given to women and Indigenous People. They further opined that the GEDSI integration in the project was satisfactory, given that CAFI did not provide them with any related feedback. When asked to rate their understanding of the GEDSI across the project, they rated it as satisfactory.

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

The interviewees discussed different forms of violence and power dynamics based on gender and ethnic identity in relation to land tenure. Some notable examples are the denial of land ownership for women and the expropriation of Indigenous land. Therefore, the interviewees stated that this project aims to empower women and promote access to land tenure among women and Indigenous Peoples. Notably, they opined that the project interventions are supported by national law that

⁴⁴ Project Annual Report, 2024; [Potentiel Bois énergie](#) | MPTF Office



recognises women as entitled to own land. They also noted that the project outcomes are in accordance with the Mouébara Law and Law No. 5-2011 which protect the rights of women and Indigenous Peoples.

To monitor GEDSI outcomes, the project team uses quantitative monitoring tools, such as attendance lists with a field for sex/gender. Additionally, they conduct separate focus group discussions by community group (Indigenous Peoples vs. Bantu) and gender (women vs. men) as needed to address emerging issues. Moreover, the project includes a dataset disaggregated by gender and community group category, in which beneficiaries' data are stored. The team indicated that they were unable to estimate the appropriateness of these monitoring approaches, given that they had never received any GEDSI-related feedback from CAFI.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

The interviewees considered the project GEDSI approach to be effective, given the feedback received through the project's Feedback and Complaint Mechanism (FCM). When prompted to elucidate, they noted that women and Indigenous People submit four percent and one percent of all feedback, respectively. They added that most feedback does not reflect complaints but could not provide further clarification due to confidentiality concerns. Consistently, the project's annual report showed that encouraging women and youth to utilise FCMs facilitated the consideration of gender aspects in the project (p. 22).⁴⁴

Regarding limitations, the interviewees pointed out that the project experienced different staff rotations, which limited the sustainability of GEDSI competencies within the project. They also indicated that the perception that the project demeaned men over women was frequent. To address this and other obstacles, the interviewees and the annual report (p. 23)⁴⁴ indicated that the project team mobilised the community, engaged with community leaders, and established focal points within the community.

Impact/transformational change:

According to the interviewees, women and Indigenous Peoples now have access to land, and some have secured considerable hectares as a result of the project. For women, the support received improved their income, allowing them to meet household expenses and support their children's education. Moreover, beneficiaries from Indigenous Communities were detached from performing labour assigned by the Bantu, which pays derisory salaries.

Future Considerations

The interviewees indicated that the population in the project localities is receptive, underscoring the feasibility of similar interventions in the localities of this project. They also noted that the teams implementing CAFI projects in the country should create a network for sharing experiences and insights on GEDSI. Notably, they asserted that CAFI, as the fund holder, has the authority to influence this.



Energie Durable Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: Energie Durable
- Implementing partners/partners: UNDP and UNCDF
- Country/ies: DRC
- Value: USD 7 million
- Theme: Energy

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 Gender score	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 3	Score: 4	Score: 3	Score: 2
	Because the 2022 FONAREDD report was not shared before 31 May 2022, CAFI could not discuss this assessment with the FONAREDD and detailed assessments per project are not provided.	Context: The project justifies itself as gender sensitive due to the a priori relevance of gender in the question of sustainable cook-stove solutions in the DRC. Furthermore, this project promotes the spread of knowledge regarding sustainable cook-stoves through civic engagement, with regional female populations specifically targeted (e.g. advocacy from Ambassador Barbara reaching 10k+ women) Implementation: Women are recognized as the main demographic of which this project pertains to. Gender is included in multiple key indicators (see chapter 4) and beneficiaries of the program are broken down by	Context: The project presents itself as gender-sensitive, primarily based on the assumed relevance of gender in the context of sustainable cookstove solutions in the DRC. In the general context section, the political analysis also highlights risks specifically affecting women, such as gender-based violence (GBV). Implementation: Women are recognized as a key demographic for this project. As a result, most activities include efforts to ensure their participation. Capacity building and women's rights initiatives have been implemented to encourage women to



gender. The communication plan set forth in the ProDoc specifically considers its visibility amongst regional female populations. The majority of the project's gender mainstreaming data shows steady growth from 2021-2022.

Monitoring/Evaluation: No specific budget allocated to gender mainstreaming/promotion of gender specific to this project. Disaggregated indicators are included with frequency throughout document (see Table 4.1). Women's participation in high-level discussion is said to be augmented, but quantitative indicators are lacking in Gender section of document.

Budget/Expertise: No specific budget allocated to gender mainstreaming/promotion of gender

take part in decision-making processes and to benefit from the program.

Advocacy is also regularly carried out to promote the nomination of women to various program committees. Currently, women represent 50% of committee members, and it is noted—though without further detail—that “some of them hold leadership positions.”

Monitoring/Evaluation: Some disaggregated indicators are included throughout the document, but the information is often missing where it would be most relevant.

The program's beneficiaries are broken down by gender. In this regard, the proportion of women remains low—for example, only 36% of beneficiaries among private sector actors and civil society are women. No data is available for the overall total.

On the other hand, under Effect 2, 82% of respondents are women, demonstrating that in certain areas of the project, women are highly represented.

Budget/Expertise: No specific budget is allocated to gender mainstreaming or the promotion of gender equality, as indicated in the document. While some gender-sensitive activities are implemented and reported, the absence of a dedicated budget line



makes it difficult to assess the project's financial commitment to gender objectives.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

The Durable Energy Project (Energie Durable, 113546A-B) seeks to reduce the demand for biomass energy in the DRC by developing alternatives to fuelwood energy and promoting the use of improved cookstoves with higher energy efficiency. It has activities in different provinces, including Kinshasa, Kwilu, Tshopo, Goma, and Lubumbashi.

During the interview, it was noted that the project lacks GEDSI-related objectives but has indicators disaggregated by gender. To uphold the GEDSI approach, the UNDP outlined that it encourages the project's implementing agencies to ensure that women and youth are engaged in activities, take on leadership roles, and access employment opportunities. This is likely how the project achieves its gender-related target indicators, although precisely how this is ensured/achieved is unclear.

The respondent noted that the project uses the reporting template developed by FONAREDD to systematically report on gender-related information. A review of FONAREDD's reporting template confirmed that it includes sections for gender-disaggregated data.⁴⁵ Also, beneficiary numbers were disaggregated by gender and by youth category in the project's 2023 annual report.⁴⁶ However, there was no section on disability and other socially excluded groups in the FONAREDD reporting template, and the project's annual report disaggregated findings only by women, men, and youth. This suggests uncertainty regarding the considerations of these groups in the Project.

Notably, the respondent mentioned that the project team has a strong understanding of GEDSI because of their capacity to populate the FONAREDD reporting template.

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

The respondent indicated that the project has a significant emphasis and impact on women and the youth. Various project-related reports support this statement. For instance, FONAREDD's 2024 annual report (page 145) indicates that by 2024, the project had created a total of 1,074 jobs, of which 31% were for women and 69% for youth.⁴⁷ The project's 2023 annual report (page 17) also reveals that the project trained 13 sheet metal workers and ceramists, of whom 38% were

⁴⁵ CANEVAS DE RAPPORT DES PROJETS FINANCÉS PAR L'INITIATIVE POUR LA FORET DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE (CAFI) ET LE FONAREDD

⁴⁶ Rapport Annuel 2023_ Programme Energie _UNDP-UNCDF ; https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05/113546-consommation_durable_bois_energie_2023_annual_report.pdf

⁴⁷ Rapport Annuel 2024 ; <https://fonaredd-rdc.org/publications/#:~:text=Le%20rapport%20annuel%202024%20du,en%20R%C3%A9publique%20D%C3%A9mocratique%20du%20Congo.>



women.⁴⁶ Notably, the respondent stated that through the project interventions, women and youth became entrepreneurs or key actors in the clean cooking energy value chain in the country.

When asked about GEDSI outcome monitoring, the respondent stated that the project team uses monitoring tools such as attendance and beneficiary lists, with gender-disaggregated sections. They further noted that this approach is appropriate because it allows the team to capture the proportion of male and female beneficiaries and take action to mobilise greater female participation when necessary. There was no indication that more qualitative insights as to e.g., whether job creation for women and youth was influencing any other gendered dynamics, or supporting empowerment were being routinely monitored or determined.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

The interviewee stated that the key challenge in GEDSI integration is the difficulty in tracking desired practice adoption or behaviour change among beneficiaries by gender. The 2024 FONAREDD Annual Report (page 145)⁴⁷ and the 2023 Project Annual Report (page 17)⁴⁶ reflect this limitation. These reports indicate the number of households using certain cooking modes without disaggregating the data by gender or youth category.

Interestingly, the interviewee noted that participant or beneficiary lists are easier to fill in and disaggregate in reports, underscoring the flexibility of incorporating the GEDSI approach across project activities that use such monitoring tools.

Impact/transformational change:

The interviewee indicated that the project does not have specific activities to assess GEDSI interventions. GEDSI concerns are captured through overall project assessments, and the learning from the assessments is used to inform improvements. To illustrate this, the interviewee noted that a previous midline evaluation reported a low rate of mobilization in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. Consequently, the project will hold a campaign in October 2025, aiming to reach 75,000 people (80% to 90% women), including 750 youth (60% female) under 36 years in Kinshasa. The youth will receive training and experience in the field of cooking and with UN agencies.

Notably, the interviewee shared that FONAREDD conducts sessions on the reporting template during reporting periods. They further clarified that these sessions are not specifically gender-focused; however, they encompass all the information required for reporting, including gender-related data.

Future Considerations

According to the interviewee, it is usually challenging for implementing agencies when they are asked to revise or incorporate new GEDSI indicators and objectives in the middle of project implementation. Therefore, future FONAREDD projects would benefit from having predefined and stabilised GEDSI indicators and



objectives to be properly tracked and reported during project execution. The interviewee also expressed the need for a dedicated budget, indicators, and methodologies for gender activities that are a priority in FONAREDD projects.

According to the respondent, this project is already gender-focused through its various activities, making it difficult to identify other activities to enhance its gender sensitivity.



PIREDD Equateur Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: PIREDD Equateur
- Implementing partners/partners: UNFAO
- Country/ies: DRC
- Value: USD 10 million
- Theme: Sustainable forest resource management

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 score	Gender	2022 Gender assessment	score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 4		Score: 4		Score: 4	Score: 3
		Because the 2022 FONAREDD report was not shared before 31 May 2022, CAFI could not discuss this assessment with the FONAREDD and detailed assessments per project are not provided.		Context: Annex 2 that provides contextual information's and 10 strategic axes. Implementation: One gender targeted activity is included: "Empowering Women in Governance". This activity focuses on strengthening local community management structures with a commitment to gender equality. It ensures that a minimum of 40 percent of democratically elected members in the 359 local development committees are women, thereby amplifying women's voices in decision-making processes.	Context: There is no specific contextual information in the document. Implementation: Gender integration is ensured through a requirement to incorporate gender considerations into all planned project activities. As a result, the activities actively encourage women's participation, which reached an average of 45% in 2024. Monitoring/Evaluation: It is stated that indicators are always disaggregated by gender; however, this is not reflected across all indicators.



Three other activities have specific gender arrangements:

- * “Inclusive Land Use Planning”: The program emphasises participatory land use planning, integrating micro- and macro-zoning to ensure equitable land distribution. By involving women and indigenous communities in this process, it fosters their ownership and stewardship of agricultural and forest lands.

- * “Enhancing Livelihoods through Agriculture”: Through investments in sustainable agriculture, it promotes the cultivation of short-cycle food crops, enhancing food security and income generation for communities. Women, who often play a significant role in agricultural activities, stand to benefit economically from these interventions.

- * “Access to Family Planning and Nutritional Education”: Recognizing the importance of reproductive health and nutrition, the program provides access to family planning services and education on nutrition, particularly targeting women and indigenous populations. By empowering women with reproductive choices and nutritional knowledge, PIREDD Equateur aims to improve the overall well-being of communities.

Monitoring/Evaluation: The PRODOC specifies that data disaggregated by sex is collected for all activities, including for CLD membership.

Fortunately, gender-disaggregated indicators are present under Outcome 8, and all indicators related to beneficiaries are disaggregated, with women representing 48% of direct beneficiaries.

Additionally, the project benefits from the support of a gender equality advisor.

Budget/Expertise: There is no specific gender budget, but the project states that gender is a cross-cutting issue that will be addressed across the different components. This is demonstrated by the activities implemented to encourage women’s participation.



Budget/Expertise: The PRODOC specifies that there is no specific budget related to gender (or other cross-cutting issues). However, many activities budgeted are expressly related to gender.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

Starting in August 2019, PIREDD Equateur is built on almost all seven pillars of DR Congo's REDD+ strategy. It is being carried out in tandem by FAO, the lead agency, and WWF/DR Congo, in an approach of pooling its own skills and capitalizing on the respective experiences acquired and accumulated in the area of intervention. The targeted areas of intervention include: 1) land-use planning, 2) governance, 3) agriculture, 4) forestry, 5) energy, 6) land tenure, and 7) population control.

According to the interviewee, PIREDD Equateur ensures that underrepresented groups, such as women, Indigenous Peoples, and people with disabilities (PWDs) account for at least 40% of the representation. Likewise, the programme's 2024 annual report (p. 52) indicates that the programme targets more than 35%⁴⁸ representation of these groups. To reach this target, the programme team recommends that Provincial Directorates ensure that at least 40% of their teams in joint initiatives consist of women. They also require their trained local staff to work with women in the field. They provide capacity-building support to women, given that women usually lack the necessary technical skills for FAO-related field and forest work. Furthermore, the team indicated that the programme has a "Population Control" component, and as part of it, 3,000 beneficiaries, of whom about 90% were women, received training on entrepreneurship, tailoring, contraceptive use, and culinary practice.

The team reported that they are in the process of developing an MoU with the Directorate of Social Affairs and Directorate of Gender to continue their training activities in Equateur, which indicates that they are aligned with the community's GEDSI needs. They also noted that the programme, through various activities such as trainings and the establishment of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), addressed the need for empowerment and emancipation among women.

The team noted that CAFI and FONAREDD developed several GEDSI-related indicators and requested that programmes report sex and vulnerable groups disaggregated data. However, in the 2024 program annual report, most quantitative information is only disaggregated by sex and not by vulnerable groups or youth.⁴⁸ They also emphasised that CAFI and FONAREDD do not conduct gender-specific evaluations. During reporting periods, they provide various

⁴⁸ RAPPORT DES PROJETS FINANCÉS PAR L'INITIATIVE POUR LA FORET DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE (CAFI) ET LE FONAREDD, PIREDD Equateur | MPTF Office



recommendations/feedback, and in most cases, gender is part of them. The interviewees highlighted that FONAREDD repeatedly instructed them to mobilise more women and engage with husbands to influence their approval to improve women's inclusion in the programme. However, they clarified that similar feedback was no longer provided, indicating improvement. Notably, the interviewees with the FONAREDD team revealed that FONAREDD communicates shortcomings to partners and directs them to take corrective actions.⁴⁹

The team rated the level of understanding and awareness of the GEDSI in the program as complete. They also emphasised that FAO has staff responsible for gender across all its programmes and provides gender-related capacity-building support to staff and implementing partners (IPs).

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

The team discussed different gender-related outcomes that the programme aimed to contribute to. First, the programme contributed to empowering and enhancing women's independence. Some women received training in sustainable farming techniques and agricultural inputs. Others were trained in tailoring and received sewing machines and materials. Additionally, by implementing culinary demonstration activities, the programme aimed to contribute towards enhancing infant nutrition. Furthermore, the team noted that the programme developed a local development plan allowing pigmies to develop business activities such as pisciculture and the commercialisation of *fumbwa* (A type of vegetable in the DRC).

The team explained that to monitor GEDSI outcomes, they first worked with the IPs to set gender objectives and indicators for their activities and developed a matrix for monitoring the IP's progress. They then periodically monitor IPs' performance concerning gender using the matrix. For activities implemented by themselves (FAO), they specify gender targets in each activity's ToR and evaluate their achievement internally.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

The team stated that their GEDSI approach is effective. When pressed to elaborate, they indicated that they consider women, youth, pigmies, and other vulnerable groups in their activities and that they are equipped with monitoring tools developed jointly with their IPs. Regarding limitations, they noted that they do not consider PWDs in a specific manner and did not include them in the design, showcasing a deviation from the comprehensive integration of GEDSI as a holistic approach.

Impact/transformational change:

⁴⁹ Interview with FONAREDD



The team discussed an example of promising practices: Establishing VSLAs and introducing women to different training enabled them to initiate income-generating activities, ultimately responding to their basic and financial needs. However, they reported that some husbands refuse to allow their wives to work in the field. Notably, they pointed out that the programme continues to increase mobilisation efforts to increase women's participation and husband approval.

Regarding CAFI/FONAREDD's support, the team indicated that FONAREDD conducts workshops for capacity-building support in response to the identified shortcomings among partners.

Future Considerations

The interviewees perceived this case study as an opportunity to further support GEDSI outcomes, as its questions revealed a further understanding of how and why GEDSI should be integrated comprehensively. They pointed out that CAFI and FONAREDD would benefit from including all GEDSI dimensions in the current Gender and Indigenous Peoples Strategy.



PIREDD Kwilu Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: PIREDD Kwilu
- Implementing partners/partners: JICA
- Country/ies: DRC
- Value: USD 9 million
- Theme: Sustainable forest resource management

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 score	Gender	2022 Gender assessment	score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 3		Score: 4		Score: 4	Score: 4
		Because the 2022 FONAREDD report was not shared before 31 May 2022, CAFI could not discuss this assessment with the FONAREDD and detailed assessments per project are not provided.		Context: The project documentation provides a detailed background on the environmental and socio-economic context, focusing on the aims of carbon sequestration and improving living conditions through agroforestry and other sustainable practices. Implementation: Gender considerations appear under the section discussing themes across the project, with specific activities aimed at involving women in environmental and social management processes.	Context: The project provides some gender context, focusing primarily on analyzing the challenges related to women's participation in project activities. It also proposes ways to improve their inclusion, aiming to increase the proportion of women involved. Implementation: The project aims to promote greater participation of women in all its activities, particularly in consultation workshops, capacity-building sessions, and awareness-raising campaigns. It strongly encourages female leadership



The project includes targeted gender activities, such as the celebration of International Women's Day, and promotes gender participation in the elaboration of simplified environmental management plans (PGES) at the village level.

Gender and the involvement of indigenous and other vulnerable groups are addressed under section 9.1, although the details are somewhat sparse.

Monitoring/Evaluation: The document includes a comprehensive section on monitoring and evaluation (Section 8), detailing the progress of various activities.

Gender-disaggregated data or specific mentions of monitoring gender impacts are not prominently detailed, which could be an area for improvement

Budget/Expertise: The budget specifics for gender-focused activities are not explicitly detailed in the sections provided. There is a general description of financial execution, but it lacks breakdowns for gender-specific allocations.

and applies this principle within its own teams, where women make up 50% of the technical staff.

For example, the project actively supports the inclusion of more women in the development process of the PDES (Economic and Social Development Plans) and seeks to enhance women's empowerment by increasing their involvement in income-generating activities.

Finally, it is important to highlight that at least one-third of the members of the steering committee must be women.

Monitoring/Evaluation: Most of the indicators are disaggregated by gender, and the results are quite strong. For example, under Product 5.3, participation and monitoring of gender-related activities recorded 52% female participation.

A dedicated monitoring and evaluation system has been established to track women's participation in project activities.

Regarding beneficiaries, only indirect beneficiaries are counted; however, they are effectively disaggregated by gender. For instance, in the agriculture sector, 52% of the indirect beneficiaries are women.

Budget/Expertise: A specific budget has been allocated for gender-focused activities, primarily supporting communication efforts and women's



empowerment initiatives. Most of this budget is financed through JICA's funding.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

Launched in 2019, PIREDD-Kwilu implements activities in the province of Kwilu. Two general objectives are pursued through this program: (1) carbon sequestration and the avoidance of deforestation through the promotion of agroforestry, and (2) the improvement of the living conditions of the populations of Kwilu. This programme is implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The programme was not designed with gender-specific objectives or indicators, limiting the tracking of gender outcomes at the programme level. Notably, the programme encompasses a safeguarding component that addresses inclusion and gender aspects. Therefore, gender aspects are monitored and reflected in the programme within this component. The programme developed a provincial gender action plan as part of the safeguarding component to guide gender integration. This plan includes a situational gender analysis of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and of Kwilu province and a proposed action plan.⁵⁰

According to the JICA team, to integrate GEDSI, PIREDD Kwilu focuses on women's participation in programme activities and governance structures. Accordingly, the Gender Action Plan suggests various activities that support women's participation.⁵⁰ Some of them include: 1) mobilising and raising awareness among women and girls; 2) popularising legal texts favourable to women; training and capacity building on gender stereotypes; and 3) sensitising local authorities for women's access to land. The interviewees indicated that they ensured women's inclusion by considering their specific needs in all programme phases, from Simplified Environmental Impact Assessments to preparation and implementation.

Additionally, the programme team aimed to achieve at least 50% female representation in governance structures. This has often been unachievable due to cultural and customary barriers, as well as marginal female representation in government departments. The programme's 2024 annual report (p. 34) reflects this by showing that only seven women out of 184 government officials benefited from capacity-building activities and participated in working groups.⁵¹

The team indicated that they had a good level of understanding of GEDSI. This is consistent with the FONAREDD 2024 report (p. 209), which ranks PIREDD Kwilu among the programmes that best integrated gender in 2024.⁵² However, they were unfamiliar with the application of the UN-REDD Gender Marker for their programme. They further claimed that they infrequently receive feedback or guidance on gender integration from CAFI/FONAREDD. One of them recalled that

⁵⁰ PLAN D'ACTION PROVINCIAL POUR LA PROMOTION DU GENRE

⁵¹ Programme Intégré de la Réduction des Emissions dues à la Déforestation et Dégradation des Forêts dans La Province De Kwilu, [PIREDD Kwilu | MPTF Office](#)

⁵² RAPPORT ANNUEL 2024 ; [PUBLICATIONS - Fonaredd | Fonds National REDD](#)



FONAREDD had previously required them to engage more female staff from government institutions in their activities. This relates to FONAREDD's position that CAFI had previously requested them to follow up on projects with inadequate gender integration and take appropriate actions.⁵³

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

In terms of GEDSI outcomes, the team noted that they intend to contribute to women's and youth's empowerment by training them in sustainable charcoal production, beekeeping, and saponification. This is confirmed in the 2024 FONAREDD annual report (p. 211)⁵², and photographs of a training activity report (July 2024) that shows women participating in apiculture and saponification trainings.⁵⁴

Regarding the alignment of this outcome with beneficiaries' needs, the team pointed out that not empowering women may increase food insecurity, given that women play a central role in agriculture. They also indicated that the national and provincial gender plans insist on women's empowerment, suggesting alignment with national needs. Moreover, the team noted that they conducted participatory diagnosis with women, youth, men, etc., to identify their needs, which informed programme activity planning and prioritisation.

To monitor GEDSI outcomes, the team records the number of beneficiaries of different activities by gender and other aspects of interest. This approach allows the team to appreciate the level of engagement of different beneficiaries by specified aspects. As they added, the results are reported in the FONAREDD reporting template.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

Interviewees see the approach as effective, given that it involved male beneficiaries in mobilising women and eventually increased women's participation and empowerment. The programme team, comprising men and women, was also a positive aspect. When it comes to the limitations, the team highlighted the lack of gender-related programme-level indicators.

Impact/transformational change:

⁵³ Interview with FONAREDD

⁵⁴ Formation à l'apiculture, à la fabrication du savon et à la gestion financière dans les villages ; [2024-07-29.pdf](#)



The team shared examples of promising practices related to the GEDSI outcomes. One example is that the local development committees (CLD) led by women provided the better results in terms of land management and income-generating activities, except for beekeeping, which registered low women participation. It was noted that women participated massively in sustainable charcoal production and commercialisation, which improved their incomes. The FONAREDD 2024 annual report supports this argument by indicating that the agriculture component reached more men, and for the land component, women were almost half of the beneficiaries (p. 242).⁵² Moreover, women and youth also took part in information sharing and imparted their knowledge to peers in neighbouring villages.

The team indicated that learning from gender assessments internally and externally helped inform programming. Based on on-the-ground observations, for example, they identified the major reason for low women involvement in beekeeping activities and restructured the activities accordingly.

The team stated that they received implementation guidelines from CAFI/FONAREDD, enabling them to meet FONAREDD's reporting requirements.

Future Considerations

The team noted that Kwilu has a considerably high female literacy rate, which favours the implementation of women's empowerment programmes. Additionally, the provincial gender action plan developed by the programme encompasses relevant information regarding gender challenges that other organisations can use to develop similar interventions.

According to the team, the GEDSI approach, specifically the gender/safeguarding component, has contributed more positively to various programme outcomes, including those highlighted above. This highlights the need for future programmes to adhere to gender principles during implementation.



PIREDD Mongala Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: PIREDD Mongala
- Implementing partners/partners: Enabel
- Country/ies: DRC
- Value: USD 12 million
- Theme: Sustainable forest resource management

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 Gender score and assessment	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 4	Score: 4 Because the 2022 FONAREDD report was not shared before 31 May 2022, CAFI could not discuss this assessment with the FONAREDD and detailed assessments per project are not provided.	Score: 3 Context: This Prodoc demonstrate an informed context on gender issues and provides analysis for some of the reasons behind the difficulties in integrating gender in the activities: Quota Reliance: The PRODOC notes that female participation is heavily reliant on a government quota requiring 30% female involvement.	Score: 4 Context: The project has provided an in-depth gender context analysis, outlining the challenges faced—particularly regarding women's participation in activities—as well as the solutions proposed, including both those already implemented and recommendations for future action. Implementation: All activities encourage the participation of women, despite the challenges encountered, and several methods have been tested and implemented to help increase this participation.



Cultural Barriers: It highlights that cultural norms limit women's active participation in meetings, often keeping them in the background.

Facilitation Efforts: To encourage female engagement, separate discussion groups for women are held, which has helped gather important information on their activities.

Opportunity Challenges: Cultural norms are also mentioned as a significant barrier preventing women from seizing opportunities provided by the project.

Implementation: Gender-targeted and responsive activities are mentioned, such as ensuring participation quotas in activities and handling specific issues like land rights conflicts affecting women.

There are structured efforts to ensure women's participation, like refusing participation of husbands in place of their wives, which directly promotes female engagement in activities

Monitoring/Evaluation: The project's challenges include culturally ingrained gender roles that are tough to shift, suggesting a need for more robust gender-focused strategies.

There's a lack of specific budget allocation for gender-focused activities, which might hinder

A quota has also been established for women's participation—particularly in training sessions—which ensures representation.

Monitoring/Evaluation: A large amount of gender-disaggregated data is presented throughout the report. Among the total project beneficiaries, 31% are women. It would be important to consistently report figures as percentages to provide a clearer picture of women's representation.

A gender checklist has been implemented to monitor participation, and a gender workshop was organized.

Budget/Expertise: The project specifies that there is no budget specifically dedicated to gender, explaining that gender is treated as a cross-cutting theme, which makes it difficult to assign a specific amount. We can therefore conclude that, gender-related aspects are budgeted throughout the document.



dedicated initiatives or detailed tracking of gender-related outcomes.

Budget/Expertise: The budget does not specifically earmark funds for gender activities, reflecting a broader issue of insufficient financial commitment to gender-specific outcomes.

Despite the gender-inclusive activities, there's an overall lack of a systematic approach to budgeting and planning for gender inclusivity.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

PIREDD Mongala was part of the national REDD+ strategy aiming to sustainably reduce the impact of human activities on forests and improve the living and income conditions of the inhabitants of the province of Mongala. This programme ended in 2024, so interviewees relied on recalling work that they have not been a part of recently; its 2024 annual report was also reviewed.⁵⁵

Following the interview and in the annual report, it emerged that the programme focused on gender, Indigenous Peoples, and vulnerable groups as part of GEDSI. Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups were cross-cutting categories within gender and youth.

The interviewee noted that the programme required public institutions to include women and youth in their collaborative work. It also encouraged women's representation in different committees, supported by its portfolio. Moreover, the programme engaged women and youth in various agricultural activities and supported them in commercialising their products. The report reflects this by indicating the number of women and youth involved in various activities. For instance, the report shows that 27 persons, including six women, were included in Hevea plantation activities (p. 21). It also indicates that 178 people participated in the Community Forest Concessions (CFC) process, and 6% of them were women (p. 21). The interviewee also noted that the programme had a sexual and reproductive health (SRH) component. While most SRH programmes focus solely on women, this programme component engaged both men and women. PIREDD Mongala also included a communication pillar. It aimed to promote behaviour change among women and youth by fostering information sharing on knowledge, experience, and appropriate practices.

⁵⁵ RAPPORT ANNUEL 2024 – PIREDD MONGALA FINANCE PAR L'INITIATIVE POUR LA FORET DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE (CAFI) Programme financé via le FONAREDD en RDC



According to the interviewee, PIREDD Mongala aimed to achieve at least 30% female representation in all domains. This was not always achievable due to insufficient funds and time, as well as community resistance. Likewise, the annual report indicated frequent occurrences of women's underrepresentation within beneficiary groups, often falling short of 30% across activities.

According to the interviewee, the programme team conducted needs assessments with women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and community leaders to identify and appropriately address their needs. In addition, FONAREDD discussed with the programme team how the programme could benefit more Indigenous Peoples. Notably, Indigenous Peoples received less support given that they were not considered during the programme design, and there were limited resources to provide sufficient support in their locality. The interviewee indicated that PIREDD Mongala aligned with and integrated many gender markers but did not provide any details, given the time since the programme closure. They recalled that the team lacked sufficient capacity to comprehensively integrate GEDSI in the project owing to government and community resistance rooted in gender-biased cultural norms.

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

The interviewee indicated that the programme facilitated entrepreneurship development among women and youth by engaging them in agricultural activities. Women were introduced to home-based farming, which reduced their workload and time burden and increased their income to meet household expenses and support their children's education. Additionally, the annual report (p. 49) indicates that the programme contributed to addressing the case of land seizure from women by introducing it into Local Development Committees (CLD). The inclusion of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and community leaders in the programme's needs assessment suggests an alignment between these GEDSI outcomes and community needs.

To monitor GEDSI outcomes, the programme team used quantitative tools such as attendance lists and checklists. Notably, the interviewee claimed that these tools were not able to capture qualitative information.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

According to the interviewee and a review of the annual report, the programme's GEDSI approach was considered effective. The interviewee noted that the approach was feasible within the social and cultural context of the province and could drive behaviour change. The report (p. 49) indicated that without insisting on 30% female representation, the inclusion of women would be negligible in all programme domains. It also indicated that the approach of encouraging women to run for leadership roles increased their likelihood of serving as workshop leaders.

There were also challenges that hindered the achievement and, ultimately, sustainability of gender results. The interviewee felt that the timeline and budget were limited in achieving gender indicators owing to the community's reluctance to adopt appropriate gender-related practices. The report shows this by indicating that



the programme had a marginal impact on the social roles assigned to men and women in daily life (p. 49). It also indicates that women are still disadvantaged in terms of the allocation of domestic and extra domestic work as well as family responsibilities (p.49).

Impact/transformational change:

The interviewee shared some of the programme's most promising practices. First, the programme fostered the sedentarisation of agriculture among women, which reduced the required effort for them and enhanced their financial stability. Secondly, women started to occupy leadership roles in CLD, develop their own associations, advocate for women's voices, and impart their knowledge to others.

Regarding CAFI/FONAREDD's support for GEDSI integration, the interviewee stated that they used to discuss project results with FONAREDD during reporting or steering committee meetings. Regrettably, they claimed that the support did not completely align with their needs owing to the absence of GEDSI experts from the meetings.

The interviewee expressed uncertainty about the sustainability of the programme's impact and promising practices, given that the programme did not last long enough. As they illustrated, long term projects tend to yield more sustainable results. PIREDD Mongala lasted five years, but the interviewee felt it was insufficient given the community's needs and the desired sustainability of the results.

Future Considerations

The interviewee expressed uncertainty about the sustainability of the programme's impact and promising practices, given that the programme should have lasted longer than five years. As a result, they expressed the need for continued funding for the programme.

PROMIS I and II Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: PROMIS I and II
- Implementing partners/partners: UNFPA and UNOPS
- Country/ies: DRC
- Value: USD 11 Million (PROMIS I) USD 33 million (PROMIS II)
- Theme: Reproductive health

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment (for PROMIS I⁵⁶)

2021 Gender score and assessment	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: 4	Score: 4	Score: 4	Score: N/A PROMIS I ended in 2023 and PROMIS II started in 2025.
	Because the 2022 FONAREDD report was not shared before 31 May 2022, CAFI could not discuss this assessment with the FONAREDD and detailed assessments per project are not provided.	Context: The report outlines that the project addresses gender, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable groups. The report has a strong implementation and integration of gender-focused activities, along with substantial efforts in monitoring and evaluating these initiatives, and significant budget allocation for gender-specific concerns.	

⁵⁶

PROMIS II is yet to be assessed.



The activities of the PROMIS-PF project are primarily focused on improving the health of women, young girls, and families in the DRC through the provision of modern contraceptive methods and the promotion of family planning to reduce maternal and infant mortality, improve access to education for young girls, and enable sustainable development of local economies. The provision of services, such as messages for behavioural changes around sexual and reproductive health, targets both men and women, boys and girls.

Implementation: Gender-Specific considerations are clearly highlighted in the report:

Increase in the number of women involved in the project implementation activities. Enlightened use of FP methods, harmonization of fertility desires within couples.

For mass activities, the project does not collect disaggregated data on the gender of the beneficiaries. For service delivery activities, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of beneficiaries are women. For mass sensitization activities, it is impossible to record the gender of participants (sometimes several hundred per event).

The number of indirect beneficiaries is the number of individuals (broken down by gender) who receive targeted support of medium intensity, or non-targeted support of strong or medium intensity.

Monitoring/Evaluation: Gender-Specific Indicators: While present, the report does lack a clear and detailed



presentation of gender-disaggregated data for the monitoring and evaluation of the gender components of the project.

Budget/Expertise: Budget Transparency: The report does not clearly delineate budget allocations for gender-focused activities, which makes it difficult to assess financial commitment to gender responsiveness. However, due to the nature and clear objectives of the project, this will not affect the high score.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

PROMIS II is a Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) project implemented by a consortium of international and national NGOs (Tulane University, DKT International, MSI Reproductive Choices, ABEF-ND, and SANRU) across 12 provinces in the DRC. The consortium is led by UNOPS and UNFPA, which are considered the lead recipients of the project's funds. The project seeks to enable access to and the use of SRH services by empowering women, adolescents, and young girls in vulnerable populations. PROMIS II is a continuation of the first phase of PROMIS and started in January 2025.

This case study includes the perspectives of three fund-level and three project-level interviewees.

The project proposal (pp. 90, 130–135) indicates that PROMIS II is guided by a gender integration Action Plan comprising three dimensions.⁵⁷ Similarly, one fund-level interviewee noted that projects' Gender Action Plans are also reviewed during the proposal evaluation process. As outlined in the project proposal, the first dimension is cross-cutting activities. This dimension requires that implementing partners (IPs) ensure gender representation of at least 30% women in all leadership and technical coordination positions and in the selection of contractors. It also emphasises the inclusion of men in all project activities, since women are the main beneficiaries of the project.

The second dimension relates to service delivery activities, including improved access to and voluntary use of Family Planning (FP) among women and adolescent girls regardless of age, matrimonial status, ethnicity, among other factors, and the training of service providers on gender aspects. The third includes demand-generation activities to augment the demand for and use of FP across different demographic groups. In this dimension, IPs are recommended to incorporate

⁵⁷Project proposal: PROGRAMME DE MISE À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA PLANIFICATION FAMILIALE EN RD CONGO « PROMIS-PF »



gender aspects into behaviour change messages and FP communication campaigns. This dimension also focuses on activities to raise awareness of the links connecting FP and education, empowerment, political involvement, access to resources, and sustainable environmental management for women. However, one sub-recipient interviewee indicated that their project activities lack a GEDSI integration approach and related indicators. They further claimed that the lead recipient (UNOPS) did not direct them to capture GEDSI aspects or set related objectives. On the other hand, the other sub-recipient indicated that they had been informed. This suggests limited communication regarding GEDSI expectations between the UNOPS and SANRU or a lack of information on the part of the SANRU respondent.

The lead recipient interviewee identified that CAFI and FONAREDD request projects to report on the gender approach used and provide the results disaggregated by gender. Notably, the FONAREDD reporting template has sections for gender-disaggregated data (Section 5) and for projects' gender approach (Section 8).⁵⁸ One sub-recipient interviewee reported that they were using FONAREDD reporting template to report on gender aspects.

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

Sub-recipients discussed some GEDSI outcomes of PROMIS II. One of them indicated that the project would fight unsafe or clandestine abortions, unintended pregnancies, and early marriage among adolescents and youth. One of the sub-recipients also pointed out that educating and distributing contraceptives helped reduce unintended pregnancies in different schools in the past. This interviewee likely referred to the PROMIS project in general (including both PROMIS I and II). They further added that by providing FP, the project combats poverty, especially among smallholders who rely on cutting down trees to survive, hence slowing deforestation. The project's Gender Action Plan (p. 5) also indicates that by promoting the use of FP, the project would reduce various forms of gender inequality.⁵⁹

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

One fund-level interviewee noted that PROMIS II is more comprehensive than PROMIS I (the first phase) by not only providing contraceptives but also building the capacity of health service providers for sustainable health systems and contributing to the reduction of maternal mortality. As they added, the integration of youth education with health services is a distinguishing factor that sets PROMIS apart from other gender programmes.

⁵⁸ CANEVAS DE RAPPORT DES PROJETS FINANCÉS PAR L'INITIATIVE POUR LA FORET DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE (CAFI) ET LE FONAREDD

⁵⁹ Canevas Analyse et Plan d'Action Genre PROMIS – PF



The PROMIS 2022 final evaluation reported that PROMIS' GEDSI aspects were weak in the design and recommended that the project pay particular attention to the most vulnerable populations (pp. 11, 22, 42, 43, 46).⁶⁰ Interestingly, the lead-recipient interviewee (UNOPS) indicated that PROMIS continuously seeks to identify and address GEDSI gaps. For instance, they are working to create disability-specific strategies by tailoring project materials to the entire community, including people with hearing impairments.

Impact/transformational change:

One sub-recipient interviewee indicated that through PROMIS II interventions, adolescents and young girls in schools gained increased engagement in SRH information sharing. Another sub-recipient respondent noted that PROMIS is directly linked to women's and DRC's economic opportunity improvements because FP helps women space or limit pregnancies, thereby increasing their participation in the workforce. When discussing PROMIS' negative externalities, this interviewee claimed that social norms or perceptions that women who use contraception are likely to be unfaithful to their husbands may jeopardise FP uptake.

Future Considerations

At the project level, one sub-recipient indicated that this case study was an opportunity for their team to learn how and why to incorporate GEDSI into their activities.

⁶⁰ Evaluation indépendante finale du Programme de mise à l'échelle de la planification familiale en RD Congo (PROMIS-PF)



Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: Programme de recherche et de surveillance des écosystèmes forestiers du Gabon
- Implementing partners/partners: TNC
- Country/ies: Gabon
- Value: USD 2.5 million
- Theme: Sustainable forest resource management

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 Gender score and assessment	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: N/A	Score: Too early to assess	Score: 2 Context: Gender considerations are implemented minimally; Tabel 9.1 is included but incomplete. This project, which begun only in June 2023, will be expected to have more gender-related data to show further along in its progress. Implementation: Recruitment targets are gender sensitive as presented in the ProDoc, with at least 30% female participation in working groups and committees. Implementation agencies are to be responsible for deploying their own	Score: 1 Context: No gender-related context is provided in this document. Implementation: The project mentions that continued efforts are needed to ensure better representation of women in recruitment and decision-making roles. Monitoring/Evaluation: The only sex-disaggregated indicators in the document are found in the beneficiary table. These figures reveal a very low participation of women, with



representatives to evaluate the projects' gender sensitivity

Monitoring/Evaluation: Monitoring/Evaluation missing from ProDoc. However, it is noted that monitoring challenges is to be completed by implementing agencies' representatives

Budget/Expertise: No budget allocation to gender mainstreaming presented in the Pro Doc.

only 8% of direct beneficiaries and 30% of indirect beneficiaries being female.

Budget/Expertise: No mentions of gender in the budget.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

The project team stated that the project was not designed with a specific GEDSI integration approach and that CAFI did not set any related objectives. Notably, the team emphasised that the implementing organisation (TNC) has a GEDSI framework that is also used in this project. Specifically, this project sought to apply a gender-transformative approach, starting with identifying the root causes and barriers of societal gender disparities, as well as different disadvantaged groups in communities and the reasons for their disadvantage. In response, the project will later engage with communities and create change champions responsible for awareness and dialogues on gender-related barriers at the community level. Interestingly, the TNC Human Rights guide (pp. 20, 21, 29) stipulates that TNC dialogue activities should be non-discriminatory, incorporate contributions from all social identities, and that the TNC staff should encourage broader participation of underrepresented groups.⁶¹ In addition, the team evoked the possibility of ensuring gender balance within the project team.

The project team noted that the alignment of the project with community GEDSI needs and/or priorities may not be determined because it does not currently engage the community. The project team was unfamiliar with the applicability of the UN-REDD Gender Marker in CAFI operations and expressed a medium level of understanding/awareness of GEDSI in this project.

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

According to the project team, the current project will contribute to gender and social equality by including men, women, youth, and other categories in the project team. The project's results will contribute to addressing the gender-blind aspects of the country's policy and make it more gender sensitive. To monitor GEDSI

⁶¹ Human Rights Guide for Working with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. [TNC-Full-Guide-01-01.pdf](#)



outcomes, the project sought to examine how the research will consistently address the issues of women's and men's participation and leadership. Remarkably, this approach helps assess the alignment between the current project and the Gabonese law promoting equal participation of men and women in political and public life.⁶² However, the team indicated that this approach would have captured all contributions to GEDSI if it had been in use since the commencement of the project.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

Effectiveness:

The project team stated that the project's GEDSI integration approach (gender transformative) is effective because of its ability to identify gender-related issues and inform mitigation strategies. However, the team highlighted that it requires considerable resources, such as funds and time, because it involves performing gender analysis.

Impact/transformational change

The project team discussed some promising practices and contributions to GEDSI outcomes. This includes improved participation of men, women, and youth and enhanced gender sensitivity in country policies.

At the time of the interview, the project team reported that no Gender Assessment had been conducted for the project. Interestingly, the team expressed readiness to use the learning from any assessment that will be undertaken to inform programming.

Nevertheless, the project team stressed that CAFI did not provide any GEDSI implementation support or compliant documents. However, they indicated that the interviews conducted with them helped them learn the significance of and how to integrate GEDSI into their activities.

Future Considerations

The project team highlighted opportunities for further support for GEDSI within the project. One of these is to improve the integration of GEDSI to make existing policies more gender-sensitive and inclusive. Another is to ensure equal participation and contribution to research in order to underscore the challenges faced by women and youth and how they are impacted by climate issues. To maximise these opportunities, the team suggested that implementing agencies coordinate to develop a unified GEDSI integration plan.

⁶² Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/GAB/CO/7>



The team indicated that supporting GEDSI will contribute to the SDGs through the support of the social sustainability pillar, which addresses gender. TNC's "How we Work" page also outlines that including women, Indigenous People, and other community groups would result in increased forest protection, climate change mitigation, sustainable food production, and other positive conservation outcomes.⁶³ However, the team reported that government institutions' lack of willingness and social norms may hinder GEDSI integration and its results and highlighted the need to promote a responsive mindset.

⁶³ TNC's "How we Work" page. [Partnering with Indigenous People and Local Communities](#)



PIREDD Maniema Project Summary

Snapshot of project

- Name of project: PIREDD Maniema
- Implementing partners/partners: GIZ
- Country/ies: DRC
- Value: USD 20 M
- Theme: Sustainable forest resource management

Summary of Gender Scores and Assessment

2021 Gender score	2022 Gender score and assessment	2023 Gender score and assessment	2024 Gender score and assessment
Score: not assessed	Score: 4 Because the 2022 FONAREDD report was not shared before 31 May 2022, CAFI could not discuss this assessment with the FONAREDD and detailed assessments per project are not provided.	Score: 4 Context: This Prodoc proves that gender is an important part of the project in every aspect of the project document. Gender is taken into account from the design of offers through the analysis and proposals. As special focus is given to equality, especially in the recruitment process. Context is also given when it comes to challenges, and the cultural resistance that has made the	Score: 4 Context: The report demonstrates a thorough analysis of the context, particularly regarding obstacles. These obstacles are primarily due to cultural resistance. To illustrate how these obstacles have been addressed, an analysis has been conducted to tackle the low representation of women in the CFCL committees. Implementation: The implemented activities are well documented in the report and highlighted in the 2024 progress. Almost all effects illustrate the



gender inclusion more difficult, especially in the implementation of activities.

Implementation: Gender is an important part of the activities of this project. Many activities focus on improving gender inclusion: panel on gender, capacity building on gender, training of women leaders etc....

In the implementation of the activities, there is also a great focus on gender, and making sure women are participating in everything, not only activities usually associated with women, such as AVEC.

Monitoring/Evaluation: The Prodoc mentions disaggregated indicators.

The 5 effects are all disagreed by gender.

The performance evaluation includes disaggregated indicators. Two products specifically take gender into account:

- Product 1.2 « Nombre de stratégies et plan provinciaux élaborés » implements a women's inclusion strategy.

- Product 2.1 focus on women participation

The communication plan has a gender strategy, and use several communication tools to increase visibility: brochure on gender involvement, radio broadcast...

integration of gender aspects in the implementation.

To illustrate: Effect 2: Gender strategy developed, women leaders strengthened.

Effect 4: Women represent 52% of the people working on the PSE approach.

Communication has played a significant role in the gender responsiveness of activities, actively sharing essential elements on gender integration, notably through the distribution of brochures and roll-ups.

Monitoring/Evaluation: The report demonstrates the importance given to gender issues in this project, as all results highlight gender-disaggregated indicators.

To illustrate, we can note:

Effect 2: Among the savers who made investments, women represent 86%.

46% of the direct beneficiaries of the project are women.

56% of the governance aspect beneficiaries are women.

Community awareness on gender concepts has been particularly important in the monitoring and evaluation aspects. Partners and local authorities



An environmental and social impact study includes a gender analysis.

Budget/Expertise: One specific budget line is in link with gender. It is the line for the product 2.1, that focus on women participation.

participated in training sessions aimed at informing and educating them on gender integration.

Budget/Expertise: An entire product is fully integrated with gender issues: "Product 2.1: Human rights respected and PA and women participating." This product addresses the participation of women and the monitoring and evaluation of gender sensitivity integration among partners.

Context of GEDSI Integration across project

PIREDD Maniema started in April 2021 and is being implemented in Maniema Province. It is based on GIZ's approaches in the field of sustainable use of forests and biodiversity, from local planning to development and capacity building.

GIZ developed a gender strategy for all projects and programmes implemented under the Global Biodiversity Framework (BGF), including PIREDD Maniema. The interviewees explained the GEDSI strategy applied in this programme: The strategy starts with a gender analysis to determine the roles, responsibilities, and needs of men and women, as well as understanding the influence of gender on environmental practices and decisions at the community level. This is followed by inclusive planning, which aims to include gender aspects, such as methodologies, indicators, and targets, in the activity planning process. After that, GIZ provides implementing partners (IPs)/local grantees with capacity-building support, allowing them to effectively implement gender. Next, the strategy requires equitable implementation based on four important pillars: participation, inclusion, integration, and implication. This aims to promote equal access to programme benefits and improve the living conditions of women and Indigenous Peoples. According to the interviewees, it is always difficult for projects that are not directly linked to gender to reach 50% female representation. Subsequently, the strategy requires GIZ to monitor how local grantees integrate gender aspects into their activities. To facilitate this process, GIZ ensures that local grantees include a gender integration approach in their proposals. GIZ also provides local grantees with monitoring templates to fill in the necessary quantitative and qualitative data for submission. The final step involves observing the impact and social changes.

The gender strategy document was reviewed.⁶⁴ It includes an analysis of gender aspects specific to biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management (pp. 6-12). This section presents women's and men's roles and responsibilities, gender challenges and risks, and added values in the integration of gender. The

⁶⁴ Stratégie de genre dans les Projets de Maintien de la Biodiversité et Gestion durable des Forêts



document also presents the gender context of BGF projects and programmes. For PIREDD programmes, the strategy suggests various activities to promote gender inclusion, participation in leadership and decision-making, and entrepreneurship among women. Some of these activities include training, sensitisation, and provision of material support (pp. 16-17). Moreover, the document indicates the priorities and orientations (pp. 24-36) as well as the monitoring and evaluation approach (p. 37) for the integration of gender among other sections.

The interviewees noted that FONAREDD did not provide them with gender markers and that they use those developed internally.

EQ 1: GEDSI results/outcomes

The interviewees shared a document outlining the GEDSI outcomes for 2024.⁶⁵ The document indicates various programme achievements in terms of technical skills, income improvement, participation in decision-making, and leadership among women. For instance, for land-use planning, the document indicates that the programme enabled 1,020 beneficiaries to become cartographers, of whom 18% were women. For the governance pillar, 419 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) were created as a result of the programme and managed to raise USD 802,235. The VSLAs included 10,200 members, with women representing over 86%. In addition, 5,728 women were involved in decision-making in different Local Development Committees (LDC). Notably, as part of this programme, women leaders in Maniema developed their own strategic plan for women's involvement in leadership and decision-making in Maniema.⁶⁶ This plan outlines various activities, including training female leaders, mobilising men, women, and youth on the importance of girls' education, popularising legal policies that favour women, and encouraging women to start their own enterprises (p. 4).

When discussing alignment with community needs, the programme-level interviewees noted that the programme activities are reflected in the simple land-use plans elaborated by local communities, which included women in the decision-making and validation processes. They further added that the programme integrates all segments of the community, including women, men, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and people living with disabilities (PWDs). However, there are no quantitative data on the representation of Indigenous Peoples and PWDs in the reports reviewed.

The interviewees noted that PIREDD Maniema developed an electronic system—with gender sections—for programme-level stakeholders to report gender aspects, these were not reviewed. In addition, interviewees indicated that the implementing team conducts meetings to discuss gender integration challenges and solutions.

EQs 2, 3, and 4: GEDSI Effectiveness, Impact and Transformational Change

⁶⁵ GESI 2024 PIREDD /Maniema

⁶⁶ Plan stratégique de l'inclusion de la femme dans les instances décisionnelle de la province du Maniema ; Rédigé par une soixantaine des femmes leaders de la province du Maniema et appuyé par le programme GIZ / BGF/PIREDD/Maniema du 05 au 17 November 2021

***Effectiveness:***

According to the interviewees, this programme is not directly linked to gender. It focuses on natural resources, where women are usually excluded from debate and decision-making. However, women demonstrated a considerable level of understanding and acceptance of the programme's area of intervention, underscoring the effectiveness of its gender/GEDSI approach. The interviewee added that the programme had improved its GEDSI approach by adding mobilisation tools such as training modules, leaflets, and brochures for extensive community awareness.

Impact/transformational change:

The interviewees discussed examples of promising practices related to GEDSI outcomes. As indicated, VSLAs have been integrated into all programme pillars to empower women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples. They also noted that women have been able to make capital investments in agribusinesses. Moreover, they indicated that the programme identified a category of community members, known as "agents of change," who previously opposed gender aspects and empowered them to mobilise others. Importantly, the interviewees noted that they abide by the "Do No Harm" principle in their efforts to promote gender equality and address potential social and cultural barriers related to gender.

The interviewees noted that learning from internal gender assessments informs programming. They emphasised that the current GEDSI/gender approach is under revision based on the headquarters' recommendations and on-the-ground realities, and the changes will be incorporated in the second phase of the programme, which will commence in 2026.

Future Considerations

The interviewees noted that for the second phase of the programme, CAFI/FONAREDD should define specific gender objectives and allocate targeted resources to achieve them. They also highlighted the need to foster the exchange of experiences on gender inclusion among stakeholders by organising lessons learned workshops. Moreover, the team indicated that through the programme, many VSLAs were established in Maniema, and they include more women than men. Therefore, future projects/programmes with similar interventions will build on them rather than starting from scratch. Furthermore, there are many women-led organisations in Maniema that need funds and capacity building, highlighting the scope for more funding.



Annex 8: Ethics and Safeguarding

The approach has drawn upon key FCDO guidance in the document ‘DFID ethical guidance for research, evaluation and monitoring activities⁶⁷’ (published in May 2019) and further guidance including: the FCDO Principles for Digital Development, the Social Research Association Research Ethics Guidance, OECD Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines, and the Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation Guidelines. It has also adhered to the FCDO’s Leave No One Behind commitments, the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, the UK Disability Inclusion Strategy, and the UK’s broader international commitments such as the Washington Principles. Furthermore, Ecorys is a member of the FCDO-supported Safeguarding Leads Network and is a signatory to the pledge to the private sector to collectively improve practice on safeguarding. All team members have been briefed on the relevant ethical and inclusion procedures for ARCAN.

Our primary data collection has included KIIs with project stakeholders – those directly engaged by ARCAN including programme MEL and research managers, FCDO pillar leads, implementing partners and downstream partners, and external stakeholders. For selected IP country case studies, where relevant we have conducted interviews or focus groups with intended beneficiaries of ARCAN programmes. We have reviewed fieldwork plans for ethical considerations and mitigated any risks, as well as ensuring compliance with the GDPR.

In person or virtual, our KIIs have all adhered to the following requirements:

- ▶ **Verbal consent will be required for interviews:** Informed consent has been sought from all informants. Information has included explaining to potential respondents the purpose and nature of the evaluation. An information note script has been read aloud before each KII/focus group discussion, covering the nature and purpose of the evaluation and explaining the approach to anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection. Respondents have not been obliged to participate, and this has been communicated to IPs and other organisations supporting the recruitment of respondents. We have ensured informed consent is obtained from all individuals before commencing interviews.
- ▶ **Anonymity:** The key ethical issue for the evaluation is protecting and managing the confidentiality of stakeholders. All engagement with stakeholders, including providing information related to the evaluation, has been done in a way that respects individuals and their confidentiality. No individuals have been identified by name in the report or in a way that would allow them to be identified from contextual information.
- ▶ **Data protection:** Data will be stored in accordance with Ecorys’ Data Protection Policies. As a registered data controller with the Information Commissioner’s Officer (Z5564761), Ecorys has a designated Data Protection Officer who is responsible for protecting data in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Ecorys applies rigorous GDPR-compliant processes to ensure that all staff and participants are aware of how and why personal data are collected, used, and stored, and how long they will be retained for, and to ensure that data are collected only for valid purposes and kept only for as long as necessary.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding procedures for the ARCAN MEL contract are based on FCDO guidance, particularly the advice given in Enhanced Due Diligence: Safeguarding for external partners, and Ecorys’ and Altai’s Codes of Conduct. If it is

⁶⁷ Thorley, L., & Henrion, E. (2019). DFID ethical guidance for research, evaluation and monitoring activities. Prepared for the UK Department for International Development.

decided that the evaluation will invite participation from potentially vulnerable individuals, the ARCAN MEL safeguarding procedures are intended to provide an appropriate and sufficient framework that ensures the wellbeing of those involved in the evaluation, including participants and potential participants, as well as members of the evaluation team. ARCAN MEL Fieldwork Plans have been submitted along with our evaluation protocol to an internal ethics review panel, where required.

Key principles of our safeguarding approach include:

- ▶ **Protection and privacy of participants:** Methodological checks ensure participants cannot be identified with their responses or in any of the reports. This extends to all participants and to all topics, not just sensitive issues. Data collection takes place in private, and all data will be securely and appropriately stored – any physical data will remain with the researcher until it can be placed in secure storage; electronic data will be password protected. Sensitive personal data, for example gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion will not be collected.
- ▶ **Informed consent:** Oral informed consent, obtained at the outset of KIIs, will empower participants to make informed decisions about engaging in the study by providing:
 - ▷ clear explanations of the aims and objectives of the study
 - ▷ potential risks associated with participation
 - ▷ clarity around voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the evaluation
 - ▷ processes around any safeguarding issues including the role and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)
- ▶ **Partnership:** It is our intention that the evaluation serves to further establish good relationships with stakeholders. They have been and will be consulted and informed about all evaluation activities. This is intended to promote acceptance of the evaluation across the IPs and DPs, and identify any emerging ethical or safeguarding issues.
- ▶ **Prompt investigation of issues:** DSOs at Ecorys and Altai will act in the event of any safeguarding issues being raised. The specific process to be taken in the event of safeguarding issues being raised are outlined in the Project Implementation Manual. We acknowledge that participants who wish to raise safeguarding issues may in principle be reluctant to notify the ARCAN MEL team, and so we will provide contact information for Ecorys DSOs who are not part of the core team and can rather act at ‘arm’s length’ from the project.
- ▶ **Training:** All researchers/data collection staff attend training that addresses safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures. This covers handling disclosures, reporting allegations, confidentiality, and codes of practice and behaviour.

Ethical Approval

The ARCAN MEL Unit observes all guidelines and rules relating to the conduct of research and evaluation in the countries selected for in-country data collection. We seek ethical approval (or exemption as appropriate) for all primary data collection by writing formally to the relevant authorities in the relevant jurisdictions, where required. A study protocol describing the design and data collection, analysis, participant confidentiality and consent, and the study tools is submitted for review and approval as required. If ethical approval is required, formal responses from the relevant authorities approving data collection activities are a prerequisite for the evaluation data collection to proceed.

ARCAN MEL also abides with Ecorys internal policy guiding the conduct of research and evaluation.

Any proposals to carry out research with potentially vulnerable individuals require internal ethical approval. The evaluation protocol is in that case submitted to an internal ethics review panel for review and approval. The members of the ethics panel have independence from each project that they scrutinise. This enables them to put the participants at the centre of their review. The ethics panel reviews the protocol and provides feedback on the approach. The total process for internal and external ethical review exemption is expected to take around 2 – 4 weeks.



Annex 9: Use and Influence Plan

The first draft of this report was shared with the CAFI Secretariat ahead of a presentation of the key findings and recommendations of the case study in January 2026. Following this presentation (where other donors and Executive Board members attended) and subsequent feedback from the CAFI Secretariat, the authors made small changes to any factual inaccuracies and adapted recommendations to fully account for the different roles and responsibilities of the CAFI Executive Board, donors, CAFI Secretariat and implementing partners. A final version of the case study was then shared with the CAFI Secretariat and FCDO.

FCDO will present this case study to the Executive Board, and discussions will follow as to how the case study's findings and recommendations can be best actioned. The case study will be shared more broadly as CAFI and FCDO see fit.