

IPSI Collaborative Activity Proposal Form

The following form is for use when submitting proposed IPSI Collaborative Activities for consideration by the IPSI Steering Committee. See the Collaborative Activity Guidelines on p. 3 for more information.

Please return the completed form to the IPSI Secretariat (isi@unu.edu).

IPSI Collaborative Activities are the activities that shall be undertaken by more than one IPSI member and constitute an important part of IPSI activities with the purpose of fostering collaboration within the IPSI membership and implementing the IPSI Strategy and Plan of Action. The IPSI Collaborative Activities shall be developed and implemented with the endorsement of the Steering Committee in accordance with the Collaborative Activity Guidelines. Resource mobilization for IPSI collaborative activities shall be the responsibility of the implementing members in principle. – IPSI Operational Guidelines, Chapter 5.4

Date of Application:	July 24, 2024
Project title:	
"Strengthening the Restoration and Sustainable Management of Sacred Forests in RAMSAR Sites 1017 and 1018 in Benin."	
Collaborating organizations (IPSI members): (*Please underline the leading organization)	
1- <u>NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION "CERCLE POUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES RESSOURCES NATURELLES" (CE.SA.RE.N - ONG).</u> 2- NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION "AMAF-BENIN" 3- NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION "NATURE TROPICALE"	
Other contributing organization(s) (including IPSI non-members):	
Expected term (e.g. 1 January 2014 – 31 December 2015):	
January 2025-December 2028 (three years).	
IPSI strategic objective(s) addressed (tick all that apply; see p. 3 for more details):	
X	1. Increase knowledge and understanding of SEPLS
X	2. Address direct and underlying causes responsible for the decline or loss of SEPLS
X	3. Enhance benefits from SEPLS
X	4. Enhance human, institutional and sustainable financial capacities

Continued on next page.

Description of the activity:

Please provide as much information as possible on:

- **Background**
- **Activities (including site locations if applicable)**
- **Expected outcomes**
- **Actors and task sharing**
- **How the activity relates to the IPSI Strategy and IPSI Plan of Action**
- **Resources, funding**
- **Monitoring and reporting**

1- Background

The Ramsar sites 1017 and 1018 cover an area of 11,770.5 km² and host over 500 Sacred Forests (SF) with several rare species of flora and fauna, some of which are listed on the IUCN Red List. Sacred forests represent an endogenous form of in situ conservation of species and an important tool for the sustainable conservation of the original biodiversity of ecosystems in Benin. The SF also play a crucial role in the lives of the estimated 5,158,879 inhabitants due to their ecological, religious, socio-economic, cultural, and ceremonial functions.

However, due to outdated agricultural techniques, rural poverty (75% of households live on less than 1 US dollar/day), and the weakness of traditional power and associated beliefs, the SF are undergoing continuous degradation, even total destruction. Indeed, 60% of sacred forests are degraded; 34% have experienced a significant reduction in area, and 14% have disappeared.

To address the main causes of SF degradation, the NGO CeSaReN implemented the Project PD 754/14 Rev.3 (F) "Restoration and Sustainable Management of Sacred Forests in RAMSAR Sites 1017 and 1018 in Benin" from 2017 to 2020, with financial support from the ITTO.

At the end of the project in March 2020, the main achievements and related products obtained were:

(i) 42 SF with legal recognition orders, (ii) 42 Simple Management Plans are developed and technically validated in a participatory manner with all stakeholders, (iii) 42 topographic surveys and plans of SF carried out, (iv) 42 SF delimited, marked, and materialized, (v) 68.5 ha reforested in the neighboring territories of SF, (vi) 162.35 ha enriched with plant species in 42 SF and 8 SF enriched with CITES specimens, (vii) \$85,000 injected into the territories for the financing of reforestation and enrichment activities (production of plants, plantations, maintenance of established plantations), (viii) 86 farmers in the SF adjacent areas supported for the adoption of Improved Production Systems (IPS) on 179 ha, (ix) 129 people grouped into 43 associations for various Income-Generating Activities (IGA) such as beekeeping, livestock farming, small businesses, IPS, etc., benefited from \$67,099 in green credits and 325 domestic gas kits through 3 sustainable financing mechanisms established and operational at the level of Decentralized Financial Systems (DFS), (x) 42 Local Committees for the Management of Sacred Forests (CLFS) created by communal orders, (xi) 4 Communal Committees for the Coordination and Monitoring of the Integration of SF (CCSI) created by communal orders, and their capacity for SF management strengthened.

One (01) year after the project's closure, CeSaReN NGO sought and obtained funding from the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Program (BIOPAMA) under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to measure the progress of the efficiency of the management of the 42 community protected areas with the Monitoring of Effectiveness of Management (METT-4) tool. This was to reorient or adapt, as needed, the capacity-building and development activities planned for these areas.

Following the evaluation, it was found that the results obtained above are still fragile and require improvements and consolidation actions because the various processes initiated concerning (i) sustainable management tools for SF, (ii) conflicts between farmers and sacred forests, (iii) increasing the income of beneficiaries are not yet completed.

It is in this context that a new project proposal on the restoration and sustainable management of SF has been developed to, on the one hand, strengthen and consolidate the achievements of the previous project and, on the other hand, go beyond the current pilot nature of certain project activities and move towards significant achievements necessary for the valorization and sustainability of SF. This proposal was submitted to the ITTO, which approved it at its 58th session for funding.

See references for the approved project at the ITTO level in the table below:

TITLE:	Strengthening the restoration and sustainable management of sacred forests in Ramsar Sites 1017 and 1018.
SERIAL NUMBER:	PD 915/21 REV.2 (F)
COMMITTEE:	Reforestation and Forest Management
SUBMITTED BY:	Government of the Republic of Benin
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE:	French

This submission of collaborative activities aims to request support from the IPSI secretariat to enhance the visibility and effectiveness of this project through its networking.

2- Activities

The main activities to be carried out within the framework of this project to achieve the expected outcomes are:

Outcomes 1

Activity 1.1: Ensure the adoption of the 40 simple management plans validated by the Ministry in charge of SF.

Activity 1.2: Inform and strengthen the capacities of CLFS and CCSI on land property rights and the integration of SF into the protected areas system.

Activity 1.3: Support the process of obtaining property titles for the 40 SF.

Activity 1.4: Successfully complete the integration process of the 40 SF into the protected areas system.

Activity 1.5: Strengthen the intervention capacities of CLFS in the implementation of developed and adopted simple management plans, including partnership search, lobbying, negotiation, etc.

Activity 1.6: Support the implementation of simple management plans (Signing implementation agreements, establishing 40 ha of plantations in the territories, enriching 50% of the unrecovered area of the 40 SF (150 ha); ecological monitoring of faunal enrichments in 08 SF; strengthening sensitive boundaries of 10 SF (200 meters), implementing essential infrastructure for SF restoration activities: digging 5 wells and refurbishing 10 km of access roads to SF).

Activity 1.7: Review the 40 simple management plans developed during the previous project.

Outcomes 2

Activity 2.1: Recruit a consultant to train and provide on-site support to farmers neighboring SF on Improved Production Systems (IPS) and the effects of climate change.

Activity 2.2: Organize a study tour for the benefit of 80 farmers neighboring SF (2/farm) to a practical reference center in the promotion of improved production systems (SONGHAI Project).

Activity 2.3: Financially support 100 farmers neighboring SF who have received training in implementing IPS.

Activity 2.4: Organize 3 competitions for the best farmers neighboring the 40 SF (1 competition/year).

Outcomes 3

Activity 3.1: Evaluate, with all stakeholders, the ongoing mechanisms for sustainable financing of Income-Generating Activities (IGA).

Activity 3.2: Validate the study on the evaluation of sustainable financing mechanisms for IGAs.

Activity 3.3: Train 80 new IGA groups on the potential socio-economic valorization of SF and neighboring territories' resources.

Activity 3.4: Financially support 80 new IGA groups.

3- Expected outcomes

Three outcomes are expected from the implementation of this project:

Outcome 1: Sacred forest management tools are effectively implemented.

Outcome 2: Conflicts between farmers and sacred forests are eliminated.

Outcome 3: Livelihoods of local populations are improved.

4- Actors and task sharing

The main beneficiaries of this project are the same as those of project PD 754/14 Rev.3 (F): Dignitaries, Traditional Chiefs, villages leaders, Kings, Land Chiefs, community leaders, Vodou Priests, communities or local populations composed of men, women, and children from villages depending on the resources of the sacred forests, farmers neighboring the sacred forests, and Mayors who are responsible for the management of natural resources in their Municipality.

The project will be supported in its implementation by other key structures as presented in the table below.

Group of actors	characteristics	Problems, needs, interests	Potentialities	Participation in the project
<i>Key stakeholders</i>				
Traditional authorities: (Dignitaries, Traditional Chiefs, village leaders, Kings, Land Chiefs, community leaders, Vodou Priests,	Garants and managers of the Sacred Forests, these authorities ensure protection, define rules for access to sacred forests, and manage resources.	Insufficient capacity to ensure the conservation of Sacred Forests in the current context of reduced authority and demographic pressure. Weak livelihoods. Needs to see the Sacred Forests equipped with a management plan and legal ownership title.	Influential authorities in the village. Holders of local knowledge in the conservation of natural resources and Sacred Forests. Strong willingness for participatory management.	Primary beneficiaries, they will be supported by the project in terms of capacity building for sustainable management of the Sacred Forests. They will lead, along with other stakeholders, the Local Committees for the Management of the Sacred Forests (CLFS) and the

				implementation of simple management plans.
Local communities or populations	Users consisting of men, women, and children from the village who rely on the resources of the Sacred Forests.	Lack of means to ensure sustainable exploitation of resources and conservation of the Sacred Forests. Actors exerting various pressures on the Sacred Forests. Weak livelihoods.	Strong potential for the development of income-generating activities (IGA) to preserve the Sacred Forests. Eagerly awaiting the implementation of the project. Strong willingness for sustainable management of the Sacred Forests.	Primary beneficiaries and direct actors for the implementation of development activities and alternative income-generating activities.
The farmers residing near the Sacred Forests	An active group composed of residents near the FS, deriving income from their agricultural activities.	Need to increase agricultural production. Limited financial resources for the implementation of improved production techniques; encroach or encroach on the SF to expand cultivated areas.	Understand the importance of the SF but concerned about increasing agricultural production. Awaiting the implementation of improved production techniques. Supportive of behavior change.	Primary actors and beneficiaries of the promotion of Improved Production Systems and capacity building for the implementation of Income-Generating Activities (IGA).
<i>Secondary actors</i>				
The Municipal Authorities	Responsible for managing land, producing and implementing municipal development plans.	Weak exploitation of development opportunities, insufficient capacity for integrated natural resource planning.	Exert authority and have a strong influence in land management. Opt for sustainable natural resource management.	Ensure the implementation of PSG and the integration of FS. Monitor the implementation of simple management plans; Collaborate to secure land tenure for SF and contribute financially to the implementation of simple management plans
Forest Administration	Represented in all project intervention municipalities. Responsible for the implementation of	Lack of sufficient means to support sustainable management of community forests.	Increasingly understands the importance and potential of SF.	Support and monitor the adoption and implementation of PSG, the

	national forest policy, laws, and regulations related to sustainable forest resource management.	Little interest in FS management in the past.		integration of FS into the protected area system of the municipality. Mobilize additional resources for the sustainability of the project.
Beninese Agency for the Environment	Competent authority responsible for managing the RAMSAR sites Convention in Benin. Develops development plans for RAMSAR sites in Benin.	Insufficient resources to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of internationally important wetlands. Concerned about the degradation of natural resources in RAMSAR sites.	Strong willingness for resource conservation.	Partner institution overseeing the environmental compliance of the project through monitoring the implementation of simple management plans. Support for the institutional implementation of the project.
<i>Third-party actors</i>				
Territorial Agricultural Development Agency (Atlantique, Mono, Ouémé-Plateau):	Mandated to ensure rural development.	Concerned about the degradation of the areas surrounding the Sacred Forests and the decline in agricultural production.	Competent in capacity building for Improved Production Systems.	Collaborate with the project team to support the implementation of Improved Production Systems by farmers living near the SF selected by the project.
National Agency for Land and Property (ANDF):	Mandated to issue property titles.	Concerned with modern land and national property management.	Competent in the study of files and issuance of property titles.	Collaborate in issuing property titles on behalf of the CLFS."
Training Centers and Research Institutions	Entrusted with the mission of teaching and research.	Limited resources to support research and development actions.	Competent in training, research, studies, and exploration.	Collaborate in the implementation of research and development activities.
Decentralized Financial Institutions (SFD)	Actively involved in financing Income Generating Activities (IGAs).	Insufficient financial resources for the development of IGAs at the grassroots level.	Good experience working in the project's intervention areas.	Partnership agreement with the project for the implementation of IGAs and capacity building for beneficiaries."
NGO Partners (AMAF NGO and	Experienced in project management in the	Concerned about sustainable	Competent in training, Information,	Collaborate in the implementation of projects.

Nature Tropicale NGO)	field of environment and biodiversity	biodiversity management	Education, and Communication (IEC), research, study, and exploration	
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5- How the activity relates to the IPSI Strategy and IPSI Plan of Action

The Satoyama Initiative is the main international organization working and making significant efforts for the use of socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes (SEPLS) that maintain and conserve biodiversity. The current project aligns with strategic objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the table on page 1 of the 2023-2030 Strategy and Action Plan of the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI).

In fact:

- **Increase knowledge and understanding of SEPLS :**

The current project follows participatory studies conducted with the local populations, leading to the development of four study reports: (i) the inventory of biodiversity in the sacred forests (SF) of Ramsar sites 1017 and 1018, (ii) a cartographic study of SF in the sites, (iii) the environmental and social impact study of the project, and (iv) the socio-economic study on the FS of the sites. All these studies took into account the neighboring lands of SF and provided knowledge of the landscapes by various stakeholders. These studies assessed the current state of SF in the area and provided basic data to develop an adapted sustainable management program. They also facilitated discussions with all stakeholders, established a common vision, and collaboratively designed a project. During these exchanges, municipal authorities, dignitaries, technical experts, and local populations expressed their willingness to actively participate in implementing a project to enhance sustainable management and restore these forests.

As sacred forests are the property of local communities, their restoration and sustainable management necessarily involve an inclusive approach. The project will collaborate with all stakeholders involved in FS management and already organized into local and municipal committees for FS management. All steps will be executed following this approach to ensure that all stakeholders share the same vision and work in synergy to achieve the desired results. This is why Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) will be emphasized to enhance continuous knowledge about landscapes and their sustainable uses.

Finally, the Simple Management Plans, developed based on a better understanding of forest resources, neighboring lands, and various possibilities for their valorization, have prescribed a set of activities. The implementation of these activities will enable the current project to break the cycle of poverty and improve the living conditions of the populations.

- **Address direct and underlying causes responsible for the decline or loss of SEPLS**

The main direct and indirect phenomena contributing to the degradation of sacred forests are (i) outdated agricultural techniques leading to high demands for agricultural land, (ii) increasing impoverishment of rural populations, and (iii) the coexistence of different land tenure systems. The present project aims to address all these phenomena.

(i) Outdated agricultural techniques: The agricultural sector is dominated by small farmers with an average farm size of 1 to 2 hectares. Most of them use few modern technologies or improved inputs, resulting in low productivity. To remedy this, farmers resort to forests, perceived as vacant, naturally fertile lands exploitable to increase cultivation. This perception leads to conflicts between them and the dignitaries of the sacred forests. However, it is possible to limit or even eliminate these land conflicts. Studies conducted during the previous project reveal that constraints need to be addressed, including: i) low productivity due to soil degradation and limited use of Improved Production Systems (IPS); ii) strong dependence on rainfall conditions heavily influenced by climate change; iii) insufficient agricultural advisory services; iv) lack of appropriate credit. Various activities are planned in the present project to address and resolve all these issues.

(ii) Increasing impoverishment of rural populations: Poverty remains widespread in Benin. According to a 2018 study by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), it increased from 35% in 2009 to 40% in 2015. In 2015, poverty incidence was higher in rural areas than in urban areas, at 43% and 36%, respectively. Populations living near sacred forests derive their main income from agriculture and forest resources. However, there are other possibilities to improve their income from sacred forests that they are unaware of. Limited knowledge of the potential valorization of sacred forest resources and the absence of means to exploit these potentialities keep local populations in a vicious circle of poverty, resulting in increased degradation and deforestation of sacred forests.

This project will break this vicious circle by enhancing awareness of different valorization possibilities through the development of income-generating activities. Consequently, the project will diversify sources of income and improve the livelihoods of populations while conserving forest resources. Planned activities aim to increase the yields of the main crop (maize) of the neighboring farmers by 40% through the application of Improved Production Systems (IPS) for the benefit of neighboring farmers.

(iii) Coexistence of different land tenure systems: The land tenure of sacred forests is undergoing a significant transformation marked by the coexistence of two different land tenure concepts: the "customary" and the "modern" concepts. The customary concept considers sacred forest land as a collective, sacred, indivisible, and inalienable asset. The modern concept favors private, individual, and marketable land ownership. This situation is also the cause of land conflicts around sacred forests. The present project plans to provide sacred forests with land titles in the name of the Local Forest Committees (CLFS) to confirm their inalienable right in perpetuity over the said sacred forests in accordance with the Land and Domain Code in the Republic of Benin.

- **Enhance benefits from SEPLS**

In order to ensure sustainable management of Sacred Forests and maintain their environmental values, it was necessary to provide them with a Simple Management Plan. These development plans have planned specific actions with the ultimate goal of conserving these SF. These actions include improving biodiversity and essential functions of the forest ecosystems of sacred forests. The project will restore multiple functions to obtain multiple benefits. Indeed, in the PSG developed by the previous project, a multitude of activities are planned to restore the economic, social, and environmental functions of the SF in order to produce a wide variety of ecosystem goods and services that stakeholders will benefit from. Thus, in addition to maintaining cultural and ritual functions, continuing FS restoration activities, coupled with hunting control and protection of FS against wildfires, will improve habitat quality for fauna and promote the return of certain animal and plant species, increase carbon storage, and reduce erosion. The following are planned:

- The continuation of reforestation in the localities to increase not only wood production, FS enrichment, and recolonization of their degraded buffer zones using valuable indigenous plant species – some of which are listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species – such as African mahogany (*Khaya senegalensis*); iroko (*Milicia excelsa*); limba (*Terminalia superba*); ayous (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*); and baobab (*Adansonia digitata*). In addition, these trees will eventually provide habitat for many rare animal species, some of which are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- The reintroduction/release of specimens of fauna species into FS that meet the conditions, including the royal python (*Python regius*), considered to be a deity; savannah monitor lizard and Nile monitor lizard (*Varanus exanthematicus* and *Varanus niloticus*); chameleons (*Chamaeleo gracilis* and *Chamaeleo senegalensis*); and galagos (*Galago spp.*).
- The planting of multipurpose plant species in the neighboring localities to reduce the degradation of natural forests will be carried out by considering traditional and modern methods, including the taungya method, which combines agriculture and forestry on agricultural land.
- Hunting and wildfire control that create favorable conditions (calmness in the FS) for the gradual return of other animal species, such as the red-bellied monkey (*Cercopithecus erythrogaster*), to restored FS, an observation that the populations have already begun during the implementation of the previous project.

In the medium and long term, an increase in the forest cover of RAMSAR sites 1017 and 1018 in Benin is expected, an increase in the production of timber and firewood that will increase carbon sequestration, reduce soil erosion, etc. This not only provides energy and service benefits but also represents an opportunity for job creation and income generation.

Similarly, strengthening Income-Generating Activities and the development of beekeeping will intensify the diversification of livelihoods for the populations.

- **Enhance human, institutional and sustainable financial capacities**

The project provides an opportunity to create and establish CLFS and CCSI, which effectively ensure the participatory implementation of activities at all stages of the project and oversee their sustainability. The present project will rely on these structures and enhance their capacities to ensure the efficient implementation of all activities. The operating mode and periodic meetings specified in the decrees of their creation, as well as the mid-term review of PSG, among others, provide opportunities for accountability and inclusivity in the decision-making process.

Additionally, the project will strengthen the capacities of local communities by implementing essential socio-community infrastructure for reforestation activities (wells, basic road improvements, etc.). It will also facilitate the training and capacity building of stakeholders directly involved in the sustainable management of these forests.

The institutional and political sustainability of this project lies in the participation of the Directorate General of Water, Forests, and Wildlife, the Beninese Agency for the Environment, and the Directorate of Agriculture and

Municipalities at all stages of development and implementation. The decentralized management of communal forest resources established by national forest policy remains relevant. Moreover, the various commitments made by municipalities through the attached endorsement letters in the annex demonstrate the project's appropriation by municipal authorities and constitute clear indicators of institutional sustainability.

On the political front, the preservation, restoration, and sustainable exploitation of ecosystems, the promotion of sustainable management of all types of forests, and climate change are taken very seriously.

The financial sustainability of achievements beyond the project duration is ensured by the renewed commitment of municipalities to fund the project, notably through advocacy with the state for the establishment of Green Support Funds for Commune Development (FADEC), and the strengthening of the operational sustainable financing mechanism already in place at the level of decentralized financial systems.

On the technical side, the sustainability of achievements is ensured by (i) the continuation of traditional and modern forest management methods, including the practice of taungya (associating plantations with agricultural cultivation in the early years, ensuring the maintenance and protection of woodlands), engaging in economically valuable ecological activities such as beekeeping in SF, etc. (ii) the elimination of land conflicts between farmers and FS through technical monitoring provided by the Territorial Agricultural Development Agency present in all municipalities or even districts for agricultural sedentarization, (iii) technical monitoring by forestry agents also present in districts for the appropriate implementation of PSG, and (iv) the monitoring of the support system established by partner decentralized financial institutions.

6- Resources, funding.

Ce.Sa.Re.N NGO is the Project Execution Agency composed of a multidisciplinary team. It will work closely with (i) collaborating agencies, namely the Directorate General of Water, Forests, and Wildlife and the Beninese Agency for the Environment, (ii) NGOs that are members of the Satoyama Initiative, such as AMAF-Benin and Nature Tropicale, and (iii) all the actors mentioned in the table above in section 4 "Actors and Task Sharing."

CeSaReN will provide the project with office facilities, some necessary equipment (computers, printers, video projectors), 1 field vehicle, and 2 field motorcycles, and will cover the maintenance and fuel costs for these means of transportation. Ce.Sa.Re.N NGO will also make available to the project its Executive Director, who will act as the project coordinator, and a vehicle driver.

The project management team will execute specific technical tasks through the use of services and consultants. The recruitment is envisaged for (i) a consultant for the connectivity study of Protected Areas with other natural ecosystems, (ii) a service provider for IEC activities, (iii) a service provider for technical support to restoration activities (enrichment of FS and reforestation of degraded areas in the territories), and (iv) a service provider for the supply of plants for the enrichment of FS and reforestation of degraded areas in the territories. The project budget is presented in the budget matrix table, which provides detailed activity costs, indicating quantities, unit costs, totals, and distribution by funding source. Refer to the project document submitted to the ITTO, whose references are provided above. The summary of financial contributions and the total project cost is presented in the table below.

Budget contributions

SOURCES	CONTRIBUTION in \$ U.S.
Partner	<u>512 402</u>
Benin (Ce.Sa.Re. N NGO)	<u>161 080</u>
TOTAL	<u>673 482</u>

This project, submitted and approved by the ITTO, is still awaiting funding and may be abandoned if financing is not available soon.

7- Monitoring and reporting

Ce.Sa.Re.N NGO is the project executing agency composed of a multidisciplinary team. It will be supported by the following bodies.

7-1. Project Steering Committee

A Project Steering Committee (CDP) will be established in accordance with ITTO guidelines or any other technical and financial partner that funds the project. Its mission is to oversee project implementation, approve expenditures, ensure compliance with established procedures, review executed activities, and study and propose modifications to the budget and activities. The Project Steering Committee will ensure the strategic management of the entire project and ensure that its execution adheres to deadlines, is efficient, and aligns with the logical framework matrix and other aspects of the project document.

It is composed of 12 members distributed as follows:

- One (01) representative from the Embassy of the country (or countries) funding the project;
- One (01) representative from ITTO or the technical and financial partner funding the project;
- One (01) representative from Directorate of Water, Forests, and Wildlife;
- One (01) representative from the Benin Agency for the Environment, which is the main authority for managing RAMSAR sites;
- One representative from the Directorate of Agriculture;
- Two representatives from the concerned Communes;
- The Executive Director of Ce.Sa.Re.N. NGO;
- Two (02) representatives of the dignitaries of the SF.
- 2 representatives from AMAF NGO and Nature Tropical.

It will meet at least twice a year.

7-2. Mechanisms for Stakeholders Participation / Steering Committee

The mechanism for stakeholder participation will involve the establishment of an advisory committee composed of representatives from local and regional authorities and organizations, local communities, authorities of the SF, and especially representatives of farmers living near the forests. This committee will play a mediation role in

resolving problems that may arise during the execution of this project. It will also have the role of mitigating land conflicts between farmers and the SF. It will be composed of:

- At the regional level, representatives of key actors likely to act at the political, legal, and decision-making levels (Directorate of Water, Forests, and Wildlife, Benin Agency for the Environment, Directorate of Agriculture).
- At the decentralized level, representatives of the CCSI.
- At the local level, representatives of the CLFS.
- At the community level, representatives of socio-professional categories that impact the SF, especially farmers living near the SF, as agriculture is the main activity of the populations of the concerned villages.

It will meet at least once a year and extraordinary meetings will be held whenever necessary.

7.3. Reports, Review, and Monitoring and Evaluation

The Executing Agency will submit reports to ITTO or the technical and financial partner that funds the project according to the periodicity suitable for projects with a duration of three years. ITTO or the technical and financial partner that funds the project will conduct monitoring and evaluation missions, performed by designated individuals, according to a frequency that suits them.

The project will be monitored and evaluated by representatives of ITTO or the technical and financial partner that funds the project in accordance with the usual procedures of the Organization, as described in their Project Monitoring, Review, Reporting, and Evaluation Manual.

7.3.1. Project Progress Reports

A project launch report and the first annual operational plan (AOP) will be prepared for the transfer of the first tranche of funds required to start the project. Semi-annual progress reports will be regularly submitted to the financial partner, in any case at least four weeks before each monitoring visit by the partner. The annual financial audit report will also be produced and transmitted each year and throughout the project duration.

7.3.2. Project Completion Reports

At the end of the project, the coordinator will prepare a completion report to be submitted to the financial partner three months after the project's closure, along with the audit report following the partner's standards and requirements. This report will synthesize all activities, achievements, and returns of the project, lessons learned, the level of goal attainment, implemented structures and systems, etc. It will also provide recommendations to ensure the sustainability and replicability of project activities.

7.3.3. Technical Project Reports

The Executing Agency will provide the financial partner and other interested structures with all technical reports and reports from consultants developed during the project's execution. This primarily includes reports related to:

- Training in forest management and resource mobilization;
- Restoration of SF and reforestation of land
- Ecological monitoring of faunal enrichments
- Construction of essential infrastructure for reforestation and enrichment activities of the SF;

- Training and monitoring of the IPS implementation
- Participatory evaluation study of the implementation of green credits;
- Conducting the process of obtaining property titles for the SF;
- Participatory evaluation study of PSG implementation and revision;
- Technical training of income-generating groups.