PV CLIMATE

PROJECT IDEA NOTE

Intambwe Savannah

Pilot Project in Gakoma, Rwanda

Version 3.0
10.02.2025

Project developed by:

The Lifescape Project, in partnership with the Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association.

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Contents

Overview

Project Title:	Intambwe Savannah, Pilot Project in Gakoma, Rwanda
Location:	Rwanda, Eastern Province, Kayonza district
Project Coordinator:	Amelia Holmes, amelia.holmes@lifescapeproject.org Olivier Nsengimana, olivier@rwandawildlife.org
Project Area:	The pilot phase of the project outlined in this document involves a project area comprising 3 contiguous parcels of land. These parcels of land, are for most purposes, considered together as the project land, as they are under the same management plan and ownership structure. For some purposes (for example, detailing previous land use), it is helpful to refer to the land parcels separately. Land 1a (9.73) and Land 1b (12 ha) were acquired using grant funding in Sept 2024 for the purpose of the project. Together with Land 1c (11.5 ha), the project area includes 33.23 hectares overall of contiguous land. As the project scales, the project region may expand to the west and north of the Kayonza District, where opportunities arise. In the vicinity of the project area, there are many plots owned by non-smallholder landowners, grazing the land that have expressed interest in selling their land, which provides the project opportunities to scale through carrying out iterations of the pilot on contiguous land to the current project area. There are not any protected areas in terms of national parks directly adjacent to the area, although Akagera National Park is around 7km away from the project land. Akagera National Park contains Central Africa's largest protected wetland and the last remaining refuge for savannah-adapted species in Rwanda. The project area is adjacent to the large wetland that runs north-south along the western side of the National Park.
Project Participants:	We are exploring innovative applications of carbon finance in Rwanda to address environmental and climate challenges, while also tackling land agglomeration driven by large-scale landowners, which is worsening inequalities and increasing vulnerabilities in rural Rwandan communities. Our approach to community participation in this pilot therefore involves setting up a novel mechanism for land use that will allow communities to benefit financially and tangibly from restoration of land within their local area. This includes being involved in the restoration and maintenance of the saplings, being leaders in the conservation activities (through RWCA's established Community Conservation Champions programme) and being members of the Community Restoration Committee, which will act as the main governance node for the project (discussed in more detail in section 2). The project aims to create a gradual transition of land use in the area away from landowners based in Kigali that are grazing it unsustainably, toward a land-use focused on community-led conservation. It also aims in the long term to restore ecological functioning and productivity, and with

	the establishment of carbon finance streams, more households will have additional options to remain in their communities rather than being forced to move where the work is, relocating with their landowner employer to less degraded lands (a pattern that has unfortunately been observed in some drought-affected areas). In summary, the theory of change is rooted in fostering positive, productive relationships between local communities and their natural environments, by providing opportunities to engage in activities that are ecologically sustainable and support livelihoods. The formal participants in our project (i.e., those included in the project agreement) will be individuals leading the restoration efforts in their roles as Carbon Conservation Community Champions (CCCCs). To date, we have recruited three CCCCs—two men and one woman. Details of the recruitment process are provided in Section 2.4. When the project PDD is approved, we will recruit 2 additional CCCCs from within the community, bringing the total to five participants. These new participants will be selected from individuals already familiar with the project structure and its requirements. The rationale for recruiting three participants now and adding two later is that RWCA currently has sufficient short-term work to employ three individuals as regular restoration CCCs, but not yet five. We aim to avoid overpromising work until it is available. If the project's PDD is approved, the three current CCCs will transition to specific roles as carbon project-specific CCCs under the carbon project, and the two additional participants will be recruited at that stage. Details on the three participants have been submitted to Plan Vivo for internal review. The project looks to shift land management from absentee owners to community-led conservation, building a sense of custodianship by involving participants in restoring areas near their homes. While participants haven't previously managed this land, the project focuses on long-term benefits, offering sustained access and usage rights to create economic and social value. It will also set up community governance and capacity building so that the participants are able to manage the land sustainably, working alongside governance systems like the village council and RWCA's Community Champions framework.
Project Intervention(s):	The region is arid/semi-arid, characterised by wooded and grassland savanna. Therefore, the activities will primarily involve restoration of vegetation of the landscape, converting deforested, overgrazed, degraded land, toward re-establishing the natural ecosystems of that area. Specifically, we are proposing only one intervention for this pilot, which is the **restoration of savannah forest** for carbon and ecological uplift. Reforestation plans will be guided by RWCA's expertise, participants' local knowledge, and using the reference sites of the protected areas of Akagera National Park. Restoration planning will involve identifying a diverse assemblage of species (all native and regionally indigenous

	species) that will best support the recovery of biodiversity and ecological function in the long term, whilst also delivering carbon sequestration benefits.
Expected Benefits:	**Climate benefits** We estimated that the restoration involving afforestation of the area to equate to carbon sequestration of between **7,178** and **7,677 tCO2e** over the presumed project period of 30 years. **Economic and social benefits** Ecosystem restoration in Gakoma village will provide significant opportunities for local communities to diversify their economies and livelihoods. The project will create jobs for vulnerable households and offer financial resources to support local development projects, prioritised and managed through the Community Restoration Committee (CRC). In addition, the restoration will enhance vital ecosystem services critical to local subsistence-based economies, including improved water and soil quality, reduced erosion, and increased resilience to desertification. It will also help to addressing land inequalities by granting local communities rights to benefit from the restoration activities and management on land that was previously inaccessible to them By connecting the community to global ecosystem services markets, such as carbon credits, the project will foster long-term economic growth. This pilot is intended to serve as a scalable model for other communities, helping to mainstream nature-based solutions and natural capital in decision-making across sectors in Rwanda. **Ecological benefits** Restoration carried out at the site is expected to provide a significant uplift in biodiversity, especially given its location near Akagera National Park. Biodiversity benefits will result from improving ecological connectivity and providing 'stepping stone' habitat for key species, using the project sites as refuges and buffers, between the protected land within the National Park and agricultural areas within Kayonza but outside park boundaries. Implementing this PV climate pilot may therefore also potentially unlock further revenue and payments to be directed to the community through biodiversity crediting, using PV Nature methodologies.
Methodology:	The exact methodology that will be used is yet to be decided and field-tested. It will likely follow Plan Vivo-approved methodology PM001 - Agriculture and Forestry Carbon Benefit Assessment Methodology. The methodology will be fully developed during the PDD stage, with technical assistance through the PV Accelerator.
PIN Version:	3.0
Date Approved:	21/02/2025

1 General Information

1.1 Project Interventions

Complete Table 1.1. to describe why each project intervention is expected to provide long-term increases in carbon storage or reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and have positive impacts on local livelihoods and ecosystems. Add a row for each project intervention.

Table 1.1 – Project Interventions

Intervention Type	Project Intervention	Expected Benefits
Enter the type of intervention i.e. Protection, Restoration or Improved Management	Enter a brief description of the project intervention.	Provide a summary of the climate, livelihood and ecosystem benefits expected.
Restoration – Restored savannah forest for carbon and ecological uplift	The technical planning and implementation of the ecological restoration of the land will be led by RWCA. The intervention will be conducted on the entire project area, on land that was previously used primarily for grazing. A combination of tree-planting and passive regeneration will be used. Following the experience RWCA have in devising restoration plans for creating native forest, here will be around 15-20 species included in the restoration plan. There are three predominant species that are included in this plan: Acacia seberiana (Paperbark thorn), Acacia polyacantha (White Thorn) and Acacia hokii. The specificities of the other species will be added after further engagement	**Climate benefits** The carbon uplift for the land is estimated to be around 239.26 tCO2e per year. Over a 30-year project period, this results in a total sequestration of 7,178 to 7,677 tCO2e. The assumptions underlying these calculations are based on sequestration rates ranging from 7.2(1) to 7.7(2) tCO2e/ha/year. Note: (These figures reflect total carbon benefits rather than sellable credits, as they do not yet account for risk buffers). **Social/economic benefits** Ecosystem restoration in this area will provide opportunities for rural communities to grow and diversify their local economies and livelihoods. While the specifics of the project are yet to be determined in exact financial detail, there will be three types of financial benefit for the Gakoma village community. 1. Carbon Community Conservation Champions This type of financial benefit is created through an employment role in the

1 Grace, J., San José, J., Meir, P., Miranda, H. S., & Montes, R. A. (2006). Productivity and carbon fluxes of tropical savannas. *Journal of Biogeography, 33*(3), 387-400. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2699.2005.01448.x

2 Azada Verde, Reseed Indico, & Climate Lab. (2024). *Kurarama Kuthemba Muty "Kukumuty": Community-led Miombo enrichment and agroforestry in Sofala, Mozambique (Version 3.0)*. Plan Vivo. https://azadaverde.org/ & https://reseedindico.org/ & https://www.climatelab.be

	with communities and more detailed planning by RWCA, who have extensive experience in planning restoration projects to maximise biodiversity and ecological outcomes, with local knowledge considered. The project pioneers a novel community tenure model in Rwanda, addressing land inequalities and ecological decline simultaneously. By leveraging climate finance through the sale of carbon credits, it establishes a scalable land governance mechanism. This innovative approach empowers local communities economically while promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development goals.	project as formal project participant. These roles will be based on, though not exactly the same, as an already-established role that RWCA have employed over 100 people throughout Rwanda called Community Conservation Champions. The carbon-specific CCCs in our project region will be the formal participants, and benefit through direct, ongoing employment and lead the community aspects of the restoration activities, maintenance, and monitoring. 2. Seasonal employment A second, more temporary way for community members to benefit financially from the project is the creation of jobs due to the labour needed to prepare the ground, plant and tend seedlings, and maintain the trees in their early years of growth. Following RWCA's established approach to restoration projects elsewhere in Rwanda, these jobs will be first offered to households that are relatively more vulnerable, such as those who are landless or have a high proportion of dependents and elderly. Engaging with the Gakoma Village Committee members, particularly the person responsible for social and civil affairs has been and will continue to be a key stakeholder here. 3. Development projects financed by carbon revenues As the project (this pilot and further iterations) develops, there will be carbon revenues available (the 60% of community revenues, minus contributions to category 1 and 2 in this current section) to support community development projects, managed through the governance mechanism called the Community Restoration Committee (CRC). The CRC will be facilitated and supported by project partners but developed within communities themselves, with input

		and guidance from the Gakoma Village Committee executives. 4. Non-financial economic benefits At the local level, there will be diversified and strengthened ecosystem service provision, including reduced erosion, enhanced water and soil quality, resilience against desertification, microclimate regulation, and cultural benefits. While not directly considered financial benefits, these ecosystem services represent economic value, through natural capital uplift and productivity-enhancing processes that restored forests provide. Another key benefit at the local scale is addressing land inequalities by providing rights to local communities to benefit from land where previously they had no such rights, as the land was owned and controlled by absentee landowners. This project will help combat the need for households to sell their unproductive land or small plots to large landowners, allowing them to participate in sustainable land use. Looking at the long-term resilience of the local economy, this project will also help establish links to global markets in ecosystem services, such as carbon credits. By channelling nature-based finance into the communities, the project will foster economic growth and support further development projects. Even greater impact will be achieved through the development of this pilot, which will serve as a scalable model that can be replicated across the project region for other communities. The contribution of mainstreaming natural capital within various institutions—such as NGOs and government—will ensure the natural environment is visible in decision-making beyond the environmental sector, extending into economic policymaking in Rwanda.

		Ecological benefits Restoration carried out at the site is expected to provide a significant uplift in biodiversity given its location in close proximity to Akagera National Park. Biodiversity benefits will result from improving ecological connectivity and providing 'stepping stone' habitat for key species, using the project sites as refuges, or buffers, between the protected land within the National Park and agricultural areas within Kayonza but outside park boundaries. Implementing this PV climate pilot may therefore also potentially unlock further revenue and payments to be directed to the community through biodiversity crediting, using PV Nature methodologies.

1.2 Project Boundaries

Provide map(s) showing the boundaries of the proposed project region(s), project area(s), and protected areas within or adjacent to the project region(s). Include geospatial data files for project region and project area boundaries in Annex 1 (optional).

Complete Table 1.2 to provide a summary of the location and extent of the proposed project region(s) and project area(s).

Figure 1: Aerial view of the project area. In figure 1, the white boundary area encompasses 3 land parcels which comprise the project area. Land parcels 1a (9.73 ha) and 1b (12 ha), were bought on 18th Sept 2024 from business owners based in Kigali that were looking to sell. The RWCA-owned land, parcel 1c adjacent to the Nyamaswi wetland of 11.5 ha) was acquired by RWCA in 2023 with unrestricted funding but has not been restored due to a lack of funds and capacity - it was therefore added to the project area as it meets additionality requirements. The land outlined in orange is also RWCA-owned land, but it does not meet additionality requirement and is therefore not included in the project area. It does, however, add benefit in terms of ecological connectivity and eventually, eco-tourism prospects. The land outlined in blue is land for sale, also grazed and currently owned by a grazing businessman based in Kigali. It has potential in being a parcel of land included in future iterations of this pilot.

Figure 2. The red dot represents the project area (around Gakoma village). For ecological context, Akagera National Park (around 100,000 ha in size) is shown in the darker green to the east of the part outlined in dotted red line – this line shows the boundary of Kayonza district. The project region is broadly considered to be the areas of Kayonza district that are not under the Akagera National Park designation.

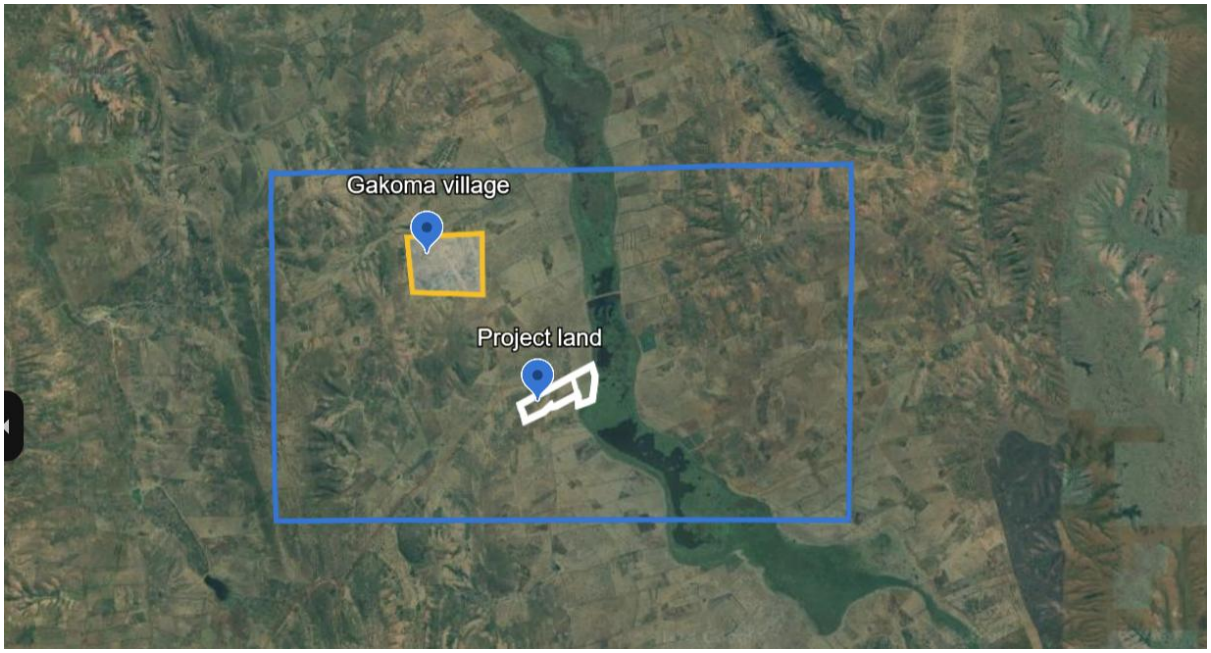


Figure 3. The blue rectangle shows where community members that will be involved in the restoration on a temporary basis, are from.

Table 1.2 Project Boundaries

Location:	Rwanda, Eastern District, Kayonza District
Project Region(s):	The Kayonza District land area is 200,000 ha. Around 30% of this area comprises the southern part of Akagera National Park. The project region is therefore broadly considered to be the areas of Kayonza district (excluding areas of land that are currently under the Akagera National Park designation). As the project scales, the project region may expand to the west and north of the Kayonza District, where opportunities arise. In the vicinity of the project area, there are many plots owned by non-smallholder landowners, grazing the land that have expressed interest in selling their land, which provides the project opportunities to scale through carrying out iterations of the pilot on contiguous land to the current project area. We are terming this 'Scaling Type A', which is the immediate focus for the scaling of the project. This differs from 'Scaling Type B,' which would involve introducing new intervention types, and involving smallholders' land directly. Scaling Type B will only be explored once the project is well-established, fully integrated into the community, and successfully implemented, ensuring that interested smallholders can be engaged across the larger project region.
Project Area(s):	The project area is located in the eastern province, within Kayonza district, located between the wetland to the west and Akagera National Park to the east (see figure 3). Three contiguous land parcels comprise the project area land of 33.23 ha in total, all within Gakoma village (SSE of the Gakoma village centre). Two of these land parcels were purchased on 18th Sept (21.73 ha together) (Land 1a and Land 1b in Figure 1) from farming businessmen. The four people currently employed on the farms (2 people on each) are in discussion with the owners regarding future employment with the same landowners on different land parcels. More details on livelihoods safeguarding are provided in later sections.

	Levels of government in Rwanda are structured in a clear, tiered system as part of a hierarchical governance framework. Our project operates within the following administrative units: ○ Eastern province (there are 5 provinces in Rwanda) ○ Kayonza district (there are 7 districts in Eastern province) ○ Murundi sector (there are 12 sectors in Kayonza district) ○ Buhabwa Cell (there are 4 cells in Murundi sector) ○ Gakoma village (there are 5-10 villages in Buhabwa cell)
Protected Areas:	Akagera National Park is a legally designated protected area within the project region, located to the east of the project area, and bordering Tanzania. Around half of the area of Akagera National Park is in Kayonza, the other half is north of this, in Gatsibo. The park covers an area of over 100,000 ha and is characterised by diverse ecosystems including savannah plains, wetlands, and woodlands. It serves as critical habitat for numerous species, including elephants, lions, hippos, and over 500 bird species. It is managed by African Parks, who manage many African national parks and is a well-established organisation. 1,415 km² of this area was degazetted from the park in 1997 to accommodate refugees after the genocide. The area is considered marginal land agriculturally, but de-gazettement was detrimental for the large mammals of the park that relied on it for dry season habitat. The Akagera Management Company's Community Benefit Sharing Program allocates a portion of park revenues to neighbouring communities.

1.3 Land and Carbon Rights

Describe the ownership, tenure, user rights or management rights of the project area(s), and how these relate to the carbon rights of project participants.

Project context

We are exploring innovative applications of the carbon finance model to tackle challenges specific to the Rwandan context. The country faces the continued escalation of land prices, fuelled by foreign investment and population growth. One botanist in RWCA noted that a common pattern seen in the eastern district is Kigali businessmen buying up entire 'hills' in the eastern district. Additionally, investments in land are often channelled into monoculture farming for products of local demand (like chilli) to be exported, which is driving food security concerns at the local scale. From our scoping and discussions so far, we have identified a way to directly address these growing land inequalities while piloting carbon-based PES in the area. This led to a novel project design where we selected non-smallholder land that communities currently do not access or benefit from (other than a select few employed), which is for sale and would likely otherwise be purchased for land agglomeration. We then use this land as the basis for this current carbon project, creating benefits in its own right as well as serving as a proof of concept for how carbon finance can work in the area.

Aligned with this vision, initial community meetings have revealed some interest by small scale landowners in Gakoma in carbon markets as a potential income source in the future. They are seeing this as alternative to selling their land, if it becomes too unproductive in the future for its current use. Though, while there is initial interest, there is understandable hesitation and scepticism that

accompanies this, which will likely remain until trust and familiarity in the carbon market is established in a way that does not have risk implications for their livelihoods (our project design). In the future, once this pilot starts to get established and people in the village start to become familiar with how carbon finance works and the timelines involved, we will look at the feasibility of adding a second technical specification, of agroforestry or restoration, where smallholder landowners participate by committing some of their own land (as is more commonly seen in PV climate project design).

The project area will be owned by RWCA, as the land purchase is funded by sources that require it to be used for climate-financed restoration, making RWCA ownership necessary for legal and risk management purposes. Participants (the five Carbon-related Community Conservation Champions) will enter into a PES agreement granting them rights that allow them to influence the project's design, implementation and use of available carbon funds through the Community Restoration Committee's governance structure, provided all actions align with the restoration focus. For example, participants will not be permitted to introduce cash crop monoculture within the project area. However, they will have the ability to influence restoration activities and halt the carbon project if it is deemed to have a negative impact on the surrounding communities. Communities will have early and continual input in developing the benefit sharing mechanism, with guidance of the project team and the village executive committee.

National context - Land rights

As a general principle, the State controls access to land rights in Rwanda. Individuals may obtain access to State owned land by any of the means set out in the law, mainly: freehold, emphyteutic leases, leases, sub-leases or state concessions. Private owners of leases or freeholds may create a sub-lease or sub-freehold, respectively, to any land rights they hold. RWCA hold the project land under freehold ownership title, and therefore there are no further complexities to consider under this topic.

Carbon rights

There does not appear to be a clear law or provision stipulating the ownership of carbon rights in the case of wholly owned private land. However, it can be reasonably deduced from the information available that on wholly owned private land, the owner will be entitled to the carbon credits revenue. Where information is lacking on carbon rights specifically, law pertaining to natural resource ownership can be useful (see Article 36 below on the rights over natural resources).

Article 36: Rights over natural resources: 'Rights on land containing minerals and quarries shall be held by the person that has proof of legal allocation. Minerals and quarries designated as such are State property.

2 Stakeholder Engagement

2.1 Stakeholder Identification

Local (primary) stakeholders

Members of the Gakoma Community: This stakeholder group is a primary focus of the project, as they will be directly involved in restoration activities and will benefit from development projects funded by PVCs and planned through the CRC. Specifically, this refers to members of the Gakoma community who are most interested in participating in the carbon project, have attended one or both of the initial community meetings (on 18 September and 22 November 2024), and have expressed interest in receiving direct payments by providing temporary and seasonal labour for land preparation and restoration activities.

The community is aware of the type of work and income involved, and some members have previously participated in other RWCA restoration projects. The social mapping exercise conducted on 22 November during a community meeting provided data on the different groups and the reasons for heightened vulnerabilities within the broader community, such as landless households which tend to be those that have migrated to the region for work (even if this was more than 10 years ago). This group often faces greater livelihood vulnerabilities than landowners, as they typically rely on working on others' land to earn income or, occasionally, engage in non-farming-related occupations.

Smallholder landowners: This group of people also forms part of wider project community – it can be considered a sub-category of the members of the Gakoma Community category. Small-holder landowners will also have a chance to participate in the project restoration activities to earn income, but there is an additional aspect of this particular group, which relates to the fact that, following the establishment of this pilot proof of concept, they may be interested in using their own land to earn carbon credits (as part of type B scaling we are envisioning in the long term – see table 1.2).

The Gakoma Village Committee, comprises five, community-elected, members with distinct roles in leadership, security, social affairs, information, and development and this group is a primary stakeholder in the project. While not direct participants, they have significant influence and interest in its outcomes. As part of the Community Restoration Committee (CRC), they will work alongside project participants to guide decisions on prioritising the use of carbon revenue, if realised. Including the village committee is aligned with Rwanda's governance structure and ensures local leadership is represented in decision-making.

Regarding all local stakeholders, Plan Vivo PES agreements will be signed with the participants, and then involvement of village council members and other primary stakeholders will be likely formalised through the signing of MOUs under the umbrella agreement (Plan Vivo project agreement).

Secondary stakeholders

The overarching idea and vision of the pilot and scaled project has been presented to the national level government in 2023, this is further detailed in section 5.2. The key government stakeholders involved in the project will include the Rwandan Environmental Management Authority (REMA), led by Deputy Director General Faustin Munyazikwiye, and the Rwanda Forest Authority (RFA), represented by Dr. Ivan GASANGWA, Forest Research Division Manager. Both REMA and RFA expressed interest in the project, with REMA commending the focus on rural subsistence

communities and RFA discussing potential collaboration on restoring Government-owned land parcels in the future.

RWCA has advised, based on their previous experience, that to implement a project effectively, it is important to approach the district (for us, Kayonza) level government – specifically the District Director of Natural Resources – to present and discuss the plan and project design, and then have more detailed discussions with the district forestry and environmental officials. Following this, at the geographically sector level (Murundi sector for this project), meetings should be held with the Executive Secretary's team, including relevant sector officials such as the land officer and agronomist. These officials would help to facilitate and formalise other types of stakeholder engagement. In early November, Deo Ruhagazi (Deputy of RWCA and member of the team implementing this project) met with Benon Gashayija, the Executive Secretary of Murundi Sector. During their conversation, they discussed an overview of RWCA, the size of the land that was purchased, the other organisations and donors involved. They also discussed the project logic and reasoning behind the initiative, and Deo also explained our ideas around how the carbon project will be specifically implemented, and ways in which the community may benefit through temporary jobs, permanent jobs, and additional future projects funded by revenue generated from the carbon project.

2.2 Project Coordination and Management

As outlined in Table 2.2, The Lifescape Project (LP) and the Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA) will jointly work to implement the project. The LP will be responsible for high-level co-ordination and overall management of the project, such as ensuring compliance and due diligence and registration of project and sale of carbon credits.

The **Lifescape Project** is a registered charity based in the United Kingdom, with a global scope of work. Lifescape's ultimate objective is to assist the protection and restoration landscapes where nature can function to the fullest extent possible, to generate a sustainable future on our planet. Lifescape see people as a core part of that goal, exploring ways to continue coexisting with nature in a harmonious way. This project would be the first Lifescape has registered in the Voluntary Carbon Market, and the first restoration project to be designed and carried out in the Global South. However, Lifescape have worked with RWCA – the local partner - in other capacities including in developing the detailed feasibility study for this project (completed in Feb 2023).

Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA) is critical to the success of the pilot due to their strong complement of staff (including botanists, ecologists, rangers, and community liaison officers) and extensive experience in meaningfully engaging with local communities in ecosystem restoration across a range of nationally and internationally funded projects.

RWCA will be responsible for implementing the project on the ground, and for stakeholder engagement. This is key, as the RWCA staff have a positive and established presence in the communities for which the project may be chosen to go ahead. The community connections and engagement with RWCA form much of the technical support available and necessary for implementing the project, particularly ecological restoration expertise and capacity.

Experience and capacity of Lifescape: Since 2017, Lifescape has been delivering high-quality, interdisciplinary projects across various jurisdictions, integrating ecological, legal, and economic expertise while collaborating with diverse partners and partnership structures. Lifescape's strong legal expertise allows the organisation to effectively draft, manage, and oversee contracts and

agreements, ensuring due diligence throughout. The social science and ecological teams are currently completing a comprehensive social engagement program in the UK, aimed at fostering open and healthy dialogue around species restoration and addressing the biodiversity crisis, with a focus on the Lynx.

In 2023, Lifescape published a Biodiversity Metrics review, examining the development of metrics for use in markets (voluntary and statutory), academia, and rewilding, which involved engaging with various actors and leaders in the environmental markets space. Recently, Lifescape was awarded funding through a four-year EU Horizon project, starting in 2025, to generate knowledge on ecosystem services and natural capital markets in Europe. The rewilding economist (project lead) and senior economic advisor (technical advisor) both have an interdisciplinary background, and extensive experience in East Africa, including at the policy level like Government and UNEP, as well as at the community level. We therefore have a learned understanding of the sensitivities, complexities, and participatory processes that are fundamental to Plan Vivo's project vision.

Experience and capacity of RWCA: RWCA have a proven track record of successful restoration projects, always prioritising community involvement as a core value and outcome. For example, in the Umusambi Village Wetland Restoration project, RWCA restored 21 hectares of wetland, creating a sanctuary for over 50 endangered Grey Crowned Cranes. This project combined ecological restoration with tourism and education, benefiting both biodiversity and local communities. RWCA engages communities to protect wildlife, offering sustainable alternatives like tree planting and beekeeping, ensuring nature-based livelihoods are central to their projects. A recent restoration project that RWCA have been delivering is in Rugezi Wetland, where protection and restoration interventions were carried out, involving planting indigenous trees and working with the communities to maintain the restoration outcomes. They have trained and hired rangers and community conservation champions to monitor the use of the marsh, and to help the rangers educate others on the sustainable use of the wetland for long term benefits.

Project partnership

RWCA and Lifescape have been working on developing this project together from 2022, delivering a comprehensive feasibility study on the potential for PES in Rwanda, focusing on carbon finance. We also delivered a natural capital assessment of the Umusambi Village restoration project in Kigali, which is one of RWCA's flagship projects and is the location of their headquarters as well as the sanctuary for injured and confiscated grey crowed crane.

If the pilot project succeeds and opportunities to scale the project are identified, building on what is presented in this PIN, the partnership between RWCA and the Lifescape Project is expected to continue for the project's duration. The partnership's view is that Lifescape should only take on roles that are not yet within the capacity of local communities and RWCA, helping to build domestic capacity and reduce reliance on international expertise. We envision the roles and involvement of each organisation to evolve with the project, with project partnership agreements written and amended to reflect this as we move through the project lifetime.

Table 2.2 Responsibility for Project Coordination and Management Functions

Project Coordination and Management Function	Responsible Party/Parties
Stakeholder engagement during project development and implementation	RWCA/Lifescape Project
Ensuring conformance with the Plan Vivo Carbon Standard (PV Climate) and compliance with applicable policies, laws and regulations	Lifescape Project
Developing technical specifications, land management plans and project agreements with project participants	RWCA/Lifescape Project
Ensuring that the PDD is updated with any changes to the project	Lifescape Project
Registration and recording of land management plans, project agreements, monitoring results, and sales agreements	Lifescape Project (with a focus on registration and sales matters), and RWCA (with a focus on recording of land management plans and project agreements)
Managing project finances and dispersal of income to project participants as described by the benefit sharing mechanism	Lifescape Project, supported by RWCA
Managing Plan Vivo Certificates in the Plan Vivo Registry	Lifescape Project
Preparing annual reports and coordinating validation and verification events	Lifescape Project
Securing certificate sales and other means of funding the project	Lifescape Project
Assisting Project Participants to secure any legal or regulatory permissions required to carry out the project	Lifescape Project and RWCA together
Providing technical assistance and capacity building required for project participants to implement project interventions	Lifescape Project to oversee, but RWCA to offer on-ground support and capacity building
Monitoring progress indicators, livelihood indicators and ecosystem indicators and providing ongoing support to project participants	RWCA, with support from Lifescape Project
Measurement, reporting and verification of carbon benefits	Lifescape Project

2.3 Project Participants

The project aims to transition land management from absentee commercial landowners to community-led conservation, focusing on fostering a deep connection between participants and the wider community (primary stakeholders) and the land. Although the participants have not previously owned or managed this land, the project seeks to build a sense of custodianship by involving them in active restoration of areas near where they live. The incentive structure is therefore rooted in long-term-benefits: by granting sustained access and possibly usage rights, participants gain both economic and social value from managing the land responsibly. The project will also establish community governance models and capacity building initiatives to ensure that even after the project ends, participants remain motivated to sustainably manage the land due to vested interests and shared benefits. These mechanisms will be integrated within other existing governance systems, including the village council (comprising a large part of the CRC governance node of this project), and RWCA's existing structures for Community Champions (of which carbon is one type of several).

For this pilot project, **project participants** are defined as individuals formally engaged under Plan Vivo (PV) agreements who will serve as **Carbon Conservation Community Champions (CCCCs)**. These Champions act as leaders within the community, bridging the guidance of RWCA with the wider community group. Their role includes advocacy, leadership, and consistent work to support restoration activities, while fostering broader community involvement. Importantly, these participants are not directly supplying carbon from their own land but instead play a key role in facilitating project activities and inspiring participation across the community. Three participants have been confirmed for the pilot and their average household income per year would not exceed the equivalent of US$1,500. Details of the three confirmed participants have been submitted to Plan Vivo for internal review.

Rationale for a Small Number of Participants

This pilot phase intentionally engages a small number of formal participants to align with the project's limited scope and early-stage carbon finance potential. By focusing on a few CCCs, we reduce unrealistic expectations within the community and ensure meaningful, consistent engagement. This approach also allows the project to test and refine its model before scaling up. The CCCs are positioned as leaders and advocates who support the project's long-term success by involving the broader community in restoration activities without formal obligations under PV agreements.

This model reflects the project's **theory of change**, where CCCs play a central role in building trust, demonstrating impact, and fostering wider participation. As the project matures and generates more carbon finance, this structure provides a strong foundation for scaling up formal participant numbers and broader community benefits.

Distinction Between Participants and Stakeholders

While CCCs serve as formal project participants, there will be community participation in the restoration activities, through casual labour opportunities for those in most need of supplementary income. Community members involved only in the temporary labour for invasives removal, ground preparation and planting is in this project classified under stakeholders, as these individuals will not be entering formal long term PES agreements in the way that the CCCCs will be, but do have influence and interest in the project and its potential benefits. More information on stakeholder types and involvement is provided in Section 2.1.

2.4 Participatory Design

Our participatory approach:

It is paramount for us that this pilot and any subsequent iterations are implemented in a way such that communities and individuals feel a deep and genuine sense of involvement and that they are given frequent opportunities for their ideas to be incorporated into project design. Good participatory processes go beyond informing communities of a plan, towards properly involving them in the design and decision making, for all steps of implementation. We highly value and prioritise transparent, fair and best-practice stakeholder engagement with communities, and work reflect this appropriately within project design, including plans for long term monitoring of benefits and progress. Additionally, RWCA has extensive experience in engaging local communities in ecosystem restoration projects, earning accolades and awards for their achievements in this specific area.

The initial engagement held on the 18th of Sept 2024 - where the project idea was introduced at a village meeting, and members of Gakoma village were invited to ask questions and comment - was structured as a community meeting. Because this was the first official time that RWCA and the project was introduced to the community, we felt that fitting into the usual village communication structure was appropriate, rather than imposing less familiar means of engagement (like participatory mapping) straight away. However, as familiarity and trust built, we started to implement more creative and interactive ways of gathering input and ideas – conducting both social mapping and wellbeing assessments at the follow up community meeting on the 22nd Nov 2024 (See Annex 6 – Community Meeting Report 2024).

Overview of Nov 22nd community meeting and participatory tools utilised:

In November 2024 the Lifescape team (represented by Amelia H and Adam E) visited Kigali to continue planning the project in person, including together conducting in-depth community and stakeholder engagement activities in the project area and region. On the 18th of Nov 2024, the PV Accelerator training module for participatory process planning was attended remotely by the project team (who met together in person at the RWCA office in Kigali), and following this session, Amelia H, Diogene T and Cecile K met to finalise the participatory planning and community meeting's structure that that took place on the 22nd Nov.

Building on the stakeholder and participant engagement that we carried out on Sept the 18th, the RWCA and Lifescape team visited the project area on 22nd Nov to carry out multiple community meetings with different groups of stakeholders, using four tools from the PV Participatory Toolkit. The tools we utilised from the toolkit were:

Social Mapping (5 participants for this activity - the 5 Gakoma village executives).

Community Meeting (including the participants, village council, and the wider community of around 70 people, particularly those already involved in restoration work or want to be involved).

Wellbeing Assessment (the 3 confirmed participants, i.e. Community Conservation Champions, and the 5 Gakoma village executives).

The November community meeting report in Annex 6 describes, in more detail, the discussions that RWCA and Lifescape had on the 22nd of November, with members of the Gakoma village community (with both participants and stakeholders). The meetings were held on a parcel of land owned by RWCA, which is in the early stages of restoration, and located adjacent to the project area. This restoration project is not included in the project area of this carbon project (as it is being funded separately), and is being supported by temporary labour from within the community, so many people are familiar with RWCA and restoration projects that involve tree planting and maintenance. Following this bigger meeting, the smaller, focused discussions and participatory processes outlined above were conducted with smaller groups of participants and stakeholders.

Three of the RWCA staff were facilitating the meetings and discussions, taking turns depending on their specific area of expertise. The three staff were Deo Ruhagazi (Deputy Director) Cecile Kayitanirwa (Senior Habitat Restoration Officer), Diogene Tuyizere (Assistant Botanist). The two staff representing Lifescape Project were Amelia Holmes (Rewilding Economist and project lead) and Adam Eagle (CEO).

All conversations with community members were had in Kinyarwanda, the local language, and every attendee can understand this language. These meeting notes in English are taken directly from

translations at the time in English by Cecile and Diogene, as well as translations from RWCA meeting notes.

Participant selection during community meetings:

The process of selecting Community Conservation Champions (CCCs) has been community-led, with guidance from the RWCA team to ensure fairness and inclusivity. This approach prevents dominance by one subgroup, such as related households or the loudest voices, and ensures that the CCCs are residents living relatively close to the plots of land included in the project area. In September 2024, the first round of selection was conducted during a community meeting in Gakoma village, where three CCs—two men and one woman—were chosen. The process began with an introduction to the concept of CCs in the context of a carbon project, emphasizing that CCs should have an interest in conservation, some knowledge of local trees, and be locally trusted and fair. The community was then asked to nominate suitable candidates. From this group, the RWCA team, led by Cecile K, a botanist, applied considerations of gender and social equity to refine the selection. For example, nominees from the same household were excluded to ensure broader representation, and care was taken to elevate quieter voices, such as a younger woman who demonstrated strong interest and knowledge but was initially overshadowed.

The three participants (Carbon Community Conservation Champions) were confirmed, and details about the participants is included in section 2.3.

Gender considerations:

The process of participant recruitment will be repeated to select two additional CCCs, and, to further enhance the inclusivity of the project and supporting the empowerment of women in the community, as we will choose at least one additional woman as the final participants, bringing the gender representation in the project leadership to either 60% women if possible, and 40% as a minimum. The same community-led approach will guide the selection, with RWCA's role focused on ensuring a fair and balanced outcome that reflects the collective voice of the group.

There will be explicit focus on continuing to ensure women, children and other vulnerable groups are invited and encouraged to participate in these deliberation sessions. Due to cultural dynamics and norms, it might also be effective to have additional sessions where youth, and separately, women have a chance to meet and have more opportunity to express their views on the project. RWCA have a female botanist on the team who is experienced in mainstreaming gender equality considerations within project design, and has expressed interest in helping to continue to guide the project in incorporating these considerations regarding equality and inclusion, Supported by RWCA's Organisational Policies, particularly the Safeguard Policy, Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy, and Equal Opportunity and Inclusion, last updated in December 2024 (all available upon request).

Incorporating community feedback and engagement going forward:

From meeting with the community in Sept and Nov 2024, feedback from the villagers and village leaders regarding the Community Restoration Committee (CRC) and ideas for using potential carbon finance for development has already been hugely insightful. For example, community members and village leaders helped the community and project team distinguish between development priorities already in the pipeline or under government responsibility, and those appropriate for CRC projects (early childhood education programmes were noted as initial priority, for example). We also initially thought that human-wildlife conflict might be a big concern for the community (given the village's proximity to the national park), but when discussed explicitly, they expressed it was not a major issue.

The idea of using only indigenous species in the planting plan was appreciated and welcomed, and RWCA noted a high level of interest and knowledge of the indigenous trees, among participants in the meeting.

Going forward, there will be participatory processes designed for exploring what the alternatives and options are that will best suit the community in the long term, whilst still achieving the ecological and carbon outcome. This might, for example, involve participatory mapping to understand the ways in which individuals and groups currently benefit from the land, to sit alongside Lifescape-led analysis on natural capital and ecosystem services. These discussions would be led through questions around costs/benefits, strengths/weaknesses and opportunities/threats involved in different interventions (and this will feed into the environment and social risks component of the project planning and development). Participants and stakeholders will continue to have the opportunity to participate in structured and well-designed engagement events such as community meetings, workshops and focus groups.

2.5 FPIC Process

Free: Village councils and households are free to decide whether or not to join the project.

Prior: The first meetings held by RWCA were held within the usual structure of the weekly Gakoma community village meetings, which are held every Tuesday afternoon. The purpose of the meetings in September and November 2024 was to communicate to households the idea and reason behind doing a carbon project in their area, and the people that attended were those initially interested in the concept and wanted to hear about the project idea and opportunities for involvement (as this was communicated prior to the meetings). Attendance for both of these meetings was around 80 community members, and the majority were interested in the jobs that would arise, with around of third of people interested in long term conservation involvement as a Community Champion. Full meeting details are included in the meeting report, as part of the appendix of the document.

Informed: The project team (particularly RWCA as the local implementing partners) are proactive and transparent with councils and villagers regarding conservation project design and implementation of previous projects, including the present project. Particularly, the project leads within RWCA have spoken with the Gakoma village executives multiple times, and the community during the village meetings, with a focus on ensuring that the concepts and ideas are communicated in accessible ways.

Consent: Consent from the Kigali-based grazing businesses is obtained when landowners voluntarily choose to sell their land, which is typically already on the market—often for some time—before RWCA engages with them. Community consent is achieved when the newly recruited Carbon Community Conservation Champions agree to the terms agreed in the existing CCC employment model under RWCA's existing structures. Consent to participate in more short-term roles is provided in a similar way – upon signing up to temporary work agreements that RWCA have previously established.

3 Project Design

3.1 Baseline Scenario

Project area

The project area is currently used for grazing cattle, at a very high density. This grazing pressure is causing considerable damage to the land's ability to provide ecosystem services to wildlife and people. It is especially affecting the quality of the adjacent Nyamaswi wetland habitat. The land acquired for this pilot has been for sale for a considerable amount of time, and without our project intervention, would likely be acquired by larger landowners that already run farming businesses in the area – the trend of land amalgamation has been an observed pattern in the area, by RWCA and community members.

Project region

The Kayonza district, which broadly represents the project region, is mostly arid. Climate change is likely to exacerbate the already high-risk desertification of the land. Wetlands in the area are being used informally and transformed rapidly, mostly for rice production as communities look to alternative sources of income in the face of unproductive land. This is putting strain on already highly stressed water resources and has reduced much of the wetlands' capacities to provide clean, useable water to communities. A dependency on biomass for fuel depletes local wood and fodder resources, which are not replenishing in line with demand. The natural ecosystems of the region may reach critical tipping points (driving climate migration to other areas of the country) without transformative land use change.

3.2 Livelihood Baseline

The land that comprises the project area, is three land parcels. One was owned by RWCA already and had been acquired with unrestricted funding in 2023 but without the financial means and capacity to restore it – this accounts for 11.5 ha. The other two land parcels (9.73 ha and 12 ha) were bought on the 18th of Sept 2024 for the purpose of the pilot project to establish a proof of concept, from two different landowners. These landowners are Kigali businessmen who mainly grazed the farms with cattle, do not rely on the land for subsistence, and employ two workers each.

The area is often affected by severe and prolonged periods of drought, the effects of which are exacerbated by grazing pressure on the land and increasingly heavy extraction from the adjacent wetlands.

Other than the land being used by the owner to graze and do some minimal cropping, (employing 4 people in total), the land does not support livelihoods of local people. RWCA have provided a grace period, to take effect between RWCA's purchase of the land (mid Sept 2024), until the end of what the Rwandan agricultural sector terms harvest season B (Feb/March), to allow the farms to harvest the crops they current have growing (a small, < 1ha area of maize) and to allow time for other income and work arrangements to be set up for those that currently work on the land. The (previous) landowner who employs the 1b farmers has already confirmed that the workers will have similar employment terms on other farms. For farm 1a, similar discussions and intentions are in process with the workers and will be confirmed in early 2025. The project considers these previously employed workers to be within group considered as priority for offering work and even longer-term involvement with this carbon project.

At the initial community meeting, 80 community members were present, though the total number of households is unknown. Of those attendees, 60% were women, 15% were youth, and 5% were elders. The average annual income is low, estimated at $1,500, with some individuals supplementing their earnings through part-time jobs on other farms. Gakoma village residents' livelihoods primarily centre around agriculture, livestock, and small-scale commercial activities. Most community members engage in cultivating land under shared agreements, where income is split with landowners. Cattle grazing is also common, although it typically involves tending to cattle owned by landowners rather than households owning herds themselves. While 70% of households own their homes, 30% rent, with renters often being migrants who move to the area to work on farms or graze cattle. These migrants, though initially temporary, are increasingly becoming permanent residents. Additionally, the community faces challenges such as financial barriers to school fees, soil erosion, and drought, with irrigation seen as a sustainable solution to address water scarcity. The community is highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly the effects of drought.

Gakoma village (of 2,724 residents) is the main village community of focus for understanding livelihood dynamics, as it is where the project area is located. Across parts of Kayonza, there is an existing revenue-sharing scheme for all communities living in close proximity to Akagera National Park (NP) and who are impacted (directly or indirectly) by the presence of the National Park. Around 10% of revenue collected from tourism ventures goes directly to the community, however rather than cash payments, it is used to fund public goods and infrastructure, such as schools, medical clinics, etc. This existing scheme does not directly benefit the communities we are working with, will provide helpful institutional scaffolding for us to learn from if we are to set up a benefit sharing scheme in this area.

3.3 Ecosystem Baseline

The land has been degraded from deforestation, livestock trampling of the adjacent Nyamaswi wetland, overgrazing, and the loss of topsoil through erosion. These are being compounded by prolonged periods of drought. The project area is situated within an ecologically important area, being located in the 'Central Valley', which is a valley along the southwestern border of Akagera National Park. An area 1,415 km² was degazetted from the park in 1997 to accommodate refugees after the genocide. The area is now considered marginal land agriculturally, and de-gazettement was detrimental for many species including the large mammals of the park that relied on it for dry season habitat. As a result of these pressures, including the de-gazettement, there has been a significant reduction suitable habitat areas and refuges for wildlife. Issues pertaining to protected areas have been identified as a major priority threat to wildlife and an ongoing issue areas has been identified as an environmental policy priority recognised by the government.

Approximately 280 species of flowering plants in Rwanda are considered endemic to the Albertine Rift. Of these, about 20 species are restricted to Rwanda, 50 are confined to Rwanda and Eastern Congo, and 20 are found only in Rwanda and Burundi. The Eastern Province has its own ecological importance, especially with the overlap of savannah and forested areas, creating unique habitats for various species. Bird species such as hornbills, marsh harriers, cranes, gonoleks, and storks rely on refuges and breeding sites, which are increasingly scarce, degraded, and subject to encroachment.

Kayonza is an arid region, and climate change is likely to enhance already high risk of aridification and even desertification of the land. A compounding pressure is that the wetlands in the area are being transformed rapidly, mostly for rice production as communities look to alternative sources of

income. This is putting strain on already highly stressed water resources and has reduced much of the wetlands' capacities to provide clean, useable water to communities and for wildlife. A dependency on biomass for fuel depletes local wood and fodder resources, which are not replenishing in line with demand due to slow growth rates of trees and shrubs in arid regions. The natural ecosystems of the region may reach critical tipping points without transformative land use change.

3.4 Project Logic

Table 3.4 Initial Project Logic

Aim

The specific problems identified that the project seeks to address are summarised by the following:

- There has been a rapid and severe decline in natural capital and productivity in the land in Murundi, and Kayonza more broadly, making subsistence farming increasingly less reliable, and more volatile as a source of livelihood. This is compounded by human pressures such as unsustainable grazing and demand for resources, further driving and further exacerbating processes like erosion and climate change driven drought. This is affecting people – particularly those dependant on subsistence farming – as well as the wildlife in the area.
- There is vulnerability and fragility of the local economy, due to a low level of economic diversification, and the pressures described above.
- Driven by largely foreign investment behind land speculation, as well investment in Kigali-based grazing businesses, there is a pattern being increasingly observed in the area of land agglomeration, often potentially serving investment-driven interests. There are therefore prevailing concerns regarding wealth inequality and access to land in the long term, which are complex to address.
- The global and local effects of climate change call for an urgent, targeted approach to the mitigation of climate change. Identifying marginal lands which have low agricultural productivity, but high carbon and biodiversity benefits is one tangible approach to lowering emissions and increasing resilience to climate events in the area.

In summary, the project addresses the issues of rural livelihood and land dependencies in the area, commercial land acquisition and speculation, ecological decline, and the resulting social inequalities in rural Rwanda. It aims to restore relatively unproductive, degraded land, previously used for agriculture or grazing, into savannah forest while pioneering a new model of community-driven land governance using carbon finance. Through restoring savannah forest and selling Plan Vivo Certificates, the project seeks to establish scalable land governance mechanisms that economically empower local communities and promote environmental conservation.

	Description	**Assumptions/Risks**
Outcomes – Intended overall project aim		
Carbon Benefit	Restoring wooded savannah and shrub savannah ecosystems provides substantial carbon benefits. As the vegetation regenerates and replaces areas of bare and	**Assumptions:** Assumed a project period of 30 years.

	degraded soil, it stores it in biomass and soil organic matter. Additionally, restoring savannah forested ecosystems enhances their resilience to climate impacts, such as drought and soil erosion, further supporting long-term carbon storage and ecosystem health.	Assumed the following CO_2 sequestration rates (/ha/yr): Open grassland: 0.05 (all from Willcock et al (2012) Savannah forest: Between 7.2 and 7.7 t CO2e (Grace et al 2006; Kukumuty 2024). There's an ecological risk related to carbon, around the potential impact of drought and other environmental pressures affecting the growth of saplings. Helping to mitigate these risks, is RWCA's approach to restoration and maintenance that measures progress based on trees surviving rather than volume of saplings planted. **Ecological:** The Eastern province, where our project region Kayonza is situated, is drought prone, and being exacerbated by climate change. This has implications for the survival of saplings planted, and the speed at which the land recovers. As RWCA have experience restoring land in this region, they will be able to adapt restoration plans to climate effects, including setting up solar powered irrigation if needed, and applying mulch to seedlings to prevent drying.
Livelihood Benefit	**Job creation:** There will be opportunities for different types of direct employment with the project. This includes physical labour like prepping the land, tree planting and maintaining saplings. It also includes more long term, community-education roles, represented by carbon-specific community conservation champions (building on an already-established employment role within RWCA). In the long term and particularly when the project is scaled across the area to connect with Akagera National Park, eco-tourism	**Assumptions:** There is an assumption here that carbon finance (including carbon price per tonne) will be available and stable enough to ensure consistent payments – which represents a risk to the financial viability of the project. This risk can be mitigated in the first instance through exploring options for pre-selling credits, keeping up to date with market trends and projections and adapting accordingly.

	opportunities are expected to arise and provide additional income. **Capacity building and training in sustainability:** Community members will learn about sustainable land management, restoration and forest conservation, which will benefit their own households and communities and can provide them with skills for future employment or entrepreneurship in green industries. **Funding of much-needed development projects:** In our model, a considerable proportion of carbon finance will be available for broad, community level development projects. This is because smallholders are not committing their land directly to the interventions at this stage, so the carbon payments only need to cover restoration, labour and maintenance costs, rather than opportunity costs. **Enhanced natural resources:** Enhanced ecosystem services and improved ecological resilience are other broad benefits that contribute to sustainable livelihoods. For example, restored ecosystems enhance the resilience of nearby farms, through preventing desertification, protecting against erosion, and maintaining ecological integrity which keeps pests and diseases in check.	There is also an assumption that local community members will remain willing to engage in paid employment as part of the project, including the involvement from the community conservation champions. **Risks:** There's a risk that the amount of finance available from the sale of PVCs will not be enough to fund the development project of the community's first priority (an early childhood facility), and to mitigate this risk we will develop plans around blended finance options and plan for implementing other development projects based on different projections of cash flow and possible finance available.
Ecosystem Benefit	The area and condition of natural habitats in the project area will increase as a result of the restoration work, with vegetation biomass and floral biodiversity to increase significantly as a result of the project interventions. We also expect a resulting increase in fauna species diversity and abundance in the area once the habitat improvements have taken place, with an	**Assumptions:** An assumption is that we are successful in putting mechanisms in place to proactively address any human-wildlife conflict concerns that the community may have. (This was not a present concern of the community when asked during the initial meeting, but we want to

	overall increase in all aspects of biodiversity (genetic, functional, species, and habitat). Ecological connectivity will be improved through providing habitat refuges for wildlife outside of Akagera NP, with especially valuable potential benefits to migratory wildlife in the area.	continue to be proactive in preventing it becoming an issue). This also assumes that we are successful in establishing new vegetation and regeneration of existing vegetation in the project area, with no substantial risks coming to pass which might prevent that, such as fire, excessive drought, unauthorised grazing, etc. The anticipated ecological benefits assumes that the improvement of natural resources like soil quality, water retention, and biodiversity assumes that restored ecosystems will stabilise and function as expected. This can be supported by regular monitoring and adaptive management practices. **Risks:** There is a risk that new vegetation establishment and the regeneration of existing vegetation in the project area may be hindered by factors such as fire, excessive drought etc as described above, compromising the project's anticipated ecological benefits.
Outputs		
Output 1	**Output 1. Restored land area with enhanced carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and ecological resilience.** The ecological restoration of a parcel of previously grazed land, using both active (e.g. tree planting) and passive management (allowing natural regeneration) approaches where appropriate.	**Risks:** There is a potential risk of government imposing a levy on carbon revenue, but we have explored this with expert advisors working with the government on similar policies, and it is likely to be small (<2.5%) or not applicable for our project. **Social:** A consideration that was identified early, is to ensure that the transition between the current use of the land, and the restoration activities, is planned and agreed. This has already been done by

		RWCA, who have talked to the previous landowners to ensure that the farmers employed to work the land have time to find work, with the same or other employers. Also, there is an agreed grace period where RWCA is allowing crops to reach their point of harvest in February 2025 and allowing farming of the land to gradually wind down until February 2025. Any other social risks identified will be mitigated through clear and consistent communication with communities and having procedural justice (rather than outcomes alone) as a focus of community meetings.
Output 2	**Output 2: The establishment of pilot carbon project that serves as a proof of concept, for the scaled project to build on.** The project will implement a pilot afforestation carbon project. This small-scale project will provide the foundation for future scaling through replication, while refining effective methods for carbon monitoring and benefit-sharing. The successful completion of the pilot will serve as a validated model for expanding the project as more carbon finance becomes available. The output will be consolidated in a lesson learned report at the completion of the pilot project period.	This output encompasses many different types of project activities and considerations and therefore has multiple types of risks associated with it. One risk commonly observed in complex, multi-faceted projects is miscommunication. If there is any miscommunication or ambiguity in the way that the project is co-designed, it might lead to local communities not being fully engaged in decision-making processes, meaning the governance structures and benefit-sharing mechanisms may struggle to be effective. This consideration has already been addressed by RWCA in the initial stages, by ensuring to communicate the logic and rationale of the carbon market and carbon projects using Kinyarwanda, which is the language that all people involved in discussions can understand. It will continue to be a priority of the project. Financial uncertainties, particularly delays or fluctuations in carbon finance, also present a risk. This will be pro-actively mitigated through finding buyers willing to buy carbon offsets at higher prices per tonne by

		marketing a high level of co-benefits). Lastly, to ensure maximum efficacy of this output to act as a blueprint, pro-active engagement with local authorities will be helpful for navigating potential governance barriers early on.
Output 3	**Output 3: Increased economic diversity and financial benefits for the local people.** At least 60% of the carbon credit finance will be directed to local participants, through the avenues previously described in previous sections. In summary, the output has 3 parts to it and will be achieved through direct payments for community involvement in project activities, including: 1. Temporal and seasonal labour involved in preparing land for restoration, removing invasive species, and planting trees, as well as periodic maintenance of the site. 2. Long-term employment through RWCA's Conservation Champion model. These are the community leaders of the restoration, and this Conservation Champion model offers stable employment with social security benefits. 3. The carbon finance available to support projects prioritised by the CRC (see output 4).	We've identified that environmental shocks could delay restoration work and therefore disrupt project employment opportunities. There may be the challenge of labour availability being mismatched with local agricultural cycles, and this will need some prior planning with communities to ensure work opportunities are able to be carried out alongside households' other jobs and subsistence farming needs, for example. Social disruption may arise from sudden cash inflows or job opportunities. Additionally, in any project that involves new and unfamiliar sources of finance, there's a risk of financial mismanagement. To mitigate these risks, we'll continue to ensure transparency is included in governance design (within the CRC especially). We will also set up contingency plans to handle any potential environmental disruptions that may arise.
Output 4	**Output 4: The establishment of the Community Restoration Committee (CRC) model** Since our project model is based on non-smallholder owned land, it frees up much of the available carbon finance to be channelled into development projects, serving the public good of the village community at large. This contrasts with the typical Plan Vivo (PV) Climate model, where	One risk in establishing the CRC, is the potential dominance of self-serving interests, where certain individuals or groups prioritize projects that benefit themselves over broader community needs. This could result in a lack of equitable distribution of funds or resources.

	most carbon finance is used to cover and exceed the opportunity costs for farmers. The establishment of the CRC will amplify the impact of carbon finance by financially supporting projects and community needs that are identified by the local population. The creation of this CRC will be a key, novel, and exciting output of the project, providing a participatory and sustainable way to direct funds towards development.	Without specific attention paid to power dynamics and the governance structure of the CRC, there is also a risk that decisions within the CRC might not be made democratically, leading to certain voices being excluded from the process. This could undermine trust in the committee and its ability to represent the community fairly. To mitigate these risks, it is a high priority of the project team that we establish clear and bottom-up governance structures that promote transparency and inclusivity, ensuring all members have an equal voice. Regular oversight, community feedback mechanisms, and rotating leadership within the CRC can help prevent dominance by any single group or individual. Additionally, conducting capacity-building activities will empower community members to actively engage in decision-making and ensure the CRC remains accountable to the entire community.
Output 5:	**Output 5: Community engagement and education.** RWCA have already established a presence within the wider project region of Kayonza through other projects, such as employing committed and enthusiastic community conservation champions who act as environmental leaders and advocates for nature conservation in the area. This project will build on this already strong foundation, and will provide opportunities for schools, households and visitors to not only learn about, but contribute to ecological resilience in their region. In doing so, it contributes to a proof of concept for other regions and communities and project developers to learn from.	Some risks include community resistance and lack of foundational knowledge or literacy necessary to be involved in some capacities. To mitigate these risks, we will provide tailored training and educational materials that cater to different literacy levels and learning styles within the community (e.g. engaging visual aids).

3.5 Additionality

Complete Table 3.5 providing a description of the current barriers to implementing the proposed project (e.g. lack of finances, lack of technical expertise) and an explanation of how the project will overcome these barriers. Include Financial/Economic, Technical, Institutional, Social/Cultural, and other barriers where relevant. Add a row for each project intervention.

Table 3.5 Initial Barrier Analysis

Project Intervention	Main Barriers	Activities to Overcome Barriers
Restoration - Restored wooded savannah for carbon and ecological uplift	The main barrier to restoration of land for the benefit of climate and community resilience is the access to land, as much of it is currently held by business owners, that often do not reside in the area. There is also the barrier to access of the physical inputs needed as well as the knowledge and technical expertise required to carry out restoration work. Access to ecological science experts is required to devise the restoration and planting plans that will be drought resistant and suitable for the type of soil and weather patterns that characterise the sites. Finance to buy seedlings and other inputs, and the opportunity cost of the time it takes to carry out the tasks, is limited in these communities, many of which are living precariously.	Funding obtained to commence the project and subsequently through carbon credit sales will overcome the primary barrier of access to the land. The RWCA, serving as the implementing partner organisation, ensures access to high quality ecological expertise. RWCA have their headquarters in Kigali at Umusambi Village, where they have extensive nurseries and seed banks which will provide the physical inputs for the restoration work. Funding available for the project will facilitate the formation of restoration plans and purchase of equipment and other inputs such as irrigation and manure if required.

3.6 Exclusion List

Indicate whether the project could include any activities listed in the Plan Vivo Exclusion List (see Annex 3). Provide a complete Exclusion List in Annex 3.

There are no activities in the Plan Vivo Exclusion List that would be included in our project.

3.7 Environmental and Social Screening

Add project coordinator responses to the social screening report in Annex 4.

Complete Table 3.7 to provide a summary of potential environmental and social risks. For each risk area, add a brief summary of potential risks, or explain why there are no risks.

Table 3.7 Environmental and Social Risks

Risk Area	Potential Risks
Vulnerable Groups	Among the households the project will work with, there are no apparent groups facing significant disadvantages currently, and we have no reason to believe that our activities would discriminate against any part of the local community. Following RWCA's established approach to restoration projects elsewhere in Rwanda, temporary and seasonal restoration jobs particularly will be first offered to households that are relatively more vulnerable, such as those who are landless or have a high proportion of dependents and elderly.
Gender Equality	Rwanda is generally characterised by a traditional patriarchal culture. We have designed the project to be particularly amenable to female participation and empowerment, within a culturally sensitive framework and therefore do not anticipate considerable gender related risks associated with our project. A female member of the RWCA project team (Cecile Kayitanirwa), has indicated that occasional women-only groupings would be helpful, and that she would help to create a culturally appropriate plan to make sure that all voices are heard. We have also planned and will continue to ensure that 50% of the temporary workers will be women. This planning has begun to take place during our in-person planning session in Kigali in mid-November, and further in the field during community meetings).
Human Rights	Within the project's scope, there are no activities or circumstances identified that would be a barrier to individuals exercising their rights.
Community, Health, Safety & Security	Tensions may arise when areas of land are patrolled to ensure compliance with the restoration plans on land. However, the potential for conflict is relatively low, as the land in the project area was privately owned land originally.
Labour and Working Conditions	The project's envisioned work largely aligns with the traditional agricultural activities of the community. Participation in the project and specific activities is entirely voluntary.

Resource Efficiency, Pollution, Wastes, Chemicals and GHG emissions	The project activities pose no risk of releasing pollutants, generating waste or hazardous materials, or causing significant consumption of energy, water, or other resources.
Access Restrictions and Livelihoods	The project ensures that no activities will impede people's access to land or natural resources for which they hold recognised legal or customary rights. Instead, it is designed to safeguard and improve access to land (as a recreational resource) that was previously used for commercial purposes. Tensions could arise when land is patrolled to ensure compliance with restoration plans, though the risk is considered relatively low, as the project area was originally privately owned. A potential area of concern is grazing, particularly during drought and the dry season, when grasses within RWCA-managed land may remain available while surrounding areas are dry. In other RWCA projects, similar situations have led to interest from community members in accessing these areas for livestock grazing, despite restrictions aimed at maintaining carbon sequestration potential. While this area is relatively new to RWCA management, Community Conservation Committees (CCCs) are in place to conduct patrols and engage with local communities. Rather than relying on fencing, mitigation will focus on clear and open communication, ensuring communities understand that if grazing occurs, carbon sequestration targets will not be met, and the associated funding will not materialise. Firewood collection has also been observed as an occasional issue in other projects, typically in the dry season, though it remains rare. Similar communication-based approaches will be used to address this, ensuring expectations around land use are transparent and well understood.
Cultural Heritage	The project site is not identified or planned as a cultural site, at either international or national levels.
Indigenous Peoples	Ethnic categories were based on economic activities around livestock, agriculture, and hunting, but groupings based on indigeneity

	were not made. Particularly, after the genocide in 1994, the Rwandan government abolished the economics-based ethnic categories and opted to classify people solely based on livelihood and income level, for social welfare purposes alone.
Biodiversity and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	There is no risk that project activities will cause adverse impacts on biodiversity - the improvement of biodiversity is explicitly built into the project's logic and outcomes. There are no identifiable risks associated with the unsustainable use of resources.
Land Tenure Conflicts	The initial community meetings held on site on 18th Sept and 22nd Nov 2024 did not uncover any potential conflict with larger or private landowners (the topic was broached at both meetings, sensitively). There was space in the meeting to raise such concerns and issues. It's an aspect that we understand can be dynamic and change with time, so it is something we will continue to monitor as the project goes forward.
Risk of Not Accounting for Climate Change	Changes in weather patterns are expected to persistently impact the Kayonza region, leading to greater unpredictability and variability in weather conditions and rainfall. However, we are planting highly resilient species and implementing passive restoration methods, which are generally less risky as plants naturally grow when conditions are conducive and are not provided with unsustainable levels of support.
Other – e.g. Cumulative Impacts	The broader region faces pressure from large-scale land acquisitions driven by industrial agriculture and foreign-owned entities and carbon market growth could increase risks of land speculation. However, proactive engagement with local landowners will help mitigate this, and the small plot sizes (compared to land that large foreign investors would buy) would make investor speculation risks minimal.

3.8 Double Counting

In Rwanda's updated NDC, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) commits to improving adaptation measures and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 38% through both unconditional and conditional measures across sectors including agriculture, energy, waste, and industry. The target is to reduce emissions by 7.5 million tCO2e in 2030 compared to the projected business-as-usual (BAU) emissions of 12.1 million tCO2e in 2030. To reach its conditional target, Rwanda plans to utilise

various climate finance sources, including international carbon market mechanisms and cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

There are currently no other REDD+ or reforestation projects in the area where the project implementation is planned. The carbon benefits achieved by our project may not be eligible for inclusion in other forms of greenhouse gas emissions trading due to factors such as project scale, verification processes, or the timing of emissions reductions.

Table 3.8 National Level Legislation, Policies and Instruments

	Yes/No/Unsure	Details
Is there a national registry for land-based carbon projects?	In development	The Rwanda National Carbon Market Framework sets out the intentions and goals of the framework but has not published anything substantive yet. It is most likely that REMA (Rwanda Environment Management Authority) will be developing and managing the registry, which may be implemented for use by the initiation of the project.
Are carbon rights defined in national legislation?	No	We have not found a clear law or provision stipulating the ownership of carbon rights in the case of wholly owned private land. However, from analysis in the full feasibility study we conclude that in the case of wholly owned private land, the owner will be entitled to the revenue and ownership of the carbon credits, subject to a small government tax.
Are there any carbon pricing regulations existing or in development (e.g. emissions trading scheme or carbon tax)	No	The Rwanda National Carbon Market Framework does not mention carbon pricing schemes explicitly yet.
Does the country receive or plan to receive results-based climate finance through bilateral or multilateral programs?	Unsure	There are several partnerships emerging such as between Rwandan Government and the Green Climate Fund. Additionally, the Rwanda Climate Finance Partnership was launched at COP28 in Dec 2023. It aims to facilitate public-private partnerships to scale-up climate finance and has been facilitated by the country's Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) arrangement with the International Monetary Fund.
Are there any other relevant regulations, policies or instruments?	Yes	The Rwanda 2050 Vision provides a long-term context on the development goals, and specifically, the National Environment and Climate Change Policy published in 2019 explicitly mentions Payment for Ecosystem Services, and work is advancing in this area.

4 Governance and Administration

4.1 Governance Structure

Describe the project's governance structure and decision-making process with details of how input from project participants is managed and how project participant and other local stakeholder representatives will be selected. Where possible, provide an organigram to demonstrate how the project coordinator, project participants and other stakeholders will be involved in the project.

The governance structure and decision-making process for the project is led by RWCA (the project coordinator) and the Lifescape Project (project development and management). The governance structure is designed to be transparent, inclusive, and attentive to the needs and viewpoints of project participants, local stakeholders, as well as the requirements and obligations associated with the carbon market.

The Community Restoration Committee (CRC) will be established, facilitated and supported by project partners but developed within communities themselves, with input and guidance from the Gakoma Village Committee, described in more detail below.

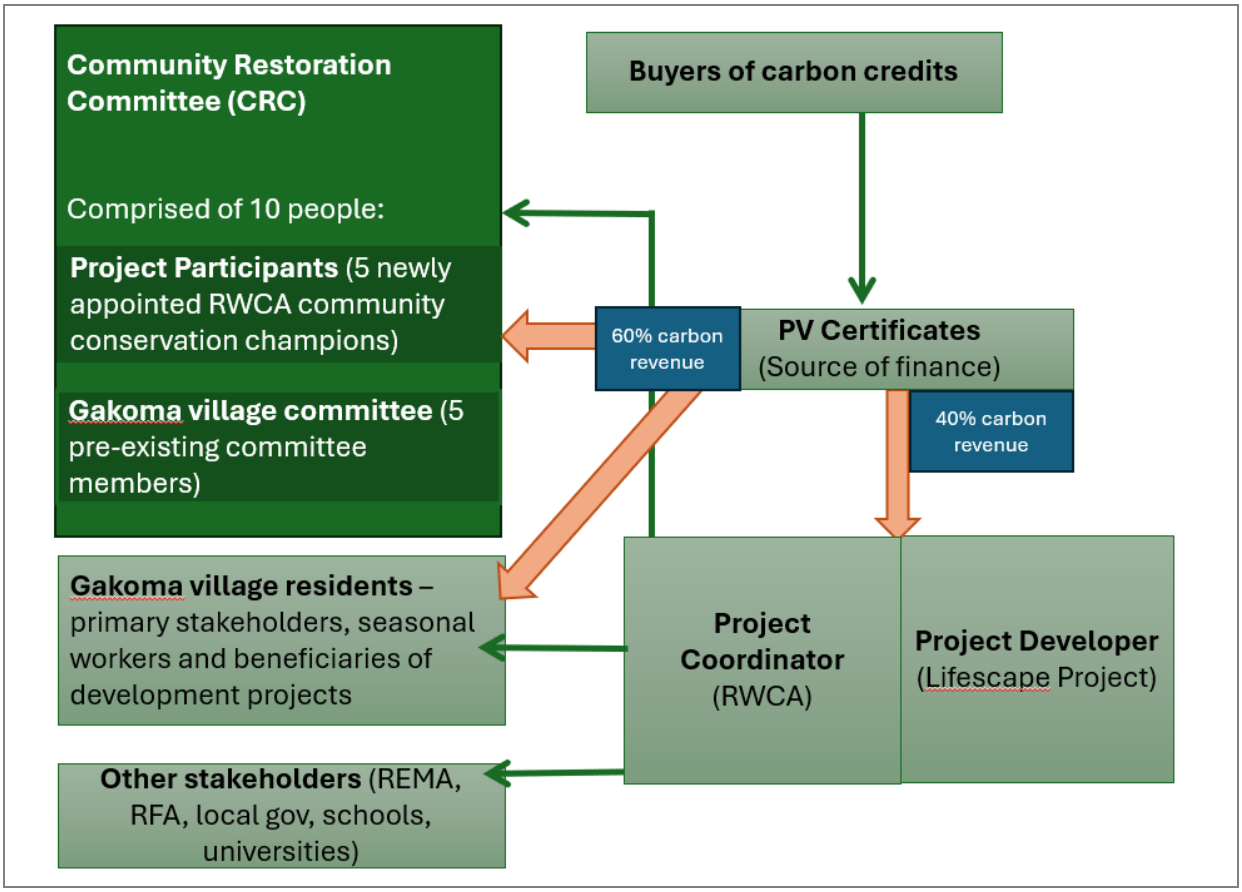
Each village in Rwanda has the same structure regarding a village council, comprising of 5 members. The responsibilities of the 5 different positions held in this committee, and the individuals who hold these positions are as follows:

1. Village's Head
2. Member in charge of security and people entering and going out of the Village
3. Member in charge of social and civil affairs
4. Member in charge of information and population education
5. Member in charge of development

These individuals are stakeholders in the project and will be members of the project's Community Restoration Committee (CRC).

The Community Restoration Committee (CRC) serves as the central community governance node for the pilot project. The CRC is comprised of the five project participants and the Gakoma Village Committee (GVC). The project coordinator (RWCA) will provide ongoing guidance and support, with the project developer contributing as needed (Lifescape Project). Stakeholder engagement, including interactions with the CRC, will be detailed during the PDD process, and the involvement of the GVC is already confirmed. The GVC are already well-placed to take on this role, as the members currently liaise with Buhabwa cell regarding village development priorities that require funding. This established governance structure sets a solid foundation for the PDD phase when the benefit-sharing mechanisms will be developed further for this project.

So far, during the broader community meetings in Gakoma Village, we have introduced the concept of the CRC and the idea and logic behind it, and will continue to develop it in more depth, with bottom-up input and as the project team continue to engage with the participants and village leadership.



The processes and discussions underpinning the formation of the CRC has been and will continue to be guided by Plan Vivo's toolkit on participatory planning as well as established protocols used by the RWCA community engagement team. If there are any disagreements within the CRC on what is being proposed on a specific point, there will be protocols (linked to or embedded within the grievance mechanism) to guide the process of resolving these.

The initial meetings with the community have revealed a general sense of enthusiasm and agreement toward what has been so far discussed – with regards to the 3 confirmed CCCs as participants, and Gakoma village as restoration workers and primary stakeholders). In terms of the governance structure, members of the community would have legal rights to benefit from the land in the ways agreed, (use of the carbon finance 60% allocation), vulnerable members of the community would have certain rights of first refusal for any paid work required on the land, would have the right to co-manage the CRC, and would have the right to withdraw from participating the project and/or its governance.

Additionally, the implementation team will lead engagement with local and central policy and government authorities as appropriate, particularly with officials of the Eastern Province, Kayonza district, and Murundi Sector. This will include matters to do with technicalities, resolution of any disputes, and discussing benefit sharing schemes that will be developed as part of the project (such as learning from what works well and the challenges of existing revenue-sharing models like those related to the Akagera National Park revenue sharing policy). In the pilot stage of the project, and in the post-pilot phase, continuing to liaise with national level government (such as REMA - the Rwanda Environment Management Authority) will be a focus.

Additionally, the implementation team will lead engagement with local and central policy and government authorities as appropriate, particularly with officials of the Eastern Province, Kayonza

district and Murundi Sector. This will include matters to do with technicalities, resolution of any disputes, and discussing benefit sharing schemes that will be developed as part of the project (particularly with reference to the Akagera National Park revenue sharing mechanisms (such as learning from what works well and the challenges of existing revenue-sharing models like those related to the Akagera National Park revenue sharing policy). In the pilot stage of the project, and in the post-pilot phase, continuing to liaise with national level government (such as REMA - the Rwanda Environment Management Authority) will be a focus.

Grievances will be initially handled by the village committee members (there are 5 members in the village council group) who are closely involved with the CRC, as they provide a trusted and accountable first point of contact for the community. These members, being elected by community members), are well-positioned to receive and discuss any concerns from community members. If escalation of a concern is required, then project co-ordinator will review the grievances and engage with the project developer to address them further.

4.2 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

The Lifescape Project and RWCA will ensure that our project in Rwanda operates in full compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements. We have already engaged with several of Rwanda's governmental bodies.
Specifically, during the Lifescape Project's 2023 site visit to Rwanda, we engaged with Rwandan Environmental Management Authority (REMA) officials (meeting led by Faustin Munyazikwiye, Deputy Director General of REMA), to discuss our project design and our vision. We received encouraging feedback, and they commended our approach of placing rural subsistence communities as the main beneficiaries of carbon finance from reforestation efforts. These discussions and recent policy developments make it an opportune time to develop our pilot PES project, and to partner with local and national government entities towards institutionalising PES and scaling our project.

We also met with Rwanda Forest Authority (RFA) in person, with Dr. Ivan GASANGWA (Forest Research Division Manager) and his team, with regards to Government-owned land parcels that they currently don't have the resources to be restored but were interested in discussing further as we developed the project more.

In Rwanda, governance operates in a tiered structure with several levels:

- **Eastern Province**: One of Rwanda's five provinces.
- **Kayonza District**: One of seven districts in Eastern Province.
- **Murundi Sector**: One of 12 sectors in Kayonza District.
- **Buhabwa Cell**: One of four cells in Murundi Sector.
- **Gakoma Village**: One of 5-10 villages in Buhabwa Cell.

From the district to the cell level, positions are government-appointed. At the village council level, members are elected by the community and work on a voluntary basis. Their role is to communicate development priorities and challenges directly to the cell level. For this project, we will rely on the village committee to guide us on who to engage with, as they already have established communication channels through their work.

Buhabwa Cell will be engaged on matters related to project alignment and similar works, while RWCA has already established rapport with Murundi Sector, having discussed the community carbon project vision at a high level. This familiarity is reinforced by other restoration works RWCA has led in the area. Engagement with Kayonza District officials will take place after discussions with REMA at the national level, likely in early 2025.

4.3 Financial Plan

Describe how the finance required to fund project development will be obtained.

During the pilot project, and through the adoption of the methodologies, we will be able to determine whether the expected revenue from carbon credits alone would enable the scaling of the project, or whether co-financing models and PV Nature credits may also be required for the initial stages of scaling the project. A provisional financial plan has been submitted to Plan Vivo and is available for review upon request.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Project Boundaries

Provide geospatial data files for project region and project area boundaries.

These have been submitted to Plan Vivo and are available for review upon request.

Annex 2 –Registration Certificate

Provide a copy of the project coordinator registration certificate.

The Lifescape Project and Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association registration certificates, and the agreement have been submitted to Plan Vivo and are available upon request.

Annex 3 – Exclusion List

Complete the exclusion list by responding 'Yes' if the activity is included in the project and 'No' if the project does not include the activity.

Activities	**Included in Project ('Yes' or 'No')**
Any project activities leading to or requiring the destruction [1] of critical habitat [2] or any forestry project which does not implement a plan for improvement and/or sustainable management.	No
Any activity which could be associated with the significant impairment of areas particularly worthy of protection of cultural heritage (without adequate compensation in accordance with international standards).	No
Trade in animals, plants or any natural products not complying with the provisions of the CITES/Washington convention [3].	No
Illegal, harvesting or trading in any wildlife resources.	No
Destructive fishing methods or drift net fishing with a net more than 2.5 km in length, explosives and/or poison.	No
Large-scale commercial logging operations for use in primary tropical moist forest.	No
Production or trade in wood or other forestry products other than from sustainably managed forests [4].	No
Exploitation of diamond mines and marketing of diamonds where the host country has not adhered to the Kimberley Process, and exploitation of other conflict minerals [5]	No
Activities involving harmful or exploitative forms of forced labour, [6] harmful child labour [7], modern slavery and human trafficking [8].	No
Projects that include involuntary physical displacement and/or forced eviction.	No
Production or activities that encroach on lands owned, or claimed or occupied by Indigenous Peoples, without full documented Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of such peoples [9].	No
Harmful and unsafe production, use, sale or trade of pharmaceuticals, ozone layer depleting substances [10], and other toxic [11] or dangerous materials such as asbestos or products containing PCB's [12], wildlife or products regulated under CITES, including all products that are banned or are being progressively phased out internationally	No
Production or trade of arms, ammunition, weaponry, controversial weapons, or components thereof (e.g., nuclear weapons and radioactive	No

ammunition, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, cluster bombs, anti -personnel mines, enriched uranium).	
Procurement and use of firearms.	No
Provision of finances to military institutions involved in conservation or security activities.	No
Production or trade of strong alcohol intended for human consumption or other alcoholic beverages (excluding beer and wine).	No
Production or trade of tobacco and other drugs	No
Gambling, gaming establishments, casinos or any equivalent enterprises and undertaking [13].	No
Any trade related to pornography, prostitution or sexual exploitation of any form.	No
Production or trade in radioactive material. This does not apply to the procurement of medical equipment, quality control equipment or other application for which the radioactive source is insignificant and/or adequately shielded	No
Production or trade in unbound asbestos. This does not apply to the purchase or use of cement linings with bound asbestos and an asbestos content of less than 20%.	No
Production, trade, storage, or transport of significant volumes of hazardous chemicals, or commercial scale usage of hazardous chemicals. Hazardous chemicals include gasoline, kerosene, and other petroleum products.	No
Transboundary trade in wastes, except for those accepted by the Basel Convention and its underlying regulations [14].	No
Any activity leading to an irreversible modification or significant displacement of an element of culturally critical heritage [15].	No
Production and distribution, or investment in, media that are racist, antidemocratic or that advocate discrimination against a part of the population.	No
Projects involving the planting or introduction of invasive species	No
Projects that increase the dependency of primary participants and other stakeholders on fossil fuels.	No

Notes:

[1] Destruction means (1) the elimination or severe reduction in the integrity of a habitat/area caused by a major and long-term/prolonged change in land-use or water resources or (2) the modification of a habitat such that this habitat's ability to fulfil its function/ role is lost.

[2] The term critical habitat encompasses natural and modified habitats that deserve particular attention. This term includes (1) spaces with high biodiversity value as defined in the IUCN's classification criteria, including, in particular, habitats required for the survival of endangered species as defined by the IUCN's red list of threatened species or by any national legislation; (2) spaces with a particular importance for endemic species or whose geographical range is limited; (3) critical sites for the survival of migratory species; (4) spaces welcoming a significant number of individuals from congregatory species; (5) spaces presenting unique assemblages of species or containing species which are associated according to key evolution processes or which fulfil key ecosystem services; (6) and territories with socially, economically or culturally significant biodiversity for local communities. Primary forests or high conservation value forests must also be considered as critical habitats

[3] https://cites.org/eng/disc/text.php

[4] Sustainably managed forests are forests managed in a way that balances ecological, economic and socio-cultural needs.

[5] Conflict minerals, including tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold, can be used to finance armed groups, fuel forced labour and other human rights abuses, and support corruption and money laundering. See the EU Regulation on conflict minerals: https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/conflict-minerals-regulation/regulation-explained_en

[6] Forced labour means all work or service, not voluntarily performed, that is extracted from an individual under threat of force or penalty.

[7] Harmful child labour means the employment of children that is economically exploitive, or is likely to be hazardous to, or to interfere with, the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health, or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. Employees must be at least 14 years of age, as defined in the ILO's Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (C138 – Minimum Age Convention, Article 2), unless local laws require compulsory school attendance or a minimum working age. In such circumstances, the highest age requirement must be used.

[8] Modern slavery is comprised two key components: forced labour and forced marriage. These refer to situations of exploitation that a person cannot leave or refuse due to threats, violence, deception or coercion. (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf)

[9] https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/

[10] Any chemical component which reacts with, and destroys, the stratospheric ozone layer leading to the formation of holes in this layer. The Montreal Protocol lists Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), their reduction targets and deadlines for phasing them out.

[11] Including substances included under the Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm Convention and WHO "Pharmaceuticals: Restrictions in Use and Availability".

[12] PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) are a group of highly toxic chemical products that may be found in oil-filled electrical transformers, capacitors and switchgear dating from 1950 to 1985.

[13] Any direct financing of these projects or activities involving them (for example, a hotel including a casino). Urban improvement plans which could subsequently incorporate such projects are not affected.

[14] Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their disposal (1989).

[15] "Critical cultural heritage" is considered as any heritage element recognised internationally or nationally as being of historical, social and/or cultural interest.

Annex 4 - Environmental and Social Screening

Complete the table below by answering each risk question. Where relevant include details of any activities that will be carried out to better understand or mitigate potential risks.

Topic	Risk Questions	Project Coordinator Response
Environmental and Social Risks		

Vulnerable Groups	Are there vulnerable or disadvantaged groups or individuals, including people with disabilities (consider also landless groups, lower income groups less able to cope with livelihood shocks/ stresses) in the project area, and are their livelihood conditions well understood by the project?	The project explicitly responds to the often-subtle differences in household vulnerabilities. For example, ensuring that at least 2 of 5 of the formal participants that are involved in PES agreements are women, as women face additional challenges in the region, as identified by the social mapping exercise conducted in Nov of 2024. As aligned with RWCA's protocol for temporary employment for restoration projects in other parts of Rwanda, those facing particularly acute issues of food security, and renting rather than owning their land, are offered temporary and seasonal work in the first instance. Restoration jobs will also be first offered to households which have a high proportion of dependents and elderly.
	Is there a risk that project activities disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, due to their vulnerability status?	The risk is minimal as the project is designed such that the benefits are maximised for vulnerable groups. As described above, RWCA have prioritisation of vulnerable groups built into to their procedures, for example, choosing to offer Community Conservation Champions to those experiencing particularly precarious food and housing situations, and women with young children. The project has adopted these established procedures, with the help of the village council who comprise part of the Community Restoration Committee.
	Is there a risk that the project discriminates against vulnerable groups, for example regarding access to project services or benefits and decision-making?	Among the households the project will work with, there are no apparent groups facing significant disadvantages currently, and we have no reason to believe that our activities would discriminate against any part of the local community. To ensure this remains the case, we will follow Lifescape Project's safeguarding policy, currently in development.
Gender equality	Is there a risk of adverse gender impacts due to the project/ project activities, including for example discrimination or	Rwanda is generally characterised by a traditional patriarchal culture. We are designing to the project to be particularly amenable to female

	creation/exacerbation or perpetuation of gender-related inequalities?	participation and empowerment, within a culturally sensitive framework and therefore do not anticipate considerable gender related risks associated with our project. One of the female project botanists with RWCA has confirmed she is happy to lead us in thinking about and implementing this consideration meaningfully and sensitively.
	Is there a risk that project activities will result in adverse impacts on the situation of women or girls, including their rights and livelihoods? Consider for example where access restrictions disproportionately affect women and girls due to their roles and positions in accessing environmental goods and services?	Women and girls will be a focus of the participatory planning, providing opportunity to consider influencing gender inequality directly within the project design. As mentioned in the section directly above, this has already been considered and has been mentioned at the initial community meetings
	Is there a risk that project activities could cause or contribute to gender-based violence, including risks of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment (SEAH)? Consider partner and collaborating partner organizations and policies they have in place. Please describe.	We identify no risks related to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment (SEAH).
Human Rights	Is there a risk that the project prevents peoples from fulfilling their economic or social rights, such as the right to life, the right to self-determination, cultural survival, health, work, water and adequate standard of living?	Within the project's scope, there are no activities or circumstances identified that would be a barrier to individuals exercising their rights.
	Is there a risk that the project prevents peoples from enjoying their procedural rights, for example through exclusion of individuals or groups from participating in decisions affecting them?	Procedural justice is a value embedded in the project design, limiting risks to communities in this regard.
	Are you aware of any severe human rights violations linked to project partners in the last 5 years?	We are no severe human rights violations linked to project partners in the last 5 years.
Community, Health, Safety & Security	Is there a risk of exacerbating existing social and stakeholder conflicts through the implementation of project activities? Consider for example existing conflicts over land or natural resources, between communities and the state.	Possible tensions may arise during monitoring and patrolling, especially if community members are engaging in activities that would undermine the aims and anticipated carbon uplift, namely harvesting woody biomass for use as fuel. This situation is familiar to RWCA, and we will take a soft approach to limiting conflict.

		This means gentle, non-confrontational, and cooperative strategy to manage or reduce conflict, which is aligned with social and cultural norms within Rwanda. Community members outside of the project area boundaries may feel unfairly treated. However, the different types and level of involvement offered to the Gakoma village is a way that we can mitigate these risks, as well as having a well-designed grievance mechanism. The benefit sharing mechanism will be designed to address this possibility explicitly.
	Does the project provide support (technical, material, financial) to law enforcement activities? Consider support to government agencies and to Community Rangers or members conducting monitoring and patrolling. If so, is there a risk that these activities will harm communities or personnel involved in monitoring and patrolling?	RWCA have multiple conservation projects that involve community members being employed in a role of monitoring and patrolling. For example, in Rugezi Wetland, they planted indigenous trees, trained rangers, and engaged community champions to ensure sustainable use by the communities. These positions involve a lot of trainings and support, including bringing together all Community Champions based around Rwanda for an annual staff retreat and to discuss challenges and learnings in their role (some CC roles are more enforcement and patrol-related than others). The community members won't work in a capacity that would be considered law enforcement (i.e. they are not patrolling government land or land that is protected by law). The project participants are the community members involved in the monitoring and patrolling, and there are no project-specific risks identified to the project participants (participants are protected under RWCA established protocols for employing CCCs).
	Are there any other activities that could adversely affect community health and safety? Consider for example exacerbating human-wildlife conflict, affecting provisioning	Because of the proximity for the Akagera National Park, there is some potential for human-wildlife conflict in the area and communities are familiar with dealing with these issues. For example, antelope encroaching on

	ecosystem services, and transmission of diseases.	lands. People may regard their presence an inconvenience and disturbance.
Labour and working conditions	Is there a risk that the project, including project partners, would lead to working conditions for project workers[3] that are not aligned with national labour laws or the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (discriminatory working conditions, lack of equal opportunity, lack of clear employment terms, failure to prevent harassment or exploitation, failure to ensure freedom of association etc.)?	No risks of this type are identified. The project will comply with Rwandan labour laws and the ILO's principles, with all labour managed under RWCA's established protocols, which include safeguards such as non-discriminatory hiring, clear contracts, and grievance mechanisms to address harassment or exploitation. Project participants engaged through the Community Conservation Champions structure will operate within this framework,
	Is there an occupational health and safety risk to project workers while completing project activities?	The project's envisioned work largely aligns with the traditional agricultural activities of the community, using similar techniques and equipment for digging, removing invasives and weeds etc. However, to ensure safe working conditions, RWCA's established protocols will be followed, including providing training, guidance, and necessary equipment for all activities. Participation in the project and specific activities is entirely voluntary, such that if there are specific tasks (like digging into very compacted ground) that are more physically demanding than others, the CCCCs will arrange labour and tasks according to ability and comfortability. Risks will be continually assessed to address any concerns proactively.
	Is there a risk that the project support or be linked to forced labour, harmful child labour, or any other damaging forms of labour?	No risks of this type are identified. Unlike projects that comprise of individual smallholder land, where there may be a risk of children contributing to tasks to earn carbon credits, all work in this project is managed directly by RWCA. This includes formal contracts, clear employment terms, and oversight to ensure compliance with Rwandan labour laws and international

[3] Project workers include project coordinator staff, staff of other project partners, third party groups fulfilling core functions of the project, and community volunteers or contracted workers.

		standards, eliminating any risk of forced or harmful child labour.
Resource efficiency, pollution, wastes, chemicals and GHG emissions	Is there a risk that project activities might lead to releasing pollutants to the environment, cause significant amounts of waste or hazardous waste or materials?	The project activities pose no risk of releasing pollutants, generating waste or hazardous materials, or causing significant consumption of energy, water, or other resources.
	Is there a risk that the project will lead to significant consumption of energy, water or other resources, or lead to significant increases of greenhouse gases?	Depending on drought dynamics, some areas of planting may require irrigation. A solar irrigation system is included in the confirmed budget, and we are close to a water source that will be used to ensure tree survival rates are maximised, with efficient use of water.
Access restrictions and livelihoods	Will the project include activities that could restrict peoples' access to land or natural resources where they have recognised rights (customary, and legal). Consider projects that introduce new access restrictions (eg. creation of a community forest), reinforce existing access restrictions (eg. improve management effectiveness and patrolling of a community forest), or alter the way that land and natural resource access restrictions are decided (eg. through introducing formal management such as co-management).	The project ensures that no activities will impede people's access to land or natural resources for which they hold recognised legal or customary rights. There were 4 men employed, two on each farm. The two workers on farm 1b have already been guaranteed by the previous landowner that they will have similar work opportunities on another farm nearby that the landholder owns. The owner of 1a has expressed the same intention but has not confirmed where yet because he is in the process of buying more land and doesn't know yet where his employees are best placed. The workers expressed that they were not concerned about this, perhaps related to the cultural norm that when land is sold, the workers tend to 'go with' the employer for the new employment opportunities.
	Is there a risk that the access restrictions introduced /reinforced/altered by the project will negatively affect peoples' livelihoods?	It is designed to safeguard and improve access to land that was previously used for commercial purposes. The project is entirely additional in terms of economic opportunities, as the structure of land ownership being used for the project creates new livelihood opportunities. Four specific individuals (see directly above), who were previously working on the farms before the land was put up for sale and acquired for the project, are experiencing changes in their

		livelihoods. However, these changes are limited to their location rather than the type of work or income.
	Have strategies to avoid, minimise and compensate for these negative impacts been identified and planned?	If negative impacts are identified as the project progresses, strategies will be devised and implemented.
Cultural heritage	Is the Project Area officially designated or proposed as a cultural site, including international and national designations?	The project site is not identified or planned as a cultural site, at either international or national levels.
	Does the project site potentially include important physical cultural resources, including burial sites and monuments, or natural features or resources of cultural significance (e.g. sacred sites and species, ceremonial areas) and is there risk that the project will negatively impact this cultural heritage?	There are no burial sites, monuments or natural features of cultural significance that will be negatively impacted by the project.
	Is there a risk that the project will negatively impact intangible cultural heritage? Consider for example cultural practices, social and cultural norms in relation to land and natural resources.	The project aims to enhance intangible cultural values and heritage (through connection to land, having a space to reflect and pray, etc), and we will build this into the stakeholder engagement workshops.
Indigenous Peoples	Are there Indigenous Peoples[4] living within the Project Area, using the land or natural resources within the project area, or with claims to land or territory within the Project Area?	While Rwanda does have various ethnic groups, including the Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa, the government has adopted policies that promote unity and discourage ethnic divisions. the Twa community, who are traditionally forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, have been recognised as a marginalised group in Rwanda, but these groups do not reside in the project region.
	Is there a risk that the project negatively affects Indigenous Peoples through economic displacement, negatively affects their rights (including right to FPIC), their self-determination, or any other social or cultural impacts?	Following from the information provided above, there is no risk identified.
	Is there a risk that there is inadequate consultation of Indigenous Peoples, and/or that the project does not seek the FPIC of Indigenous Peoples, for	Following from the information provided above, there is no risk identified.

[4] As per the IUCN Environmental and Social Management System, Indigenous Peoples include: "(i) peoples who identify themselves as "indigenous" in strict sense; (ii) tribal peoples whose social, cultural, and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; and (iii) traditional peoples not necessarily called indigenous or tribal but who share the same characteristics of social, cultural, and economic conditions that distinguish them from other sections of the national community, whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions, and whose livelihoods are closely connected to ecosystems and their goods and services" (IUCN 2016).

	example leading to lack of benefits or inappropriate activities?	
Biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources	Is there a risk that project activities will cause adverse impacts on biodiversity (both in areas of high biodiversity value, and outside of these areas) or the functioning of ecosystems? Consider issues such as use of pesticides, construction, fencing, disturbance etc.	There is no risk that project activities will cause adverse impacts on biodiversity - the improvement of biodiversity is explicitly built into the project's logic and outcomes. There are no identifiable risks associated with the unsustainable use of resources. The local partner RWCA are conservation and biodiversity experts and will guide activities to maximise biodiversity benefits.
	Is there a risk that the project will introduce non-native species or invasive species?	There may be a small amount of work involved in removing lantana from site, and as mentioned above, RWCA are well placed to identify and quickly resolve any issues regarding introduced and invasive species found or accidentally introduced on site.
	Is there a risk that the project will lead to the unsustainable use of natural resources? Consider for example projects promoting value chains and natural resource-based livelihoods.	In restoring land to a point of self-sustained ecological resilience, the project will include a sustainable harvest allowance for communities, to avoid leakage on other areas of more precarious land.
Land tenure and conflicts	Has the land tenure and use rights in the project area been assessed and understood?	Securing land ownership and therefore community involvement was important foundational step to doing this intervention. The land use and ownership rights have been well understood.
	Is there a risk that project activities will exacerbate any existing land tenure conflicts, or lead to land tenure or use right conflicts?	If the agreement with communities at the outset is not extremely clear, there is a risk of misunderstandings regarding the rights and obligations of the local communities within the project. The engagement process at the outset, has so far been, and will continue to be thorough and transparent, and will involve full participation of local communities, to mitigate this as much as possible.
Risk of not accounting for climate change	Have trends in climate variability in the project areas been assessed and understood?	Changes in weather patterns are expected to persistently impact the Kayonza region, leading to greater unpredictability and variability in weather conditions and rainfall.
	Has the climate vulnerability of communities and particular social	The project region is arid, and the risk of desertification and increasing aridity is increasing. Weather and

	groups been assessed and understood?	precipitation patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable, causing stress for households that rely on subsistence cropping and grazing.
	Is there a risk that climate variability and changes might influence the effectiveness of project activities (e.g. undermine project-supported livelihood activities) or increase community exposure to climate variation and hazards? Consider floods, droughts, wildfires, landslides, cyclones, etc.	We will focus on planting resilient, indigenous tree and shrub species, complimented with passive restoration methods.
Other – e.g. cumulative impacts	Is there a risk that the project will contribute cumulatively to existing environmental or social risks or impacts, for example through introducing new access restrictions in a landscape with existing restrictions and limited land availability?	The area faces pressure from large-scale land acquisitions driven by industrial agriculture and foreign-owned entities. Over time, as carbon projects become more prevalent in Rwanda, there is a potential risk of additional pressures related to land speculation driven by carbon markets. To mitigate this risk, the project will proactively engage with local landowners to, for example, understand their intentions regarding land sales and external entities. However, the risk of these relatively small plots being acquired specifically for carbon speculation is considered minimal due to their size and current usage. There are no other risks identified, as the project is designed to increase both community access to land and increase the area within the landscape that is ecologically restored and/or managed in way that allows natural revegetation and improvements to occur.
	Are there any other environmental and social risks worthy of note that are not covered by the topics and questions above?	None identified.
Safeguard Provisions		
Stakeholder engagement	Has a stakeholder analysis been conducted that has identified all stakeholders that could influence or be affected by the project, or is this still to be completed? Please describe.	Yes, the initial community meeting has taken place (18th Sept 2024), where RWCA explained the project and identified further stakeholders. Especially useful, was meeting and talking with some of the Gakoma

		village council members (there are 5 in total), who will be involved as key stakeholders. Further detailed analysis of this will be explored in later meetings, particularly in November during the full team visit.
	Are the local community and indigenous peoples statutory or customary rights to land or resources within the project area already clear and documented, or is further assessment required? Please describe.	We have now acquired the land for the project, and the land ownership and customary rights to be considered are straightforward, with no further assessment required.
	Are local governance structures and decision-making processes described and understood (including details of the involvement of women and marginalized or vulnerable groups), or is further assessment required? Please describe.	Local governance structures and decision-making processes are well understood, and RWCA's extensive experience with local communities and government in Rwanda provides confidence in the project to navigate these processes. As mentioned below, the RWCA community engagement team have years of experience and will guide the formation of participatory processes that are particularly cognisant of the needs of vulnerable groups.
	Are past or ongoing disputes over land or resources in the project area known and documented, or is there need for further assessment? Please describe.	None that we know of, it will be something that we will continue to closely monitor.
Stakeholder consultation	Does the project have a Stakeholder Engagement Plan with clear measures to engage Vulnerable Groups, or is this plan still to be developed? Please describe.	We focus on ensuring women and vulnerable groups are included in discussions, and the specific plans for this will consideration will be formed by the community engagement team of RWCA.
	Has the Project Coordinator informed all stakeholders of the project, through providing relevant project information in an accessible format, or does this still need to be completed? Please describe.	During all community meetings and participatory activities so far, RWCA have had discussions with Gakoma community (potential participants) and the village executives, about the relevant project information was communicated in Kinyarwanda, which all community members are fluent in. On the few occasions where Lifescape representatives spoke, Deo Ruhagazi of RWCA would translate directly to Kinyarwanda.
Free, Prior and Informed Consent	Has the project analysed and understood national and international requirements for Free Prior and	We have understood both national and international requirements for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Our commitment to adhering to

	Informed Consent (FPIC)? Please describe.	these requirements is paramount in our project planning and implementation process.
	Has the project identified potential FPIC rightsholders and potential representatives in local communities and among indigenous peoples, or is this still to be completed? Please describe.	While Rwanda does have various ethnic groups, including the Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa, the government has adopted policies that promote unity and discourage ethnic divisions. The term "indigenous peoples" is not commonly used in Rwanda's official discourse. Instead, the government emphasizes Rwandan identity and citizenship over ethnic distinctions
	Has the project worked with rightsholders and representatives of local communities and indigenous peoples to understand the local decision-making process and timeline (ensuring involvement of women and vulnerable groups), or is this still to be completed? Please describe.	While indigenous peoples specifically aren't the focus of the project, we focus on involving local decision-making, ensuring women and vulnerable groups are included when present. Our participatory approach and ongoing communication with local communities ensure shared information and informed decision-making.
	Has the project sought consent from communities to 'consider the proposed Project', and if so, where is this in principle consent documented? Please describe.	This occurred during the initial community meeting (18th Sept 2024), this is documented in the appendix (meeting report).
Grievance Mechanism	Does the project already have a Grievance Mechanism, or is this still to be established? Please describe.	A grievance mechanism has yet to be established, but will be drafted with RWCA in Nov 2024, and finalised during the in-depth community meetings in November 2024. It is likely that grievances will be initially handled by the village committee members who are closely involved with the CRC, as they provide a trusted and accountable first point of contact for the community. These members, being government-appointed, are well-positioned to receive and discuss any concerns from community members. If necessary, the project co-ordinator will then review the grievances and engage with the project developer to address them further.
	For projects with a GRM, is this accessible to project affected people? Please describe.	This will be further developed after community meetings in November.

Annex 5 – Notification of Relevant Authorities

Provide a copy of any correspondence addressed to the authorities with overall responsibility for land management and greenhouse gas emissions assessment within the project region informing them of the project.

Copies of email threads detailing our meetings with the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, the Rwanda Forest Authority, and other stakeholders have been submitted to Plan Vivo and are available upon request.