



## PROJECT DOCUMENT

### SECTION 1: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

**1.1 Project title:** Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

**1.2 Project number:** GEF ID: 9759  
PMS: 01564

**1.3 Project type:** FSP

**1.4 Trust Fund:** GEF

**1.5 Strategic objectives:**

GEF strategic long-term objective: Land Degradation: Integrated natural resources management

Strategic programme for GEF VI:

LD2-Prog.3: Land Management and Restoration

LD3-Progr.4: Scaling-up SLM through Landscape Approach

**1.6 UN Environment priority:** Healthy and productive ecosystems

**1.7 Geographical scope:** National

**1.8 Mode of execution:** Internal

**1.9 Project executing organization:** Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning together with the UN Environment

**1.10 Duration of project:** 48 months

Commencing: August 2019

Completion: August 2023

**1.11 Cost of project**

	US\$	%
Cost to the GEF Trust Fund	3,662,545	14
Co-financing		
Cash		
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia	7,217,666	28

<b>United Nations Environment Programme</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Zhelino Municipality</b>	<b>50,000</b>	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>7,517,666</b>	<b>29</b>
In-kind		
<b>Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia</b>	<b>12,091, 229</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Zhelino Municipality</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Saraj Municipality</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>United Nations Environment Programme</b>	<b>750,000</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation – North Macedonia</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>14,341,229</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,521,440</b>	<b>100</b>

### 1.12 Project summary

Due to its topography and climatic characteristics, North Macedonia is highly susceptible to land degradation. The mountainous and steep terrain is particularly susceptible to water erosion, landslips, torrent events and top soil loss if vegetation cover is degraded and poor land use practices applied. The mainly continental climate with hot dry summers and wet winters increases this susceptibility, and climate change is increasingly exacerbating these risks and thereby increasing the likelihood of both summer drought and winter intense precipitation (leading to greater risks of land degradation and human security risks).

Land degradation has accelerated since the collapse of the former Yugoslav Republic. This, in part, has been due to the strenuous transition process the newly independent Macedonia has had to go through, and the difficult economic, institutional and social adjustments necessary during this process. Significant regional and local outbreaks of conflict have also impacted both economics and the movement of population. A significant impact of this process has been the disruption and reduction of state support to rural areas, and rural land users facing new challenges created by the introduction of free market conditions, refugees, etc. The results of these factors, combined with North Macedonia's natural land degradation vulnerability, are evidenced by a wide set of land degradation problems

The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate

new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts in the future.

The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD / forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.

The goal of the Project is: *to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes*. The objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components: 1). Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM; 2). Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling), 3). Knowledge management and public awareness.

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**ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

a.s.l	Above sea level
AK	Agro-kombinats
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
APFO	Association of Private Forest Owners
BD	Biodiversity
BFSO	Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CMC	Crisis Management Centre
DLDD	Drought, Land Degradation and Desertification
DEPI	Division of Environmental Policy Implementation
EU	European Union
ECO-DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ETCAP	Erosion and Torrent Control Action Plans
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FOF	Faculty of Forestry
FAFS	Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IA	Institute of Agriculture
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance of EU
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IE	Implementing Entity/Partner
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LD	Land Degradation
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LSGU	Local Self Government Units
LRIMS	Land Resources Information Management System
LS	Livestock Units
MOEPP	Ministry of Environment and Physical planning
MAFWE	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NASA	National Academy of Sciences and Arts

MAKMONTANA	Association for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in North Macedonia
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategies
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
NHMS	National Hydro-meteorological Service
NAPFO	National Associations of Private Forests Owners
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NAEZ	National Agro-Ecological Zoning
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NAP	National Action Programme
NARDS	National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy
PE	Public Enterprise
PENF	Public Enterprise National Forests
PEMP	Public Enterprise for Management of Pastures
PIR	Project Implementation Review/Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SCI	Science – Policy Interface
SOC	Soil Organic Carbon
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

## SECTION 2: BACKGROUND AND SITUATION ANALYSIS (BASELINE COURSE OF ACTION)

### 2.1. Background and context

1. The Republic of North Macedonia (from hereafter North Macedonia), is a country in the Balkan Peninsula in Southeast Europe. It is one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, from which it declared independence in 1991.
2. A landlocked country, that occupies a territory of 25, 713 km<sup>2</sup>, North Macedonia has borders with Kosovo to the northwest, Serbia to the northeast, Bulgaria to the east, Greece to the south, and Albania to the west. The country's geography is defined primarily by mountains, valleys, and rivers.
3. The population of the country is approximately 2 million inhabitants with around 30% concentrated in North Macedonia's capital Skopje. Approximately 43% of the population occupies rural areas (average density 78.7 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>). The majority of the residents are ethnic Macedonians, while Albanians form a significant minority at around 25 percent, followed by Turks, Romani, Serbs, Bosniaks, Aromanians, and Bulgarians.
4. The current sovereign state of North Macedonia is a parliamentary republic and member of the UN and of the Council of Europe. Since 2005 it has also been a candidate for accession to the European Union and has applied for NATO membership. Although one of the poorest countries in Europe, North Macedonia has made significant progress in developing an open, market-based economy.

**Figure 1.** Geographic Position of North Macedonia



*Bio-Geographical Context:*

5. Landscapes and topography: The country's topography is characterized by mountains, valleys, ravines, narrow gorges, saddles and other forms. The present relief structure is morphogenically diverse, with both older and younger relief forms and a high diversity of both bedrock and soils. The average elevation is 829.7 m above sea level. The highest point (Golem Korab – 2,764 m) is situated on the Albanian border in the north west of the country and the lowest point (40 m a.s.l.) is situated on the border with Greece in the south of the country.
6. “Mountains” are the most important relief form and cover approximately two-thirds of the territory. There are 14 mountain peaks higher than 2,000 m. “Valleys and plains” are the second distinct morphological feature and constitute approximately one-third of the country. Most distinct are the ones extending along the Vardar River. The slope in the valleys and plains is gentle, but the mountains have very steep slopes (more than 30%), which they cover much of the country.
7. Climate: North Macedonia is under the influence of two zonal climates: Mediterranean and moderate continental, but combined influences predominate everywhere resulting in major climate modifications over a relatively small area. The wide variation in altitude and aspect also results in a great diversity of micro-climates within the country. The average annual temperature varies between -0.4 in winter and 14.2°C in summer, and annual amounts of precipitation range from 460 to 1 103 mm.
8. Two prominent seasons occur - cold, wet winters and dry, hot summers. In addition to these, in the high, mountainous areas there is also a mountainous climate characterized by short, cool summers and considerably colder and moderately wet winters, where precipitation is mainly in the form of snow.
9. *Overall land use*: Out of the total territory of the country, 1 261 thousand ha or 50.1% is agricultural land (cultivated land, permanent pasture and meadow, land used for permanent crops and kitchen gardens), 44.3 % are under forests while about 4% are water and other surfaces (table 1).

**Table 1.** Land use

<b>Type</b>	<b>ha (000)</b>	<b>% of total area</b>
1. Land area	2 461	98.0
1.1 Utilized agricultural area	1 261	50.1
1.2 Forests	1 092	44.3
1.3 Other land area (natural parks, water banks, urban etc.)	108	4.4
2. Inland waters including lakes	56	2.0
<b>Total area</b>	<b>2 517</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: State Statistical Office, 2013, published 2014.



10. In 2013, cultivated land represented around 509 thousand ha or about 40% of total agricultural land. From the total cultivated land 81% are under arable land and gardens, 3% are under orchards, 4% under vineyards, and 11 % meadows. Pastures are represented by 751 187 ha or 60% of total agricultural land.
11. According to the official data of the forest management plans (2008), total forest area in North Macedonia amounts to 1 091 857 ha, out of which 256 802 ha are un-forested lands. The forested parts comprise 255 445 ha high forests, 546 179 ha coppice forests, 14 460 ha forest plantations and 18 978 ha shrubberies. About 50% of forests are pure and mixed oak stands (480 000 ha), 30% (285 000 ha) beech stands, 8% (80 000 ha) Black Pine and Scots Pine, and 12% other forest stands<sup>1</sup>.
12. Water resources: The country possesses some moderately significant water resources, a well-developed hydrological network (of which Vardar River Basin occupies the largest area - 80%), and three larger lakes of tectonic origin (Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran). The rivers of North Macedonia are divided into three primary watersheds: one flowing to the Adriatic Sea and two to the Aegean Sea. Another very small watershed flows to the Black Sea.
13. The Vardar River (Aegean watershed) is the largest river, containing 80% of the water flow leaving the Republic of North Macedonia. The total length of the Vardar River is 388 km, of which 300 km are present in North Macedonia and the remainder in neighboring Greece. Its headwaters are the springs near the village of Vrutok, and it flows into the Aegean Sea near the Thessaloniki Gulf.
14. *Biodiversity*<sup>2</sup>: North Macedonia has a great floristic and faunal diversity which is the result of its central geographical position in the Balkan Peninsula and the various influences to which its territory has been exposed. The fluctuations of temperatures before, during and after the Ice Age caused multiple, dramatic migrations of species, which also greatly affected this region. Such mass movements left traces on the current flora and fauna.
15. Within the North Macedonia, several bio-geographical regions can be distinguished:
  - The sub-Mediterranean area of the Mediterranean bio-geographical region. The fauna of this area is most frequently represented by Pontus (east)-Mediterranean and Syrian arboreal elements
  - The middle-European bio-geographical region, which includes a major part of North Macedonia and dominates various climate-zonal broadleaf (primarily Oak) forests. These forested areas are mainly inhabited by east-Mediterranean fauna elements
  - Steppe - The central part of North Macedonia is characterized by steppe-like vegetation, which is represented by typical steppe floral elements. Steppe and other dry areas of the country are

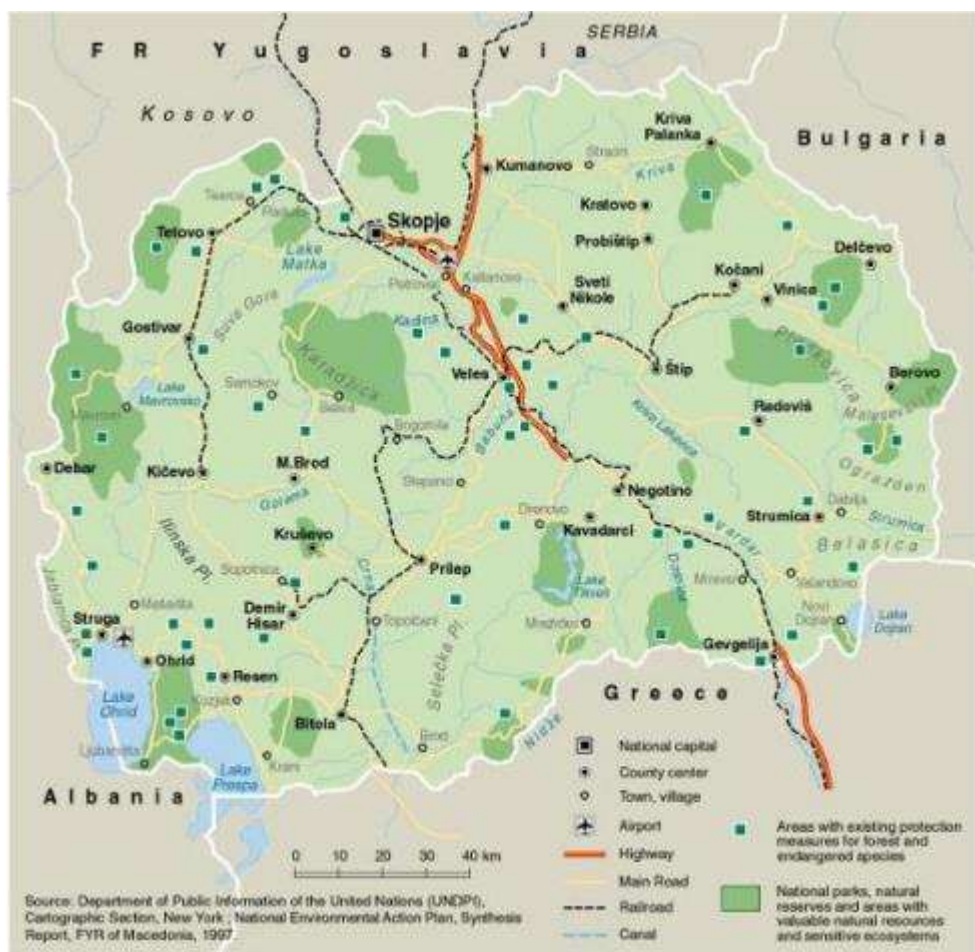
<sup>1</sup> PE National Forests ([http://www.mkdsumi.com.mk/zasumite\\_en.php?s=1&page=3](http://www.mkdsumi.com.mk/zasumite_en.php?s=1&page=3)).

<sup>2</sup> Country Study for Biodiversity of the Republic of Macedonia (First National Report) - Skopje, July, 2003

inhabited partly by Caucasus arboreal and partly by Aral-Caspian ephemeral (i.e., grassland or desert) elements.

- The boreal bio-geographical region includes the biome of the European primarily coniferous forests of the boreal type.
- The middle-south European mountainous bio-geographical region includes the alpine and partly subalpine zone of the highest mountains. The region is distinguished by many endemic and relict oreo-tundral (i.e., high-mountain tundral) representatives
- Limno-fauna - large organisms (fishes, crabs and shellfish), are dominated by Pontus-Caspian invaders, which in most cases have evolved due to their isolation.

**Figure 2: Bio-geographical regions**



- Key ecosystems include: *Oak / Chestnut Forests* - distributed in the lowlands and highlands up to 1 100 m and covers 73% of the total forested area; *Beech Forests* - covers the mountainous areas between 1 100 - 1 700 m (about 22% of the total forested area) - The sub-mountain Beech region is present between 1 100 – 1 300 m; *Subalpine Forests* - located between 1 700 m and approximately 2 100 m. In these areas, the forests are almost destroyed. Forests of Spruce (*Picea abies*), Mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*) and Molika (*P. peuce*), however, as well as heath of

*Bruckenthalia spiculifolia*, *Vaccinium myrtillus* etc., can be found; *Dry land/grassland ecosystems* - occupy a large part of North Macedonia. They occur in the lowland and highland belt (in the highland pastures), and often in secondary habitats primarily because of permanent degradation of forest communities (mainly Oak), but also due to recolonization of abandoned farmland by grassland species; *Alpine ecosystems* - Mountain and high-mountain vegetation which develops above the upper forest boundary (over 1 800 m) is very rich and diverse; *Wetland ecosystems* in North Macedonia are present in various forms (relic lakes, glacial lakes, reservoirs, rivers, streams, springs and temporary waters). The group of key aquatic systems includes the three natural lakes and the developed river network, especially the watershed of the Vardar River.

17. The global IUCN Red List contains 969 species that occur in North Macedonia, of which 110 are either Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable. Despite its small size, the country is home to a large number of species that do not occur anywhere else in the world<sup>3</sup>.
18. *Main threats to biodiversity*: The current threats to biodiversity are mainly rooted in poverty, weak institutional capacity to manage or protect forests and other ecosystems, and in unsustainable land use practices that impact hydrology, micro-climates, erosion and agro-chemical pollution. Key direct threats include:
  - Deforestation resulting from illegal logging and increased forest fires,
  - Water pollution and quality changes (agro-chemicals, salinization, urban waste, soil erosion and sedimentation) mostly derived from land degradation,
  - Direct disturbance from infrastructure and unplanned construction.

#### **Political and socio-economic context:**

19. Since its independence, the country has had to undertake strenuous reforms in order to restructure the communist era centralized system into an open market economy tailored towards its eventual accession into the European Union.
20. Political and administrative structure: Following the disintegration of the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, the newly independent Republic of Macedonia became a free-market oriented parliamentary republic with the president as the chief of state and the prime minister as the head of government. Administratively, the country is divided into 8 non-administrative planning regions, 80 self-governing municipalities and 1 767 settlements.
21. Demographics: According to the latest official population census, performed in 2002, the country had a total population of 2 022 547, with an average of 3.6 persons per household. The average population density calculated on the total area of the country (25 713 km<sup>2</sup>) is 79 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. In 2002, 59% of the total population lived in predominantly rural regions. The average age of the population in North Macedonia is approximately 40 years, and 70.7% of the population is of working age (between 15 and 64). In the last thirty years, the country has faced severe 'aging population syndrome'. From 1981 to 2012, the number of young people (0 to 19 years) declined from 41% to 23.9% of the total population, while population aged 65 and above increased from

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iucn.org/news/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/201711/national-red-listing-kicks-macedonia>

8% to 12%. The rural areas have problems in retaining the young population and almost all rural municipalities experience overall decline in population.

22. Economy: Since its independence in 1991, North Macedonia has made progress in liberalizing its economy and improving its business environment. Its low tax rates and free economic zones have attracted some foreign investment, but it is still low relative to the rest of Europe. North Macedonia's economy is closely linked to Europe as a customer for exports and source of investment and has suffered as a result of prolonged weakness in the euro zone. Unemployment has remained consistently high at about 23% but may be overstated due to the existence of an extensive gray market, estimated to be between 20% and 45% of GDP. North Macedonia maintained macroeconomic stability through the global financial crisis by conducting prudent monetary policy, which keeps the domestic currency pegged to the euro, and inflation at a low level.
23. Role of Agriculture in the Economy: Agriculture (including hunting, forestry and fishery) is the third largest sector after services and industry. Agriculture from being the third largest contributor in GDP has dropped to be the fourth largest, although its share in GDP has remained steady (around 9%). In terms of the structure of total employment in the country, data for 2012 show that 24.8% of people were employed in the primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing), compared to 75.2% in other sectors (23.4% in industry and construction and 51.8% services / others).
24. Agriculture has served as shock-absorber for the socio-economic and structural changes in industry and other sectors of the economy. In 2004 the sector has provided income and employment to approximately 17% of the national workforce<sup>4</sup> (around 11% in 2000) but the real contribution probably exceeds this percent as according to the latest Census (2002) about 43% of the population, 36% of the labor force and 44% of the poor live in rural areas.
25. The country is a net importer of agricultural and food products which accounted for about 15% of total imports in 2004-05. The agricultural trade deficit in value terms has been widening in recent years, though a sizeable increase in tobacco and wine exports narrowed the gap in 2005.
26. North Macedonian agriculture is facing major challenges and need for structural reforms. WTO membership increased possibilities for export expansion but also competition on the domestic market from imported products. These challenges are going to be even more severe with the implementation of the Free Trade Agreements with the neighboring countries and the EU-27. A decline in agriculture, forestry and fishery and associated industries could have significant adverse consequences in rural areas and to the overall economic and social stability of the country.
27. Poverty<sup>4</sup> and Rural decline<sup>5</sup>: North Macedonia has some of the highest levels of poverty in Europe, even in the pre-independence period. In 2016, the poverty rate according to the official

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<sup>4</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Macedonia/Poverty-rate-at-dollar32-a-day>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/EAPN-Multidimensional-poverty-analysis-Macedonia-2017-1243.pdf>

national poverty measure was 21.9 % (though this was a decline from a peak of 27% in 2010). An overwhelming share (two thirds) of the poor lived in rural areas.

28. Unemployment or under-employment is a major cause of poverty in North Macedonia. The rate of unemployment in North Macedonia was 23.4 percent in 2016, rendering one in four people unable to find work. The shift from a Yugoslavian command economy, in which the central government mandated many aspects of the market such as prices, incomes and investments, to the modern democratic economy, subject to volatile influences such as supply and demand, has left many citizens without job opportunities. About 60% of the poor lived in households headed by individuals who worked. Of these, almost two-thirds were wage/seasonal workers, and the rest were farmers.
29. *Decline of rural infrastructure and services, rural depopulation*: Due to various financial constraints and economic shocks felt by North Macedonia since the collapse of the Republic of Yugoslavia there has been a decline in the level of investments and support to rural areas generally, and many villages have fallen into decay. The consequences of this are particularly severe for the vulnerable groups living in the hill and mountain areas. Research in such areas indicates that 43% of respondents stated that they do not have enough money for food, while 47% stated that they have enough for food but not for clothing and footwear. Widespread stagnation has caused many young people to abandon farming and move to urban areas. In some places, uncontrolled out-migration has completely emptied villages in a very short time. Already in 1998 it was reported that as many as 121 villages had no longer any inhabitants with this trend continuing over the years, and in as many as 21% of the total number of North Macedonia's villages there were less than 50 inhabitants. In 104 villages, there were only 10 people or less. Moreover, the number of civil associations and organizations in rural areas are decreasing. A diminishing social capital deprives rural populations of their possibilities to cope with a deteriorating situation, and forces many to move to the cities.
30. Factors<sup>6</sup> contributing most to the poverty of the rural population in North Macedonia are:
  - Low income derived from agricultural activities due to the fragmentation of land plots (average 2 ha), obsolete technology, low-quality land cultivation and knowledge,
  - Inadequate access to markets and market information, which renders small farmers unable to get better prices for their products and raw materials,
  - Basic infrastructure needs of rural areas remain unsatisfied – poor roads, irregular bus service, lack of supply of necessities, insufficient drinking water, non-existent sewage network etc.,
  - Lack of access to educational institutions and basic health services, including primary health care, particularly for the people living in the hills and mountains.
31. In North Macedonia, 492 thousand people were living on degrading agricultural land in 2010 bringing the share of rural residents who inhabit degraded agricultural land up to 56% of the total

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<sup>6</sup> Rural Development: Does Macedonia Need a New Approach, Jorde Jakimovski 2002 (<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/24964/1/cp02ja23.pdf>)

- rural population<sup>24</sup>. Land degradation can severely influence populations' livelihood by reducing farm productivity, increasing costs, and limitation of vital ecosystem services (including food, fuel and water), and increasing the risk of poverty.
32. *Gender Issues*<sup>7</sup>: The patriarchal structures and traditional social norms are still prevalent, evident in the low employment rate of women, the low proportion of women property owners, especially in rural areas, and low role of women in decision making. The level of awareness of gender discrimination is relatively low in rural areas, where this impedes the realization of other activities related to gender equality, such as equal representation in politics, economy and equitable distribution in society and at home. The most traditional social norms are visible in rural areas.
  33. *Land Use past and present*: With the establishment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1948, agricultural land was partially nationalized and redistributed, and partially collectivized. Farmer households could own up to 10 hectares of land per person and the excess farmland was owned by co-ops, agricultural companies or local communities.
  34. Extensive structural reforms have been realized in agriculture since 1994, including partial privatization of public enterprises (in agriculture known as agro-kombinats-AKs) and a major reduction in the level of budgetary support. Some rationalization of institutions has also begun, and the private sector is becoming increasingly influential. But the potential benefits to the rural sector from these changes in the legal, institutional and economic frameworks have been slow to materialize, due to political and economic shocks, incomplete reforms and the continued use of inappropriate policy. As mentioned previously, rural land users, particularly small private farmers, face numerous legal, institutional, infrastructural, land tenure/distribution, inputs/marketing and financial barriers.
  35. *Detailed description of Land Use*: In 2013, the total agricultural land area equaled 1 261 thousand ha of which the majority was used as pasture (751 187 ha or 60%), and cultivated land represented around 509 thousand ha. or about 40% of total agricultural land. From the total cultivated land 81% are under arable land and gardens, 3% are under orchards, 4% under vineyards, 11% meadows (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Agricultural land area (in 000 hectares)

Area	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>1. Agricultural land, out of which</b>	<b>1 064</b>	<b>1 014</b>	<b>1 121</b>	<b>1 120</b>	<b>1 268</b>	<b>1 261</b>
<b>1.1 Cultivated land, out of which</b>	521	513	509	511	510	509
<i>1.1.2 Arable land and gardens</i>	424	420	415	415	414	413
<i>1.1.3 Orchards</i>	14	14	14	14	15	15
<i>1.1.4 Vineyards</i>	22	21	21	21	21	22
<i>1.1.5 Meadows</i>	61	58	59	61	60	59
<b>1.2. Pastures</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>751</b>
<b>2. Ponds, reed beds and fish ponds</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/EAPN-Multidimensional-poverty-analysis-Macedonia-2017-1243.pdf>

36. *Land tenure and management*: Approximately 2 702 863 ha. of North Macedonia is under non-urban or non-industrial / mining use (i.e. under forestry, protected areas, pasture or agriculture). The majority is under the state ownership and managed by public enterprises (39% Forestry, 28% pasture and 6 % protected areas - total 73%).
37. On the other hand, the *cultivated agricultural land ownership* structure in the country is predominantly private. Individual agriculture holdings (small scale household farms) cultivate 80% of arable land (451 702 ha) and the rest is cultivated by agriculture enterprises (237 882 ha), out of which around 36 000 ha are cultivated by privatized former Agriculture Combines and public enterprises.
38. The management of the state-owned land resources is centralized (see institutional section of the document). The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) manages the renting or distributing of agriculture land to the socially vulnerable population.

**Table 3: Summary of Land Ownership and Management**

<i>Land Use type</i>	<i>Land ownership</i>	<i>Land user/manager</i>	<i>Area ha.</i>	<i>%</i>
Forestry	State	Public Enterprise “National Forests”	1 091 857	39%
	Private	Forest owners represented through the Association of Private Forest Owners (APFO)	94 146	3%
Protected Areas	State	Public enterprises	170 235	6%
Pasture	State	Public Enterprise for Pasture Management	751 187	27%
Cultivated land	Private	Small household farmers	451 702	16%
		Private Agricultural enterprises, Privatized former Agriculture Combines	201 882	7%
	State	State owned, managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	36 000	1%
Total			2 797 009	100%

39. *Forestry organization and management*: Forest ecosystems cover a large portion of North Macedonia. According to the Corine Land Cover nomenclature<sup>8</sup>, 31 classes of land cover have been identified in North Macedonia (out of the total 44 classes, up to 3<sup>rd</sup> level of nomenclature). According to the official data of the forest management plans (2008), total forest area in North Macedonia amounts to 1 091 857 ha, out of which 256 802 ha are unforested forest lands.

<sup>8</sup> CORINE (Co-ordination of information on the environment) land cover programme was proposed by European Commission in 1985 and launched in 2000 aiming to satisfy the need for precise and easy accessible information on land cover in Europe. North Macedonia was involved in this programme since 1998, two datasets are available (2000, 2006) and third one is in phase of development.

40. For planning purposes 92% of the forests have economy classification, 2% are protective forests and 6% national parks. Forests with high quality are 30.4% and coppices are 69.6% of total forest area. Main forestry products and services are:
  - Ecological protection of landscapes
  - Timber (raw and some limited processing) for domestic market
  - Fuelwood for domestic market - 80 to 85% of harvested wood is for fuelwood.
41. The economic value of the forestry sector is poorly evaluated, particularly in terms of the ecosystem service and non-timber forest products, and in terms of social importance for rural fuel supplies and rural employment. The most important problems related to the protection of North Macedonian forests are:
  - an increasing level of illegal cutting, mainly of fuel wood but also timber, due to unfavorable social and economic conditions, and weak protection
  - a rise of climatic change induced forest dieback
  - frequent forest fires due to increased aridity from climate change and weak management (sanitary cleaning, fire breaks, fire control, etc.).
42. Several enterprises manage the forests in North Macedonia. However, PE “National forests” (PENF) manage the greatest part of state-owned forests in the country. Forests within national parks are managed by the institution responsible for managing the particular national park. Only a small share of forests is managed by others, such as: local municipality administration, public communal enterprise or water management enterprise. Management of private forests is by their owners.
43. Management of both private and state forest, regardless of their purpose, is supposed to be in accordance with general forest management plans developed for a period of twenty years and adopted by the North Macedonian government. There is an obligation to prepare forest management plans for a ten-year period for forests covering an area larger than 100 ha, and secure approval by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE). Forests have a key role not only in wood production but also in watershed protection, in non-timber products (mushrooms, berries, etc.), adaptation and mitigation to climate change, tradition and cultural heritage, tourism, recreation among others.
44. The public enterprise “National Forests”, was established in 1998 as a legal successor of the former Yugoslav (and early independence period) enterprises for forest management. Around 3 000 people are employed in the forestry sector, of which, in the year 2004, 2 709 were in the PENF, around 100 are in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, around 150 in the Forestry police, and the rest are in the National parks, and in other organizations. From this number around 700 are forestry engineers, 900 are forestry technicians, and the rest are loggers, cutters and other necessary staff.
45. Unfortunately, the PENF has struggled for a long period to remain financially viable and operationally effective due to limited state budget support, an organizational structure and internal



regulations which impede sustainable and profitable management, increased pressures from illegal activity due to wider socio-economic pressures in rural areas, and reduced effectiveness in terms of forestry protection enforcement and afforestation/re-forestation in the field.

46. *Pasture Organization and management*<sup>9</sup>: Cattle, sheep, and goats are herded in large areas of semi-natural and natural pastures in mountain areas throughout almost the entire year. During winter, herds migrate to the plains of central North Macedonia. The extensive grazing-based keeping of cattle is practiced by both individual farmers for their personal use and market-oriented family farms. Sheep breeding is semi-nomadic and has a long tradition in North Macedonia. It is most often carried out in mountainous areas along the border of the northern, western and eastern parts of the country. The breeds for the combined production of milk and meat are much used.
47. Almost all pastures in North Macedonia (and especially mountainous ones) are state-owned. Their management is regulated by the Law on Pastures (2000). General management is delegated to the Public Enterprise for Pasture Management (state body). An invitation to tender for the use of pastures is published annually. User rights are granted in accordance with natural boundaries and pastures capacity. Pastures above 1 200 m are used for grazing mainly in summer months. Contracts are signed for a period of 5 years and farmers pay compensation (fee) for use per Livestock Unit (LSU).
48. Due to the lack of funds, the Public Enterprise is currently only collecting farmers' compensations/fees, without implementing any measures to regulate or improve pastures. Feeding sites and shelters for animals have nearly collapsed, and new ones have not been erected. Roads to distant pastures are not maintained and cannot be used. The result is a great loss of grazing areas and semi-natural habitats due to shrubs and tree invasions, or its conversion to cultivation.
49. *Agricultural Land Organization and Management*: The largest share of agricultural holdings belongs to the group of small-scaled individual (household) farms (66%) with the majority (around 58%) being extremely small (1-3 ha. only). These farmers are mainly subsistence in nature and most farming households have family members with incomes derived from other sources as well. Despite the small scale and subsistence nature of these farms they produce the vast majority of the agricultural produce in the country (including livestock).

**Table 4:** Distribution of land by Farm types

<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Farm type</i>	<i>Area (ha.)</i>	<i>%</i>
Private	Small (household) farmers	451 702	66%
	Private Agricultural enterprises	201 882	29%
State	State owned, managed by MAFWE	36 000	5%
<i>Total</i>		689 584	100%

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sasb-eu.org/en/nature/the-western-balkans/macedonia>

50. The remaining area of cultivated lands is under either larger more commercially orientated private farms or under the privatized “Agro-Kombinats” (AK). Due to a slow process of farm consolidation, small-scale of farms, and inefficient use of the production factors, North Macedonian agriculture is challenged with low productivity (including labor)<sup>10</sup> and economic return. For example, about half of the farms in the country (84 740 holdings or 49.6% of the total number of holdings) had income less than 2 000 EUR in 2013. 70% of farms (118 396 holdings) had incomes below 4 000 EUR. Only 0.4% of the holdings have economic size from 25 000 to 50 000 EUR<sup>11</sup>.
51. The privatized AKs have struggled to remain financially viable despite their larger size due to inherited debts, outdated machinery and lack of free market experience. Existing irrigation schemes, which once covered 40% of the area suitable for irrigation, has been reduced to 13% coverage. The state of the country's irrigation system is poor due to lack of maintenance and investments, and crop damage during the variable summer dry period is prevalent.
52. The post-harvest assembly, distribution and management system for fresh produce in North Macedonia is highly rudimentary. Produce quality suffers from lack of needed infrastructure supporting post-harvest treatment and packing. These activities are essential to compete in export markets and, increasingly, in the domestic market that is now being influenced by international supermarket chains, which are becoming dominant players in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The purchase of bulk loads by supermarket chains has tremendous opportunities in terms of volume, but these volumes must meet stringent quality standards, which North Macedonian products do not now meet.
53. *Agricultural Areas of High Nature Value*: The mosaic landscape of low production volume is characterized by family gardens, small traditional orchards, individual trees, as well as vineyards within the households. Local varieties are still grown in family gardens in a very extensive way. Traditional orchards (mainly pears, apples, and plums) and vineyards grown for own consumption are also typical. Traditionally used pastures retain a high diversity of plant species.
54. *Land Degradation in Cultivated Areas*: Extensive degradation of cultivated land is a major and increasing problem affecting almost all cultivated areas in North Macedonia. Key LD issues include:
  - Loss of organic matter so the loss of soil fertility and water retention capacity in cultivated fields,
  - High levels of water (and to lesser extent wind) erosion of fields resulting in loss of fertile topsoil, gullying, flash floods and high sediment levels,
  - Inappropriate use of agro-chemicals leading to pollution,

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<sup>10</sup> European Economic and Social Committee, 2011

<sup>11</sup> Farm Structure Survey 2013, Typology and Structure of Agricultural Holdings, 2013

- Salinization of irrigated areas due to poor infrastructure (drainage), and weak management of water.
55. *Impact of Climate change:* The negative effect of climate change on agriculture in North Macedonia is increasing. The agricultural sector as a whole, and particularly small farms, are expected to be exposed to prolonged heat waves, more severe droughts and floods. The climatic events in 2007/2008 and 2011/2012 with long dry periods and heat waves lead to significant production losses. Less than 10% of agricultural land is irrigated, and with the exception of the western parts of the country, water deficiencies occur in summer, resulting in significant moisture stress for summer and annual crops.
- The most significant impacts agriculture has on the environment are associated with soil degradation; water-logging and salinization as a result of unsustainable agricultural practices and land use; poor water management; biodiversity degradation; soil erosion. All of these issues increase the vulnerability of agricultural systems and rural livelihoods to external shocks such as climate change.
  - With a considerable proportion of the rural population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, rural communities are particularly vulnerable to risks posed by changes that may occur as a result of climate change. This risk is further intensified by North Macedonia's relatively low productivity associated with a lack of adaptive capacity to the present climate, also known as "the adaptation deficit". This deficit refers to underperformance caused by a complex set of factors, including distortions and imperfections in agricultural output and input markets; poor quality public services in areas like agricultural education, extension, research and market information systems; delays in farm restructuring; undeveloped agricultural land markets; lack of access to finance; unsustainable management of soils; insufficient irrigation; and high vulnerability to natural hazards like droughts, floods, frosts, and severe storms.
  - The forestry sector in North Macedonia is expected to experience a high level of impact from climate change, especially boreal forests, where those impacts could be dramatic. The major sources of exposure (and associated impacts) for forests in the country are increasing temperatures, increasing frequency of forest fires, and changes in the forest productivity. The following segments of forest management are deemed to be most vulnerable till 2025: forest management planning, forest utilization, forest protection, hunting and treason, and silviculture<sup>12</sup>.
56. *The main Land Degradation problems in North Macedonia:* In North Macedonia erosion is the most dominant land degradation type, and it is affecting up to 96% of all territory of the country. Of this, an area of 9 423 km<sup>2</sup> or 36.65% of the total state area is in the highest categories (I–III) of erosion, with 8% being bare land. The predominant form of soil erosion in North Macedonia is water erosion.
57. *Soil erosion* is one of the most important environmental problems and it has increased in the last decade. The combination of natural vulnerability (sloping terrain, vulnerable soil structures and occurrence of intensive rains), inappropriate land use (destruction of natural flora, conversion of

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<sup>12</sup> Third National Communication on Climate Change, 2014 (for North Macedonia)

grasslands for cash crop cultivation, establishment of large fields involving the destruction of former shelterbelts, landscape elements and field margins) and farming practices (overgrazing, use of monocultures, limited application of organic materials, ploughing of steep slopes, lack of soil conservation tillage techniques, insufficient land use for winter cover crops) contribute to the acceleration of erosion processes.

58. Currently an estimated 38% of the country experiences medium to severe erosion processes, with an annual total soil loss of about 17.1 million cubic meters. Soil erosion results in large amounts of sediment ending up in artificial and natural accumulations and water beds, leading to a reduction of storage or flow capacity of water leading to damage of critical hydraulic infrastructure and to floods.
59. Abandonment of agricultural areas has in some places contributed to a reduction of erosion, but in mountain areas, lack of maintenance of terraces has increased erosion.
60. Flooding, landslides and gullying: Other prominent types of soil erosion in North Macedonia are high rates of landslides and gulling, exacerbated by torrential rains (increased in past decades due to climate change) and human activities including illegal logging, and forest fires. Landslides are especially prevalent in the North-Western mountainous region of the country. In 2015, there were 89 recorded landslides in the North-Western part of North Macedonia, causing huge economic and human losses. Flood events have increased in number and scale with significant economic and disaster risk impacts.
61. The damage caused by floods directly affects the already fragile agriculture and local rural economies. It is stated that the occurrences of extreme hydrological events (floods and droughts) have increased in frequency and intensity over the past decades due to climate change. In 2015, over 170 000 people were affected by heavy flooding and during the last three decades regional floods caused by the biggest rivers in North Macedonia, caused an estimated total damage worth US\$ 193.8 million<sup>13</sup>.
62. Land use change: Land cover and land use change are intensifying the land degradation problems, including soil sealing (the covering of the ground by an impermeable material)<sup>14</sup>, conversion of pasture to arable, and the abandonment of some arable lands. In the period 2000-2006, the situation in the landscape of North Macedonia can be characterized by a net increase in artificial areas and water bodies and a net decrease in arable land, permanent crops (orchards, etc.), pastures-mosaics and semi-natural vegetation.
63. Soil fertility decline and inappropriate agrochemical use: Arable cultivated land in North Macedonia is degrading due to:
  - Loss of humus content which leads to reduced fertility and water retention capacity (resilience to drought),

<sup>13</sup> Study on Erosion and Action Plan for the City of Skopje, UNDP, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in the R. of Macedonia (draft, UNCCD, 2018).

- Top soil erosion (for reasons described above),
  - Salinization in irrigated lands.
64. There are high losses of topsoil, humus and nutrients from the agriculture land located on slopes. Approximately 17 million m<sup>3</sup> of arable soil is lost every year. The major problems causing soil degradation in rural areas are poor agricultural practices, especially inefficient irrigation schemes, the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and mono-cultivation. The farmers usually apply the same practice for one crop, despite differing natural conditions of the field. Same land cultivation, same fertilization practice is used for different conditions (for flat lowland and sloped and hilly areas, for irrigated and non-irrigated land, etc.)
65. The most common soil cultivation practice is moldboard ploughing that is permanently mixing soil top layer, exposing it to increased aeration and create soil organic matter loss due to more intensive processes of organic matter degradation. The ploughing of sloped areas is usually along the slope instead of across the slope that causes losses of the soil by erosion, losses of natural vegetation and biodiversity. This practice decreases land productivity and significantly increases the risk of land degradation.
66. Intensification of agriculture (higher fertilizer and pesticide use, semi-natural grassland conversion to arable land and new irrigation developments) is posing a severe threat to the biological diversity of the country. Traditional management of grasslands and low input, high crop diversity mixed farming, which was maintained on high nature value habitats, has ceased in many marginal but environmentally valuable areas. Excessive application of fertilizers, especially in highly erosion-prone soils, decreases the soil fertility. Fertilizer use in North Macedonia increased from 14 100 tons to 29 500 tons between 2002 and 2014.<sup>15</sup>
67. Deforestation: Deforestation plays a major role in causing or exacerbating the land degradation issues discussed above. There are three main causes of deforestation in North Macedonia: illegal cutting for fuelwood and timber, an increase in number and severity of forest fires, and increased levels of dieback of forests. Generally, forestry activities carried out in the past have contributed to doubling of North Macedonia's forest cover over a period of 60 years. On the other hand, some type of forest activities (e.g. illegal wood cut and clear-cut forest management) are not appropriate and lead to land degradation.
68. As a result of drought conditions, inadequate preventative management and inappropriate land clearance activities (using fire) by local people, 2 791 forest fires in the last 15 years have destroyed 128 181 ha or 9 156 ha annually of forest and forest land. A total of 1 687 620 m<sup>3</sup> of wood volume was burned causing serious damages for the PE National forests and other subjects. Though according the Law on Forest fire use in the forests and the adjacent area of 200 m from the forest border is prohibited, the burning of adjacent juniper bushes and stubble are common reasons for forest fires. Destruction of forest by fires leads to soil and land degradation and desertification especially in semi-arid parts of the country.

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<sup>15</sup> Fertilizers consumption in nutrients (N, P205, and K2O), FAOSTAT.

69. An increased level of dieback of forests in some locations has been observed, mainly in response to higher temperatures and drought conditions that are arising out of increased climate change impacts.
70. *Description of Project Focal sites:* The project has selected 3 areas as pilot sites for undertaking on-ground activities that will demonstrate viable methods and approaches for addressing land degradation (LD), improving sustainable land management (SLM), and reversing deforestation trends (sustainable forest management-SFM). These sites were selected on the basis that:
- a). The North Macedonia's UNCCD NAP identifies the mountain areas near the Arachinovo-Strachintsi villages (Arachinovo and Gazi Baba municipalities), Lipkovo municipality and Zheden Massive (Saraj, Jegunovce, and Zhelino municipalities) as among the worst affected municipalities by land degradation.
  - b). The deforestation and land degradation problems faced in these areas are typical of mountainous areas in North Macedonia.
  - c). The rural development and social needs of the area were highlighted as a priority by the North Macedonian government.
  - d). The sites contain areas of significant biodiversity value and farming landscapes of high nature value (diverse mixed arable, orchard and pasture).
  - e). The sites are important in terms of providing key ecosystem services vital for the large urban population in and around Skopje (water supply and flooding risk reduction).
  - f). The sites are located within a short distance of Skopje and will be logistically cost-effective to work in.
71. *LD background of the sites:* Extensive erosion has taken place in the five municipalities, due to topographic and geological factors as well as deforestation, overgrazing and unsustainable agricultural practices, and inappropriate construction. The latter is both a significant cause of erosion, but also a high risk for people due to the danger of flooding and landslides/mud flows. Locations of the pilot sites (referred in the text as “north-western part of the country”) are in Figure 3.
72. Arachinovo-Strachintsi villages cover an area of about 116 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 84 000 (Arachinovo 24 km<sup>2</sup> area with 12 000 inhabitants, Gazi Baba 92 km<sup>2</sup> area with 72 000 inhabitants). Land use is primarily for forestry and for grazing. Cultivated areas consist of small mixed (arable plots, orchards, and livestock) farming areas of mainly a subsistence nature. Arachinovo and Gazi Baba municipalities were mostly affected by flash floods and torrents from the surrounding mountain areas. There were some afforestation attempts done in the past, through different projects and initiatives. However, most of them were unsuccessful due to improper selection of species used. An influx of refugees from Kosovo, together with high birth rates, has greatly increased populations in last decades and led to a surge in construction, often in inappropriate and unsafe locations (flood plains, steep slopes, etc.) which has accelerated land loss and erosion.

73. Lipkovo municipality, covering of 267 km<sup>2</sup> with 27 058 inhabitants, is one of the poorly developed regions and there is no industrial activity on its territory. Forest is the most dominant land use with an area of 9 968 ha or 44.2 %<sup>16</sup>. Bare lands in this municipality are the result of uncontrolled extensive forest exploitation by the local inhabitants. The annual wood cut is 80 384 m<sup>3</sup>. The total area covered with forests and forest land is 13 380 hectares with a total timber volume of 376 476 m<sup>3</sup><sup>17</sup>. In addition, during the period 2004 – 2011, there were 73 registered forest fires in this municipality, causing over 3 000 ha of burned forest and over US\$ 15 million of damages.
74. The main economic activity is agriculture and involves 95 % of the active population. There is an area of 22 599 ha for agriculture, from which 8 256 ha or 36.5 % is irrigated cultivable soil (irrigated by Lipkovo hydro system). Pastures have an area of 4 375 ha or 19.3 %.
75. Soil quality of about 20 000 ha of cultivable land is mostly affected by the improper use of agrochemicals, communal solid waste and from heavy metals pollution disseminated through different pathways from abandoned mine facilities. As a result, 57.8% of the Lipkovo Municipality is under severe erosion, and the Local Environmental Action Plan of 2011 identifies the need for rehabilitating and re-vegetating the affected areas in order to prevent further erosion, as well as to install good agricultural practices. There have been some efforts to remediate the most affected sites since the area was identified as mining related hot spot is threatening the environment as well as public health and safety, both in a local and transboundary context requiring immediate attention. However, there was no follow-up for some years.
76. Zheden Massif (falling within the 3 municipalities of Saraj, Jegunovce, and Zhelino): Zheden Mountain itself has an area of 109 km<sup>2</sup>, out of which 50% is under Category II of soil erosion according to the National Erosion Map. The massif is in three municipalities (Saraj 229 km<sup>2</sup> area with 35 408 inhabitants, Jegunovce 117 km<sup>2</sup> area with 10 673 inhabitants, and Zhelino 201 km<sup>2</sup> with 27 563 inhabitants).
77. Saraj, Jegunovce, and Zhelino municipalities have extensive bare land (around 18 000 ha) due to extensive deforestation and erosion. According to Corine land cover maps of 2000 and 2006, around 1 578 ha of forest and 692 ha of pastures area have been converted to 1 841 ha semi-natural vegetation and bare land and the rest have been converted to artificial areas, water bodies and arable land<sup>18</sup>. This mountain is of exceptional importance because it contains Spring Rashce, the biggest source of drinking water for North Macedonia and the capital Skopje. Therefore, the Skopje City Council developed the spatial plan of the protection zones of Zheden Massif<sup>19</sup>. Zheden mountain range possesses significant geomorphological and biodiversity features, and

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<sup>16</sup> State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia <http://www.stat.gov.mk>

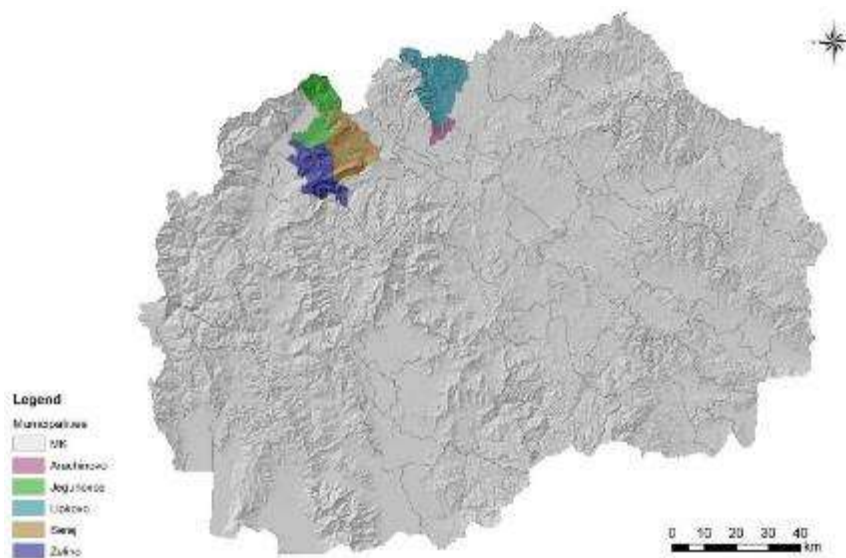
<sup>17</sup> Local Environmental Action Plan for Lipkovo Municipality, 2011

<sup>18</sup> Land cover changes are based on CORINE 2000 and 2006 raster images

<sup>19</sup> Spatial Plan of the region of protection zones of Rasche springs (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 98/02)

given the size, status of forests and proximity of villages, the most appropriate category for protection is Nature Park <sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 3.** Locations of the pilot sites



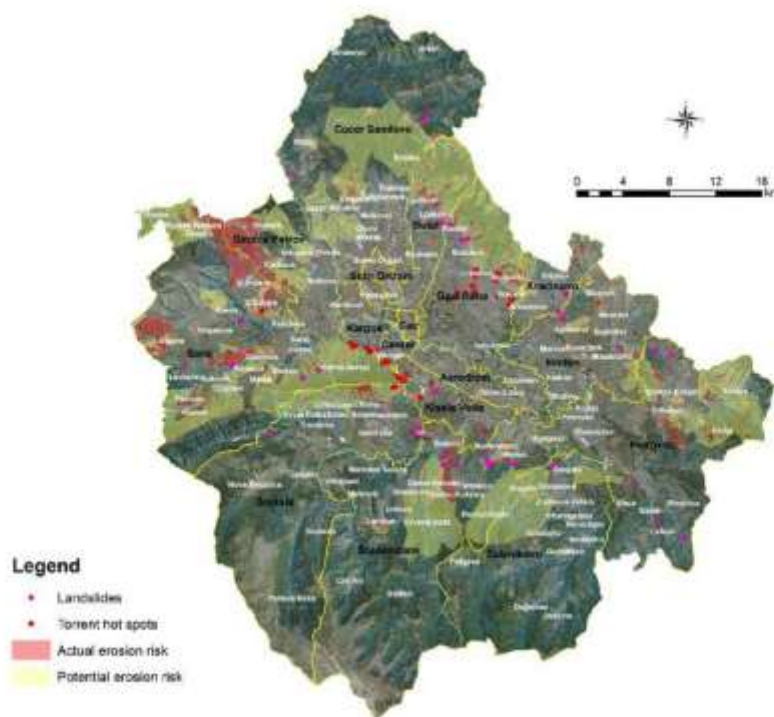
78. In addition, the UNDP Study on Erosion<sup>21</sup> from 2017 has identified the Arachinovo-Strachintsi area and part of the Zheden Massif in the Municipality of Saraj as most vulnerable to erosion and as hot spots for actual and potential erosion (torrent and landslides) in North Macedonia, shown on the map below.

**Figure 4.** Erosion risk map for some of the targeted areas

<sup>20</sup> An assessment of the global impact of 21st century land use change on soil erosion-Nature Communications volume 8 (2017)

<sup>21</sup> Study on Erosion and Action Plan for the City of Skopje, UNDP, 2017.





## 2.2. Institutional, sectoral and policy context

### Policy Context

79. *National policy context for agriculture and rural development*<sup>22</sup>: Based on the recognized importance of the agricultural sector, as of 2007 the Government of Republic of North Macedonia has listed agriculture as one of its economic priorities. The first systematic policy document for agriculture and rural development was developed for the period 2007-2013 and was adopted by the Government in June 2007 (National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development).
80. In order to raise the competitiveness of the sector and to improve the living conditions in the rural areas, all of the necessary legal and institutional conditions for introducing the new support policies were set up, drawing on the needs of the sector and the positive experiences of the countries that have implemented organized agricultural policies. In order to implement the new policies, in the previous period a significantly greater funding was allocated to this purpose.
81. According to the National Strategy, the overall development vision was translated into the following long-term sectoral strategic objectives, as the basis for agricultural and rural development and formulation of the future agricultural policy:

<sup>22</sup> National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for the period - Skopje, November 2014

- to strengthen agriculture in order to compete on the integrated regional markets in the European Union and South East Europe through measures for increasing the efficiency of agricultural production, processing and marketing, and to build appropriate and effective public and private institutions;
  - to improve farm revenues; to ensure that consumers have access to safe, healthy food;
  - to optimize the benefits of limited soil, forest and water resources in an environmentally friendly way; and
  - to build vital rural communities through sustainable rural development.
82. The subsequent strategic period 2007-2013 re-established the planning and implementation basis for modern agricultural policy of the Republic of North Macedonia. With the introduction and implementation of agricultural policies in the period 2007-2013 favorable conditions were created that contributed for the halting or stabilizing the previous downward trends of continuous reduction of the agricultural production volumes and values, and for the gradual shift towards upward growth rates, more evident in subsectors featured by comparative advantages.
83. However, the increased competitive pressure from trade liberalization of the agricultural products, further sharpened by the negative impact of the global economic crisis and the frequent instability of international markets of the agricultural products, created a serious challenge for most of the North Macedonian agriculture.
84. The current National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development is for the period 2014-2020. The primary strategic priority of the national agricultural policy for the period 2014-2020 remains to be:
- increasing the competence of the North Macedonian agricultural production and food industry, development of rural areas and sustainable management of natural resources,
  - changing the unfavorable structure of the sector,
  - market organization, vertical integration and quality,
  - improving the living and business conditions in the rural areas,
  - providing knowledge transfer to farmers,
  - completing the food safety system,
  - application of sustainable ecological practices in agriculture,
  - reducing the adverse effect of climate change,
  - strong investment cycle in agriculture and the rural areas.
85. Despite the on-going reforms, the national agricultural sector is yet in the initial stage of prolonged and slow restructuring. As a result of their structure, most of the agricultural holdings are unable to compete on an equal leg with competing agricultural products of the European and world-wide agricultural producers in terms of production costs and marketing characteristics of the products.
86. Weaknesses that still exist were identified during the preparation of the 2014-2020 National Strategy – these include:

- Dual structure of agriculture, with large share of small agricultural holdings with very low average production capacity per holding;
- High level of fragmentation of the agricultural land and the private forest land, with limited access to water and access roads to the parcels;
- Low level of education, inadequate qualifications, business and managerial skills of the workforce in agriculture and among the rural population;
- Lack of seasonal workforce in agriculture and an aging workforce in the rural areas;
- Depreciated equipment and means of production, and application of obsolete technologies;
- Unfavorable varieties and breeds;
- Lack of own capital and limited access to loans, particularly for the small agricultural holdings;
- Poor integration within food chains and lack of vertical and horizontal integration;
- Low productivity in agriculture and food industry;
- Significant share of old low/coppice forests;
- High share of agricultural products with low added value – raw or semi-processed products in the export structure of agri-food products and insufficient diversification in export destinations;
- Underdeveloped system of vocational training in agriculture, food industry and forestry, and insufficient access to quality advisory services.

Other relevant national strategies and planning documents include:

86. **UNCCD National Action Programme (NAP)** - This project is directly in line with the objectives of developed NAP (still pending government's adoption). The draft NAP has identified a number of priority objectives regarding the protection of land, mostly which are in line and coherence of this project objectives and outputs: 1) Setting of a sound legal and strategic framework for Drought, Land Degradation and Desertification (DLDD), in line with the EU *acquis*, 2) Strengthening of administrative and operational capacities for DLDD issues, 3) Awareness raising of the public for issues related to DLDD, 4) Creation of suitable environment for implementing modern techniques, methodologies and techniques for mitigation of DLDD, 5) Mobilization of international financial support for DLDD activities.
87. **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan – NBSAP (2018 – 2023)** – North Macedonia is the signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and has just recently developed with the support of UNEP/GEF an NBSAP. The strategy and action plan present sustainable management and use of natural ecosystems and resources as well as ecosystem restoration of priority areas. Targets under these priorities state that by 2020, rehabilitation plans ought to be implemented in at least 20% of degraded sites that will safeguard the sustainable delivery of ecosystem services. Furthermore, it intends to mobilize the private sector to implement plans for sustainable consumption and production to mitigate or prevent negative impacts on ecosystems' carrying capacity through the use of natural resources.

88. **Strategy for Sustainable Development of Forestry in North Macedonia** (2006 - 2026) - The overall goal of the strategy is to increase the contribution of the forestry sector to the national economy and rural development through sustainable forest management, ensuring renewable resources and protection of local and global environment, and providing products and services for improving the quality of life of all citizens. The Strategy is mainly focused on the economic aspects of forests: increasing forest area, improving the composition and quality of forests, protection of forests against fires and diseases, forest management measures, promoting the use of timber and wood products from sustainably managed forests, etc. One of the goals defined in the strategic goal 'forestry and environment' refers to the conservation and revitalization of the components of biological and landscape diversity of forests in North Macedonia through the integration of conservation objectives into forestry practices.
89. **National Strategy for Sustainable Development** (2009-2030) - This Strategy identifies land degradation caused by unsustainable land management as of national concern hampering accession into EU, which is the national top political priority<sup>23</sup>. NSDS report considers (i) the update of existing database and degraded and abandoned sites as the first step towards rehabilitation and (ii) the development of a prioritization scheme for degraded zones/areas requiring urgent intervention, then developing and implementing adequate conservation actions in these areas, which would include namely rehabilitation and development of appropriate land use plans. Relevant to land degradation and rehabilitation, the NSDS also sets targets for 2030 for the development and implementation of regional development plans in addition to setting up targets for the rehabilitation of extremely degraded land and soil by 20%.
90. **Third National Communication on Climate Change** (2014) – this document clearly outlines that climate change poses a huge risk to many sectors, especially forestry and agriculture. Third National Communication on Climate Change explicitly states that land should be conserved using innovative sustainable land management tools to mitigate ever-increasing damages caused by climate change in the country.
91. Several other strategies and planning documents are of importance for SLM and land use in North Macedonia – **National Spatial Plan** (2002-2020), **National Strategy for Consolidation of Agricultural Land** (2012-2020), **Waste Management Strategy of Republic of North Macedonia** (2008-2020), and **Water Strategy for the Republic of North Macedonia** (2011-2041).
92. Legal context: Legislation about sustainable land management and land use are in the regulatory framework of Nature and Environment, Water Management legislation, Agriculture and Fisheries, Forestry and Hunting and other related legislation. Major legislations relevant for this project are contained in Law on Environment, Law on Nature Protection, Law on Forests, and Law on Agriculture and Rural Development. The table below provides an overview of legislation relevant to SLM and land use in North Macedonia.

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<sup>23</sup> National Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Macedonia, 2008

**Table 5.** Existing legal framework for SLM and Land Use

<i>LEGISLATION</i>	<i>Official Gazette No.</i>
Law on Environment	53/05, 81/05, 24/07, 159/08, 48/10, 124/10, 51/11, 123/12, 93/13, 187/13, 42/14, 44/15, 129/15, 192/15, 39/16
Law on Waste Management	68/04, 71/04, 107/07, 102/08, 143/08, 124/10, 51/11, 123/12, 147/13, 163/13, 51/15, 146/15, 156/15, 192/15, 39/16 and 63/16
Law on Nature Protection	67/04, 14/06, 84/07, 35/10, 47/11, 148/11, 59/12, 13/13, 163/12, 41/14, 146/15 and 39/16
Law on Waters	87/08, 6/09, 161/09, 83/10, 51/11, 44/12, 23/13, 163/13, 180/14, 146/15 and 52/16
Law on Agriculture and Rural Development	49/10, 53/11, 126/12, 15/13, 69/13, 106/13, 177/14, 25/15, 73/15, 83/15, 154/15, 11/16, 53/16, 120/16, 163/16, 74/17 and 83/18
Law on Agricultural Land	18/11, 95/12, 79/13, 87/13, 39/14, 130/14, 166/14, 72/15, 98/15, 154/15, 215/15, 7/16 and 39/16
Law on Forests	64/09, 24/11, 53/11, 25/13, 79/13, 147/13, 43/14, 160/14, 33/15, 44/15, 147/15, 07/16 and 39/16
Law on Spatial and Urban Planning	51/05, 137/07, 151/07, 24/08, 60/11, 70/13, 199/14, 44/15, 193/15, 64/18 and 168/18
Law on Hydro-meteorological service	103/08, 115/08, 53/11, 51/15 and 149/15
Law on Crises Management	36/11, 27/13, 41/14, 47/14, 104/15, 39/16 and 83/18
Law on Protection and Rescue	36/04, 49/04, 86/08, 124/10, 18/11, 41/14, 129/15, 71/16, 106/16 and 83/18
Law on Mineral Resources	136/12, 25/13, 93/13, 132/13, 44/14, 160/14, 129/15, 53/16, 120/16 and 189/16
Law on Local Self-Government	5/02

93. At present, North Macedonia does not have a Law on Soil (as a natural resource) to complement the existing Law on Environment, Law on Water and the Law on Ambient Air Quality, as part of the environmental protection legislation framework. This law is in its drafting phase, carried out by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.
94. Institutional context: North Macedonia has two levels of government: national and local. The Local self-government system consists of 80 municipalities. Ten (10) of the municipalities constitute the City of Skopje, a distinct unit of local self-government and the country's capital. According to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) on the NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 level, the Republic of North Macedonia counts as a single region. On NUTS 3 level, the country territory is divided in 8 statistical regions: Vardar, East, Southwest, Southeast, Pelagonia, Polog, Northeast and Skopje.
95. *National Government Institutions:* Some of the competences of the institutions overlap, while some have not been clearly defined. Furthermore, strategies, annual plans and other planning documents of the institutions with competence on SLM do not contain substantial activities related to the SLM. This is partially attributable to the lack of major planning documents that would serve as base for operational planning of the institutions. This implies insufficient

allocations of finances from the national and local budgets for land management issues. The capacities of responsible ministries are fragmented with regard to land issues, and often lagging behind existing SLM challenges. The issue of land degradation was often neglected given that it was of lower importance on the political agenda, lower than biodiversity or climate change.

**Table 6.** Institutional set-up for land management in the Republic of North Macedonia

Institution	Responsibilities
<b>Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MOEPP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepares new, improves and proposes changes to the exiting legislation, in accordance with European Union and monitoring their implementation through state environmental inspectorate.</li> <li>- Elaborates and implements sectorial strategies and policies of nature and environment protection including management of protected areas/unit, soil and water protection. Responsible for water law implementation too.</li> <li>- Liaises and coordinates work with other ministries, local municipality administration, public institutions, donors and private actors operating in the fields of nature and environmental protection.</li> <li>- Water sector within MOEPP is responsible for water permits, giving concessions for water use for energy, planning in water sector, various activities according to water law and EU Water Framework directives.</li> <li>- Prepares the necessary documentation for participation and membership in organization, conventions, protocols and agreements in their areas of competences.</li> </ul>
<b>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFWE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepares, improves and proposes changes to the exiting legislation, in accordance with European Union.</li> <li>- Inspection and monitoring of implementation of legislation related to forest management and hunting through state inspectorates for forestry and hunting,</li> <li>- Prepares and follows the implementation of sectorial strategies and policies of agriculture, forestry and rural development.</li> <li>- Department of Water Management has the mission of sustainable and effective management of the irrigation system and drainage. Drafts, improves and proposes technical norms related with the soil and irrigation.</li> <li>- Department of Forestry is responsible for creation of forest policy.</li> <li>- Forest police guard is responsible for protection of all forest primarily against illegal logging, but also form other biotic and abiotic factors.</li> </ul>
<b>Local Self-Government Units (LSGUs)</b>	<p>The local self-government units-Municipalities are responsible for regulating and performing activities of public interest of local importance such as: environment and nature protection – measures for the protection and prevention of water, air and soil pollution, nature protection; public activities – drinking water supply; technological water supply; wastewater drainage and treatment; storm wastewater drainage and treatment; maintenance of public hygiene; collection, transportation and treatment of municipal solid and industrial waste; maintenance and use of parks, green areas, forest parks and recreational areas; regulation, maintenance and use of river beds in urbanized parts.</p>

<b>National Hydro-meteorological Service of the R. of North Macedonia (NHMS)</b>	Provides meteorological, climatological, hydrological, agro-meteorological information data and is responsible for monitoring of air, water and soil quality.
<b>Crisis Management Centre of the R. of North Macedonia (CMC)</b>	Independent state administrative body, having the status and function of a directorate, which legal competences include gathering of information, assessment, situation analysis, objectives and tasks determination, development and implementation of the necessary actions for prevention, early warning and handling crises. CMC is the implementing agency for Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) model against flood, landslides, soil erosion, and forest fires by utilizing multiple forest functions.

97. At the local level, according to the Law on Local Self-Government, the local self-government units (LSGUs) are competent for regulation and performance of affairs of public interest of local relevance. The LSGUs are responsible for general environmental protection measures including land degradation issues. Almost every municipality in the country has adopted its strategy document on sustainable development, which is called “Local Environmental Action Plan”. More than 50% of the municipalities have environmental inspectors and staff devoted to the environment. There are limitations on the implementation of the decentralization process in the country due to budget and human capacity constraints in several municipalities. Many of the issues related to land degradation and SLM need to be treated on the local governmental level, while the main legal and policy framework is designed on a national level. In this respect, the better link between both levels is needed for the achievement of satisfactory results.
98. *Scientific institutions:* The scientific sector in North Macedonia has some capacity for monitoring of land. Universities and research institutes dealing with land issues have conducted research concerning land degradation, in particular the soil erosion. However, the academic and research institutions usually conduct the work independently, often using different approaches and applying these to limited geographic areas, making it more difficult to compare and generalize the results. It should also be noted that these organizations sometimes act as competitors (e.g. for research funding), hence not sharing all available information on soil among each other or with other stakeholders. Unifying the basis for scientific soil research, such as internationally acceptable classifications of soil, or other methodologies, would substantially advance the level of knowledge on the status of soil in North Macedonia, and it would make available more reliable and more practical data in the future. Such institutions can also play an important role in awareness raising on land degradation and SLM.
99. *Other relevant actors for specific issues in land management*
- Public enterprise “National Forests” (PENF),
  - Water economies,
  - Private companies,
  - Individual farmers and private forest owners,
  - Civil Society Organizations.

101. The communication between the ministries, institutions and other actors dealing with land issues and operating at the national level is insufficient. The mentioned ministries and agencies dealing with the land do attempt to collaborate, but this collaboration and communication is on an “ad-hoc” basis. There is no systematic approach to establishing and maintaining communication and collaboration channels in order to comprehensively deal with SLM. The coordination is even more fragmented between state, regional and local levels, with local levels missing strategic support and guidance on how to address land degradation.

### **2.3. Global significance**

102. Globally, land degradation affects 33% of the world’s land surface, with consequences effecting more than 2.6 billion people in more than 100 countries. Land that becomes progressively degraded cannot sustain agricultural production and creates socio-economic problems in agro-ecosystems. These problems can also be exacerbated by the increased vulnerability of people and ecosystems to climate change and variability. Degradation of land is likely to reduce the ability of soils to serve as a carbon sink and causes release of carbon currently stored in soils to the atmosphere. The challenges of reaching sustainable development, environmental services, as well as health and livelihood of local communities greatly depend on adequate planning and management of land resources on local and national levels, and with regional and global repercussions. Without healthy soils, ecosystems and human food production cannot be sustained.
103. Land use and land degradation of mountainous areas, such as North Macedonia, have particular global importance as they are both areas highly vulnerable to erosion, but are also critical landscapes for provision of vital ecosystem services for large lowland populations as well as being important areas for global hotspots for biodiversity. This holds true for the territory of North Macedonia which contains globally endangered and unique biodiversity, and currently provides ecosystems services that effect not just its own populations but also those of its neighbors.
104. In North Macedonia, 492 thousand people were living on degrading agricultural land in 2010 - a worsening of 2% in a decade, bringing the share of rural residents who inhabit degraded agricultural land up to 56% of the total rural population<sup>24</sup>. Land degradation can severely influence populations' livelihood by restricting people from vital ecosystem services (including food and water), and increasing the risk of poverty.
105. The annual cost of land degradation in North Macedonia is estimated at 51 million United States dollars (USD)<sup>24</sup>. This is equal to 6.9% of the country's agricultural Gross Domestic Product. Land degradation leads to reduction in the provision of ecosystem services that takes different forms - deterioration in food availability, soil fertility, carbon sequestration capacity, wood production, groundwater recharge, etc. – with significant social and economic costs to the country. In this context, a recent global assessment on land degradation shows that for North Macedonia the

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<sup>24</sup> Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, 2018. Country Profile of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Investing in Land Degradation Neutrality: Making the Case. An Overview of Indicators and Assessments. Bonn, Germany.



returns on taking action against land degradation versus inaction are estimated at 8 USD for every dollar invested in reverting degraded land, underlining the strong economic incentives for bold actions on achieving LDN. Assessments of the costs of action against land degradation through restoration and sustainable land management practices versus the cost of inaction highlight the strong economic incentive for bold actions against land degradation.

106. In North Macedonia, the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector is responsible for 11% of the total greenhouse gas emissions of the country. Due to the role of terrestrial ecosystems as a source and sink of emissions land is positioned as a key point of intervention for climate change mitigation. Land-based mitigation options rank among the most cost-effective opportunities to sequester carbon emissions. Economic evaluations of various climate change mitigation alternatives show that capturing carbon through restoring degraded lands (including degraded-forest) is a cost-effective option that offers multiple co-benefits.

#### **2.4. Threats, root causes and barrier analysis**

107. Due to its topography and climatic characteristics, North Macedonia is highly susceptible to land degradation. The mountainous and steep terrain is particularly susceptible to water erosion, landslips, torrent events and top soil loss if vegetation cover is degraded and poor land use practices applied. The mainly continental climate with hot dry summers and wet winters increases this susceptibility, and climate change is increasing exacerbating these risks and thereby increasing the likelihood of both summer drought and winter intense precipitation (leading to greater risks of land degradation and human security risks).
108. Land degradation has accelerated since the collapse of the former Yugoslav Republic. This, in part, has been due to the strenuous transition process the newly independent North Macedonia has had to go through and the difficult economic, institutional and social adjustments necessary during this process. Significant regional and local outbreaks of conflict have also impacted both economics and movements of population. A significant impact of this process has been the disruption and reduction of state support to rural areas, and rural land users facing new challenges created by the introduction of free market conditions, refugees, etc. The results of these factors, combined with North Macedonia's natural land degradation vulnerability, are evidenced by a wide set of land degradation problems, including:
  - the widespread and accelerating erosion issues, including loss of top soil and gullying of arable, pasture and forest areas,
  - the increased frequency and extent of flash floods, mud flows and land slide events,
  - the declining land productivity due to loss of soil humus (organic) matter, soil structure and soil organisms, and soil salination in irrigated areas,
  - reduced water quality due to increased sedimentation and agro-chemical (and other chemical) pollution.
109. The *impacts* of these land degradation problems have most dramatically been felt during the torrential floods in the North Western region (August 2015 and 2016) which caused 23 deaths

and millions of dollars in damages. However, such high profile impacts are but a small part of the overall socio-economic, human security and ecosystem service impacts that are being increasingly felt in the country. These include:

- The undermining of the rural land users' sustainable livelihoods (declining agricultural productivity and thereby incomes, sources of fuel wood, timber and non-timber natural products, micro-climate changes, etc.),
  - Infrastructure damages (damage to roads, river banks, dams and other infrastructure through flash floods, landslides, sedimentation, etc.),
  - Water quality deterioration and water availability issues for both urban and rural populations (sedimentation and chemical pollution of water sources, changed hydrological regimes due to more rapid run-off / reduced soil water retention leading to both flooding and erosion events and increased summer aridity, etc.),
  - Loss of critical regulatory and provisioning ecosystem services and reduction of biodiversity,
  - Human security risks from extreme natural disaster events (flash floods, landslides, etc.), raised social tensions and conflicts, and reduced food security.
110. The full costs, economically and socially, of these impacts are neither well documented nor well understood at present. However, as a country with a high dependence on its natural resources, land degradation represents a very real threat to its future sustainable development and survival of North Macedonia. Such degradation is destined to continue and deepen in future unless effective actions are taken to address them, with potentially grave consequences for North Macedonia's future development and security.
111. The main *direct causes* of land degradation in North Macedonia are unsustainable agricultural practices, and unsustainable forestry (degradation of forests, deforestation, and forest fires). These are responsible for the majority of land degradation at the current time and are interlinked.
112. Deforestation and Degradation of Forests: The main causes behind the loss of forest or degradation of the quality of forests, in North Macedonia are illegal cutting and forest fires in state managed forests, and over utilization and clearance of forested areas in private / common property areas. Illegal cutting is carried out by local populations in order to access fuel wood (the main source of heating and cooking energy in many rural areas) and timber for either household use or for additional income generation. The rapid increase in such activities is driven mainly by the worsening socio-economic situation in rural areas and absence or affordability of alternatives (electricity, gas, legal fuel /timber), combined with a weakened capacity of forestry protection organizations to effectively enforce laws. It is estimated about 200 000 m<sup>3</sup> are illegally cut each year<sup>25</sup>.
113. Forest fires are becoming an increasingly severe and extensive phenomenon, as in many parts of southern Europe in the last decade. Mainly this is due to increased drought and high temperatures probably related to climate change impacts, but is also a reflection of weak capacity of the forest

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<sup>25</sup> Illegal logging and trade of illegally derived forest products in the UNECE Region: Causes and Extent – Country Report of the Republic of Macedonia, 2013.

management enterprises to undertake fire prevention and control management (sanitary clearing, fire break creation and maintenance, effective fire extinguishing application), and the lack of understanding and care of other land users who use fire as a land clearance and preparation methodology. As a result, 2 791 fires in the last 15 years destroyed 128 181 ha (9 156 ha annually) of forest and forest land<sup>26</sup>. Total 1 687 620 m<sup>3</sup> of wood volume was burned causing economic damages of US\$ 75 million<sup>27</sup>.

114. Deforestation, whether as a result of cutting or of fire, has major land degradation impacts including increased water and wind erosion, changes in hydrological regimes including faster run-off and thence flooding risks, increased risk of landslides on steep slopes, reduced water retention in soils/aquifers and then droughts and reduced summer flows in rivers and springs, increased sedimentation of waters, etc.
115. Unsustainable agricultural practices and soil degradation: The main causes of soil degradation in rural areas are poor agricultural practices, especially land preparation practices (lack of contour ploughing, universal use of moldboard ploughing, mono-cultivation, the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and inefficient irrigation schemes. The farmers usually apply the same practice for one crop, despite differing natural conditions of the field i.e. the same practice is used for flat lowland and sloped and hilly areas, for irrigated and non-irrigated land, etc.
116. The insufficient application of contour ploughing in the majority of hilly cultivated areas is a major cause of top soil loss and development of erosion features such as gullies. The most common soil cultivation practice is “moldboard” ploughing that is permanently mixing soil top layer, exposing it to increased aeration and create soil organic matter loss due to more intensive processes of organic matter degradation. There is an absence of knowledge on alternative cultivation practices that may be both better for maintaining soil health and also less costly/input intensive (minimum or zero till methods, use of winter cover crops, for example). There is limited knowledge or application of methods for increasing soil organic and nutrient content (composting or manure spreading, crop rotation with leguminous crops, intercropping/agro-forestry, etc.). The negative practices decrease land productivity and significantly increases the risk of land degradation.
117. Monoculture cropping over time brings problems with soil fertility declines and increases in pest issues that then require larger applications of pesticides and herbicides<sup>28</sup>. This reduces all species diversity, including natural pest regulators and crucial pollinators, as well as increasing agro-chemical loadings in crops, soil and water. This is exacerbated by low knowledge and experience of farmers with agro-chemicals leading to over application and some direct health risks through inappropriate handling and storage. Fertilizer use in North Macedonia increased from 14 100 tons to 29 500 tons between 2002 and 2014<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in the R. of Macedonia (draft, UNCCD, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> An assessment of the global impact of 21st century land use change on soil erosion-Nature Communications 8 (2017).

<sup>28</sup> IPARD Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020.

<sup>29</sup> Fertilizers consumption in nutrients (N, P2O5, and K2O), FAOSTAT.

118. Both the abandonment and conversion of agricultural land are problems. Land is abandoned due to declining productivity (from poor practices) or lack of financial capacity and incentive to cultivate. In some cases, abandoned land naturally regenerates and this reduces erosion risks at least. However, once abandoned any investment in its use such as terracing degrades and increases erosion vulnerability, plus reduces the potential for re-cultivation in the future. Agricultural land conversion is a major issue<sup>30</sup>, principally the conversion of agricultural land to urban (i.e. construction on agricultural land) – this occurs because of significantly increased populations in some areas, but also because there are perverse financial incentives to do so. Such construction results in the loss of agricultural potential (area) and “soil sealing” (i.e. the sealing of land surface by buildings/roads, etc.) which increase the speed of precipitation run-off. Conversely, there are also cases of pasture conversion to cultivated land – this is primarily a result of poor management and investment in pasture management by the public enterprise responsible and thus financial incentive for local populations to use the land for crops rather than livestock. Loss of species diverse pasture land is negative both in terms of erosion vulnerability and biodiversity loss. The establishment of large fields involving the destruction of former shelterbelts, landscape elements and field margins, is in some cases an issue.
119. Moreover, about 30 000 – 80 000 ha of irrigated agricultural land is vulnerable to salinization and land degradation. This is mainly a result of waterlogging resulting from poor infrastructure (drainage and control facilities) and poor management through lack of knowledge or institutional capacity.
120. Traditional management of grasslands and low input, high crop diversity mixed farming, which was maintained on high nature value habitats, has ceased in many marginal but environmentally valuable areas.
121. The North-Western mountain region is particularly threatened by erosion<sup>31</sup>, including the three pilot areas of this region: Arachinovo-Strachintsi villages (Arachinovo and Gazi Baba municipalities), Lipkovo municipality and Zheden Massif (Saraj, Jegunovce, and Zhelino municipalities). These three locations are among the most affected by extensive erosion, due to deforestation, and unsustainable agricultural practices. Also, recent flooding events in the North-Western mountain region between 2011 and 2016 affected more than 10 000 ha of agriculture land area leading to further soil degradation in these regions. Zheden Massif is also under threat for further soil degradation, and it is important to rehabilitate the degraded land as this mountain is the source of drinking water for the capital of Skopje.
122. The total tree cover loss<sup>32</sup> for the period 2001-2014 in the municipalities of Arachinovo, Jegunovce, Lipkovo, Saraj, and Zhelino was 0.3 ha, 111 ha, 564 ha, 28 ha, and 597 ha respectively. Deforestation in these municipalities increases the intensity of erosion. Arachinovo and Lipkovo Municipality were severely hit by floods in 2016 and 2015, causing not only economic losses but

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<sup>30</sup> IPARD Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020.

<sup>31</sup> National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in the R. of Macedonia (draft, UNCCD, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Data extracted from Global forest watch database. The tree cover loss is calculated for the canopy density larger than 30% for the period 2001-2014.

taking away 23 lives. It is believed that the floods have such a severe impact because of large bare-land surfaces caused by extensive deforestation, where the soil does not have retention capacities anymore. The North-Western region of the country has strong precipitation events, which after forest fires cause high sediment inputs, destruction landscapes and of aquatic habitat and downstream flooding described above. All these lead to economic and environmental losses, especially in the North-Western region of North Macedonia, which is the biodiversity “hotspot” in the country and contains some identified high nature value forests<sup>33</sup>. There is no clear border between state and private ownership, and in many cases, both sides are making “mistakes” in harvesting, plus the lack of clarity of ownership leads to over exploitation. Moreover, due to the political conflict causing civil unrest in 2001, natural resources were severely exploited, especially forests. The civil unrest mostly took place again in the North-Western region of North Macedonia where this project will rehabilitate degraded land in three pilot areas above described. As can be seen from Figure 2, the municipalities described above have the highest number of landslides caused by extensive deforestation, causing vast economic and human casualties during severe storms and rains.

123. Climate change is clearly a factor that is exacerbating agriculture and forestry related degradation. Given that existing trends in terms of more extreme weather events (intense winter rain fall, reduced snow, increased length of summer droughts and higher summer temperatures, etc.) are likely to continue and worsen the existing land degradation issues will only become worse unless concerted actions to reverse them are implemented and capacity within land users to adapt is built.
124. Analysis of the root causes of the unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation/forest degradation has identified the following main underlying reasons (excluding climate change) for the current unsustainable agricultural land use and deforestation:
125. Uncoordinated and contradictory institutional and regulatory framework and lack of capacity in systematically applying and promoting sustainable land management practices: SLM practices in North Macedonia are inadequate and sustainable land management are still not well integrated into other areas of policy-making and implementation. At present, the institutional and regulatory context is weak. North Macedonia does not have a harmonized legislation on land management between central and local levels. Responsibility for land management is dispersed and poorly coordinated among many institutions and across sectors and levels of government. The capacity of the MOEPP and municipalities is limited for addressing non-compliance and weak enforcement of existing legal framework.
126. Moreover, local authorities have a weak role and limited capacity in monitoring and enforcement of Law on Environment; Law on Nature Protection; Law on Organic Agriculture; Law on Agricultural Land; Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, related regulations and environmental guidelines. Decision makers both at the national scale and local scale do not have the capacity to understand socio-economic losses from degraded land and the trade-offs among different land utilization schemes. Unfortunately, regulations on urban planning, water management, forestry

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<sup>33</sup> National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Macedonia, 2014-2019.

and agricultural sector do not recognize the importance of the ecosystem services of mountain lands and tend to approach the issues in a fragmented manner. Regulation on ‘Good Agricultural Practice’ (minimum requirements for nutritional ingredients management, pesticide use, avoidance of land abandonment, maintaining permanent pastures) is lacking.

127. Both the MOEPP and the MAFWE have limited capacities to oversee and critically review and monitor reclamation and rehabilitation. There is not any comprehensive guideline in local language for sustainable land management nor a guideline for the private sector for rehabilitation of degraded sites. Key issues include:

- a. Lack of harmonized legislation between central and local (municipal) levels: the country’s decentralization process is continuing and the new duties of municipalities related to natural resource management require new legislation at the local level and revisions at the central level, including changes to the laws on land reform, land tenure and land transaction that are outdated and do not reflect the current administrative structure or address current threats to rural development, livelihoods and the forest and agricultural resources they depend upon.
- b. Many of the laws and regulations on land management that have been enacted *are “reactive” and narrowly focused*, and thus fail to provide an integrated and comprehensive framework for land management that addresses land use planning, reforms, protections, tenure, transactions and other elements. Existing laws on land reform, land tenure and land transactions need to be revised, coordinated and consolidated into one comprehensive law and pertaining by-laws. For example, legislation and practice in forestry still do not recognize forests with various statuses within one forest management unit and the current Rulebook for the preparation of forest management plans is only suitable for economic forestry and does not recognize management for other values. In the context of land some laws or their application actually creates perverse incentives – for example, registration legal requirements are cumbersome and impractical to apply in reality, and in some cases penalize registration by consequently removing social benefits.
- c. Responsibility for land and resource management is dispersed and poorly delineated among many institutions and across sectors and levels of government; cooperation mechanisms between the responsible ministries and institutions are inadequate; and policies, strategies and plans developed and carried out for land management and conservation are poorly coordinated, so that most programs do not address priority issues or achieve effective results.
- d. Many strategies and plans are undertaken in North Macedonia concerning issues of land protection and land degradation and desertification, but the steps/actions proposed by different strategies and plans frequently differ in terms of both priorities and activities. As a result, sectorial policies are often conflicting, the most pressing needs are often not incorporated into planning processes, and proposed strategies and plans often do not result in actual implementation.

128. Inadequate knowledge of land users (farmers and foresters) of sustainable forestry and land management practices and principles: A significant underlying root cause for much of the observed

- land degradation and deforestation is a lack of practical knowledge of land users on practices and approaches for undertaking more sustainable land use under changed political, legal, institutional, socio-economic and climate change conditions. Technical forestry practices and knowledge is extensive but based on out-of-date methodologies and methods that are not effective under current conditions. They tend to be based on very conservative approaches and dominated by large scale “economic” plantation approaches rather than approaches that are adaptive to specific conditions, and which aim to achieve environmental rather than economic results. There is a significant gap in terms of knowledge about Sustainable Forestry Management (SFM) philosophy, techniques and practices at all levels within the forestry sector. This greatly inhibits both the effectiveness of on-ground activities in the long term (i.e. tree survival rates) and the cost-effectiveness of efforts. There is little or no active involvement or training of non-public enterprise forestry actors (i.e. private forestry owners or farmers who could benefit from orchard and agroforestry practices).
129. In the pasture management context, there are significant practical knowledge limitations both within the Public Enterprise responsible for managing pastures, but more relevantly, within the local pasture users. Many traditional practices that helped ensure sustainable pasture use in the past have broken down due to nationalization of pastures during the Yugoslav Republic era and, the disruption caused by conflicts and the subsequent influx of refugees, increase in population, etc. The systematic movement and semi-transhumant traditional practices of the past have been significantly hampered by a multitude of barriers. Knowledge either within the Public enterprise responsible for pastures or the pasture users themselves, to adapt to new circumstances is limited.
  130. In the cultivated land context, few of the small household farmers who form the majority of the arable land users, have a good baseline education or knowledge of how to effectively undertake new practices which the changes situation in the country forces them to apply. Traditional knowledge based on historical circumstances does not provide answers or guidance for the current circumstances. There are currently little or no sources of agricultural extension and knowledge building for the majority small farmers and thus the current knowledge gap is likely to persist unless new innovative and targeted efforts are made.
  131. *Poverty and rural decline*: Undoubtedly the declining socio-economic and social infrastructure of rural areas (roads, services, etc.) in North Macedonia is both a driver of unsustainable land use and land degradation, and a subsequent cause of further degradation.
  132. It is a driver in that it incentivizes short term “survival” resource use strategies and practices of rural populations and land users, over longer-term more sustainable ones, and increases pressures on “public” resources or perceived “common property resources” such as forests and pastures. This is evidenced in North Macedonia by the significant increase in the illegal cutting of forests, and by the transition from past sustainable farming practices to new income generation approaches from land (both agricultural and others such as construction) which bringing better short-term returns but have poorly understood longer term implications. Even when it is understood that practices are having a negative long-term impact, the imperative of short-term survival will prevent land users from applying alternative options. This is a vicious cycle because with further degradation the productivity of land declines, forestry resources become scarcer, and erosion, floods and landslides

further degrade infrastructure and land, all of which will just further deepen rural poverty and future economic opportunity.

133. In this context it is important to have concerted government efforts to ensure effective rural development, and that an essential component of that is targeted to maintaining and improving the natural resource base it depends on. Furthermore, the government needs to recognize that investment in a productive and prosperous rural landscape is not merely undertaken to support rural populations and improved economic returns for the country from agriculture but is also an investment in maintaining essential landscape integrity and vital ecosystem services. These are crucial to the entire population and to the long-term sustainable development of the country. This has been amply demonstrated by the severe human and economic impacts of recent flood events, and by the risks identified to Skopje's main source of water supply. Thus, there is a need for the government to properly recognize the overall national importance of ensuring sustainable rural development and maintenance of healthy landscapes and to balance national investments development policies accordingly.

#### Long-term solution and barriers

134. Several barriers are preventing effective land management in North Macedonia, including a poor awareness of the real economic and social costs, and a lack of locally proven models, technologies and approaches that can be used to address the land degradations faced. Even though there exist isolated efforts to demonstrate sustainable land and forestry management in some areas of North Macedonia, widespread adoption is not taking place mainly because the scale of these efforts has been too limited and the policy, legal, and institutional framework is not supportive.
135. In response to these threats, the long-term solution is to address the key root causes identified above. This requires strengthening and better coordinate the strategic planning/policy, legal and institutions framework, improve the capacity and skills of national and local government institutions and most importantly land users and forestry practitioners to implement relevant activities, and to provide practical and replicable examples of how to address land degradation threats in the field. The latter will be undertaken in the selected pilot sites in the north-western mountain regions of North Macedonia.
136. The long-term solution envisaged by this project is to expand sustainable land management capacity and practices, and so contribute to the goal of achieving the national land degradation neutrality target. However, to implement the above stated long-term solution, there are some identified barriers that need to be addressed.
  - Limited models, technologies and knowledge for applying SLM in practice on the ground: North Macedonia has limited experience, knowledge, resources and capacity at either central or e local level to apply SLM. Clear procedural and regulatory provisions for utilizing land rehabilitation are absent in the country. There is a lack of good practices of land conservation measures and activities. The funds available for rehabilitation of public lands are limited, and there are no financial incentives for the promotion of SLM in the agricultural sector and other sectors. Existing programs do not support sustainable land management approaches, and as a result, there is very little experience in North Macedonia in implementing practices



such as the sustainable use of chemicals and land cultivation technologies, and the use of agro-ecological techniques such as landscape planning, windbreaks, crop rotation, soil filtering in mountainous ecosystems.

- a. North Macedonia has few successful models or demonstrations of the sustainable use of resources that produce positive economic returns, sustainable use of resources, and effective protection of land from degradation.
  - b. Extremely limited experience, knowledge, resources and capacity at the local level in applying sustainable land management practices (with the decentralization in North Macedonia's some responsibilities for the management of natural resources were transferred to local governments, without yet providing increased staffing and staff training, legislation to support local government management, and budget and resource allocations to municipalities).
- Low public awareness and insufficient knowledge and understanding of the importance of SLM: North Macedonia is constrained by knowledge gaps in scaling up best practices in sustainable land and forest management. National and municipal government officials have limited capacity for persuading private sector land developers and users towards sustainable land management practices. Knowledge products, guidelines on best SLM practices applicable for North Macedonia are not available in local language. There is an inadequate recognition of the degradation of mountain lands and the costs of degradation. Awareness among natural resource managers and farmers on the importance of soil and benefits of SLM practices is limited. Overall awareness for conservation of natural resources and environmental protection is weak. The environmental monitoring and information system is inadequate.

## 2.6 Stakeholder mapping and analysis

137. North Macedonia is a landlocked nation with a population of just over 2 million persons. The advantage of its relatively small size is that the key stakeholders and relevant organizations are well known.

**Table 7:** Stakeholders and relevance/role

Stakeholder and level	Relevance and Expected Role in Project <sup>34</sup>
<i>National level</i>	
The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MOEPP)	Will provide political and institutional supervision, particularly as it houses the National Focal Point persons for the UNCCD, the UNFCCC and the CBD. Hence, it is the center of policy making for implementation of multilateral environmental agreements as well as environmental legislation in general. The Ministry will also chair the Project Steering Committee.

<sup>34</sup> See Section 5 Stakeholder Participation for more details on participation of specific stakeholders.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE)	MAFWE is also an important stakeholder for implementation since many of the planned interventions focus upon consolidation of productive lands, and improved management of forests. MAFWE would be assisting to MOEPP at implementation of components that are concerning mainstreaming SLM and LDN approaches into land use policies, documents and strategies, as well as a data source for many other outputs.
National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD)	The Council is formed by representatives of all relevant ministries, and also includes executive representatives from the municipalities, as well as from the private sector, who through the work of the Council should coordinate the inclusion of the land management in planning and implementation within different sectors. The Council has a mandate to formulate decisions on multi-sectoral coordination among relevant authorities and to lead the way in developing and coordinating implementation of multi-sectoral strategies. Although institutional responsibilities for environmental management are defined broadly by environmental laws, many responsibilities overlap in the area of soil and land management, and the project will support efforts by the Council to clarify responsibilities in areas related to SLM and SFM. The Council's role in coordinating a more unified approach to mainstreaming LD and SFM issues needs to be strengthened under the project.
Crisis Management Centre of RM (CMC)	The Crisis Management Center (CMC) is an independent state administrative body, having the status and function of a directorate, which legal competences include gathering of information, assessment, situation analysis, objectives and tasks determination, development and implementation of the necessary actions for prevention, early warning and handling crises. In the execution of the crisis management tasks, CMC performs the activities that refer to providing continuity of the inter-departmental and international cooperation, consultations and coordination. In accordance with its legal competences in a national crisis situation CMC on behalf of the Government performs the coordination and cooperation with international community as a national point of contact 24/7.
The Public Enterprise (PE) 'National Forests' (PENF)	PENF is responsible for both management of more than 80% of the national forests, including all forest outside of protected areas. As such, PE National Forests plays in integral role in raising the awareness of the public regarding the role of sustainable forest management and achieving LDN Targets. The Enterprise through its subsidiaries will be especially important in the process of identifying suitable areas for afforestation in the pilot sites, development of supporting documents and maps needed for the design and implementation of the project activities, implementing practical field level activities to reverse deforestation, as well as take part in the training on SFM and LDN approaches. The afforestation activities will be carried out through the PENF local subsidiaries.
The Public Enterprise for Pasture Management (PEPM)	The Public Enterprise for Pasture Management has been established by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia as a part of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE), to manage the state-owned pastures. According to Law on pasture, the PE has an obligation to create a pasture management program every year which include annual plans for pasture management throughout the country. This program determines the natural conditions of the pasture, its restoration, and development, measures for breeding, protection, promotion and extension of pastures. This enterprise will be involved in the Project Steering Committee.
National Association of Private Forests Owners (NAPFO)	The association is organized at local, regional and national levels. It represents more than 850 members. The main objectives of the association are to: achieve sustainable management of forests in private ownership; strengthen the capacities of the association; participation in the process to change the present Forestry Law according to the Strategy for sustainable development of Forestry

	<p>in the Republic of North Macedonia; Decentralization of forest management; Development of the partnerships and cooperation with relevant organizations and institutions in North Macedonia and internationally.</p> <p>NAPFO will take part in the demonstration projects through participating in the rehabilitation of degraded land. In addition, they will receive training in SFM and LDN approaches. Farmers and land users are the ultimate beneficiaries of the project and will take part in the demonstration projects through rehabilitation of degraded land; will be trained in SFM and LDN approaches.</p>
National hydro-meteorological service (NHMS)	<p>A public service that provides meteorological, climatological, agro-meteorological, hydrological information data and is responsible for monitoring of air, water and soil quality. The country has a considerable background, tradition and experience in coping with issues related to land management and conservation. Remarkable results were achieved within the past few decades after the Second World War up to the end of '90. During this period the majority of relevant educational and scientific capacities were established, and the most important activities were performed.</p> <p>NHMS gathers relevant information on environment from different institutions; with regard to land management, collects information on soil erosion and monitoring. NHMS will support monitoring and evaluation of land degradation processes in order to support the proposed project, will participate in the Project Steering Committee, as well as take part in the training on SLM and LDN approaches.</p>
<p>Ss. Cyril and Methodius University (UKIM)</p> <p>1. Faculty of Forestry (FoF)</p> <p>2. Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences (FAFS)</p> <p>3. Institute of Agriculture (IA)</p>	<p>The oldest and largest university in the country. Several faculties such as Faculty of Forestry, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food and Institute of Agriculture are of crucial importance and will have significant roles in the implementation of several project components such as development of guidelines for revision of North Macedonia's legal and institutional framework for sustainable land use and management, definition of the methodology for recognition of erosive zones and zones affected by erosion, development guidelines for revision of North Macedonia's legal and institutional framework for sustainable land use and management practices and implementation of reforestation and sustainable forest management in the pilot areas.</p> <p>The Faculty of Forestry is involved in monitoring and reporting on soil erosion on national and international level. The Faculty will provide expert knowledge on SFM approaches for reducing LD and erosion control in the pilot areas and will contribute to the design and implementation of the project activities. The Faculty will contribute in the development of SFM guidelines, Erosion Control Action Plans, Law on Soil Protection and Soil Protection Strategy. It will also develop educational content on SFM and LDN as well as design and implementation of project's awareness raising activities.</p> <p>The Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences and the Institute of Agriculture will provide expert knowledge and guidance on demonstrating and scaling up SLM and LDN Best Practices through development of Law on Soil Protection and Soil Protection Strategy and will contribute to the design and implementation of the project activities. The Faculty and the Institute will also contribute to the project's awareness raising activities and to the development of educational content on SLM and LDN.</p>
Civil society organizations	<p>Different stakeholders in society can be reached via organizations, institutions and networks. As an example, NGOs in North Macedonia are already natural partners in planning and implementing governmental campaigns and projects. There are many environmental CSOs active in North Macedonia, with a few focused on the sustainable use of natural resources and conservation. National civil society organizations are very important in communicating the project to local communities and public awareness raising that is crucial for success of this</p>

	<p>project. Few international nonprofit foundations related to SLM and rural development operate within the country, but local organizations such as the Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development, Makmontana – Association for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in North Macedonia and Green Cross North Macedonia have extensive local networks and significant experience in project implementation in the area of SLM and land degradation. Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development is currently finalizing the National Action Programme aligned to the UNCCD 10 Year Strategy and Reporting Process under UNCCD, and have an array of experience in delivering different outputs in the area of sustainable development, education and promotion activities in North Macedonia.</p> <p>Some CSOs also provide basis for land use planning and SLM practices and are therefore important sources of knowledge about ecosystems services valuation for forest and grasslands ecosystems and ecosystem restoration in the country. CSOs will be involved in all three components of the project, either through scientific work, public hearings, stakeholders' workshops, trainings or through implementation of pilot projects.</p> <p>Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development (BFSD) will participate in the development of SLM/SFM and LDN approaches, will take part in the training of local community representatives through providing expert assistance, and will assist in replicating the training results to other contexts in order to scale up the project outcomes. BFSD will also take part in training on using economic instruments that mobilize available resources to ensure sustainability and investments in SLM/SFM and LDN.</p> <p>MAKMONTANA – Association for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in North Macedonia, will support and assist the design of the SFM and LDN approaches and field-level activities at the project demonstration sites, as well as take part in the training on SFM and LDN approaches. It will assist the implementation of communication and outreach campaign with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of sustainable management of land and forests.</p>
Private sector	<p>The Project would do well to ally with the North Macedonian Chamber of Commerce (MCC), American Chamber of Commerce in North Macedonia, Invest in Macedonia and other organizations and institutions like these to cooperate in communicating investment possibilities in North Macedonia. North Macedonian Chamber of Commerce (MCC) is an important stakeholder to represent the interests of private sector relevant for the Project, and to offer opportunities for private sector involvement and capacity building. The role of the MCC is in ensuring a dialogue between economic sectors, professional associations of industries and the public sector. MCC has very strong communication channels developed in its division dealing with industry, agriculture and services and entrepreneurship. The private sector will be involved in project implementation through direct communication and interest representation of private sector and private companies of interest to the Project; promotion and dissemination of project activities and results within Sectoral Bulletins; Support to capacity building of private sector (information channels, meeting space etc.) and using economic instruments that mobilize locally available resources to ensure investment in soil conservation.</p>
<i>Local level</i>	
<p>Municipalities of the 3 project target sites:  <i>Site 1:</i> Arachinovo and Gazi Baba municipalities  <i>Site 2:</i> Lipkovo municipality</p>	<p>The Municipal Administration in the targeted municipalities is important partner for the project and will be responsible for creating the enabling conditions for implementation of all project activities at the local scale. The Administration will ensure that the pilot sites are available for demonstration activities and that local resource managers and users are available for training. The Administration also will participate in the technical advisory working group.</p>

Site 3: Saraj, Jegunovce, and Zhelino municipalities	The local self-government units (municipalities and their administration staff) will be responsible for creating the enabling conditions for implementation of all project activities at the local scale, will ensure that the pilot sites are available for demonstration activities in collaboration with PE National Forests and that local resource managers and users are available for training.
<u>Local communities:</u>	<p>Local communities are important stakeholders, especially in the areas suffering from degradation of land, and loss of soil due to natural or anthropologic influences.</p> <p>Farmers within local communities are the key actors in terms of local level halting and reversal of land degradation within cultivated land and selected/volunteer farmers will be key in demonstrating on-ground pilot activities related to SLM/SFM in cultivated areas and pasture.</p> <p>Farmers are the ultimate beneficiaries of the project, and will take part in the demonstration projects through rehabilitation of degraded land; will be trained in SLM and SFM approaches.</p> <p>All local resource users (arable, livestock, users of forestry, etc.) will be involved in awareness raising and SLM/SFM knowledge training. This includes building knowledge on appropriate and safe areas to construct dwellings.</p> <p>Traditional/non-formal community governance structures will be used when formal structures are lacking to support unified communication and action at community level.</p>
<i>Multilateral and bilateral donors and international organizations</i>	
UN Environment	Through Europe Regional Office's Vienna Programme Office, being the leading voice for the environment in the Balkan region for the past 10 years, also brings a wealth of applied experience to this project. UN Environment, through the ENVSEC initiative, has implemented numerous projects relating to assessment and management of risks from hazardous activities, management of natural resources, adaptation to impacts of climate change and regional cooperation. In the area of land use, UN Environment has done a number of activities including identifying land-degraded hotspots, production of large-scale maps, public awareness raising campaigns and guidelines on remediation of hot-spots. The current project builds on these activities to scale up the approach to polluted areas from different sources but also to other major causes of land degradation. In addition, UN Environment is currently supporting all the countries in the region comply with national and global commitments to UNCCD, UNCBD and UNFCCC through a number of different national projects. Furthermore, this project will complement the existing UN Environment projects in North Macedonia and the region, such as "Achieving Biodiversity Conservation through Creation and Effective Management of Protected Areas and Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Land Use Planning in North Macedonia", "Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning in Serbia", "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Albania through Integrated Restoration of Ecosystems", and "Sustainable Forest and Landscape Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina" and that way contribute global perspective, knowledge development and experiences sharing.
The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP)	SGP has an office in Skopje and has implemented numerous community-level interventions in the area of livestock, alternative livelihoods and afforestation in drought-stricken communities. It is foreseen that GEF SGP can add value in pilot projects that are strategically designed as interventions following the results of the nationwide inventory and mapping analysis with this GEF project by allocating SGP grants in the targeted areas.

Others	<p>World Bank, UNDP, GIZ, Czech Development Cooperation, Italian Ministry of Environment and Austrian Environment Agency, are also relevant stakeholders. They provide policy frameworks, networking, information exchange and financial and technical support to programs and projects dealing with land degradation.</p> <p>The bilateral development organizations which are present and relevant to this GEF proposal include Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). They are dedicated and involved in long-term sustainable development of the North Macedonian socio-economic and environmental sectors, and currently have significant programmes which could contribute to this GEF FSP via co-financing (both cash and in-kind) as well as project continuity via regional and transboundary mechanisms. These institutions have expressed support to this project during the scoping mission organized by UN Environment in the context of the preparation of this project.</p> <p>Coordination with all key donor organizations will be undertaken through invitation as appropriate to Project Steering Committee meetings and through ad-hoc workshops and coordination meetings.</p>
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## 2.7 Baseline analysis and gaps

138. As described in the previous section on the baseline situation, the government of North Macedonia, with the support of many donors and interested parties (including the EU) has, and continues to, make significant efforts to address rural development and the establishment of economically productive and sustainable rural land use. This includes substantial efforts to plan and implement actions to address land degradation and deforestation.
139. However, analysis carried out during the project development has identified several areas where the current baseline activities will not fully address the key threats, root causes and barriers identified. See table 8 below.

**Table 8.** Key Identified gaps in baseline related to SLM and LD

Type	Gap (in baseline “ <i>status quo</i> ” scenario)
<b>Policy framework</b>	Erosive areas and areas vulnerable to erosion have not been officially proclaimed, therefore creating lack of basis for research and specific policy actions
	Insufficient data and awareness / understanding of the economic costs of land degradation and deforestation (ecosystem services loss, agricultural productivity decline, human security and infrastructure risks, etc.) constrain sufficient mainstreaming and political will
	Absence of specific strategic planning on soil protection and maintenance
<b>Legislative context</b>	Absence of specific legislation on soil protection
<b>General institutional issues</b>	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning has lack of capacities for SLM and LD related issues
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy has lack of staff engaged on issues related to SLM and LD

	Not clearly defined responsibilities among relevant stakeholders on operational level for addressing SLM and LD issues
	Lack of efficient mechanism for coordination among the central government institutions with regards to the activities related to SLM and LD
	Low level of awareness about SLM and LD of the stakeholders in North Macedonia
<b>Specific SLM and LD capacity-related issues</b>	Insufficient capacities for administration of the national soil information system
	Lack of appropriate land management system
	Lack of sufficient and efficient support of agricultural production that addresses SLM and LD issues
	Limited capacities of water management organizations (water economies) related to SLM and LD
<b>Type</b>	<b>Gap</b>
<b>Data</b>	Scarcity of relevant data for SLM and LD processes in the country
	Very limited public availability of the existing data related for SLM and LD
	No specific programmes for data collection and data management for research purposes related to SLM and LD issues exists.
<b>Type</b>	<b>Gap</b>
<b>Research and development</b>	Limited number, as well as lack of capacity of research institutions working in the area of SLM and LD
<b>Type</b>	<b>Gap</b>
<b>Management practices</b>	Limited experience in North Macedonia of practical models and approaches for more sustainable land use practices by farmers and methods to reverse or reduce land degradation risks (gullying, flooding risks, landslides, etc.) Good agricultural practices and agro-ecological measures related to SLM and LD are in initial phase of implementation
	Low knowledge and awareness of farmers/ land users and municipalities about good practices to avoid land degradation (loss of soils, organic matter, contour ploughing, rotational grazing, etc.)
	Limited knowledge and experience of Forestry Enterprise field staff and planners on SFM methods and approaches.
	Drainage and flood protection structures are in a poor condition
	Waste management is not enough or absent at rural community level
	Forest fires are partly a result of insufficient understanding of local land users of the impacts, and from lack of “ownership” or valuation of public land resources.
	Limited awareness and understanding of the human and land degradation risks and impacts of constructions on inappropriate sites

A summary of the main gaps identified:

140. *National policy, legislative and coordination gaps:* An important limitation that has been identified as currently limiting the systematic mainstreaming of land degradation/ deforestation into policies, and their effective follow-through in implementation, is the large number of related policies, strategic plans, etc. prepared in the recent decade in accordance with EU accession needs, North Macedonia’s commitments under, etc. Any mechanisms that can improve future policy and planning coordination between key rural development, natural resource user and environmental

protection institutions will positively impact practical implementation of LD and SFM measures in the country. A more specific gap identified is in terms of policy and legal instruments to address one of the most crucial aspects of land degradation, namely protection and maintenance of soils. Healthy and productive soils are the cornerstone of viable agricultural systems and their degradation one of the greatest direct threats posed – however, currently there is no specific strategic or legal framework for their protection.

141. *National institutional capacity weaknesses and gaps:* A key gap that is only being partially met under the baseline situation is the capacity and knowledge within the main national institutions responsible for developing and implementing land and natural resource use policy and legislation. This has direct impact on the overall effectiveness of baseline efforts to address land degradation, deforestation sustainable rural development and the conservation of biodiversity.
142. *Insufficient baseline efforts to fill crucial awareness and data gaps at all levels, particularly in regard to LD costs and development risks:* Linked to the above gap is the insufficient informational and conceptual basis were properly evaluating the extent and social, economic and health costs of land degradation and deforestation, and the methods and approaches for addressing it. This limitation is felt at all levels from central government through to institutions responsible for managing/regulating land use, to municipality and land user levels. This inevitably constrains the commitment to, and the effectiveness, of efforts within the country to address and reverse LD and deforestation.
143. *Lack of practical models and experiences for achieving LD / SFM results on the ground and gap in the baseline in this regard:* A key barrier to moving forward to achieving “on-ground” impacts of policies and legislative/institutional changes is the limited in-country practical experience of what measures, approaches and methodologies can best address the LD and deforestation threats under current political and socio-economic circumstances. Much of the technical training and past experience is rooted in the centralized state led methodologies of the former Yugoslav socialist republic and are not sustainable of cost feasible under current conditions. The changing political and economic context has led to new land use pressures for which there is little relevant technical or traditional experience to tap into. There is therefore a need to test and demonstrate new and innovative approaches built on international experience elsewhere, and on the basis of this practical experience ensure the most effective means are identified, replication encourage and application up-scaled.

## 2.8 Linkages with other GEF and non-GEF interventions

144. North Macedonia has so far implemented a number of projects and initiatives as an intervention based on laws and regulations related to land management, agriculture and forestry. Some of these projects’ outputs and results can serve as a beneficial platform for this GEF project. The baseline projects with whom active coordination needs to be maintained are given in the table below.

**Table 9:** List of baseline projects



Name of the project, Duration	Description of activities and envisaged outcomes
Support to North Macedonia for development of National Action Programs (NAP) aligned to the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy and Reporting Process under UNCCD (2014 - 2018) US\$ 306 986	This project includes preparation of the aligned National Action Plan in North Macedonia to combat land degradation and desertification that will guide the efficient and effective implementation of the NAP and other relevant action in accordance with the five operational objectives of the 10 Year UNCCD Strategy. The NAP has identified certain gaps regarding land management and proposed GEF6 project is directly in line with its objectives regarding the protection of land and sustainable land management.
Setting the land degradation neutrality baseline (2016-2018) US\$ 103 000	The project is funded by GEF-UNEP and implemented through UNCCD Secretariat by MOEPP. The project outcomes include LDN Leveraging Plan and LDN assessment; baseline established and mapped to define the LDN frame of reference, legal and institutional aspects analyzed and drivers. Therefore, this proposed GEF6 project would be continuation of LDN mainstreaming, though further setting LDN targets and measures and inclusion into selected national policies and strategies.
Assessment of agriculture production through NAEZ and LRIMS and scenario development in the Republic of North Macedonia (2017 – ongoing) US\$ 423 000	Funded by FAO, the project has main goal to improve agricultural production and increase the adaptive capacity of North Macedonia, by establishing National Agro-Ecological Zoning (NAEZ), a Land Resources Information Management System (LRIMS) and Scenario Development to better inform policy at national level and reduce climate risk through adaptation at local level. The expected impact is improved agricultural monitoring and land-use planning, better production systems and national policies. It is hoped that new strategies will be adopted by the government to increase and diversify production potential and that recommendations and pathways for achieving sustainable and diversified land use will be developed.
Capacity Building for Ecosystem Based Disaster Risk Reduction through Sustainable Forest Management in North Macedonia (2018 – ongoing) US\$ 1 500 000	The project started in 2018, funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and implemented by the Crisis Management Centre, Public Enterprise National Forests and MAFWE. The overall goal of the project is development of Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) measures and activities in synergy with sustainable forest management, disaster risk of floods, landslides, soil erosion and forest fire in North Macedonia.
Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, energy efficiency and utilization of renewable energy sources in rural communities of the Republic of North Macedonia (2017 - ongoing) US\$ 3 500 000	This project is funded by SIDA, EU, GIZ and implemented by FAO and a number of North Macedonian NGOs and contains a component on promoting sustainable agricultural practices – institutional and legal framework development, capacity building, public awareness raising.
Mainstreaming of the National Land Consolidation Programme (2017 – ongoing) EUR 2 500 000	This project is implemented by FAO in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE). FAO has been providing technical assistance to the MAFWE to develop its capacity to implement a National Land Consolidation Programme. The project enables the Ministry to gain practical experience with different approaches to land consolidation, allowing farmers to consolidate the fragmented parcels of their land, which is considered as a barrier to apply modern practices of soil and water conservation one of the factors of unsustainable and inefficient land use.

Upgrade of institutional and administrative capacities in line with Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) requirements (2017 - ongoing) EUR 2 830 000	The objective is to upgrade the established institutional and administrative capacities of the national relevant structures for agriculture and rural development towards requirements of the EU accession process. Under this project, actions will be taken on restoration, preservation and enhancement of ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry. It will promote the use of environmentally friendly farming practices, protection and enhancement of biodiversity, landscape, water and soil both within high nature value and traditional agrarian areas, and mitigation of climate change.
Achieving Biodiversity Conservation through Creation and Effective Management of Protected Areas and Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Land Use Planning (2017 - ongoing) US\$ 3 360 000	The overall objective of the project is to promote biodiversity conservation through supporting national capacities in expanding the national protected areas coverage, improvement of management effectiveness through creation of a good policy and capacity environment, improve land use planning and management and pilot testing and strong inclusion of local stakeholders throughout the process. The third component is concerned with mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into land use planning; supporting future processes of revision and incorporation of biodiversity conservation into National Spatial Plan and Forest Management Plans.
Reducing Flood Risk in the Polog Region (2016 - ongoing) US\$ 435 238	The goal of the project is to assist the country's flood recovery efforts in the Polog Region. It aims to prevent loss of life and damage to property during future floods by reconstructing important parts of the flood control infrastructure in the City of Tetovo, removing historical dumpsites upstream from Shipkovica and from torrential streambeds, while also introducing a flash flood early warning and public alert system for Tetovo and other high-risk areas in the Polog Region. The project is also supporting the preparation of a comprehensive technical documentation both for the full reconstruction of the system of check-dams in Pena upstream from Tetovo, and a long-term flood risk mitigation system for the flood-sensitive village of Shipkovica.

145. The projects mentioned above are implemented at the national scale and also include some of the municipalities suggested for pilot projects. Currently, there are not any specific land conservation projects by the pilot municipalities except the government funded. According to the Forest Management Plans, between 2013 and 2016, 32 ha, 62 ha and 18 ha were afforested in the municipalities of Lipkovo, Saraj and Arachinovo respectively. The annual national contribution to municipal budgets for implementation of land management and environmental protection measures is approximately totaling US\$ 150 000 for all targeted municipalities.
146. GEF is the main financial mechanism for the implementation of UNCCD, and with a mandate to address land degradation. This GEF project will continue to build on the experiences and work already done in the area of SLM and LD, by filling in the gaps and building stronger pillars for sustainable land management.

### SECTION 3: INTERVENTION STRATEGY (ALTERNATIVE)

#### 3.1. Project rationale, policy conformity and expected global environmental benefits

147. The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts.
148. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute significantly to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts.
149. The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD / forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.
150. The project objective and activities are fully in line with existing government strategies and plans for land management, soil conservation and forestry and by facilitating the development of sustainable land and forest management (SLM/SFM) comprehensive approaches, will further focus on revising the existing legislation to include SLM/SFM considerations. This will include the development of tools and methodologies on both national and local level in order to ensure sustainability in using SLM/SFM practices and execution of SLM/SFM techniques on the ground that allow for practical learning and directly impact the state of land. Building upon the experience gained in the field and on the lessons learned from past and existing GEF funded initiatives and similar efforts, the project will create a more conducive policy and legal framework for SLM and better integrated landscape management and build national and local capacity for practical implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices in the field.
151. The Project is fully compliant with Land Degradation Focal Area for GEF-6, specifically with Land Degradation Strategic Objective 2 (LD-2): “Generate sustainable flows of ecosystem services from forests, including in drylands” (*Program 3 Landscape Management and Restoration*), and Land Degradation Strategic Objective 3 (LD-3): “Reduce pressures on natural resources by managing competing land uses in broader Landscapes” (*Program 4 Scaling-up sustainable land management through the landscape approach*).
152. The requested GEF funds will play a catalytic role in mobilizing and changing the trajectory of large baseline investments from Government of North Macedonia towards developing and up-

scaling integrated sustainable land management practices and creation of an enabling environment of relevant policies, legislation, and institutional capacity.

153. The project will contribute to global environmental benefits primarily through reduced soil erosion, reduced risk of land degradation, and improved land and soil health. Adoption of SLM and SFM practices will reduce land degradation and secure ecosystem services over an area covering over 15 000 ha in the three targeted municipalities. This will help to reduce the main threats to ecosystem functions and services in the pilot sites, and through the experience, the whole of North Macedonia in the future through dissemination of results.
154. The project will reduce land degradation that is happening due to over exploitation of wood and timber. Sustainable land use and forest management practices will help to conserve and restore natural habitats important for biodiversity, and reforestation of degraded lands will increase carbon sequestration, and this contributes to climate change mitigation objectives. The mountainous region, where the pilot projects will take place, is important for biodiversity, where restoration of the forest/woodland ecosystem and support to its conservation would, therefore, contribute to both regional and global biological conservation benefits. The project sites have an approximate population of 120 000 people, and since the intervention will be implemented directly with the communities, it is expected that their direct participation in the project activities will contribute to the raising of their awareness of the values of biodiversity, and how to conserve and use resources sustainably within agricultural production landscapes.

### **3.2. Project goal and objective**

155. The goal of the Project is: *to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes.*
156. The Project objective: is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia.
157. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components:
  - Component 1: Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM;
  - Component 2: Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (*testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling*);
  - Component 3: Knowledge management and public awareness.

### **3.3. Project components and expected results**

**Component 1.****Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM:**

158. This component will be implemented with active involvement of main project partners, namely MOEPP and MAFWE, with the support of PE National Forests, PE for Pasture Management, NHMS and Local Self Government Units (Municipalities), Research Institutions and Universities and other project stakeholders. This component is designed to reach the following outcomes:

***Outcome 1.1. National authorities address gaps and weaknesses in the land use and land degradation policy, legal and regulatory framework [to accelerate the achievement of land degradation neutrality]***

Output 1.1.1. Analysis of the ongoing legal, institutional and capacity needs of land management sector including key opportunities and threats to achieving Land Degradation neutrality (LDN) at national scale in North Macedonia completed and made available to the national and local government

159. Currently in North Macedonia there is little or no scope for local land users and the private sector to play a constructive role in pasture and forestry land use. Issues of cross-sectoral linkage and/or competition (e.g., energy/fuel wood needs of local population and forestry, forestry and extensive grazing, fodder needs of extensive grazing and fodder supply by irrigated agriculture) are not recognized in the policies and strategic planning of these sectors, except perhaps at a very local level. Thus, there is a need to update sector policies related to land use in order to ensure real “buy in” and support.
160. There are wide knowledge gaps within institutions and among land users about the situation on the ground, the options available for improving land use, and even basic concepts of sustainable pasture, forest and biodiversity use and integrated land use management. At central levels of government, limited strategic thinking has been applied to the role that mountain landscapes should play in the country’s long-term development and environmental, food and social security.
161. The project will support a full review and analyses of relevant legislation with the primary purpose of seeking opportunities to strengthen and harmonize the existing legal framework in order to provide for the adoption of integrated, gender-sensitive and cross-sectorial approaches that mainstream SLM and SFM practices and principles. In addition, priorities identified in the current NAP to Combat Land Desertification will be integrated into the new Law on Soil Protection and National Strategy for Soil Protection.
162. The results of the review and analysis will further initiate changes in policies (and legislation intended to support the realization of the policies related to SLM and SFM) that will inevitably have a knock-on effect on the institutional structures and their mandates. Changes in policy will for example require institutions to adjust their mandates and function, and changes in legislation will require different approaches to implementing them. Institutions will need to re-orientate from being the sole managers of land to being facilitators by providing a support system for non-state actors (farmers, local communities and households) to manage land, something that is currently not taking place.

163. The Project will also address the need in capacity building through enhancing institutional effectiveness and staff capacities of relevant ministries, local self-government units in the targeted areas and research institutions on SLM and SFM issues.

Output 1.1.2.: Development of Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme completed and made available for adoption

164. The existing national environmental provisions recognize the problem of soil threats to a certain extent, and the importance of preserving soil functions. However, regulatory means of soil protection are mostly embedded into wider environmental legislation. Thus, soil protection ends up as a by-product in measures often lacking the required authority to enforce soil protection. Commonly, there is a lack of overarching soil protection legislation and existing national policies are sometimes insufficient for preserving soil functions and combatting soil threats (halt erosion, soil sealing, etc.).
165. The aim of a Soil Protection Strategy will be to provide a framework within which soil quality is protected from degradation. In addition to protecting soil quality through the implementation of best management practices, a soil strategy will develop mechanisms by which changes in soil quality can be measured and the effectiveness of remedial actions assessed.
166. Together with the Strategy a guideline will be developed for establishing national soil quality monitoring programme together with the set of indicators which are representative of soil quality. A soil monitoring programme must be able to encompass the spatial heterogeneity of soils and their physical, chemical and biological properties. It should be dynamic and able to adapt to developments and changes in our understanding of soil dynamics over time.
167. This will be implemented via workshops and other consultative events, to clarify the best management practices for soil protection and adequate monitoring programme and reach consensus for the drafting of a strategic plan for review and consideration by the government.

Output 1.1.3. Land utilization and ecosystems services valuation for forest and grasslands ecosystems in the pilot sites in the north-western part of North Macedonia completed and disseminated

168. Agriculture is one of the most important economic sectors in the region, providing food and jobs for the local rural population. However, due to enormous socio-economic changes in North Macedonia, and especially the North-Western parts of the country with large population shifts, land utilization has never assessed and the effect on the ecosystem services is unknown. However, what is evident is that the area enormously suffers from land degradation; soil erosion is very prevalent due to massive deforestation and flooding is frequently causing landslides and gully, soil fertility has declined and there are major land-use changes that occurred during the past three decades. In addition, the north western region of North Macedonia is the very vulnerable to climate change, which further surges land degradation issues. As such, assessment of the land utilization and valuation of ecosystem services of forests and grasslands in the pilot regions, will equip local and national decision makers on how to better plan and more sustainably develop

different economic sectors in the region and the country. The activities planned are preparation of studies on (a) Scenario characterization and biophysical & economic data and (b) Scenario analysis and valuation – within a scope of application of land utilization and ecosystem services. All activities will be consulted and validated with all stakeholders, and the results will be disseminated at the end.

#### Output 1.1.4: Support in the development of Law on Soil Protection

169. Since the independence, there have been many legal regulations on agriculture. However, there has not been any specific law on soil protection as a part of the land use legal framework. In order to close this gap, the project will support the development of Draft Law on Soil Protection in collaboration with related governmental bodies, universities, chambers and NGOs.
170. The draft soil protection law will include measures to prevent desertification from the intensification of agriculture, mining, road construction, and urban land use as well as climate change. The purpose of the draft Law is to ensure the integrity of soil surface, conservation thereof and rise of soil fertility, to establish the rights and the duties of land users, landowners and the state in the field of soil protection. The law will provide guidance to facilitate a safe and healthy environment for the population, and to prevent soil damage and lower soil fertility from overgrazing and desertification, and systems to prevent soil erosion. The law will also contain measures to establish accountability in environmental protection along with more elaboration on soil degradation, desertification gradation criteria, soil assessment methodology and monitoring.
171. Subsequently, the project will facilitate the law's approval by government, and raise awareness about its contents.

#### Output 1.1.5: “Local Environmental Action Plans” of targeted municipalities are revised and updated, to include sustainable land management considerations and ecological approaches for erosion control

172. According to the Law on Local Self-Government, the local self-government units (LSGUs) are competent for regulation and performance of affairs of public interest of local relevance, specified by law. The LSGUs are responsible for general environmental protection measures including land degradation issues. Some of the municipalities in the targeted region adopted its strategy document on sustainable development, which is called “Local Environmental Action Plan” (LEAP). However, the LEAPs developed for the 5 municipalities i.e. the area of the identified 3 pilot sites, are very outdated and do not consider ecological approaches for erosion control.
173. Therefore, the planned update will be detailing the measures to be undertaken for each of the pilot sites that will be developed in consultation with the local authorities and resource owners/users. These updates will mainly focus on soil erosion control measures, as most of the land is severely affected by soil and water erosion; the remaining parts of the land are affected by overgrazing and deforestation, which also contribute to vulnerability from soil and water erosion.

174. The projects will be very pragmatic given the limited local financial and technical capacity and will include the technical designs for erosion control in selected torrents/torrent series with detailed descriptions of what will be done, how it will be done and by whom it will be done. Practical implementation will require strong collaboration between public, municipality and local population stakeholders.

***Outcome 1.2. – Trained national and municipal resource managers to integrate SLM/ SFM in LDN, in coordination with the NCSD***

Output 1.2.1. Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem services, and use of economic instruments.

175. This output is crucial in order to ensure the long-term sustainable application of better land use practices. An improved legal, institutional and policy framework alone will not have any benefits unless there is the technical and managerial capacity to put it into practice. The project will support establishment of mechanisms that will ensure the longer-term development of relevant national capacity to continue to develop the sustainable management of mountain landscapes in the long term, post project.
176. Under this output, the project will carry out an assessment of capacity needs both at the national and local levels to identify the needs and challenges of all relevant stakeholders in adopting SLM and SFM approaches, including land use planning, prevention of soil degradation through integrated soil fertility management, ecosystem services, and use of economic instruments.
177. Based on the results of the assessment, training programs will be designed and conducted for local and national resource managers of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning; the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy; PE National Forests and PE for Pasture Management.
178. In addition, the municipalities of the project pilot sites of Arachinovo, Jegunovce, Lipkovo, Saraj, and Zhelino will be capacitated in order to build their capacities and facilitate knowledge and technology transfer, with a focus on public participation, monitoring, assessment and knowledge management, support for learning by doing strategies for land use and management, and with special consideration to gender equality and minority rights as well as traditional knowledge. In particular, the project will support efforts to strengthen capacities to incorporate SLM and SFM practices and principles into the land management responsibilities that are currently being transferred from national to local authorities, building on the government's existing efforts to transfer knowledge, experience and technical information from national resource managers to local resource managers.
179. As part of this process, the project will also support the integration of traditional management practices into decision making processes and management practices. Resource managers will benefit from capacity building in developing sustainable land planning strategies and action plans; in the design, replication and scaling-up of SLM and SFM best practices; in the development and



implementation of integrated approaches to land restoration within local land-use action plans; and in using appropriate and sustainable economic instruments such as valuation of natural resource assets and ecosystem services when creating development strategies and local action plans.

180. The project will also identify and address information gaps for carrying out SLM and SFM approaches, and build institutional capacities at local and national levels to generate and manage information and data related to SLM/SFM, including land suitability analyses, land designation systems, degradation analysis, information on farming, forestry, pastures, etc., as well as capacity to analyze, visualize, and utilize data collected under the project. Furthermore, the project will create synergies with on-going initiatives on environmental information and will specifically address the environmental information flow from the national to the local level. In addition, capacity development support will be provided to local and national resource managers on gender sensitization and mainstreaming, including gender training for staff within extension services, and in taking the necessary measures during project implementation to ensure that women's access to land and land rights is improved and not hindered.
181. Training activities will use a mix of approaches based on existing experience, ranging from relatively formal training sessions, to practical workshops and field visits.

Output 1.2.2 Strengthened National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) to coordinate institutions, engage with local communities, and manage information flows for better integration of SFM/SLM and LDN aspects

182. The capacities of the Council will be strengthened so that it can: better coordinate the work on land management undertaken by different institutions such as MAFWE, MOEPP and other relevant national and local authorities; mainstream SLM and SFM approaches into national and local programs and strategies across sectors, including LDN aspects; and facilitate information sharing on SLM and SFM practices and the monitoring of projects and activities on SLM and SFM in order to measure North Macedonia's progress and to consolidate and share lessons learned on SLM and SFM best practices and LDN aspects.
183. The project will organize meetings and workshops to facilitate the work of the Council and to provide capacity building for Council members in carrying out their duties, and also will organize field visits for Council members to facilitate engagement with local communities. The project also will help to develop mechanisms for gathering and sharing information between Council members as well as other relevant institutions at both the local and national levels. Finally, the project will support the work of the Council in developing / revising national policies in sectors relevant to land management.

## **Component 2.**

**Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region** (*testing and*

*demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling)*

184. This component aims at increasing practical experience and knowledge of the SLM and SFM methods and approaches and to facilitate uptake of SLM/SFM measures, which will eventually lead to reductions in land degradation and enhance ecosystem services. The project focuses on the issue of soil erosion, as one of the most dominant types of land degradation mostly caused by torrent rains, flooding and human activities including poor agricultural practices, inappropriate forest management, illegal loggings and forest fires.
185. The planned interventions in Component 2 will introduce, test/demonstrate and evaluate (learn lessons) on SFM and SLM practices in selected pilot sites. This includes the implementation of sustainable forest management practices through the SFM guidelines that will be developed under Output 2.1.1. on at least of 5 000 ha area. The guidelines will be incorporated into the current forest management plans for this area. Afforestation activities will involve three small-scale projects in the Arachinovo-Strachintse, Lipkovo and parts of Zheden Massif selected pilot sites for sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration of approximately 400 ha of highly degraded sites on government-owned lands within the five municipalities. This component will lead to practical demonstration of SLM and SFM best practices by wider application of innovative SLM and SFM tools and practices in the targeted municipalities. The land in these municipalities where significant degradation has occurred due to illegal logging (by local residents and commercial interests), as well as overgrazing and unsustainable agricultural practices will be rehabilitated.
186. Target groups and stakeholders: This component will be implemented with active involvement of Local Self Government Units (Municipalities), MOEPP and MAFWE, with support of PE National Forests, PE for Pasture Management, Research Institutions and Universities and other project stakeholders. Through this component the expected outcome will be: Implemented project activities to result in 10 000 ha land under SLM practice and 5 000 ha of forest and forest land under SFM.

**Outcome 2.1.** *Local governments in North Macedonia apply practical methods, approaches and practices for halting or reversing land degradation and deforestation beyond the pilots*

Output 2.1.1. SFM and SLM guidelines are prepared and made available to national and local authorities and all interested stakeholders, providing an effective framework for reforestation, afforestation, restoration and conservation activities

187. The project will support the targeted municipalities in developing guidelines for sustainable land and forest management that will also include silvicultural system for forest regeneration and that will be integrated in all existing sectorial plans for forest, pasture and agriculture areas management. A technical advisory working group that includes representatives from MOEPP, MAFWE, PE National Forests, PE for Pasture Management, Municipalities, land users and local NGOs working on rural development, forestry and pasture management issues, will be established by the project to support the development and implementation of these guidelines. The working

group also will ensure careful documentation of the process to revise the guidelines, the collecting of best practices and lessons learned from developing and implementing the guidelines, and the dissemination of these findings to other municipalities in order to facilitate replication throughout the country. The project will integrate traditional knowledge / management practices into the SLM and SFM guidelines to provide an effective framework for reforestation, afforestation, restoration and conservation activities. The Faculty of Forestry will provide expert knowledge on SLM and SFM best practices and developing of these guidelines.

188. These guidelines will be designed for the practical use and application of farmers and land users, as well as by local authorities and representatives of relevant national institutions at field level. Therefore, great emphasis will be placed on ensuring that these guidelines are readily accessible to the intended audience and will utilize as much as possible simple non-technical language, easily understandable diagrams and pictograms, feasible actions and readily available materials, step-by-step instructions, and “trouble-shooting” guidance.

Output 2.1.2: SFM practices and priority actions for afforestation are implemented to accelerate optimized use of forest and non-forest land by communities and local government on 5 000 hectares at pilot sites.

189. The project will support the implementation of sustainable forest management practices on an area of 5 000 hectares of forest territory, based on the previously developed SFM guidelines.
190. In addition, the project will implement the practical application of field reforestation / afforestation activities in 400 ha of selected bare or severely degraded forest. This will include innovative afforestation techniques at selected pilot sites covering 400 ha in the targeted municipalities through application of best soil preparation techniques and selection of adequate nitrogen fixing trees/shrubs as well as forest/wild fruit tree species. On non-forested sites, nitrogen-fixing plants (plants which grow and thrive in harsh, low-fertility conditions) begin the cycling of nutrients by accumulating available nutrients. As more nutrients enter the biological system and vegetative cover is established, conditions for other non-nitrogen fixing species become favorable. The project will therefore support planting of nitrogen fixing trees/shrubs as a part of the afforestation process.
191. According to the report on sustainable land management (SLM) by the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI), afforestation/reforestation is an effective approach to reverse land degradation and rehabilitate degraded land, and is an effective climate change mitigation strategy. Changes in land use through afforestation could lead to a gradual accumulation of soil organic Carbon (SOC), although this depends on the previous land use type and the species and planting techniques. High SOC accumulation is most likely when converting from cropland or when restoring severely degraded land.
192. Other potential benefits from afforestation/reforestation include an increase in above and below-ground biomass accumulation and biodiversity (especially when mixed tree species are used), soil erosion control, and improved ecosystem functions and services, such as soil and water conservation.

Output 2.1.3: SLM practices to address priority LD and deforestation issues tested, demonstrated and locally validated on 10 000 hectares to achieve local LDN targets

193. The project will undertake a systematic set of activities to achieve this output and strengthen the consultation, ownership, and practical knowledge of land users to undertake more sustainable land management. The first step will be to support development of a Land Management Study and Action Plan for the targeted municipalities through review of the current land management practices in existing sectorial plans for forest, pasture and agriculture management and questionnaires for the local land owners/users and municipal administration, covering an area of approximately 10 000 hectares. Based on this review, up-to-date land management practices will be integrated into all existing sectorial plans for forest, pasture and agriculture management. The study will be undertaken by experts from the Faculty of Forestry and the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences and it is expected that at least 500 local land owners/users will be directly involved in the questionnaires.
194. A technical advisory working group that includes representatives from MOEPP, MAFWE, the Municipalities, the PE's and local civil society organizations working on rural development, forestry and pasture management issues, will be established by the project to support the development and implementation of the Land Management Study and Action Plan. The working group also will ensure careful documentation of the process to review of the current land management practices in existing sectorial plans, the collecting of best practices and lessons learned, and the dissemination of these findings to other municipalities in order to facilitate replication throughout the country. The Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences and the Faculty of Forestry will provide expert knowledge in integrating the SLM best practices into the Land Management Study and Action Plan and integrate all existing sectorial plans for forest, pasture, and agriculture areas management.
195. Areas impacted by land degradation as well as areas where SLM practices have reduced or eliminated land degradation will be identified and mapped, and the impacts of land degradation processes on ecosystems state in these areas will be assessed and compared. This mapping of degradation and conservation areas will provide key information for decision making on where investments can best be made and which SLM and SFM practices have the best potential to have effective impact and good uptake/replication by land users.
196. In order to increase the involvement of the local population beyond the land owners/users participating in the questionnaires, user friendly/accessible written materials and manuals will be prepared in order to further build-up their knowledge and capacity to adopt SLM technologies and sustainable farming practices.
197. The determined land management state in the targeted municipalities and recommendations for its improvement from the Land Management Study and Action Plan will be presented by the experts at two workshops where representatives from MOEPP, MAFWE, PE National Forests, PE for Pasture Management, civil society organizations, private sector, municipal administration

and local land owners/users will take part and debate on achieving sustainable land management through adoption of appropriate SLM technologies and sustainable farming practices. The first workshop will involve the Arachinovo-Strachintsi and Lipkovo municipalities, while the second workshop will involve Saraj, Zhelino and Jegunovce municipalities. It is expected that these workshops will reach approximately 100 representatives from the public enterprises and state institutions, as well as 400 participants from other stakeholders.

198. Good participation by and involvement of land users is fundamental for the effective coverage of any areas. Efforts will be made to ensure sufficient “ownership” of activities if felt by local land users and that they will in future self-regulate unsuitable practices. Therefore, intensive expert-land owner/user communication will be established for awareness raising and selection of local land owners/users upon their free will to adopt appropriate SLM technologies and sustainable farming practices at their land. At least 100 local farmers will be targeted to adopted SLM practices, comprising an area of approx. 50 ha. The agricultural value of the land will be maintained through crop diversification, together with biological control and reductions of chemical inputs.
199. In addition, both public enterprises (Forestry and Pasture) will be supported to apply SLM activities in forest lands and pastures respectively. Designated areas will comprise degraded forestland, pasture, and agricultural land, and will showcase rehabilitation techniques and best SLM practices on approx. 2 000 ha. The main aim of the rehabilitation processes will be to address overgrazed and degraded lands and to solve the issues with landslides where soil erosion has been the main issue. In areas subject to overgrazing, rotational grazing systems will be established for local farmers, while areas affected by deforestation will be reforested. These interventions described above will also support the natural regeneration process of the planted trees and shrubs.
200. Final activities under this output will focus on the assessment of the impact, lessons learned and potential for replication of the various approaches and mechanisms tested and demonstrated in the project target sites. These assessments will provide a practical basis for further replication and for communication activities under Component 3.

### **Component 3.**

#### **Knowledge management and public awareness:**

201. The third component of the proposed GEF project is aimed at improving understanding of benefits of SLM/SFM and LDN practices to scale up the SLM/SFM and LDN for future activities and sites. It will bring together the results of the project, more efficient approaches to rehabilitation of degraded land and sustainable land management and LDN approach by private sector land developers and users. Component 3 is dealing with the following gaps: (i) Insufficient level of cooperation with regards to SLM/SFM and LD issues among central and local governmental level, (ii) Very limited public availability of the existing data related for SLM and LD, (iii) Scarcity of relevant data for SLM/SFM and LD processes in the country, (iv) Variability of data collection programmes and data management for research purposes related to SLM and LD issues and (v) Low awareness for SLM and SFM with emphasis on ecosystem services.

202. Target groups: The component targets the stakeholders on both, national and local level. It will be implemented with particular support of the scientific community, MOEPP, MAFWE, as well as NGOs that can directly contribute to proactive stakeholder engagement and awareness raising.
203. This component is designed to reach the following outcome and outputs:

***Outcome 3.1. Private sector land developers and users apply SLM/ SFM best practices for mitigating erosion and degradation applicable for North Macedonia***

Output 3.1.1. Production of knowledge management products made available to national and local stakeholders, based on training and exchanges under Outcome 1.2 and best practice arising from Outcome 2.1 to ensure SLM/SFM and LDN

204. Production of knowledge management products based on best practice arising from Components 1 and 2 will ensure SLM/SFM and application of LDN principles through a cross-sectorial multi-stakeholder landscape approach to managing competing uses of mountain lands as well as other regions of the country identified as vulnerable to soil degradation. This output will result will compilation of results of the project, and global best SLM/SFM practices that can be tailored and applied to North Macedonia, and disseminated to some different sectors that are involved directly or indirectly in soil and land resources and management.
205. Lessons learned, including a summary of the policy framework and a special chapter dedicated to mainstreaming gender into SLM/SFM approaches, will be compiled in a user-friendly handbook that will be distributed to key stakeholders nationally in an effort to support the work of staff responsible for land and forest management and to clarify local roles and responsibilities. The handbook will contain information on essential laws and regulations, and instruction in a user-friendly language, and useful interpretations of regulations will be prepared for the local population. Finally, communication channels will be scrutinized and monitored to ensure that information about SLM/SFM approaches and other project activities reach women. Proactive measures to address barriers to full engagement of women in SLM/SFM will be taken and innovative methods to enable women's access to information will be used, including Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Moreover, local women leaders that can mobilize and inform female members of the community will be identified and particular attention will be dedicated to the geographical and spatial location of training and meetings so as to ensure women's attendance.
206. The project will instigate a dialogue between the sector stakeholders on a sector to sector basis as well as multi-sector discussions via working meetings and workshops. On the basis of agreement and consensus developed through these dialogues, cross-sector issues and collaborative approaches / mechanisms will be integrated into individual sector policy / strategic planning documents. An over-arching multi-sector briefing paper itemizing these will be developed as an annex to each sector document and as a guidance document for the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD).

Output 3.1.2. Communication strategy and outreach campaign designed and made available to targeted national and local stakeholders, with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of sustainable management of land and forests of North Macedonia, including establishment of web-based national SLM/SFM and LDN knowledge management hub.

207. The project will develop a communication strategy focused on increasing understanding of land degradation issues and impacts, the benefits of SLM/SFM approaches in increasing production and income, the low cost of SLM and SFM practices, SLM/SFM best practices to be implemented on the ground level, and sharing the results of activities undertaken within the project targeted at both local and national stakeholders.

208. The outreach campaign will emphasize the importance of soil and its protection and potential ecological and economic benefits. The communication activities will comprise capturing and disseminating lesson learned in multi-media format (videos, manuals, guidelines and interactive maps). The campaign will portray the positive social and economic impacts of SLM and SFM practices. The project will utilize both direct and indirect mechanisms to achieve maximum and targeted dissemination of relevant materials (policy documents, strategies, action plans and guidelines) produced by the project to key land use stakeholders and decision makers.

209. Direct mechanisms will include:

*Direct delivery of relevant materials to identified target users:* The project will organize the delivery of materials to target stakeholders, for example, copies of SLM/SFM guidelines will be delivered directly to local authorities etc. on the basis of a pre-defined list. Likewise, policy documents, new legislation (with explanations of their implications and practical application) will be delivered to national and local institutions and local land owners/users, support groups and education facilities.

*Workshops and dissemination events:* The project will follow up the direct delivery of materials generated by the project with strategically planned workshops and other events in order to highlight their existence and clearly demonstrate their practical “real life” application. This includes workshops for the local population (i.e. workshops for a number of similar pre-defined groups from each municipality) and a limited number of national workshops and profile raising events to highlight the issues and follow through on building awareness of the materials previously delivered. At a national level, an “open day” exhibition will be organized to present the achievements of the project, with specific focus on the most successful best practices which will be presented by representatives of the target local authorities, participating local land owners/users, experts and researchers.

*Study tours:* Study tours of stakeholders from other municipalities within the projects target landscapes will be organized in order for them to see in practice the way and results of applying SLM and SFM best practices, and to talk to those who were practically involved in the process of applying them. Additionally, key local and national stakeholders and decision makers will be invited to undertake such visits in order to build a practical awareness of the issues faced on the ground and the means that the project tested for addressing them.

210. Indirect mechanisms will include:

*Multiplier / dissemination agents (extension/education institutions):* The project will make use of the strengthened technical and vocational training colleges and institutes to act as multipliers and dissemination agents for the projects materials. The project will support such agents to integrate materials provided by the project results into their training curriculums and in this way ensure practical use and long term application.

*Media and Web based dissemination:* The project will utilize social and local media, particularly local newspaper, radio and TV, to build awareness of the main issue and solutions to priority land use in the target landscapes. Emphasis will be placed on the real life interests and concerns of rural populations and land owners/users and the thus the need to prompt a “local-to-local” type of approach rather than “technical/academic to local” one. Additionally the project will establish an independent web-based national SLM/SFM and LDN knowledge management hub to provide materials to the target stakeholders. Web-based materials will focus on providing useful source materials for national and municipal administration, NGO’s and development actors. If deemed beneficial for the local population, the project will develop online tools to support the public awareness campaign (incl. websites, social media, etc.).

*National networks and regional initiatives:* The project will further aim to take advantage of existing networks within UN Environment and partner organizations and initiatives to achieve dissemination and practical application of project materials. The project will identify existing projects that can make use of or effectively access key land use players and integrate into their activities the project materials. This would include, for example, rural development/poverty reduction orientated and governance related projects. A similar approach will be utilized with other UN agencies and relevant partner agencies such as FAO, UNDP, etc. Finally, the project will take full advantage of the UN Environment regional network to disseminate and share experience within the region and with relevant stakeholders.

Output 3.1.3. Development of three bankable project proposals made available to national authorities, for replication of sustainable land and forest management practices in other regions identified as vulnerable.

211. The project will assist in the development of three bankable SLM/SFM project proposals and develop fund-raising options for further scaling up of results in the other North Western mountainous part of North Macedonia, as well as state wide. This output will contribute to long-term sustainability of application of SLM/SFM practices in North Macedonia; the proposals will be developed, and donor assistance will be sought. The output will also organize fund raising activities by sharing project achievements, and the possible follow-up actions to all major donors in the region. The project will undertake an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the methodology used to implement the project activities and specifically identify major difficulties, adaption required, and practical lessons learned that will be of value when trying to replicate the process with the development of three bankable project proposals.



### 3.4. Intervention logic and key assumptions

212. The Project will be conducted at national and local level in order to address not only the national policy/legal/institutional framework for LD and SFM but also gain practical field level experience that can feedback into the national framework and provide a vehicle for achieving real LD and SFM impacts in the future.
213. The Project will build upon and collaborate with on-going and planned national, regional and international initiatives that will support the main objective of the Project.
214. The Project Management Unit and Project Steering Committee will play a key role in ensuring that close linkages between the Project and all relevant implemented or planned initiatives are established and maintained.
215. In order to avoid duplication and to reduce overlap with other initiatives, the Project will be informed by lessons learned from other projects and will complement national plans and programs of the country. It will employ the results and data produced by other projects and aim at close partnerships with similar initiatives, both at national and regional level.
216. During the preparation phase, an in-depth stakeholder analysis was performed. It took into consideration project-relevant initiatives and projects and potential partner organizations and agencies. Stakeholder analysis and engagement in the preparation phase lead to identification of strategic partners for project implementation and co-financing.

### 3.5. Risk analysis and risk management measures

217. The risks for project implementation are identified and assessed, along with mitigation measures for each identified risk.

**Table 10.** Identified Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risk	Level of Impact	Mitigation Measures
Insecurity and political unrest may result in considerable delays and postponement of project implementation	Medium	The current political situation in North Macedonia is stable, but the potential for a spontaneous upsurge in violence is real. The project team will provide continuous monitoring of the security and political situation in the country and update the Steering Committee on a regular basis, so there is sufficient lead time for adequate response actions and adjustment in project strategy.

Lack of attention by National Government institutions because of other priorities (in particular possible start of negotiation with EU for integration)	Medium	The project will emphasize the advantages of its intervention not only toward meeting global goals, but also the EU <i>acquis</i> <sup>35</sup>
Administrative challenges emerging during setting up policy platform for SLM coordination between the sectors.	Medium	The project will focus on previously identified goals regarding land management, which are necessary to be implemented according to national strategic documents.
Rehabilitation of disused and abandoned land surfaces may encounter resistance from landowners (public and private) and political figures	Low	The project will work to reduce the likelihood of this risk occurring by ensuring that initiatives will be designed and implemented with the full participation of stakeholders from the public sector, namely municipalities and from the private sector, fostering an understanding of the need for striking the right balance between planned and occurring land use and safeguarding of ecosystems for the services they provide. If the risk arises, the project will stress the economic case for sustainable natural resource use versus the development of certain sectors in sensitive areas delivering critical ecosystem services. It will also put into effect an effective communication strategy and stakeholder involvement plan which is expected to lead to an appreciation, and defense, of what the project is proposing.
Insufficient knowledge about modern technologies and technical approaches, such as GIS, remote sensing, computer modeling, environmental valuation, cost-benefit analysis, and social impact assessment	Medium	The project will support training and coordination with the central government to support the introduction and use of new technology, as well as the transfer of knowledge and skills from the extension services of the central government to the new staff in local (municipal) governments. Also, the project will pursue coordination and development of training modules with other ongoing projects of similar topic.
Unclear roles of stakeholders in the execution of the project may result in lack of commitment/buy-in from local communities and therefore may result in failure of demonstration projects	Low	A stakeholder engagement plan was drawn up during the PPG phase, and community stakeholders were engaged with during the PPG phase to ensure their buy-in into the project. During project implementation, the project will actively engage local communities and will raise awareness through communication campaigns.
Climate change impacts (e.g. increased flooding; more severe	Medium	Integrated land use plans will include hazard mitigation measures to minimize the impacts

<sup>35</sup> EU *acquis* (*acquis communautaire*) is the accumulated legislation, legal acts, and court decisions which constitute the body of European Union law, and therefore the constantly evolving common rights and obligations that are binding for all EU member states.

droughts; forest fires) may negatively affect project activities for ecosystem restoration and effective SLM practices		of droughts (e.g. through better water management and adoption of drought tolerant crops), to reduce the risk of forest fires (through education and improved enforcement regarding the intentional setting of fires), and to reduce the threat of flooding (through improved land management and retention / restoration of vegetative cover).
Poor monitoring of environmental, social and economic impacts after the project implementation	Medium	The Project will strengthen capacities of major stakeholders for environmentally sound practices in sectors competing for land area and natural resources.

### 3.6. Consistency with national priorities or plans

218. The Project is fully compliant and supports the implementation of main environmental legislation in North Macedonia treating land degradation. The Law on Environment (2005 as amended) is a framework law that regulates the protection and promotion of the environment for the purpose of providing of the citizens' right to a healthy environment including biological diversity. The Law on Nature Protection (2004 as amended) states that protection of nature shall be organized by protection of the biological and landscape diversity and the protection of the natural heritage.
219. The Project is directly in line with North Macedonia's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2023 (NBSAP) objectives, which identifies soil erosion, deforestation and unsustainable rural land use practices as causes of habitat fragmentation and biodiversity loss which need immediate interventions.
220. North Macedonia is currently undertaking the development of the National Action Program to Combat Land Degradation and Drought (NAP), which is in its final phase. This Project will benefit from the respective outcomes of the NAP alignment process. In addition to the national legislation and policy frameworks, the project is in line and supportive of North Macedonia's commitments to international agreements such as the UNCCD, CBD and FCCC, to which North Macedonia is Party to (UNFCCC: 1998; UNCBD: 1998; UNCCD: 2002).
221. The project responds to the priority actions identified in the National Action Program to Combat Desertification (NAP). The NAP lists a number of key priorities, and the project will directly contribute to realizing some of these priorities. In particular, the project will address the following NAP strategic objectives and general recommendations:
- To mitigate risk of natural hazards in a changing climate aggravated by unsustainable agricultural and forest practices and ineffective risk governance;
  - To establish wise use of nation's natural resources to satisfy socio-economic needs without compromising the quality of land resources;
  - To improve the knowledge about the use of land resources aligned with sustainable land management;

- To improve the regulatory and legislative framework that will provide appropriate use, management and protection of the land resource base;
  - To develop economic mechanisms for ensuring more sustainable use of natural resources.
222. Additionally, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia in 2018 implemented LDN activities and the country have completed an LDN Leveraging Plan and LDN assessment; established and mapped baseline to define the LDN frame of reference and analyzed legal and institutional aspects and drivers. Therefore, this proposed GEF project would be continuation of LDN mainstreaming.
223. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development identified “Seven Strategic Thrusts” for achieving sustainable development in North Macedonia. Of relevance to the proposed GEF project are calls for raising awareness with the public; introduction of e-government as a key tool (which would benefit from the digital planning tools in Component 3); and a call for more integrated and participatory approaches within government bodies – which is a key planned effort in the project implementation.
224. This proposed GEF project is aligned with the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (NARDS) 2014-2020 by building upon several goals including ensuring the sustainable management and use of natural resources (land, forest, and water) in response to climate change impacts, land degradation, overgrazing and overuse of forest resources. Furthermore, this GEF project is in line with several mitigation measures in the Third National Communication on Climate Change (2014) for protection of natural disasters, environmental protection and sustainable resource management. Since the most significant impacts agriculture has on the environment are associated with soil degradation; water-logging and salinization as result of unsustainable agricultural practices and land use; poor water management; biodiversity degradation; soil erosion; the adaptation measures includes introduction of sustainable agricultural land management practices, altering tillage techniques that should improve physical, chemical and biological properties of soil, improved management of fertilizers, improved forest management planning, introduction of SFM activities an techniques and improved carbon sequestration.

### **3.7. Incremental cost reasoning**

225. A tabular summary of the incremental reasoning for the project is presented below, based on the baseline analysis and the elaboration of the intervention strategy detailed in Sections 2 and 3 above. It compares the likely outcomes of the current baseline (business as usual scenario) with the expected outcomes of the alternative scenario (with project interventions), thus distilling environmental benefits at global and national levels that can be attributed to the project as its incremental contribution.

**Table 11:** Incremental reasoning

<b>Baseline Scenario B</b> (Business as Usual)	<b>Alternative Scenario A</b> (with project interventions)	<b>Local/National and Global Environmental Benefits</b> (A – B)
<p><b>Component 1: Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM</b></p> <p><b>Baseline:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor coordination between local and national authorities for land use planning and management</li> <li>• Incomplete / weak institutional and regulatory framework for SLM</li> <li>• Lack of capacity in applying and promoting SLM practices</li> <li>• Weak legislative framework in terms of soil protection</li> </ul> <p><b>Probable results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National policies and plans are partially implemented and SLM/SFM is not integrated effectively into other areas of policy making</li> <li>• Land use planning and management continue to be poorly coordinated among many institutions and across sectors and levels of government</li> <li>• Poor coordination of activities for land use planning and management by the national authorities</li> <li>• Soil protection issues poorly recognized and poor legal framework for protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of National Council for Sustainable Development in terms of coordinating policy and institutions strengthened</li> <li>• Gap analysis of existing legal, institutional and capacity needs of land management sector</li> <li>• Trained and capacitated relevant resource managers on state and local level for land use planning, SLM/SFM practices, ecosystem restoration and use of economic instruments</li> <li>• Valuation of land use and ecosystem services</li> <li>• Updated LEAPs of pilot municipalities to support sustainable land management considerations and ecological approaches for erosion control</li> <li>• National Soil Protection Strategy in place</li> <li>• Soil Protection Law development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local/national benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved planning capacities for locally adapted SLM/SFM</li> <li>• National Soil Protection Strategy</li> <li>• National Soil Protection Law</li> <li>• Updated LEAPs</li> </ul> <p><b>Global benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences and guidelines for establishing an SLM/SFM framework and mainstreaming SLM/SFM into sectoral policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 2: Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines on undertaking SFM/SLM based reforestation in pilot sites prepared</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local/national benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced deforestation and degradation of forests</li> </ul>

<p><b>Baseline:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsustainable agriculture and forestry practices</li> <li>• Low provision of ecosystem services due to land degradation</li> <li>• High rate of erosion processes and natural hazards in the target areas (e.g. torrential floods and forest fires)</li> <li>• High vulnerability of people and ecosystems to climate change</li> <li>• Low ability of soils to serve as a carbon sink</li> <li>• High rate of deforestation and degradation of forests</li> <li>• No existence of “High Nature Value” forests that are crucial for soil and water protection in North Macedonia</li> </ul> <p><b>Probable results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SLM and SFM practices are not applied at national and/or local levels</li> <li>• Loss of fertile soil layer remain high</li> <li>• Living conditions of local and rural livelihoods in targeted areas remain stagnant at a low level and endangered from natural hazards</li> <li>• Land and forest degradation remain high</li> <li>• Absence of remediation in the areas most effected by erosion and floods in the NW mountain region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable reforestation and forest management practices are tested/demonstrated at local level</li> <li>• Local level and community (land user) innovative erosion control methods tested/demonstrated and validated</li> <li>• Training of local land owners/resource users in SLM/SFM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in achievement of local LDN targets</li> <li>• Remediation measures lead to improved local livelihoods</li> <li>• Developed, tested and disseminated locally validated SLM and SFM practices</li> <li>• Demonstration of successful models for sustainable use of resources that produce positive economic returns and effective protection of land from degradation</li> </ul> <p><b>Global benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved knowledge on threats for regionally/ globally important ecosystems</li> <li>• Improved provision of ecosystem services from 10 000 ha degraded, agricultural and forest land, with scaling up possibility</li> <li>• Soil carbon sequestration ability improved on local level, contributing to overall global sink.</li> <li>• Improved living conditions of local communities in the targeted areas, benefiting approximately 120 000 people with upscaling potential</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 3: Knowledge management and public awareness</b></p> <p><b>Baseline:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low awareness for SLM/SFM and LDN practices at the local authorities and wider public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of knowledge management products based on best practice for SLM/SFM and application of LDN principles and their</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local/national benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness among stakeholders at all institutional levels and the wider public on SLM/SFM and LDN</li> <li>• Awareness on linkages between LD, soil loss and</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced information exchange between scientific institutions, sectoral authorities and the public</li> <li>• SLM/SFM and LDN principles are not applied through multi-stakeholder approach</li> <li>• No communication and outreach campaign for SLM/SFM and LDN</li> </ul> <p><b>Probable results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarce and uncoordinated data collection, information exchange and knowledge production</li> <li>• Knowledge about ongoing ecosystem and resource degradation (deforestation, erosion and soil loss) remains isolated and erratic</li> </ul>	<p>dissemination through a cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of communication and outreach campaign with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of SLM and SFM</li> <li>• Establishment of web-based national knowledge management hub for SLM/SFM and LDN</li> <li>• Development of three bankable project proposals for replication of sustainable land management practices in other regions identified as vulnerable.</li> </ul>	<p>socio-economic risks and benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to information related to SLM/SFM and LDN via web portal</li> <li>• Enabled information exchange for scientific institutions, public and private sector</li> <li>• Dissemination and replication of project results in other affected areas of the country is enabled</li> </ul> <p><b>Global benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved knowledge on threats for important ecosystems and broad public engagement in SLM/SFM and LDN implementation</li> <li>• Implementation of project activities with equal inclusion and representation of genders</li> </ul>
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### 3.8. Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up

226. **Innovativeness:** The integrated approach proposed by the project building on a partnership between different sectors of the government, the private sector and local stakeholders will provide an innovative model in North Macedonia that is expected to (a) generate important lessons for other Municipalities in the country, and (b) build new national expertise in SLM and SFM and integration of land resources into the wider landscape management and economic development.
227. Furthermore, the strengthening and expansion of the role of the National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD) to engage directly with the local communities is an important innovation. The demonstration and scaling-up of SLM/SFM practices through rehabilitation of three pilot sites and at least 100 local farmers accepting SLM practices all constitute new approaches in land planning and management in North Macedonia. Stimulating local resource mobilization under Component 2 will be both innovative and a key contribution to the sustainability of project interventions. Finally, through project interventions, new data, knowledge products, research and culture of cooperation will be developed.

228. Sustainability: The Project is designed to build on and reinforce the ongoing momentum for mainstreaming SLM/SFM and LD issues in North Macedonia. Inter-agency coordination and collaboration will be strengthened horizontally and vertically, instead of establishing additional institutional mechanisms. As the project aims to help build a strong enabling environment, taking into account the needs of the government sector and focusing on building their capacities for long-term effective management, the actions proposed are expected to be sustainable.

The project is designed to involve different sectors of the government by building on their comparative advantage and their core mandates, which will further ensure sustainability. By focusing on financial sustainability (Output 3.1.3. Development of three bankable project proposals made available to national authorities, for replication of sustainable land and forest management practices in other regions identified as vulnerable), and scaling up from demonstration models (Output 3.1.1. Production of knowledge management products made available to national and local stakeholders, based on training and exchanges under Outcome 1.2 and best practice arising from Outcome 2.1 to ensure SLM/SFM and LDN), project design has a strong focus on sustainability.

229. Close collaboration with local stakeholders will ensure that the project interventions are responsive to actual needs and designed to bridge existing gaps between national regulations and local requirements and planning processes. Capacitating and training these stakeholders – government bodies, the private sector as well as communities and their representatives – to understand each other's concerns and limitations, and for trust-building, negotiating and collaborative decision making, will institute a coordinated and continued partnership among resource users and beneficiaries, to last beyond the limits of the project.
230. The project will work in parallel with the Enabling Activity reporting for UNCCD and the activities on developing the National LDN Target Setting Leverage Plan and awareness raising activities supported by the Global Mechanism.
231. Replication: One focus of this project is its integrated approach to SLM in North Macedonia, which allows for a stronger capacity development of the main stakeholders, from users of ecosystem services to decision makers at all levels, using improved and updated methodologies and tools that are applicable in local circumstances and allow for replication of the project results. These, and other specific activities, such as the development of locally validated SLM and SFM practices, strengthening of land owners' capacities for planning, land use and management, are aimed at local application and allow for replication at higher levels, both governmental and geographical. All these actions will be applied keeping their replication potential in mind, both regionally and beyond.
232. Replication and dissemination of the project results will be achieved both through short-term and long-term measures. Short-term measures include the careful documentation of results and development of pragmatic replication materials, which will then be disseminated to key stakeholders through a set of national and local events. It will also be scaled up through mass media and via the internet-based knowledge management hub. Long-term measures include: a)



documented field experience to be reflected in amended legal, institutional and policy frameworks as well as development of integrated local land use planning, and b) lessons and experience from the demonstration projects will feed the training programme that will form a key aspect of the project capacity building efforts. All intervention and awareness/education activities (Component 3) will allow better understanding of benefits of SLM/SFM practices for mitigating erosion and land degradation applicable for North Macedonia and therefore lessons learned will help replication through communication both at national and international level.

233. Throughout project implementation, there will be strong collaboration between experts, local government institutions and departments, the central government, NGOs and direct beneficiaries that will assist in mainstreaming approaches and capacities to diverse stakeholders. Several of the project outputs will help to upgrade the country's land management, especially through learning by doing strategy where SLM practices and new technical approaches and capacities will be transferred to other local government units. Developed necessary tools and practices for SLM that will be demonstrated at three municipalities, and then mainstreamed through the strengthened national legal and regulatory framework to allow further replication in other affected areas in North Macedonia. The project will capacitate both local and national level resource managers and relevant authorities (MOEPP and MAFWE) in land use planning, SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem restoration, and use of economic instruments in order to ensure further replication throughout North Macedonia. The recently initiated LDN target setting process will develop an action plan which is expected to be implemented in North Macedonia. This process will be an important platform to further disseminate the project's lessons learned.
234. Furthermore, the project will develop several plans and documents on national level that will allow for application of similar activities in other regions of the country. The awareness raising component of the project will ensure the public is fully informed of the benefits of SLM and SFM. Additional replication opportunity of the project lies in forming knowledge networks, creating bridges that allow a streamlining of data to be used by local communities now and in the future. By connecting national public institutions with the private sector and local communities, replication is envisaged for future projects that propose an integrated approach both sectoral and on levels of governance, by adapting user-friendly tools that will enhance exactly this replicability.
235. Scaling up: Throughout the project, a collaboration scheme is envisioned between the experts engaged during project implementation, local government institutions and departments, the central government, NGOs, and direct beneficiaries, which will help assist in mainstreaming approaches and capacities to diverse stakeholders. Several of the project outputs will help to upgrade the country's land use management capacities and processes, especially through a learning by doing strategy where SLM practices and new technical approaches and capacities will be transferred to other local government units.
236. Furthermore, lessons learned from the activities of the project will be compiled in a user-friendly handbook that will be distributed to key stakeholders nationally in an effort to support the work

of staff responsible for land management and to clarify local roles and responsibilities. The local platform in the targeted municipalities will serve to sustain project outcomes and both national and local workshops will be organized to ensure the scaling up throughout the country. Scaling up will be also ensured through developing and demonstrating innovative tools and practices for SLM/SFM at the targeted sites, and then mainstreaming these tools and practices into new and revised laws and regulations so that they apply broadly to all affected areas in the country. Additionally, the project will provide training for end-users such as farmers and land owners to be able to individually adopt SLM/SFM practices. The inclusion of lessons learned will be facilitated by the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) when designing the multi-sectoral strategies.

### **3.9. Public awareness, communications and mainstreaming strategy**

237. The Project aims to provide that knowledge and information regarding the SLM in North Macedonia is mainstreamed into public and private sectors responsible for land use planning and management. Therefore, the Project includes a separate component that will ensure knowledge management and public awareness.
238. Component 3 of the Project aims towards improved understanding of benefits of SLM practices for mitigating erosion and land degradation applicable for North Macedonia and ability to replicate the lessons learned in other regions of the country identified as vulnerable to soil degradation and their sharing with the main identified stakeholders and the wider public. This component will tackle an important constraining factor – limited public awareness on SLM issues. The component will include:
  - organization of fund-raising activities by sharing project achievements, and follow-up actions to all major donors in the region,
  - development and implementation of communication and knowledge management campaign to raise public awareness and disseminate and replicate the results of the project,
  - emphasizing soil importance and its protection and potential ecological and economic benefits.
  - development of three bankable SLM project proposals.
239. The Project consists of national and local level activities, which will contribute to mainstreaming the process and the participation and ownership. All Project stakeholders, including the Government and CSOs, will be encouraged to work closely for training, capacity development and information sharing on SLM. It is expected that through awareness raising activities, the understanding and interest in SLM at all levels of society will increase.
240. The project will develop, implement and maintain a communication strategy to ensure that all stakeholders are informed on an on-going basis about: the project's objectives; the projects activities; overall project progress; and the opportunities for involvement in various aspects of the project's implementation. The communication strategy will be developed in the first year of

project implementation as indicated in the Workplan and timetable (Appendix 5; 3.1.2.1) and Key deliverables and benchmarks (Appendix 6).

### **3.10. Environmental and social safeguards**

241. The project is expected to generate positive and long-term environmental and social impacts. Progress towards these will be measured through the indicators and targets specified in the Results Framework, applied under the project monitoring and evaluation plan (Section 6).

#### ***Environmental safeguards<sup>36</sup>***

242. The Project aims to produce positive environmental and social impacts under all its three components. It will develop and improve the institutional, organizational and individual capacities of government bodies responsible for SLM and involve public and private entities in integrated landscape management and sustainable land use planning in North Macedonia.
243. Project activities aim to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks, to undertake capacity building for SLM, and to demonstrate and scale-up SLM practices which constitute new approaches in North Macedonia. As there have been almost no efforts to date to create a national, comprehensive and effective approach to the problem of land degradation in the country and especially in the most vulnerable mountainous areas the project's effort to support the government, local authorities and the private sector to build such an approach based on the acceptance that this is a shared responsibility will be the first such attempt in the country.
244. Furthermore, the project will catalyze the efforts to achieve LDN targets through revision of the national policy framework and inclusion of the SLM and SFM in the relevant planning documents that will facilitate integration of LDN in the land management efforts on the local level. The project is also expected to create indirect environmental benefits through improved ecosystem management and the potential for enhanced climate change mitigation opportunities through integrated land management.

#### ***Social safeguards<sup>37</sup>***

245. The Project design and implementation strategy respects internationally proclaimed human rights including dignity, cultural and intellectual property rights. Stakeholder identification and consultation has occurred during the PPG phase, and a communication and outreach strategy is developed to assure appropriate dissemination and use of the project's results.
246. The Project is expected to significantly improve the capacity of targeted institutions and local stakeholders and is expected to enhance other socioeconomic benefits in the long term, arising from improved soil monitoring, site recovery and remediation measures and improved land recovery opportunities, particularly for agricultural purposes.

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<sup>36, 37</sup> Please refer to ESERN (Appendix 9)

247. In order to ensure that there are no disproportionate negative impacts to women or other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, appropriate involvement of all social groups was ensured during the PPG phase, and will be continued throughout the project's implementation.
248. In addition, the ecosystem management principles in natural resource management practices will be supported throughout the Project, and they will underline gender sensitive activities, while recognizing and respecting the different roles that women and men may play in sustainable resource management and in society. Further consideration to promoting gender equality will be given in the capacity building and awareness raising activities, while relying on the consideration of gender balance and equal opportunities.
249. The project will adopt UN Environment's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and take into account the differences, needs, roles and priorities of men and women. The project will also acknowledge that women are often the most vulnerable to land degradation such as that resulting from poor management of agricultural and forestry sector, and will be proactive in seeking women's input to local innovations for sustainability, particularly those with a focus on rehabilitation and restoration – Component 2.

### **3.11. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

250. Gender equality and women's empowerment will be mainstreamed into project activities, ensuring that women have an equal voice in project implementation, as well as governance and an active role during the whole project. Women will participate equally with men in any dialogue or decision-making initiated by the project and will influence decisions that will determine the success of the project and ultimately the future of their families.
251. The proposed project is consistent with the GEF Policy on Gender Equality (GEF/C.53/04, October 2017), and is also in line with the UNCCD, which recognizes the important role of women in achieving the objectives of the Convention: "Decisions 21/COP.9, 11/COP.8, 15/COP.5, 15/COP.4, 15/COP.3 and 13/COP.2 deal with the need to ensure a better gender balance and representation of all relevant disciplines, and of all individuals with expertise on desertification, land degradation and drought". Gender relations between women and men in North Macedonia play a key role in the access to environmental resources, control of the resources, and the goods and services they provide. The same is true for representation of vulnerable groups and ethnic or religious minorities. In order to ensure that there are no disproportionate negative impacts to women or other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, appropriate involvement of all social groups will be ensured during the project's implementation.
252. In the inception phase of the project all relevant vulnerable groups and ethnic and religious minorities will be identified, as well as gender equality considerations, in order to ensure their equitable involvement throughout the project implementation. Vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities will be invited to every national consultation, workshop and training, and the project implementation team will be gender balanced. Key indicators for gender equality considerations

and involvement of ethnic/religious minorities and vulnerable groups will include their active participation during project implementation, such as: the percentage of women present at stakeholder meetings (especially local meetings that will not take place in the capital Skopje); and the number of ethnic/religious minorities involved in drafting of government documents, public hearings, trainings etc. All documents developed in all project components will consider gender mainstreaming and inclusion and representation of all ethnic and religious groups found in the region on implementation.

253. The likely mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in the project based on UN Environment Gender Policy will be:
  - Ensuring gender balance when representing different sectors and conducting activities of the project;
  - Optimizing entrepreneurial and decision-making opportunities for women through promoting gender parity in recruitment;
  - Assessing impacts of the project for men and for women;
  - Training to scale up the involvement of women in land use planning and management.
254. To better understand the problems of land degradation and its environmental and socio-economic consequences that seriously affect the welfare of local people, as well for capacity building of women in resolving issues related to sustainable land and forest resources management and biodiversity conservation, the Project will take the following measures:
  - Encourage and support participation of women in demonstration activities by selecting them as implementers of and consultants for pilot projects and integrated land use planning;
  - Ensure equal representation of men and women in the project's seminars, workshops, trainings and awareness raising events of the project;
  - Assist in improving cooperation of women in rural areas with non-governmental women's organizations, carrying out joint "round tables" and seminars;
  - Engage women from women's organizations in monitoring and evaluation of pilot projects, and also in dissemination of good practices in neighboring rural areas. In particular, the project will actively engage women from local communities in environmental awareness raising activities for various target groups;
  - Include activities on improving monitoring and evaluation of gender aspects in the project's annual work plans.
255. Some specific activities of the project that will support gender equality and the empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups are: 1.1.1.3, 1.1.2.2, 1.1.2.7, 1.2.1.4, 2.1.1.4, 2.1.2.4, 2.1.3.6, 3.1.1.1, 3.1.2.1, 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.3.1 (see Appendix 5 for details).
256. Project activities will endeavor to ensure preservation of women's knowledge and to prevent the overuse of local and traditional knowledge (in the sense of abusing it without any palpable benefit directly to the local communities). With assistance from the stakeholders, bottom-up development

of local and traditional environmental knowledge will be supported, taking into consideration gender equity in natural resource management, research, planning and decision-making at all levels. In this context, the project also will consider the active participation of different social classes while ensuring that benefits from interventions accrue to both men and women. All relevant information on women's knowledge and survival strategies in rural and local community areas and their expertise in respective fields will be documented.

257. Project activities and stakeholders shall empower and assist women in their role as local natural resource managers and identify strategies to help rural women achieve sustainable livelihoods, while allocating adequate technical and financial resources to support women directly in natural resource management and the control of environmental degradation. Working with relevant CSOs, the project will support, strengthen and involve women's organizations and networks working on environmental issues, with the aim of sharing awareness on both the importance of nature preservation and the importance of women to achieving that objective. These activities will serve as a promotion of the recognition of gender-differentiated roles, skills and practices in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (biodiversity, water resources, etc.), having in mind these roles may vary from place to place and change over time. Enhancing awareness-raising on women's roles in land management and nature protection will lead to the fostering of gender sensitivity through training courses in the natural resources sectors and beyond.

#### SECTION 4: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

258. The **Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of North Macedonia** is the governmental institution to provide political and institutional supervision and act as the **National Executing Entity/Responsible Partner**. The overall responsibility for the project execution and implementation by MOEPP implies the timely and verifiable attainment of project objectives and outcomes. The MOEPP will provide support to, and inputs for, the implementation of all project activities. Execution generally includes the management and administration of project activities, in addition to managing the delivery of project outputs. This is in accordance with specific project requirements outlined in the approved Project Document and the agreement with UN Environment.
259. **UN Environment Ecosystems Division** represents the **Implementing Entity/Partner (IE) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)**, with following roles:
- Providing consistent and regular Project oversight to ensure that GEF policies and criteria are adhered to and that the project meets its objectives and achieves expected outcomes,
  - Performing the liaison function between the project and the GEF Secretariat,
  - Application of UN Environment policy and criteria to strengthen execution arrangements,
  - Ensuring that both GEF and UN Environment guidelines and standards are applied and met (technical, fiduciary, M&E),
  - Ensuring timely disbursement/sub-allotment to executing agencies, based on agreed legal documents,
  - Approve budget revision, certify fund availability and transfer funds,
  - Providing technical support and assessment of the execution of the Project,
  - Providing guidance if requested to main TORs/MOUs and subcontracts issued by the project,
  - Follow-up with EA for progress, equipment, financial and other reports,
  - Certify project operational completion
260. Full support in regards to the execution is placed in the **UN Environment Regional Office for Europe (Geneva and Vienna Programme Offices)** as the **Supporting Entity/Partner** of the project. UN Environment is responsible for project cycle management services. Working closely with MOEPP, UN Environment Europe Office will be responsible for:
- Appraise the project and finalize project implementation arrangements, including mission travel,
  - Recruitment of project staff and contracting of consultants and service providers,
  - Assist project management to draft TORs and advise on the selection of experts for implementation,
  - Advise on and participate in project start-up workshop,
  - Provide technical guidance, as necessary, for project execution,
  - Ensure technical quality of products, outputs and deliverables,
  - Participate in the Steering Committee meetings,
  - Assisting the National Executing Entity that the project is executed according to the agreed work plan, budget and reporting tasks,

- Provide procurement and financial management services to ensure implementation is in line with UN Environment's policies and timeline,
  - Make direct payment on behalf of the Executing Agency in accordance with the project budget,
  - Support compilation and submission of progress, financial and other reporting requirements.
261. The day-to-day management of the project will be carried out by a **Project Management Unit (PMU)**. The PMU will be established in Skopje and will consist of a Project Manager/Coordinator, Administrative Assistant and locally recruited staff in the country. The PMU will use premises in the country as provided by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. The PMU roles will be to implement project outputs, monitoring and reporting, liaison with project partners, ensure project execution and all technical aspects of project implementation. Throughout the project, PMU will closely collaborate with MOEPP. PMU will ensure collaboration with all country stakeholders, ministries and different municipalities and local communities, which is imperative for the successful implementation of the project.
262. **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established at the inception of the project to monitor project progress, to guide the project implementation and to support the project in achieving its listed outputs and outcomes. The PSC will be multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral in fields related to nature protection, forestry and land use planning. The PSC will include representatives of relevant Governmental institutions of North Macedonia, including, but not limited to the current line ministries responsible for environmental, nature and land protection issues – the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy. Membership will also include UN Environment representatives, as well as GEF UNCCD Focal Point in the North Macedonia and representatives of targeted municipalities. However, the PSC will remain sufficiently lean to facilitate its effective operation. Other participants can be invited into the PSC meetings, at the decision of the PSC. The PSC will meet regularly (at least twice a year) or according to project needs, to review project progress, discuss and agree on project work plans, provide direction and guidance, and assist in project implementation, as well as provide synergies with other complementing initiatives and ongoing projects. One of the key tasks of the PSC will be to ensure coordination and synchronization of central and local-level activities supported by the project. Participation in PSC meetings will be possible also via video link or Skype and decisions and consultations might also take place in email exchange form.
263. **Project collaborators** will be involved in the project to provide expertise in agriculture, forestry and land use planning knowledge and information management, regular updates on environmental management in the country, staff time and experience in guiding and advancing the activities' implementation, supporting the project with robust field data on environmental issues at stake, linking with stakeholders, including at local level for project implementation and for receiving stakeholders' input and feedback. Organizations, NGOs and research institutions working in the area of SLM/SFM and LD, will be involved in the project through providing the outputs related to data management and networking, as well as contributing to fundraising. Exact partner



organizations will be identified for each project component at the initial stages of the project implementation. National and international consultancy services will be called in as required for specific tasks, such as needs assessments, development of indicator framework, capacity building and training for key stakeholders, design of delivery models and financing mechanisms. Consulting services will be procured in accordance with applicable UN Environment/GEF rules and regulations.

264. At the outset of project operations, a project inception report will be prepared in co-operation with the key stakeholders, local and international expert(s) engaged in leading or supporting the implementation of the project. The inception report will include detailed work plans for each subcomponent (output) of the project at the specific activity level and elaboration of the required resources and stakeholders to be involved for reaching the stated targets. These output specific work plans will provide the main basis for day-to-day management, implementation and monitoring of the progress of the project, complemented by the annual monitoring to be done at the Outcome level by the PIRs.
265. To successfully reach the objective and outcomes of the project, it is essential that the progress of each project component will be closely monitored both by the key local stakeholders and authorities as well as by project's international experts, starting with the finalization of the detailed, component-specific work plans and implementation arrangements and continuing through the project's implementation phase. The purpose of this is to facilitate early identification of possible risks to successful completion of the project together with adaptive management and early corrective action, when needed.
266. To accord proper acknowledgement to the GEF for providing funding, a GEF logo should appear on all relevant GEF project publications, including any hardware purchased with GEF funds. Any citation on publications regarding projects funded by GEF should also accord proper acknowledgement to GEF in accordance with the respective GEF guidelines.
267. The Decision-making flowchart and organizational chart is presented in Appendix 10.

## **SECTION 5: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

268. Participation during project development: The idea for this project was firstly presented at the end of the 2016 and by the end of 2017, the project concept prepared by UN Environment in coordination with MOEPP, was approved by GEF for further development.
269. The inception meeting for the project development stage took place on 26 January 2018 in Skopje, whose purpose was to present the project concept following the identified problems and threats in the country regarding land degradation, developed by UN Environment in cooperation with MOEPP. The meeting has gathered 45 participants from the relevant institutions and organizations. As part of the meeting agenda relevant on-going or planned projects in the country, implemented by national and international organizations, that might contribute to this GEF project were presented and expressed willingness for partnership.

270. Series of meetings with various national stakeholders were held during the PPG phase. The objective of these meetings was mainly to present the project concept and consult identified stakeholders about the project design and integrate their views towards potential contribution to the project during the implementation phase. The table below summarizes the outcomes and points discussed during the meetings, as well as identified project partners.

**Table 12.** Stakeholder Meetings and identified project partners during PPG phase

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Outcomes of the meeting / Points discussed</b>
<b>National and local authorities</b>	
MOEPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and full cooperation with GEF and UNCCD NFP to be established during the PPG phase</li> <li>• Revision of the project components was agreed with UNCCD NFP and UNCBD NFP</li> <li>• Plan for providing co-financing letters</li> </ul>
MAFWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAO programme is implementing several projects in the country, supporting MAFWE and other institutions in the country</li> <li>• Possibilities for cooperation</li> <li>• Interested in cooperation of activities related to forests conservation and identification of SLM and SFM best approaches and practices</li> </ul>
National Hydro-meteorological Service of North Macedonia (NHMS)	NHMS will provide support, where necessary
Crisis Management Centre of North Macedonia (CMC)	Centre will provide support, where necessary
Local Self Government Units (LSGUs)	Municipalities will provide data for further analysis, support during implementation and involvement in trainings
<b>Scientific institutions</b>	
National Academy of Sciences and Arts (NASA)	Based on their expertise and capacity expressed readiness for participation in the project implementation
Faculty of Forestry, UKIM Skopje	Expressed willingness to support this GEF project and provide co-financing letter, and cooperation in some activities
Faculty of Agricultural Science and Food and Agricultural Institute, UKIM Skopje	Expressed willingness to support this GEF project and provide co-financing letter, and cooperation in some activities
<b>Other relevant institutions and organizations</b>	
PE National Forests	Proposed some revision in the project components
Delegation of EU in North Macedonia	<p>EU progress report for the country states very little or no progress in the area of forestry and soil protection</p> <p>No progress has been made to improve data quality and relevance of the farm register and Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS). Current structures and resources at the MAFWE, and the Agency for financial support in Agriculture and Rural Development remained insufficient to operate and maintain a robust control system.</p>

Institution	Outcomes of the meeting / Points discussed
	Administrative capacity remains largely insufficient and awareness-rising activities need to be considerably strengthened.
<b>CSOs</b>	
Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development (BFSD)	Experienced in performing similar assignments Development of the project documentation in the PPG phase Experience developing the 10 year NAP for UNCCD
Connecting Natural Values and People (CNVP)	Experience in forestry and land degradation issues Assisted in other GEF projects on similar topics Expressed support to this GEF project
MAKMONTANA – Association for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in North Macedonia	MAKMONTANA capacity strengthening covers sustainable development of mountain regions, sustainable forest management; environment and natural resource management and rural development. Will provide support during project implementation with private forest owners, pasture users, agri-rural producer groups, women's groups, young people, social entrepreneurs and communication with others involved in developing businesses at different points along agriculture and forestry.
National Association of Private Forests Owners	The main objectives of the association are to: achieve sustainable management of forests in private ownership; strengthen the capacities of the association; participation in the process to change the present forestry legislation according to the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Forestry; Development of the partnerships and cooperation with relevant organizations and institutions in North Macedonia and internationally. The Association shows willingness to support the project.
Green Cross Macedonia	NGO working in the area of environment and sustainable development. Expressed support to this GEF project

271. In order to ensure that there are no disproportionate impacts to women or other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, appropriate involvement of all social groups has been ensured during the Project preparation phase and will be continued throughout the Project implementation.
272. *Stakeholders Validation Meeting:* In January 2019 a validation meeting was held with the representatives of the MOEPP and relevant stakeholders in order to discuss the project design, project activities and modes of implementation.
273. In order to ensure that there are no disproportionate impacts to women or other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, appropriate involvement of all social groups has been ensured during the Project preparation phase and will be continued throughout the Project implementation.
274. *Stakeholder Participation during Project Implementation:* During the project preparation phase the role of stakeholders has been defined in detail through their engagement in different levels and project activities such as: workshops, trainings, pilot projects, field work and expertise etc.

**Table 13:** Stakeholder participation in project implementation

Stakeholder	Participation in project implementation
Ministry of Environment and Physical planning (MOEPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of project implementation and overall support to project management;</li> <li>• Political and institutional supervision;</li> <li>• Will chair the Project Steering Committee;</li> <li>• Will support the work of the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD);</li> <li>• Will take part in the training on SLM/SFM approaches;</li> <li>• Will contribute to the preparation of SFM guidelines, LEAPs update, Law on Soil Protection and Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme</li> </ul>
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will assist MOEPP in providing high-level support to the revision of relevant laws and the mainstreaming the SLM/SFM and LDN approaches into multi-sectorial regulations;</li> <li>• Will assist the design of SLM/SFM and LDN demonstrations and support capacity building at local level in the targeted Municipalities;</li> <li>• Will support the work of the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD);</li> <li>• Will participate in the Project Steering Committee;</li> <li>• Will take part in the training on SLM and LDN approaches;</li> <li>• Will contribute to the preparation of SFM guidelines, LEAPs update, Law on Soil Protection and Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme</li> </ul>
National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will coordinate the inclusion of the land management in planning and implementation within different sectors;</li> <li>• Will work on clarification of the responsibilities in areas related to SLM and SFM.</li> </ul>
National Hydro-meteorological Service of North Macedonia (NHMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to the MOEPP and MAFWE in the overview of project implementation;</li> <li>• Will gather information on land management, soil erosion and monitoring;</li> <li>• Will participate in the Project Steering Committee;</li> <li>• Will support capacity building and training on SLM/SFM and LDN approaches at national and local levels.</li> </ul>
Crisis Management Centre of North Macedonia (CMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will assist with the preparation of Erosion control action plans in targeted municipalities as part of LEAPs update;</li> <li>• Will support the design and implementation of the demonstration projects;</li> <li>• Will take part in the training on SLM/SFM and LDN approaches;</li> <li>• Will participate in the Project Steering Committee.</li> </ul>
Local Self Government Units (LSGUs) <i>Municipalities and their administration staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will be responsible for creating the enabling conditions for implementation of all project activities at the local scale;</li> <li>• Will ensure that the pilot sites are available for demonstration activities in collaboration with PE National Forests and that local resource managers and users are available for training.</li> </ul>
Local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will take part in the demonstration projects through rehabilitation of degraded land;</li> <li>• Will be trained in SFM and LDN approaches;</li> <li>• Will be involved in awareness raising and SLM/SFM knowledge training;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selected/volunteer farmers will be involved in demonstrating on-ground pilot activities related to SLM/SFM in cultivated areas and pastures.</li> </ul>
Faculty of Forestry, UKIM Skopje	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will be involved in monitoring and reporting on soil erosion on national and international level;</li> <li>Will provide expert knowledge on SFM approaches for reducing LD and erosion control in the pilot areas;</li> <li>Will contribute to preparation of SFM guidelines, LEAPs update, Law on Soil Protection and Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme;</li> <li>Will develop educational content on SFM and LDN as well as design and implementation of project's awareness raising activities.</li> </ul>
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food and Agricultural Institute, UKIM Skopje	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will provide expert knowledge and guidance on demonstrating and scaling up SLM and LDN Best Practices through development of Law on Soil Protection and Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme;</li> <li>Will contribute to the design and implementation of the project activities;</li> <li>Will contribute to the project's awareness raising activities and to the development of educational content on SLM and LDN.</li> </ul>
PE National Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will provide supporting documents and maps needed for the design and implementation of the project activities;</li> <li>Will be involved in the process of identifying areas for afforestation in the pilot sites;</li> <li>Will be involved in implementation of afforestation activities through its local subsidiaries;</li> <li>Will take part in the training on SFM and LDN approaches;</li> <li>Will participate in the Project Steering Committee.</li> </ul>
National Association of Private Forests Owners (NAPFO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will take part in the demonstration projects through participating in the rehabilitation of degraded land.</li> <li>Will take part in the training on SFM and LDN approaches.</li> </ul>
Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development (BFSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will participate in the development of SLM and LDN approaches;</li> <li>Will take part in the training of local community representatives through providing expert assistance;</li> <li>Will assist in replicating the training results to other contexts in order to scale up the project outcomes;</li> <li>Will take part in training on using economic instruments that mobilize available resources to ensure sustainability and investments in SLM and LDN.</li> </ul>
MAKMONTANA – Association for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in North Macedonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will support and assist the design of the SFM and LDN approaches and field activities at the project demonstration sites;</li> <li>Will take part in the training on SFM and LDN approaches;</li> <li>Will assist the implementation of communication and outreach campaign with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of sustainable management of land and forests.</li> </ul>

## SECTION 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

275. The project will follow UN Environment standard monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes and procedures. Substantive and financial project reporting requirements are summarized in

Appendix 8. Reporting requirements and templates are an integral part of the UN Environment legal instrument to be signed by the executing agency and UN Environment.

276. The project M&E plan is consistent with the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy. The Project Results Framework presented in Appendix 4 includes SMART indicators for each expected outcome as well as mid-term and end-of-project targets. These indicators along with the key deliverables and benchmarks included in Appendix 5 will be the main tools for assessing project implementation progress and whether project results are being achieved. The means of verification and the costs associated with obtaining the information to track the indicators are summarized in Appendix 7. Other M&E related costs are also presented in the Costed M&E Plan and are fully integrated in the overall project budget.
277. The M&E plan will be reviewed and revised as necessary during the project inception workshop to ensure project stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis project monitoring and evaluation. Indicators and their means of verification may also be fine-tuned at the inception workshop. Day-to-day project monitoring is the responsibility of the project management team but other project partners will have responsibilities to collect specific information to track the indicators. It is the responsibility of the Project Manager to inform UN Environment of any delays or difficulties faced during implementation so that the appropriate support or corrective measures can be adopted in a timely fashion.
278. The Project Steering Committee will receive periodic reports on progress and will make recommendations to UN Environment concerning the need to revise any aspects of the Results Framework or the M&E plan. Project oversight to ensure that the project meets UN Environment and GEF policies and procedures is the responsibility to the Task Manager in UN Environment-GEF. The Task Manager will also review the quality of draft project outputs, provide feedback to the project partners, and establish peer review procedures to ensure adequate quality of scientific and technical outputs and publications.
279. Project supervision will take an adaptive management approach. The Task Manager will develop a project supervision plan at the inception of the project which will be communicated to the project partners during the inception workshop. The emphasis of the Task Manager supervision will be on outcome monitoring but without neglecting project financial management and implementation monitoring. Progress vis-à-vis delivering the agreed project global environmental benefits will be assessed with the Steering Committee at agreed intervals. Project risks and assumptions will be regularly monitored both by project partners and UN Environment. Risk assessment and rating is an integral part of the Project Implementation Review (PIR). The quality of project monitoring and evaluation will also be reviewed and rated as part of the PIR. Key financial parameters will be monitored quarterly to ensure cost-effective use of financial resources.
280. In-line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy the project will be subject to a Terminal Evaluation and, additionally, a Mid-Term Review will be commissioned and launched by the Task Manager before the project reaches its mid-point. The possibility of a Mid-Term Evaluation will be discussed with the Evaluation Office.

281. The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the Terminal Evaluation (TE) and will liaise with the Task Manager and Executing Agency(ies) throughout the process. The TE will provide an independent assessment of project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of impact and sustainability. It will have two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF, executing partners and other stakeholders. The direct costs of the evaluation will be charged against the project evaluation budget. The Terminal Evaluation will be initiated no earlier than six months prior to the operational completion of project activities and, if a follow-on phase of the project is envisaged, should be completed prior to completion of the project and the submission of the follow-on proposal. Terminal Evaluations must be initiated no later than six months after operational completion.
282. The draft TE report will be sent by the Evaluation Office to project stakeholders for comment. Formal comments on the report will be shared by the Evaluation Office in an open and transparent manner. The project performance will be assessed against standard evaluation criteria using a six point rating scheme. The final determination of project ratings will be made by the Evaluation Office when the report is finalised and further reviewed by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office upon submission. The evaluation report will be publically disclosed and may be followed by a recommendation compliance process.
283. The indicative Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan is provided in the Appendix 7.

## **SECTION 7: PROJECT FINANCING AND BUDGET**

### **7.1. Overall project budget**

[Refer to Appendix 1 for the detailed budget.]

### **7.2. Project co-financing**

[Refer to Appendix 2 for the detailed budget.]

### **7.3. Project cost-effectiveness**

284. The annual cost of land degradation in North Macedonia is estimated to be US\$ 51 million per year, equaling to 6.9% of agricultural gross domestic product. Thus, project cost effectiveness has been significantly considered in the strategic design of this GEF project. The project will use minimum resources to provide North Macedonia with best options of sustainable land management and sustainable forest management practices in the country. This will be achieved through building of institutional and legal basis, as well as capacitating major stakeholders, valuating forests and grasslands and finally through pilot actions that will all together have a long run progressive catalytic effect on other areas of the country.
285. The north western region of North Macedonia, targeted through this project, has suffered human, social and economic losses in the past years due to high degree of land degradation caused by

overexploitation of timber, floods causing landslides and gullying. This GEF investment will help for sustainable management of 15 000ha hectares of agricultural and forestry land, thus clearly providing not only safer and more environmentally sustainable, but also more economical solutions for the north western region as well as the whole country in sectors such as agriculture and forestry.

286. Land-based mitigation options rank among the most cost-effective opportunities to sequester carbon emissions. Economic evaluations of various climate change mitigation alternatives show that capturing carbon through restoring degraded lands (including degraded forest such as in the case of this GEF project) is a cost-effective option that offers multiple cobenefits. 15 000 ha will benefit from better and more sustainable land management practices, meaning that the investment will result in; better vegetation productivity, larger forest coverage, decreased forest fragmentation and increased capacity for carbon stock sequestration, all providing long terms social and economic gain. Further on, development of three bankable projects in component 3 that will further intensify the economic gain, through replication and scaling up of the GEF investment.



## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Budget by project components and UN Environment budget lines

## ANNEX F-1 - RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GEF ACTIVITY BASED BUDGET AND UNEP

## BUDGET LINE (GEF FUNDS ONLY US\$)

Project title: Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

Project number: 9759

Project executing partners: UNEP Regional Office  
for Europe

Project implementation period: 48 months )

From:		Add additional components/activities as required				Add additional years as required						
To:		Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Project management	Total	Expenditure by calendar year					
UNEP Budget Line							Year 1*	Year 2*	Year 3*	Year 4	Total	
10	PERSONNEL COMPONENT											
	1100	Project personnel										
	1101	Project manager				120,000	120,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	120,000
	1199	Sub-total	0	0	0	120,000	120,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	120,000
	1200	Consultants				0						
	1201	National project coordinator	34,000	33,000	33,000	100,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000	
	1202	National project assistant (technical specialist)	22,000	21,000	21,000	64,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	64,000	
	1203	Forestry/Soils expert (national)	35,000	35,000	10,000	80,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000	
	1204	Forestry/Soils expert (international)	30,000	30,000	5,000	65,000	25,000	15,000	15,000	10,000	65,000	
	1203	Web-portal development specialist			30,000	30,000	5,000	5,000	10,000	10,000	30,000	
	1204	Web and graphic designer			20,000	20,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000	
	1205	Database expert	20,000			20,000	12,000	8,000			20,000	

	1206	Policy/Institutional expert (International)	30,000	30,000		60,000	25,000	25,000	10,000		60,000	
	1207	Policy/Institutional expert (national)	40,000	20,000		60,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	60,000	
	1208	Capacity building expert	40,000	40,000	10,000	90,000	20,000	30,000	20,000	20,000	90,000	
	1299	Sub-total	251,000	209,000	129,000	0	589,000	168,000	164,000	136,000	121,000	589,000
	1300	Administrative Support										
	1301	Financial specialist			25,000	25,000	9,000	8,000	8,000			25,000
	1302	Financial and travel assistant			24,000	24,000	8,000	8,000	8,000			24,000
	1399	Sub-total	0	0	0	49,000	49,000	17,000	16,000	16,000	0	49,000
	1600	Travel*										
	1601	Travel for PMIU			5,000	5,000	3,000	1,000	1,000	1,000		6,000
	1699	Sub-total	0	0	0	5,000	5,000	3,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
1999	Component total		251,000	209,000	129,000	174,000	763,000	218,000	211,000	183,000	152,000	763,000
20	SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT											
	2200	Sub-contracts (MOUs/LOAs for supporting organizations)										
	2201	Analysis of the ongoing legal and institutional setup and development of the Soil Protection Law	180,000				180,000	130,000	50,000			180,000
	2202	Development of the Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Monitoring	145,287	44,713			190,000	130,000	60,000			190,000
	2203	Ecosystem services valuation for forest and grasslands system in north-western N. Macedonia	170,000				170,000		100,000	70,000		170,000
	2204	Development of the Training Programme for SLFM		76,000			76,000	60,000	16,000			76,000
	2205	SFM guidelines for effective framework for	70,000				70,000		70,000			70,000

		reforestation/afforestation activities										
	2206	Update of Local Environmental Action Plans (with focus on SLM and erosion control)	80,000				80,000		40,000	40,000		80,000
	2207	Afforestation of 5 municipalities (3 pilots sites)		520,000			520,000			520,000		520,000
	2208	SLM in 5 municipalities (3 pilot sites)		450,000			450,000		250,000	200,000		450,000
	2209	Preparation of Land Management Plans Plan (including guidebook) and validation of the pilot sites measures	105,443		44,695		150,138			100,000	50,000	150,000
	2210	Preparation of communication strategy and outreach campaign			35,000		35,000	35,000				35,000
	2211	Preparation of lessons learned			15,000		15,000				15,000	15,000
	2212	Gender oriented communication	5,000				5,000	5,000				5,000
	2299	Sub-total	755,730	1,090,713	94,695	0	1,941,138	360,000	586,000	930,000	65,000	1,941,000
2999	Component total		755,730	1,090,713	94,695	0	1,941,138	360,000	586,000	930,000	65,000	1,941,000
30	TRAINING COMPONENT											
	3200	Group training*										
	3201	Training of trainers on SLFM practices (international)		125,000			125,000	100,000	25,000			125,000
	3202	Local Trainings on SLFM practices		60,000			60,000		30,000	30,000		60,000
	3203	Consultative meetings on pilot sites activities	10,000	10,000			20,000		10,000	10,000		20,000
	3204	Participation in international training sessions	30,000	30,000			60,000	30,000	30,000			60,000

	3205	Experience sharing with other countries on reporting and institutional capacities	35,000	10,000			45,000		45,000			45,000
	3206	Training of farmers/demonstrations	35,000	35,000			70,000			35,000	35,000	70,000
	3299	Sub-total	110,000	270,000	0	0	380,000	130,000	140,000	75,000	35,000	380,000
	3300	Meetings/Conferences*										
	3301	Meetings with national stakeholders	10,000	10,000	10,000		30,000	10,000	10,000	10,000		30,000
	3302	Steering committee meetings	3,000	2,000			5,000	1,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
	3302	Working group on sustainable land management (NCSD) committee		28,000			28,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	28,000
	3304	Capacity building workshops	50,000	45,000			95,000	40,000	40,000	15,000		95,000
	3399	Sub-total	63,000	85,000	10,000	0	158,000	58,000	59,000	33,000	8,000	158,000
3999	Component total		173,000	355,000	10,000	0	538,000	188,000	199,000	108,000	43,000	538,000
40	EQUIPMENT AND PREMISES COMPONENT											
	4100	Expendable equipment										
	4199	Sub-total	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0
	4200	Non-expendable equipment*										
	4201	Computer Software for remote sensing and data monitoring and management		50,000			50,000	50,000				50,000
	4202	Data gathering and consolidation equipment		100,000			100,000	50,000	50,000			100,000
	4203	Office Supplies and Equipment			407		545	545				545
	4205	Infrastructural equipment for the 3 pilot sites		118,000			118,000			118,000		118,000
	4299	Sub-total	0	268,000	0	407	268,545	100,545	50,000	118,000	0	268,545
	4300	Rental of premises										
	4301	Office Premises	20,000	20,000		0	40,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	40,000

4999	4300	Sub-total	20,000	20,000	0	0	40,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	40,000
	Component total		20,000	288,000		407	308,407	110,545	60,000	128,000	10,000	308,545
50	MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT											
	5200	Reporting costs										
	5201	Publication	20,000	10,000			30,000	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
	5299	Sub-total	20,000	10,000	0	0	30,000	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
	5300	Sundry										
	5301	Communications	6,000	6,000			12,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
	5399	Sub-total	6,000	6,000	0	0	12,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
	5500	Evaluation (consultant fees/travel/DSA, admin support. Internal Projects)										
	5501	Mid Term evaluation	30,000				30,000		30,000			30,000
	5502	Terminal Evaluation		40,000			40,000			40,000		40,000
	5599	Sub-total	30,000	40,000	0	0	70,000	0	30,000	40,000	0	70,000
5999	Component total	56,000	56,000	0	0	112,000	3,000	43,000	53,000	13,000	112,000	
99												
99	GRAND TOTAL	1,255,730	1,998,713	233,695	174,407	3,662,545	879,545	1,099,000	1,402,000	283,000	3,662,545	

**Appendix 2: Co-financing by source and UN Environment budget lines**

Co-financier	Comp 1	Comp 2	Comp 3	PMC	TOTAL		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia	7,087,160	8,710,776	2,379,408	1,131,551	19,308,895		5,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	6,308,895	<b>19,308,895</b>
Zhelino Municipality		550,000			550,000			550,000			<b>550,000</b>
Saraj Municipality		500,000			500,000			500,000			<b>500,000</b>
UN Environment	400,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	1,000,000		250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	<b>1,000,000</b>
Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation – North Macedonia		300,000	200,000		500,000		125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	<b>500,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,487,160</b>	<b>10,260,776</b>	<b>2,779,408</b>	<b>1,331,551</b>	<b>21,858,895</b>		<b>5,375,000</b>	<b>5,425,000</b>	<b>4,375,000</b>	<b>6,683,895</b>	<b>21,858,895</b>

### Appendix 3: Incremental cost analysis

The incremental costs and benefits of the proposed project are summarized in the following incremental cost matrix. The incremental cost of the project, USD27.962 million, is required to achieve the project's global environmental benefits. Of this amount USD\$3.662 (representing 13% of the total) is being requested from GEF. The remaining amount of USD\$24.3 million (87%) of the total cost will come from the Government of North Macedonia and other national and international donors. The figure includes both in-kind and cash contributions.

**Table 14:** Incremental Cost Matrix

<b>Baseline Scenario</b> (Business as Usual)	<b>GEF Incremental Contribution</b> (what the GEF project will contribute)	<b>Key Outcomes expected with the Alternative Scenario</b> (BAU+GEF Increment)
<b>Component 1.</b>	\$ 1,255,730	\$ 7,487,160
<b>Component 2.</b>	\$1,998,713	\$10,260,776
<b>Component 3.</b>	\$233,695	\$2,779,408
<b>Project Management</b>	\$174,407	\$1,331,551
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,662,545</b>	<b>\$21,858,895</b>

Refer also to Table 11 in Section 3.7 for the complete **Incremental Cost Reasoning** and detailed analysis.

**Appendix 4: Results Framework**

Outcome Level Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
<b>Project Objective:</b> to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia				
<b>Outcome 1.1</b> National authorities address gaps and weaknesses in the land use and land degradation policy, legal and regulatory framework to accelerate the achievement of land degradation neutrality				
Number of Government Strategy, Legislation developed	No specific strategy for soil protection No specific legislation on protection of soils	<u>Midterm:</u> Report on existing legal, institutional and capacity needs of land management sector Updated Local Environmental Action Plans drafted Soil Protection Strategy drafted for consultation  <u>Project End:</u> National Soil Protection Strategy approved Municipal Local Environmental Action Plans updated Soil Protection Law drafted	Report on legal, institutional and policy gaps, soil strategy document, draft soil protection law, Project Progress Reports, Mid-term Review,	<i>Assumptions:</i> Political support to strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for SLM/SFM remains strong, facilitating further implementation of SLM and SFM practices on the ground  <i>Risks:</i> Weak political or institutional will to make necessary changes will prevent the application of SLM and SFM practices on the ground
<u>Outputs</u> 1.1.1 Analysis of the ongoing legal, institutional and capacity needs of land management sector including key opportunities and threats to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) at national scale in North Macedonia completed and made available to the national and local government 1.1.2 Development of Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme completed and made available for adoption 1.1.3 Land utilization and ecosystems services valuation for forest and grasslands ecosystems in the pilot sites in the north-western part of Macedonia completed and disseminated				



Outcome Level Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
1.1.4 Support in the Development of the Law on Soil Protection 1.1.5 “Local Environmental Action Plans” of targeted municipalities are revised and updated, to include sustainable land management considerations and ecological approaches for erosion control				
<b>Outcome 1.2:</b> Trained national and municipal resource managers to integrate SLM/ SFM in LDN, in coordination with the NCSD				
Increase in scores on the Capacity Development Score framework for 15 points  # of trained and capacitated NCSD members  # of participants in trainings from all relevant sectors	Score for MOEPP: 15  NCSD has limited capacity, limited participation of important stakeholders, limited coordination between the members of NCSD	<u>Midterm:</u> MOEPP: 22  <u>Project end:</u> MOEPP: 30  <u>Midterm:</u> 5 NCSD members trained  <u>Project end:</u> 100 experts trained	Training Programs and Manuals, Training records and evaluations, Updated Capacity Development Scorecard at midterm, project end, Project Progress Reports, Mid-term Review,	<u>Assumptions:</u> Central and local government show willingness to engage local stakeholders in land use planning and application of SLM/SFM practices  <u>Risks:</u> Building of sufficient capacity and practical know-how within essential state institutions and local authorities will take too long to allow project sustainability
<u>Outputs</u> 1.2.1 Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem services and use of economic instruments 1.2.2 Strengthened National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) to coordinate institutions, engage with local communities and manage information flows for better integration of SFM/SLM and LDN aspects				
<b>Outcome 2.1</b> Local governments in North Macedonia apply practical methods, approaches and practices for halting or reversing land degradation and deforestation beyond the pilots				

Outcome Level Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
Forest land under SFM (ha) under afforestation actions	~9,000 ha of forest and forest land have been lost annually.  0 ha under SFM practices  There are no specific guidelines for undertaking SFM in project sites	<u>Midterm</u>  Guidelines for SFM reforestation for the targeted municipalities prepared  SFM approaches (based on developed SFM guidelines) for additional 5 000 ha of forest and forest land determined  <u>End Project:</u>  Practical application of field afforestation activities at selected bare land or severely degraded forest and additional 5 000 ha of forest and forest land is under SFM	Project Progress Reports, Mid-term Review,	<i>Assumptions:</i>  Mandates of central and local government institutions, including departments, sectors and groups in these institutions, are clarified to support coordinated and effective implementation of SLM/SFM measures  Key stakeholders have the interest and capacity to internalize new knowledge on SLM/SFM principles
Area of land under sustainable land management (ha) under SFM	0 ha - Farmers do not apply sustainable land management and climate smart agricultural practices in pilot municipalities	<u>Midterm</u>  500 local farmers involved in the questionnaires by year 1		Local land users/owners and municipal administration are interested in supporting SLM/SFM activities
# of farmers testing SLM practices	Municipalities have no systematic plans with local land users to prevent or reverse erosion threats	At least 100 local farmers tested SLM practices 2 LEAPs revised and updated		<i>Risks:</i>  Engaging local stakeholders contains some risk in the context of existing mainly centralized approaches
# of municipal action plans updated (LEAP)	Limited local level knowledge or understanding of SLM methods or approaches	<u>Project End</u>  10 000 ha of land under SLM 5 LEAPs revised and updated		Insufficient knowledge about modern technologies and technical approaches in land use

Outcome Level Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
				planning and application of SLM/SFM practices
<u>Outputs</u> 2.1.1 SFM and SLM guidelines are prepared and made available to national and local authorities and all interested stakeholders, providing 2.1.2 SFM practices and priority actions for afforestation are implemented to accelerate optimized use of forest and non-forest land by communities and local government on 5 000 hectares at pilot sites 2.1.3 SLM practices to address priority LD and deforestation issues will be tested, demonstrated and locally validated on 10 000 hectares to achieve local LDN targets				
<b>Outcome 3.1</b> Private sector, land developers and users apply SLM/ SFM best practices for mitigating erosion and degradation applicable for North Macedonia				
Community, stakeholder and societal knowledge and understanding of benefits of SLM/SFM improved	Few targeted knowledge management products based on best practice for SLM and application of LDN principle available  Few stakeholders have knowledge products on SLM/SFM and LD  No Web-based national knowledge management hub for SLM/SFM and LDN available to scientific institutions, public and private sector	<u>Midterm</u> At least 300 people (out of which, at least 50% women) have taken notice of, or participate in, at least 3 targeted awareness raising activities and/or materials  <u>Project End</u> At least 500 people (out of which, at least 50% women) have been given opportunity to take notice of, or participate in, a variety of targeted awareness raising activities and materials and benefits from SLM/SFM At least 50% of the communication and awareness raising products delivered by the project will be focused towards women	Dissemination materials & events Published communication strategy Project Progress Reports, Mid-term Review,	<u>Assumptions:</u> Key stakeholders have the interest and capacity to internalize new knowledge on SLM/SFM principles  Local land users/owners and municipal administration are interested in supporting SLM/SFM activities  <u>Risks:</u> Weak political or institutional will to make necessary changes and support reform will prevent the application of good land use practices on the ground

Outcome Level Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
Three new project proposals for application of SLM/SFM developed	No well-developed SLM/ SFM project proposals for submission to donors prepared	<u>Midterm</u> One bankable SLM/SFM project proposals prepared  <u>Project End</u> Three bankable SLM/SFM project proposals prepared and being discussed with potential donors		Engaging local stakeholders contains some risk in the context of existing mainly centralized approaches  Insufficient knowledge about modern technologies and technical approaches in land use planning and application of SLM/SFM practices
<u>Outputs</u> 3.1.1 Production of knowledge management products made available to national and local stakeholders, based on training and exchanges under Outcome 1 and best practice arising from Outcome 2 to ensure SLM/SFM and LDN 3.1.2 Communication strategy and outreach campaign designed and made available to targeted national and local stakeholders, with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of sustainable management of land and forests of North Macedonia, including establishment of web-based national SLM/SFM and LDN knowledge management hub 3.1.3 Development of three bankable project proposals made available to national authorities, for replication of sustainable land and forest management practices in other regions identified as vulnerable				

**Appendix 5: Workplan and timetable**

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
<b>COMPONENT 1: Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM</b>																	
<b>Outcome 1.1. National authorities address gaps and weaknesses in the land use and land degradation policy, legal and regulatory framework to accelerate the achievement of land degradation neutrality</b>																	
<b>1.1.1</b>	<b>Analysis of the ongoing legal, institutional and capacity needs of land management sector including key opportunities and threats to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) at national scale in North Macedonia, completed and made available to the national and local government</b>																
1.1.1.1	Analysis and identification of gaps in the relevant primary and secondary legislation in the land management sector in the country																
1.1.1.2	Analysis, identification of gaps and different responsibilities of relevant stakeholders in the land management sector																
1.1.1.3	Conduct meetings and workshop with relevant stakeholders to discuss results from the performed analysis under 1.1.1.1 and 1.1.1.2 and present proposals for improvements, taking into consideration gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups and ethnic and religious minorities																
1.1.1.4	Clarify and define individual and joint stakeholder responsibilities, especially in regards to SLM and SFM decision making mechanisms and responsibilities																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
1.1.1.5	Prepare report with recommendations for improvements in the identified legal and institutional framework																
<b>1.1.2</b>	<b>Development of Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme completed and made available for adoption</b>																
1.1.2.1	Analysis of the existing national and local policy documents to impact SLM and SFM, major related environmental problems, steps taken so far and reasons for strategy development																
1.1.2.2	Preliminary national stakeholders' consultations to discuss major problems and results under 1.1.2.1, taking into consideration gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups and ethnic and religious minorities																
1.1.2.3	Develop sections on LD in correlation with other sectors and impacts, mechanisms for measuring soil quality and effectiveness of remedial actions																
1.1.2.4	Consultation with national stakeholders to discuss proposed actions and best management practices																
1.1.2.5	Draft Soil Protection Strategy																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
1.1.2.6	Develop guidelines for establishing soil quality monitoring programme																
1.1.2.7	National stakeholders' consultations to discuss 1.1.2.6 and development of final version of the Strategy, taking into account gender balance and inclusion of minorities																
<b>1.1.3</b>	<b>Land utilization and ecosystem services valuation for forest and grasslands ecosystems in the pilot sites in the north-western part of North Macedonia, completed and disseminated</b>																
1.1.3.1	Determine through stakeholder consultation which SLM options are to be assessed for land utilization and ecosystem services																
1.1.3.2	Preparation of studies on (a) Scenario characterization and biophysical & economic data and (b) Scenario analysis and valuation – within a scope of application of land utilization and ecosystem services																
1.1.3.3	Organizing of Stakeholder validation workshop on the application of land utilization and ecosystem services and preparation of final version on scenario analysis and valuation																
1.1.3.4	Publications (translation, design and printing) of																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
	scenario analysis and valuation study on the applications of land utilization and ecosystem services																
1.1.3.5	Dissemination of Scenario analysis and valuation study on the application of land utilization and ecosystem services																
1.1.4	<b>Support in the Development of the Law on Soil Protection</b>																
1.1.4.1	Conform an inter-institutional steering group to guide and supervise the development of the Law, taking into consideration the existing international and national policies, regulations and treaties																
1.1.4.2	Establishment of an expert team to work on the development of the Draft Law, taking into account gender balance																
1.1.4.3	Develop Draft Law on Soil Protection																
1.1.4.4	Carry out necessary workshops, meetings, national consultations to present and discuss the Draft Law on Soil Protection, taking into account gender balance and inclusion of minorities																
1.1.4.5	Preparation of all necessary documentation and																



		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
	submission of the Draft Law to relevant legislation authorities for official processing and adoption of the Law																
1.1.5	"Local Environmental Action Plans" of targeted municipalities are revised and updated, to include sustainable land management considerations and ecological approaches for erosion control																
1.1.5.1	Selection of expert team to work on the development of the "Local Environmental Action Plans"																
1.1.5.2	Draft "Local Environmental Action Plans", taking into account gender balance, local capacities and institutional budgets																
1.1.5.3	Stakeholders workshop to discuss developed draft "Local Environmental Action Plans"																
1.1.5.4	Final "Local Environmental Action Plans" updated and lessons learned																
<b>Outcome 1.2. Trained national and municipal resource managers to integrate SLM/SFM in LDN, in coordination with the NCSD</b>																	
1.2.1	<b>Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem services and use of economic instruments</b>																
1.2.1.1	Assessment of capacities at national and local level to identify the needs and challenges of relevant stakeholders in adopting SLM/SFM approaches																
1.2.1.2	Based on the results of 1.2.1.1, develop Training																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
	Program, to fit the capacity needs assessment																
1.2.1.3	Selection of training teams depending on the model of training and stakeholders																
1.2.1.4	Implementation of the Training Program, taking into consideration gender balance																
1.2.1.5	Identification and addressing of information gaps and flows for carrying out SLM and SFM approaches																
1.2.2	<b>Strengthened National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) to coordinate institutions, engage with local communities and manage information flows for better integration of SFM/SLM and LDN aspects</b>																
1.2.2.1	Strengthen NCSD capacities on SLM and SFM approaches, through thematic meetings and workshops																
1.2.2.2	Field visits for NCSD members to facilitate engagement with local communities																
1.2.2.3	Develop mechanism for gathering and sharing information between NCSD members																
1.2.2.4	Develop recommendations for revising national policies relevant to the land management sector																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
<b>COMPONENT 2: Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region</b> ( <i>testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling</i> )																	
<b>Outcome 2.1. Local governments in North Macedonia apply practical methods, approaches and practices for halting or reversing land degradation and deforestation beyond the pilots</b>																	
<b>2.1.1</b>	<b>SFM and SLM guidelines are prepared and made available to national and local authorities and all interested stakeholders, providing an effective framework for reforestation, afforestation, restoration and conservation activities</b>																
2.1.1.1	Establish technical advisory working group with representatives from concerned stakeholders																
2.1.1.2	Select expert team to work on the development of the guidelines based on data gathered through questionnaires and analysis of other relevant documentation																
2.1.1.3	Develop draft guidelines and effective framework of reforestation/ afforestation activities																
2.1.1.4	Workshop and meetings to discuss the developed guidelines with relevant stakeholders taking into consideration gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups and ethnic and religious minorities																
2.1.1.5	Final guidelines and effective framework developed																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
<b>2.1.2</b>	<b>SFM practices and priority actions for afforestation are implemented to accelerate optimized use of forest and non-forest land by communities and local government on 5 000 hectares at pilot sites</b>																
2.1.2.1	Select expert team to work on the identification and implementation of priority actions																
2.1.2.2	Discuss and select possible pilot sites with national and local stakeholders, including types of species for reforestation/ afforestation																
2.1.2.3	Establishment of work plan for implementation of SFM practices																
2.1.2.4	Implement SFM practices and priority actions on selected sites, involving local communities, taking into account gender balance and inclusion of minorities																
2.1.2.5	Presentation of results during national stakeholder workshops																
<b>2.1.3</b>	<b>SLM practices to address priority LD and deforestation issues tested, demonstrated and locally validated on 10 000 hectares to achieve local LDN targets</b>																
2.1.3.1	Selection of expert team to work on the implementation of SLM practices																
2.1.3.2	Establishment of inter-organization advisory working group																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
2.1.3.3	In consultation with concerned stakeholders, determine the pilot sites to test and validate SLM practices																
2.1.3.4	Develop Land Management Study and Action Plan																
2.1.3.5	Workshops with national and local authorities and representative of targeted municipalities to present and discuss the study under 2.1.3.4																
2.1.3.6	Practical testing and validation of applicable SLM practices on identified pilot sites, with involvement of local communities and taking into consideration gender balance																
2.1.3.7	Presentation of results during national stakeholder workshop																
<b>COMPONENT 3: Knowledge management and public awareness</b>																	
<b>Outcome 3.1. Private sector land developers and users apply SLM/ SFM best practices for mitigating erosion and degradation applicable for North Macedonia</b>																	
<b>3.1.1</b>	<b>Production of knowledge management products made available to national and local stakeholders, based on training and exchanges under Outcome 1.2 and best practice arising from Outcome 2.1 to ensure SLM/SFM and LDN</b>																
3.1.1.1	Development of user-friendly handbook on land and forest management practices, applicable in the country and taking gender balance into consideration																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
3.1.1.2	Stakeholders workshop to discuss the developed handbook																
3.1.1.2	Design, translation, printing and dissemination of the developed handbook																
<b>3.1.2</b>	<b>Communication strategy and outreach campaign designed and made available to targeted national and local stakeholders, with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of sustainable management of land and forests of North Macedonia, including establishment of web-based national SLM/SFM and LDN knowledge management hub</b>																
3.1.2.1	Develop Communication Strategy taking into consideration gender balance																
3.1.2.2	Organization of outreach campaigns (direct and indirect dissemination mechanisms) with involvement of local communities and taking into consideration gender balance																
3.1.2.3	Connecting with related national networks and regional initiatives, for possible experience sharing and organization of experience exchange study visits																
3.1.2.4	Develop web based communication and information dissemination hub/site																
<b>3.1.3</b>	<b>Development of three bankable project proposals made available to national authorities, for replication of sustainable land and forest management practices in other regions identified as vulnerable</b>																

		YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4			
	Output and Activities Description	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 5	Quarter 6	Quarter 7	Quarter 8	Quarter 9	Quarter 10	Quarter 11	Quarter 12	Quarter 13	Quarter 14	Quarter 15	Quarter 16
3.1.3.1	Develop three bankable project proposals, taking into consideration gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups and ethnic and religious minorities																
3.1.3.2	Analysis of the results and capture lessons learned for replication in other regions																

**Appendix 6: Key deliverables and benchmarks**

Component/Outcome/Outputs	Deliverables	Benchmarks
<b>COMPONENT 1: Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM</b>		
<b>Outcome 1.1. National authorities address gaps and weaknesses in the land use and land degradation policy, legal and regulatory framework to accelerate the achievement of land degradation neutrality</b>		
1.1.1. Analysis of the ongoing legal, institutional and capacity needs of land management sector including key opportunities and threats to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) at national scale in North Macedonia, completed and made available to the national and local government	Report on the identified gaps in the primary and secondary SLM and SFM legislation in the country  Report on the identified gaps in the institutional framework and defined joint and individual SLM and SFM stakeholders' responsibilities	Documented approach and participative engagement with respective ministries and core stakeholder groups
1.1.2 Development of Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme completed and made available for adoption	Developed Soil Protection Strategy  Developed Guidelines for Establishing Soil Quality Monitoring Programme	Broad consultations with relevant stakeholders to define the strategy and necessary actions
1.1.3 Land utilization and ecosystems services valuation for forest and grasslands ecosystems in the pilot sites in the north-western part of Macedonia completed and disseminated	Report on scenario analysis and valuation on the applications of land utilization and ecosystem services	Scenario analysis and valuation study are based on biophysical & economic data  Broad consultations with relevant stakeholders
1.1.4 Support in the Development of the Law on Soil Protection	Developed Draft Law on Soil Protection, consulted with relevant national and local stakeholders	Broad consultations with relevant stakeholders to define draft law
1.1.5 "Local Environmental Action Plans" of targeted municipalities are revised and updated, to include sustainable land management considerations and ecological approaches for erosion control	"Local Environmental Action Plans" updated for selected pilot sites	Targeted municipalities actively involved in the development of "Local Environmental Action Plans"



Component/Outcome/Outputs	Deliverables	Benchmarks
		“Local Environmental Action Plans” validated and accepted by local land owners/users
<b>Outcome 1.2. Trained national and municipal resource managers to integrate SLM/ SFM in LDN, in coordination with the NCSD</b>		
1.2.1. Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem services and use of economic instruments	<p>Report on identified capacity needs assessment on national and local level</p> <p>Developed Training Program</p> <p>≥ 20 persons trained on SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem services and use of economic instruments</p>	Engagement with respective ministries and core stakeholder groups
1.2.1 Strengthened National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) to coordinate institutions, engage with local communities and manage information flows for better integration of SFM/SLM and LDN aspects	<p>Thematic meetings, workshops and trainings, study visits for NCSD members and facilitated engagement with local communities</p> <p>Developed mechanism for gathering and sharing information between Council members and other relevant institutions</p> <p>≥ 5 NCSD members trained on SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem services and use of economic instruments</p>	<p>NCSD strengthened with members from all relevant sectors and enlists for meetings and workshops</p> <p>NCSD manage information flows, coordinate institutions and actively engage with local communities</p>

Component/Outcome/Outputs	Deliverables	Benchmarks
<b>COMPONENT 2: Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling)</b>		
<b>Outcome 2.1. Local governments in North Macedonia apply practical methods, approaches and practices for halting or reversing land degradation and deforestation beyond the pilots</b>		
2.1.1 SFM and SLM guidelines are prepared and made available to national and local authorities and all interested stakeholders, providing an effective framework for reforestation, afforestation, restoration and conservation activities	Developed SLM and SFM guidelines for reforestation, afforestation, restoration and conservation, for the targeted municipalities	Engagement with respective ministries and core stakeholder groups  Guidelines are accepted by key stakeholders
2.1.2 SFM practices and priority actions for afforestation are implemented to accelerate optimized use of forest and non-forest land by communities and local government on 5 000 hectares at pilot sites	Determined SFM approaches for 5 000 ha of forest and forest land  Afforestation plans developed for pilot areas of 400 ha, and practical application of field afforestation activities at selected bare land or severely degraded forest	Targeted local communities from selected municipalities actively involved in establishment of SFM practice and afforestation activities
2.1.3 SLM practices to address priority LD and deforestation issues tested, demonstrated and locally validated on 10 000 hectares to achieve local LDN targets	Developed Land Management Study and Action Plan for the targeted municipalities  Approx. 100 representatives from the PEs and state institutions, and 400 participants from other stakeholders trained on SLM/SFM  PEs for forest and pasture management implement	Targeted local communities from selected municipalities, PEs and state institutions actively involved in adoption of SLM/SFM practices  Experience, lessons learned and materials for replication available

Component/Outcome/Outputs	Deliverables	Benchmarks
	SLM/SFM activities on 2 000 ha of state-owned land  At least 100 local farmers adopted SLM practices, comprising an area of 50 ha	
<b>COMPONENT 3: Knowledge management and public awareness</b>		
<b>Outcome 3.1. Private sector land developers and users apply SLM/ SFM best practices for mitigating erosion and degradation applicable for North Macedonia</b>		
3.1.1. Production of knowledge management products made available to national and local stakeholders, based on training and exchanges under Outcome 1.2 and best practice arising from Outcome 2.1 to ensure SLM/SFM and LDN	Developed Handbook on SLM and SFM practices to be used by relevant national and local stakeholders	Dissemination of handbook
3.1.2. Communication strategy and outreach campaign designed and made available to targeted national and local stakeholders, with an emphasis on ecological and economic benefits of sustainable management of land and forests of North Macedonia, including establishment of web-based national SLM/SFM and LDN knowledge management hub	Developed Communication Strategy  ≥ 3 outreach campaigns organized  Developed web-based communication and information hub	Dissemination of campaign promo materials  Active involvement of targeted national and local authorities and local communities in the dissemination events  Active engagement of women in awareness raising activities
3.1.3 Development of three bankable project proposals made available to national authorities, for replication of sustainable land and forest management practices in other regions identified as vulnerable	3 bankable project proposal  Developed lessons learned report	Lessons learned are sought after and are quoted in other policy processes

**Appendix 7: Costed M&E plan**

Type of M&E Activity	Responsible Parties	GEF Budget (USD)	Co-finance (USD)	Time Frame
Inception Workshop	Project Manager/ Project Management Unit (PMU)/Steering Committee UN Environment Targeted municipalities Stakeholders from relevant state and local institutions	7 000	10 000	Within 2 months of project start-up
Inception Report	Project Manager PMU		2 000	1 month after project inception meeting (Cost incorporated in project components and management budget)
Measurement of project indicators (outcome, progress and performance indicators, GEF tracking tools) at national and global level	Project Manager PMU/Project Technical team Consultants	7 000	10 000	Outcome indicators: start, mid and end of project  Progress/performance indicators: annually (Cost incorporated in project components and management budget)
Semi-annual Progress/Operational reports to UN Environment	Project Manager PMU		3 000	Within 1 month of the end of reporting period i.e. on or before 31 January and 31 July (Cost incorporated in project components and management budget)
Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (Chair) Delegated representatives of other relevant Ministries	5 000	30 000	At least twice a year

Type of M&E Activity	Responsible Parties	GEF Budget (USD)	Co-finance (USD)	Time Frame
	Project Manager PMU UN Environment NGOs Private sector representative and community representatives			
Reports of PSC meetings	Project Manager PMU		3 000	Within 1 month after PSC meeting (Cost incorporated in project components and management budget)
Project Implementation Review (PIR)	Project Manager PMU UN Environment		2 000	Annually, part of reporting routine (Cost incorporated in project components and management budget)
Mid Term Review/Evaluation	Project Manager PMU Domestic & External consultant(s) UN Environment	30 000		At mid-point of project implementation
Terminal Evaluation	UN Environment External consultant(s)	40 000		Within 6 months of end of project implementation
Project Final Report	Project Manager PMU Consultants for lessons learnt evaluation		2 000	Within 2 months of the project completion date (Cost incorporated in project components and management budget)
Co-financing report	Project Manager PMU		2 000	Within 1 month of the PIR reporting period, i.e. on or before 31 July (Cost incorporated in project components

Type of M&E Activity	Responsible Parties	GEF Budget (USD)	Co-finance (USD)	Time Frame
				and management budget)
Publication of Lessons Learnt and other project documents	Project Manager PMU Consultants for lessons learnt evaluation	30 000	20 000	Annually, part of Semi-annual reports & Project Final Report
<b>Total M&amp;E Plan cost</b>		<b>119 000</b>	<b>84 000</b>	

**Appendix 8: Summary of reporting requirements and responsibilities**

<b>Reporting Requirements</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Responsibility of</b>
Procurement plan (goods and services)	2 weeks before project inception meeting	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Inception Report	1 month after project inception meeting	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Expenditure report accompanied by explanatory notes	Quarterly on or before 30 April, 31 July, 31 October, 31 January	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Cash advance request and details of anticipated disbursements	Yearly on or before 31 December	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Progress report	Half-yearly on or before 31 January	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Inventory of non-expendable equipment	Yearly on or before 31 January	Project Manager and Project Coordinator
Co-financing report	Yearly on or before 31 July	Project Manager and Project Coordinator
Project Implementation Review (PIR) report	Yearly on or before 31 August	Project Manager and Project Coordinator, UNEP-GEF Task Manager (TM)
Minutes of Steering Committee meetings	Yearly (or as relevant)	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Final Report	3 months after project completion date	Project Coordinator
Final inventory of non-expendable equipment		Project Coordinator
Equipment transfer letter		Project Manager and Project Coordinator
Final expenditure statement	4 months after project completion date	Project Manager Project Coordinator
Mid-term Review of Mid-term Evaluation	Midway through project	TM Project Coordinator
Independent Terminal Evaluation Report	6 months after project completion date	Evaluation and Oversight Unit

**Appendix 9: UNEP Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note (ESERN)****I. Project Overview**

<b>Identification</b>	<i>Addis Project # 01564</i>
<b>Project Title</b>	<i>Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes</i>
<b>Managing Division</b>	<i>Ecosystems Division</i>
<b>Type/Location</b>	<i>National</i>
<b>Region</b>	<i>Europe</i>
<b>List Countries</b>	<i>North Macedonia</i>
<b>Project Description</b>	<p><i>The project objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to promote SLM practices in north-western mountainous ecosystems of Macedonia while supporting sustainable local development.</i></p> <p><i>This project proposes an integrated land management approach, ensuring SLM through comprehensive legal and institutional strengthening, addressing degraded land directly with rehabilitation and restoration pilot activities and gain the necessary skills and know-how for scaling-up activities. Achieving these objectives requires collaboration with a wide range of stakeholder to improve the enabling environment for such an approach, including regulation and enforcement within the framework of multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral land use planning and management.</i></p> <p><i>Three components are planned:</i></p> <p><i>Component 1 – Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM. This component will enable a strengthened legal and institutional framework for SLM and SFM at national scale through review of existing national SLM and SFM legislation and institutional set-ups in North Macedonia.</i></p> <p><i>Component 2 – Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling). This component aims at increasing uptake of SLM and SFM measures, which will eventually lead to reductions in land degradation and enhance ecosystem services.</i></p> <p><i>Component 3 – Knowledge management, and public awareness. The third component of the proposed GEF project will improve understanding of benefits of SLM and SFM practices to scale up the SLM/SFM for future activities and sites. It will bring together the results of the project, more</i></p>



	<i>efficient approaches to rehabilitation of degraded land and sustainable land management by private sector land owners and users.</i>
Estimated duration of project:	<i>2019-2023</i>
Estimated cost of the project :	<i>GEF Grant: 3,662,545</i> <i>Co-finance: 24,300,000</i>

## II. Environmental Social and Economic Screening Determination

<b>A. Summary of the Safeguard Risks Triggered</b>			
<b>Safeguard Standard Triggered by the Project</b>	<b>Impact of Risk<sup>38</sup> (1-5)</b>	<b>Probability of Risk (1-5)</b>	<b>Significance of Risk (L, M, H)</b>
SS 1: Biodiversity, natural habitat and Sustainable Management of Living Resources	1	1	L
SS 2: Resource Efficiency, Pollution Prevention and Management of Chemicals and Wastes	1	1	L
SS 3: Safety of Dams	1	1	L
SS 4: Involuntary resettlement	1	1	L
SS 5: Indigenous peoples	1	1	L
SS 6: Labor and working conditions	1	1	L
SS 7: Cultural Heritage	1	1	L
SS 8: Gender equity	1	1	L
SS 9: Economic Sustainability	1	1	L
Additional Safeguard questions for projects seeking GCF-funding (Section IV)			
<b>B. ESE Screening Decision<sup>39</sup></b> (Refer to the UNEP ESES Framework (Chapter 2) and the UNEP's ESES Guidelines.)			

<sup>38</sup> Refer to UNEP Environment, Social and Economic Sustainability (ESES): Implementation Guidance Note to assign values to the Impact of Risk and the Probability of Risk to determine the overall significance of Risk (Low, Moderate or High).

<sup>39</sup> **Low risk:** Negative impacts negligible: no further study or impact management required.

Low risk ☒ Moderate risk ☐ High risk ☐ Additional information required ☐

**C. Development of ESE Review Note and Screening Decision:**

Prepared by: Name: Ersin Esen\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 15 March 2019

Safeguard Advisor: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Manager: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Recommended further action from the Safeguard Advisor:**

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**Moderate risk:** Potential negative impacts, but less significant; few if any impacts irreversible; impact amenable to management using standard mitigation measures; limited environmental or social analysis may be required to develop a ESEMP. Straightforward application of good practice may be sufficient without additional study.

**High risk:** Potential for significant negative impacts, possibly irreversible, ESEA including a full impact assessment may be required, followed by an effective safeguard management plan.

### III. ESES Principle and Safeguard checklist

(Section III and IV should be retained in UNEP)

<b>Precautionary Approach</b>
The project will take precautionary measures even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically and there is risk of causing harm to the people or to the environment.
<b>Human Rights Principle</b>
The project will make an effort to include any potentially affected stakeholders, in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups; from the decision making process that may affect them.
The project will respond to any significant concerns or disputes raised during the stakeholder engagement process.
The project will make an effort to avoid inequitable or discriminatory negative impacts on the quality of and access to resources or basic services, on affected populations, particularly people living in poverty or marginalized or excluded individuals or groups. <sup>40</sup>

<b>Screening checklist</b>	<b>Y/N/ Maybe</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Safeguard Standard 1: Biodiversity, natural habitat and Sustainable Management of Living Resources</b>		
Will the proposed project support directly or indirectly any activities that significantly convert or degrade biodiversity and habitat including modified habitat, natural habitat and critical natural habitat?	N	Not anticipated, on the contrary the project will improve ecosystems.
Will the proposed project likely convert or degrade habitats that are legally protected?	N	No negative impacts are anticipated on the habitats legally protected within the Project area.
Will the proposed project likely convert or degrade habitats that are officially proposed for protection? (e.g.; National Park, Nature Conservancy, Indigenous Community Conserved Area, (ICCA); etc.)	N	No negative impacts are anticipated on the habitats that are officially proposed for protection.
Will the proposed project likely convert or degrade habitats that are identified by authoritative sources for their high conservation and biodiversity value?	N	Not anticipated, on the contrary the project will conserve ecosystems.

<sup>40</sup> Prohibited grounds of discrimination include race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, disability, sexual orientation, religion, political or other opinion, national or social or geographical origin, property, birth or other status including as an indigenous person or as a member of a minority. References to “women and men” or similar is understood to include women and men, boys and girls, and other groups discriminated against based on their gender identities, such as transgender people and transsexuals.

Will the proposed project likely convert or degrade habitats that are recognized - including by authoritative sources and /or the national and local government entity, as protected and conserved by traditional local communities?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project approach possibly not be legally permitted or inconsistent with any officially recognized management plans for the area?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project activities result in soils deterioration and land degradation?	N	Not anticipated, on the contrary the project's objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to promote SLM practices.
Will the proposed project interventions cause any changes to the quality or quantity of water in rivers, ponds, lakes or other wetlands?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project possibly introduce or utilize any invasive alien species of flora and fauna, whether accidental or intentional?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 2: Resource Efficiency, Pollution Prevention and Management of Chemicals and Wastes</b>		
Will the proposed project likely result in the significant release of pollutants to air, water or soil?	N	Not anticipated, on the contrary the project will improve the soil quality.
Will the proposed project likely consume or cause significant consumption of water, energy or other resources through its own footprint or through the boundary of influence of the activity?	N	Not anticipated, on the contrary the project will improve water use by demonstrating SLM/SFM practices.
Will the proposed project likely cause significant generation of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions during and/or after the project?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project likely generate wastes, including hazardous waste that cannot be reused, recycled or disposed in an environmentally sound and safe manner?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project use, cause the use of, or manage the use of, storage and disposal of hazardous chemicals, including pesticides?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project involve the manufacturing, trade, release and/or use of hazardous materials subject to international action bans or phase-outs, such as DDT, PCBs and other chemicals listed in international conventions such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants or the Montreal Protocol?	N	Not anticipated

Will the proposed project require the procurement of chemical pesticides that is not a component of integrated pest management (IPM) <sup>41</sup> or integrated vector management (IVM) <sup>42</sup> approaches?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project require inclusion of chemical pesticides that are included in IPM or IVM but high in human toxicity?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project have difficulty in abiding to FAO's International Code of Conduct <sup>43</sup> in terms of handling, storage, application and disposal of pesticides?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project potentially expose the public to hazardous materials and substances and pose potentially serious risk to human health and the environment?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 3: Safety of Dams</b>		
Will the proposed project involve constructing a new dam(s)?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project involve rehabilitating an existing dam(s)?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project activities involve dam safety operations?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 4: Involuntary resettlement</b>		
Will the proposed project likely involve full or partial physical displacement or relocation of people?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project involve involuntary restrictions on land use that deny a community the use of resources to which they have traditional or recognizable use rights?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project likely cause restrictions on access to land or use of resources that are sources of livelihood?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project likely cause or involve temporary/permanent loss of land?	N	Not anticipated

<sup>41</sup> "Integrated Pest Management (IPM) means the careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep pesticides and other interventions to levels that are economically justified and reduce or minimize risks to human health and the environment. IPM emphasizes the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to Agro-ecosystems and encourages natural pest control mechanisms <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/pests/ipm/en/>

<sup>42</sup> "IVM is a rational decision-making process for the optimal use of resources for vector control. The approach seeks to improve the efficacy, cost-effectiveness, ecological soundness and sustainability of disease-vector control. The ultimate goal is to prevent the transmission of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, leishmaniasis, schistosomiasis and Chagas disease." ([http://www.who.int/neglected\\_diseases/vector\\_ecology/ivm\\_concept/en/](http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/vector_ecology/ivm_concept/en/))

<sup>43</sup> Find more information from [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/Pests\\_Pesticides/Code/CODE\\_2014Sep\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/Pests_Pesticides/Code/CODE_2014Sep_ENG.pdf)

Will the proposed project likely cause or involve economic displacements affecting their crops, businesses, income generation sources and assets?	N	Not anticipated, on the contrary within the scope of SLM practices, the project will promote using native seed materials.
Will the proposed project likely cause or involve forced eviction?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project likely affect land tenure arrangements, including communal and/or customary/traditional land tenure patterns negatively?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 5: Indigenous peoples<sup>44</sup></b>		
Will indigenous people be present in the proposed project area or area of influence?	N	
Will the proposed project be located on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project likely affect livelihoods of indigenous peoples negatively through affecting the rights, lands and territories claimed by them?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project involve the utilization and/or commercial development of natural resources on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	N	Not anticipated
Will the project negatively affect the development priorities of indigenous peoples defined by them?	N	Not anticipated
Will the project potentially affect the traditional livelihoods, physical and cultural survival of indigenous peoples?	N	Not anticipated
Will the project potentially affect the Cultural Heritage of indigenous peoples, including through the commercialization or use of their traditional knowledge and practices?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 6: Labor and working conditions</b>		
Will the proposed project involve the use of forced labor and child labor?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project cause the increase of local or regional un-employment?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 7: Cultural Heritage</b>		
Will the proposed project potentially have negative impact on objects with historical, cultural, artistic, traditional or religious values and archeological sites that are internationally recognized or legally protected?	N	No negative impacts are anticipated on cultural heritage.

<sup>44</sup> Refer to the Toolkit for the application of the UNEP Indigenous Peoples Policy Guidance for further information.

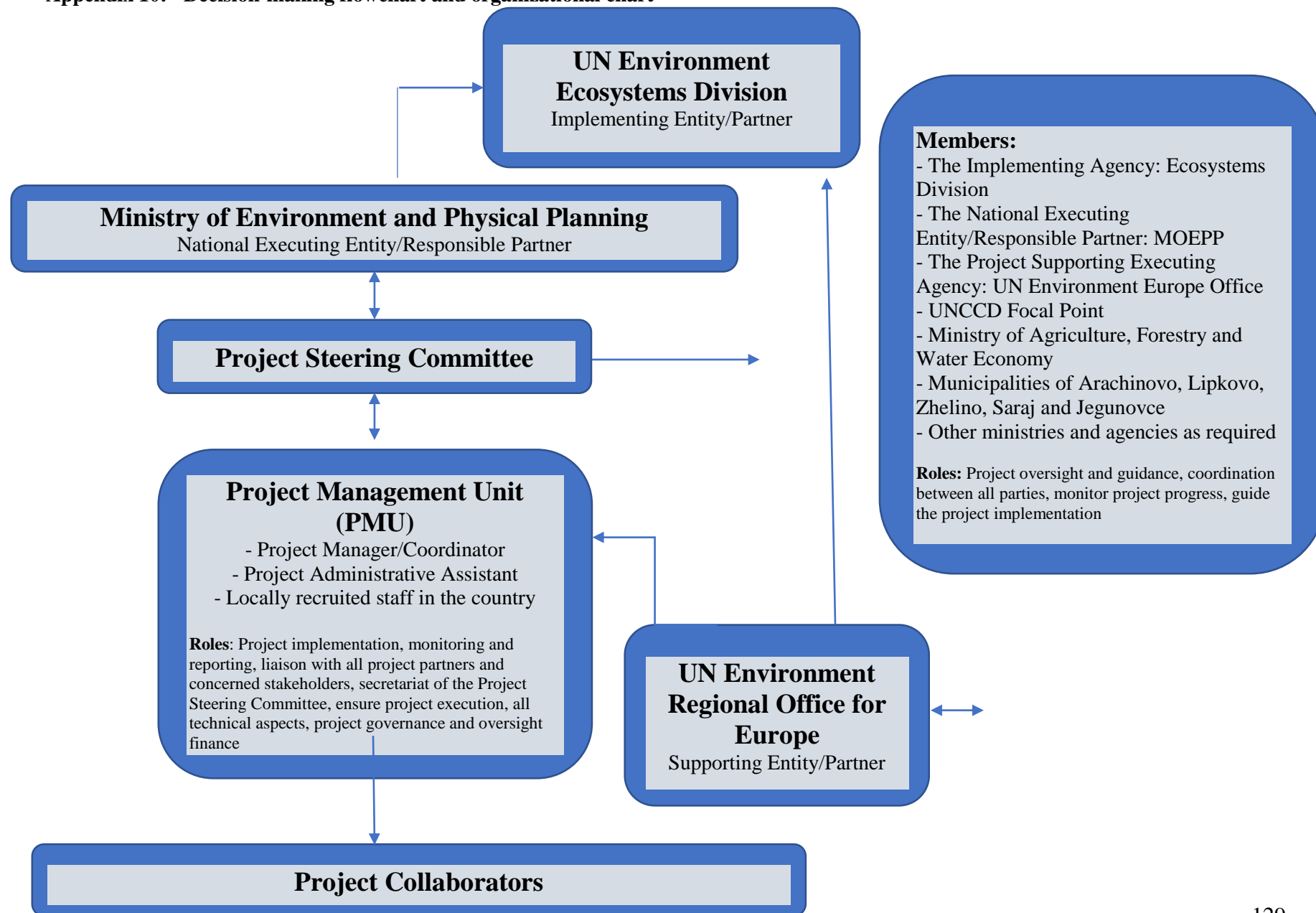
Will the proposed project rely on or profit from tangible cultural heritage (e.g., tourism)?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project involve land clearing or excavation with the possibility of encountering previously undetected tangible cultural heritage?	N	Not anticipated
Will the proposed project involve in land clearing or excavation?	N	Not anticipated
<b>Safeguard Standard 8: Gender equity</b>		
Will the proposed project likely have inequitable negative impacts on gender equality and/or the situation of women and girls?	N	A number of project activities will contribute directly and indirectly towards improving the condition of women by enhancing their capacity to participate in decision-making processes, and to engage in land use activities that have the potential to improve their economic situation.
Will the proposed project potentially discriminate against women or other groups based on gender, especially regarding participation in the design and implementation or access to opportunities and benefits?	N	No. Women will benefit particularly from skill development (education/training) and improved access to modern technologies and knowledge on land management, which will contribute increasing both the incomes and social capital of women.
Will the proposed project have impacts that could negatively affect women's and men's ability to use, develop and protect natural resources, taking into account different roles and positions of women and men in accessing environmental goods and services?	N	The project will make sure that consultations among stakeholder groups, capacity-building programs and outreach programs all include an analysis of gender dimensions in order to maximize the participation of and the potential positive impacts for women.
<b>Safeguard Standard 9: Economic Sustainability</b>		
Will the proposed project likely bring immediate or short-term net gain to the local communities or countries at the risk of generating long-term economic burden (e.g., agriculture for food vs. biofuel; mangrove vs. commercial shrimp farm in terms of fishing, forest products and protection, etc.)?	Y	The project will promote SLM and SFM practices and use of best practices by enhancing productivity of lands. These interventions are expected to bring economic gains to local communities.
Will the proposed project likely bring unequal economic benefits to a limited subset of the target group?	N	

#### IV. Additional Safeguard Questions for Projects seeking GCF-funding

<b>Community Health, Safety, and Security</b>			
Will there be potential risks and negative impacts to the health and safety of the Affected Communities during the project life-cycle?			
Will the proposed project involve design, construction, operation and decommissioning of the structural elements such as new buildings or structures?			
Will the proposed project involve constructing new buildings or structures that will be accessed by public?			
Will the proposed project possibly cause direct or indirect health-related risks and impacts to the Affected Communities due to the diminution or degradation of natural resources, and ecosystem services?			
Will the proposed project activities potentially cause community exposure to health issues such as water-born, water-based, water-related, vector-borne diseases, and communicable diseases?			
In case of an emergency event, will the project team, including partners, have the capacity to respond together with relevant local and national authorities?			
Will the proposed project need to retain workers to provide security to safeguard its personnel and property?			
<b>Labor and Supply Chain</b>			
Will UNEP or the implementing/executing partner(s) involve suppliers of goods and services who may have high risk of significant safety issues related to their own workers?			



## Appendix 10: Decision-making flowchart and organizational chart



## Appendix 11: Terms of Reference

### Terms of Reference

#### Job Description

**Project:** Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

**Post title:** Project Manager (PM)

**Duration:** 4 years, full time

#### Background

The goal of the Project is to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes. The Project objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components: 1) Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM; 2) Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling), 3) Knowledge management and public awareness.

The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute significantly to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to achieve combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts in the future.

The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD/forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.

#### Duties and Responsibilities

- Supervise and coordinate all aspects of the day-to-day work of the PMU and Project Partners as necessary;
- Supervise and coordinate the production of project outputs, as per the project document;
- Mobilize all project inputs in accordance with procedures for nationally implemented projects;
- Supervise and coordinate the work of all project staff, consultants and sub-contractors;
- Coordinate the recruitment and selection of project personnel;
- Prepare and revise project work and financial plans;
- Liaise with UN Environment, relevant government agencies, and all project partners, including donor

organizations and NGOs for effective coordination of all project activities;

- Facilitate administrative backstopping to subcontractors and training activities supported by the Project;
- Support the Chair of the PSC;
- Oversee and ensure timely submission of the Inception Report, Project Implementation Review/Annual Project Report (PIR/APR), Technical reports, financial reports and other reports as may be required by UN Environment, GEF and other oversight agencies;
- Disseminate project reports and respond to queries from concerned stakeholders;
- Oversee the exchange and sharing of experiences and lessons learned with relevant community based integrated conservation and development projects nationally and internationally;
- Ensure the timely and effective implementation of all components of the project;
- Assist relevant government agencies and project partners with development of essential skills through training workshops and on the job training thereby upgrading their institutional capabilities;
- Perform any other duty relevant to the assignment.

### **Reporting structure**

The PM will report to the Director, UN Environment Europe Office - Vienna Programme Office and will coordinate with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MOEPP) on a day-to-day basis and provide project reports (progress reports, financial reports, etc.) to the GEF Implementing Agency.

### **Qualifications**

#### **Education**

- Postgraduate degree (Masters or PhD) in environmental management, environmental sciences, natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, or a related field.

### **Required Skills**

- Strong leadership, negotiation and communication skills;
- Solid background in project management, including finance;
- Sensitive to different cultural backgrounds;
- Aware of and sensitive to government and civil society interactions/politics;
- Attention to detail and strong organizational skills;
- Able to establish priorities and to plan and coordinate work between different partners and stakeholder groups;
- Able to manage a complex workload and work within tight deadlines;
- Able to lead, manage and motivate project teams as well as international and local consultants and other stakeholders to achieve results;
- Able to build strong relationships at all levels with conservation partners, media contacts, potential project sponsors and other stakeholders;
- Able to react to project adjustments and/or alterations (if any) in an efficient and prompt manner;
- Able to work in a multicultural and multifunctional environment;
- Excellent oral, written, mass and interpersonal communication skills;

- Fully computer literate;
- Well-developed knowledge about protected area management and pertaining requirements is desirable.

### **Experience**

- At least six years of experience in cross-cultural project management (design and implementation), with a proven track record of achieving results;
- Hands-on experience in managing national and international natural resources projects, in particular concerning natural resources management, environmental information management, capacity development etc., preferably in the project target area;
- Prior UN projects management experience, and particularly UN/GEF project experience and knowledge of UN and GEF procedures and guidelines;
- Extensive experience in managing a diverse and multi-cultural team, and in personnel management (contracting, recruitment, performance monitoring);
- Demonstrated understanding of sustainable development, including financial and institutional sustainability.

### **Languages**

- Fluency in English (oral and written) a strict requirement;
- Knowledge of any of the other languages in the project target region beneficial.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Job Description**

**Project:** Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

**Post title:** National Project Coordinator (NPC)

**Duration:** 4 years, full time

### **Background**

The goal of the Project is to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes. The Project objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components: 1) Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM; 2) Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling), 3) Knowledge management and public awareness.

The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute significantly to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to achieve combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts in the future.

The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD/forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Coordinate daily duties with the Project Manager (PM) and support him/her in steering project implementation;
- Work as a team member of the PMU and with all project partners to coordinate and implement project activities, particularly with regard to natural resource management assessment, planning and evaluation as well as relevant capacity development measures;
- Liaise with government institutions and non-governmental organizations on the project's behalf;
- Provide strategic guidance to the PM;
- Work and communicate regularly with National Focal Points for MEAs to resolve any project issues;

- Coordinate resources (including technical support) for project partners;
- Provide technical and administrative support to the project partners;
- Receive and implement guidance from the Project Steering Committee (PSC);
- Provide secretariat support to the PSC, including organization, communication and preparation of all meeting documentation;
- Liaise, consult and network with national partner agencies;
- Establish an effective outreach and engagement strategy, including training and communication activities, promotion of project visibility and effective collection of documentation and dissemination of project results and lessons learned;
- Actively promote the project and its components in all relevant media and fora;
- Perform any other duty relevant to the assignment.

The NPC will support and complement the PM's role in the project, specifically to:

- Coordinate all aspects of project implementation to streamline technical requirements and to support efficient project implementation and timely and consistent technical, administrative and financial reporting;
- Coordinate and put systems in place for the timely and accurate technical and financial reporting to the PM from all project partners, sub-contractors and consultants;
- Support the PC in establishing a project monitoring and evaluation system in accordance with the project documentation;
- Prepare periodical consolidated progress reports and annual PIRs (Programme Implementation Reports) for UN Environment and the GEF;
- Select experts and consultants as necessary for the project;
- Assist with coordination and implementation of the project monitoring and evaluation plan, as outlined in the project document.

## **Reporting structure**

The NPC will report to the PM on a day-to-day basis and submit standard project reports (progress reports, financial reports, etc.) to the PM within set deadlines.

## **Qualifications and Competencies**

### **Education**

Postgraduate degree (Master or equivalent) or equivalent experience in environmental/natural resource management, legal sciences or resource management or a related field.

### **Required Skills**

- Leadership, negotiation, communication and trouble-shooting;
- Project management;
- Self-motivated and able to work remotely with minimum supervision;
- Sensitive to different cultural backgrounds;

- Aware of and sensitive to government and civil society interactions/politics;
- Able to prioritize, plan and coordinate work remotely and with various partners;
- Able to lead, manage, support and motivate diverse teams of stakeholders to achieve results;
- Able to build strong relationships at all levels with conservation partners, media contacts, potential project sponsors and other stakeholders;
- Able to work as part of a team;
- Able to work in diverse and multicultural environments;
- Demonstrable sound working ethics;
- Excellent oral, written, mass and interpersonal communication skills;
- Fully computer literate;
- Specific knowledge of protected area management is desirable.

### **Experience**

- Minimum of five years' experience in natural resource management and related project implementation and/or project management, with a proven track record of achieving results;
- Strong managerial background; an administrative track record is desirable.

### **Languages**

- Fluency in English and at least one of the national languages (oral and written) a strict requirement;
- Knowledge of any of the other languages in the project target region beneficial.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Job Description**

**Project:** Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

**Post title:** National project assistant (technical specialist) (NPA)

**Duration:** 4 years, full time

### **Background**

The goal of the Project is to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes. The Project objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components: 1) Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM; 2) Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling), 3) Knowledge management and public awareness.

The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute significantly to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to achieve combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts in the future.

The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD/forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Coordinate daily duties with the NPC and support him/her in steering project implementation;
- Work as a team member of the PMU and with all project partners to coordinate and implement project activities, particularly with regard to ensuring full engagement of all relevant national partners at state level, according to their respective policies and procedures;
- Provide strategic guidance to the NPC on all matters relating to North Macedonia institutional, legal and policy particularities at state level;
- Actively promote the project and its components in all relevant media and fora;
- Perform any other duty relevant to the assignment.



The NPA will support and complement the NPC's role in the project, specifically to:

- Coordinate all aspects of project implementation with state project partners, to streamline technical requirements and to support efficient project implementation and timely and consistent technical, administrative and financial reporting;
- Coordinate and put systems in place for the timely and accurate technical and financial reporting to the PM from all project partners, sub-contractors and consultants;
- Support the PM in establishing a project monitoring and evaluation system in accordance with the project documentation;
- Provide technical and administrative support to the project partners;
- Coordinate resources (including technical support) for project partners;
- Provide technical and administrative support to the project partners;
- Provide secretariat support to the PSC, including organization, communication and preparation of all meeting documentation;
- Liaise, consult and network with national partner agencies;
- Actively promote the project and its components in all relevant media and fora;
- Assist with coordination and implementation of the project monitoring and evaluation plan, as outlined in the project document.

## **Reporting structure**

The NPA will report to the NPC on a day-to-day basis and submit standard project reports (progress reports, financial reports, etc.) to the NPC within set deadlines.

## **Qualifications and Competencies**

### **Education**

Graduate degree (Bachelor or equivalent) in environmental/natural resource management, legal sciences, management or a related field.

### **Required Skills**

- Leadership, negotiation, communication and trouble-shooting;
- Project management;
- Self-motivated and able to work remotely with minimum supervision;
- Sensitive to different cultural backgrounds;
- Aware of and sensitive to government and civil society interactions/politics;
- Able to prioritize, plan and coordinate work remotely and with various partners;
- Able to work as part of a team;
- Able to work in diverse and multicultural environments;
- Demonstrable sound working ethics;
- Excellent oral, written, mass and interpersonal communication skills;
- Fully computer literate;

- Specific knowledge of protected area management is desirable.

### **Experience**

- Minimum of two years' experience in natural resource management and related project implementation and/or project management, with a proven track record of achieving results;
- Knowledge and experience in coordinating environmental issues with different government stakeholders in North Macedonia;
- Strong managerial background; an administrative track record is desirable.

### **Languages**

- Fluency in English and at least one of the national languages (oral and written) a strict requirement;
- Knowledge of any of the other languages in the project target region beneficial.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Job Description**

**Project:** Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

**Post title:** National or International Technical Expert (TE)

**Duration:** 4 years / part time, per separate assignment

### **Background**

The goal of the Project is to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes. The Project objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components: 1) Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM; 2) Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling), 3) Knowledge management and public awareness.

The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute significantly to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to achieve combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts in the future.

The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD/forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Collaborate closely with the PM, NPC and MOEPP to ensure alignment and complementarities with the defined project outputs;
- Review drafted reports, studies and other documents envisaged within the project components and provide recommendations for improvement of documentation;
- Analyze the past and present trends of land use in the targeted municipalities and develop recommendation for future sustainable land management based on these, that in future could be applicable to other regions in the country;
- Identify and propose sustainable land use practices (such as farming systems and practices) that will increase the sustainable productivity of agriculture land while avoiding any form of degradation and

exploitation of natural resources;

- Review the current responsibilities and capacities of the relevant Government departments, non-government and private institutions, and make appropriate recommendations in their role for the implementation of the proposed land use policy;
- Ensure land use and forestry issues are considered in the various policy interventions;
- Assist in identification of pilot sites for practical implementation of SLM and SFM practices and in planning, design and implementation of SLM and SFM practices in targeted municipalities;
- Perform any other duty relevant to the assignment.

## **Reporting structure**

The PM will report to the Director, UN Environment Europe Office - Vienna Programme Office, PM and NPC as per and during the concrete assignment.

## **Qualifications**

### **Education**

- Postgraduate degree (Masters or PhD) in environmental management, environmental sciences, forestry, agriculture, natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, or a related field.

## **Required Skills**

- Strong leadership, negotiation and communication skills;
- Sensitive to different cultural backgrounds;
- Able to establish priorities and to plan and coordinate work between different partners and stakeholder groups;
- Able to manage a complex workload and work within tight deadlines;
- Able to build strong relationships at all levels with conservation partners, media contacts, potential project sponsors and other stakeholders;
- Able to react to project adjustments and/or alterations (if any) in an efficient and prompt manner;
- Able to work in a multicultural and multifunctional environment;
- Excellent oral, written, mass and interpersonal communication skills;
- Fully computer literate;
- Well-developed knowledge about forestry, land and natural resources management and pertaining requirements is desirable.

## **Experience**

- At least 10 years' experience in GEF project development and implementation, including experience of LD/SLM project development, with a proven track record of achieving results;
- Experience in identification and proper implementation of SLM and SFM practices in other countries;
- Experience in development of planning documents in the area of forestry, agriculture, sustainable development and other related aspects;
- Experience in development of land use studies;

- Familiar with community-based natural resource management and social land management issues;
- Hands-on experience in managing national and international natural resources projects, in particular concerning natural resources management, environmental information management, capacity development etc.

**Languages**

- Fluency in English (oral and written) a strict requirement;
- Knowledge of any of the other languages in the project target region beneficial.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Job Description**

**Project:** Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

**Post title:** Project Steering Committee (PSC)

**Duration:** 4 years

### **Background**

The goal of the Project is to reduce the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in the mountain landscapes. The Project objective is to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia. To achieve this objective, the Project will support activities through the implementation of the following three components: 1) Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM and SFM; 2) Implementation of sustainable land and forest management practices for reducing the effects of land degradation in three pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous region (testing and demonstration in selected pilot sites in the most vulnerable mountainous regions, as basis for lessons learned, replication and upscaling), 3) Knowledge management and public awareness.

The project will build upon existing government efforts and programs for land management by targeting those areas of the current efforts where gaps have been identified, which left unaddressed, will limit the wider effectiveness of overall efforts. Importantly the project will address the gaps not only within the national policy, legislative and institutional framework, but also through practical on-ground efforts to halt and reverse LD and deforestation in a cost-effective, socially acceptable and sustainable way within the selected pilot sites. It will contribute significantly to introducing, testing and demonstrating new methods and approaches to achieve combatting land degradation and deforestation issues in North Macedonia, and generate new experience and awareness that will potentially have far reaching impacts for the on-going efforts in the future.

The practical experience gained on the ground will help reverse LD threats at project site level, plus fill gaps in knowledge about effective methodologies/approaches. Furthermore, the on-ground experience will also help highlight practical limitations of the current institutional, legal and policy context, and thereby provide lessons that can be used to fine tune and adjust the LD/forestry enabling framework and help ensure land users are better facilitated to apply sustainable practices in the future.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

PSC will provide overall guidance and strategic direction and oversight to project management and will approve all final outputs and deliverables of the project. The PSC will be multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral in fields related to nature protection, forestry, agriculture and land use planning.

Specific functions of the Steering Committee will include:

- Review of Project Status Reports;
- Endorsement of the final reports from project experts and consultants;
- Approval of the Annual Project Work plan and budget respectively and any changes thereto, in accordance with GEF and UN Environment guidelines;
- Annual review of project activities to assess project development;
- Any other business brought before the PSC by one of its members.

As the PSC will provide overall guidance to the project it will not be expected to deal with day-to-day management and administration of the project. This will be handled by the National Project Coordinator (NPC), in coordination with the Executing Agencies, and under guidance from the Project Manager. The PSC is especially responsible for evaluation and monitoring of project outputs and achievements. The PSC should be consulted for supporting any changes to the work plan or budget, and is responsible for ensuring that the project remains on target with respect to its outputs. Where necessary, the PSC will support definition of new targets in coordination with, and approval from, the Executing/Implementing Agencies.

### **Composition**

The PSC will include representatives of relevant Governmental institutions of North Macedonia, including, but not limited to the current line ministries responsible for environmental, nature and land protection issues – the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy. Membership will also include UN Environment (ROE) representatives, as well as GEF and UNCCD Focal Points in the North Macedonia and representatives of targeted municipalities. However, the PSC will remain sufficiently lean to facilitate its effective operation. Other participants can be invited into the PSC meetings, at the decision of the PSC.

The PSC will meet regularly (at least twice a year) or according to project needs, to review project progress, discuss and agree on project work plans, provide direction and guidance, and assist in project implementation, as well as provide synergies with other complementing initiatives and ongoing projects. One of the key tasks of the PSC will be to ensure coordination and synchronization of central and local-level activities supported by the project. UN Environment and PMU will serve as secretariat of the PSC.

### **Frequency and Conduct of Meetings**

The PSC will be expected to meet formally at least once every 6 months. The members of the PSC will be expected to communicate via e-mail and telephone on urgent project related matters. The PM and NPC will be responsible for ensuring close liaison within the PSC. Formal meetings will be scheduled and arranged by the NPC in consultation with, and at the request of, the other PSC members (with tentative dates for the following meeting being agreed under Any Other Business). Extraordinary meetings of the PSC can be requested by any of its members, and will be considered and may be approved by the Executing and Implementing Agencies within the budget limitations of the project. Meetings of the PSC will normally be summoned by at least two weeks' notice via email. The cost of participation in meetings of the PSC will be met by the project. Every effort will be made to reduce the financial burden on the project by scheduling PSC meetings to coincide with other relevant project meetings at which the members of the PSC may be present.

## Appendix 12: Co-financing commitment letters from project partners

ОПШТИНА САРАЈ - КОМУНАЛНО СЕЉАК  
ГРАДОНАЧНИК КИТЕТАН  
Бр. 01-02/2019  
САРАЈ - САРАЈ

To:  
Dr. Maryam Namin-Fuller  
Director, GEF Coordination Office  
United Nations Environment  
PO Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya

**Subject:** Co-financing for the GEF/UN Environment project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes"

Dear Dr. Namin-Fuller,

The Municipality of Saraj, is committed to support the GEF/UN Environment project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes" with the overarching objective to develop and strength national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of Macedonia.

It is acknowledged that the above mentioned project is being designed in full synergy and complementarity with several other on-going and planned initiatives that are undertaken in Macedonia with support of the Municipality of Saraj. The programmes and indicative co-financing values are included in Annex to this letter. The Municipality of Saraj would like to confirm that the project activities are complementary, and will provide cash and in-kind contribution to the project for the four-year period in the amount of 500 000 USD.

The Municipality of Saraj is pleased to be a part of the project and contribute to its outcomes. We look forward to collaborating with UN Environment, the GEF and other partnering organisations/institutions on this initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Skopje, 01/02/2019

Mayor: Blerim Bexheti





To:  
Dr. Kelly West  
Director, GEF Coordination Office  
United Nations Environment Programme  
PO Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya

**Subject:** Co-financing for the GEF/UN Environment project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes"

Dear Dr. Kelly West,

The Municipality of Zhelino, is committed to support the GEF/UN Environment project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes" with the overarching objective to develop and strength national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of Macedonia.

It is acknowledged that the above mentioned project is being designed in full synergy and complementarity with several other on-going and planned initiatives that are undertaken in Macedonia with support of the Municipality of Zhelino. The programmes and indicative co-financing values are included in the Annex to this letter. The Municipality of Zhelino would like to confirm that the project activities are complementary, and will provide 50,000 USD cash and 300,000 USD in-kind contribution to the project for the four-year period.

The Municipality of Zhelino is pleased to be a part of the project and contribute to its outcomes. We look forward to collaborating with UN Environment, the GEF and other partnering organisations/institutions on this initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Skopje, .../28/01/2019

Mayor, Biserin Sejdiu





Republic of North Macedonia  
**Ministry of Environment  
 and Physical Planning**

DEPARTMENT FOR EUROPEAN UNION

Arh.no. 21-2271/1  
 Date: 11-04-2019

**TO:** Kelly West  
 Director, GEF Coordination Office  
 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
 PO Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya  
 Kelly.West@unep.org  
 +254 20 762 4147

**SUBJECT:** Co-financing for the UNEP/GEF project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes"

Dear Ms. West,

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning is committed to support the UNEP/GEF "project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes" with the overarching objective to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) and to contribute to achieving the national Land Degradation Neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia.

It is acknowledged that the above mentioned project is being designed in fully synergy and complementarity with several other on-going and planned initiatives that are undertaken in North Macedonia with support of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. The programmes and indicative co-financing values are included in Annex to this letter. The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning would like to confirm that the project activities are complementary, and will provide in-kind contribution to the project for the four year period in the amount of 12.091.229 USD and cash contribution to the project for the four year period in the amount of 7.217.666 USD.



Republic of North Macedonia  
**Ministry of Environment  
and Physical Planning**

DEPARTMENT FOR EUROPEAN UNION

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning is pleased to contribute to its outcomes. We look forward to collaborating with UNEP, the GEF and other partnering organisations/institutions on this initiative.

Yours sincerely,



**MINISTER**

*Sadulla Duraki*

**Approved:** Vesna Indova Tochko  
GEF Operational Focal Point

*Vesna Indova Tochko*



Republic of North Macedonia  
**Ministry of Environment  
and Physical Planning**

DEPARTMENT FOR EUROPEAN UNION

**Annex I:** Contributing programmes and indicative co-financing values

Programmes/activities of Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	Value (USD) In - kind contribution	Value (USD) cash contribution
Strengthening the Capacity for Implementation of Nature Legislation and Natura 2000	2.015.120 (EU-IPA funds)	461.250 (national co- financing)
Improvement of implementation of Flood Directive (Preparation of Flood Risk Management Plans with Implementation and Emergency Measures)	2.420.138 (EU-IPA funds)	427.083 (national co- financing)
Development of River Basin Management Plan for River Vardar under the Water Framework Directive with Implementation of Measures	1.548.888 (EU-IPA funds)	273.333 (national co- financing)
Development of Environmental Monitoring and Information System	1.452.083 (EU-IPA funds)	256.000 (national co- financing)
Implementation of pilot measures for sustainable use of natural resources (planned to be implemented in 2016)	4.555.000 (EU-IPA funds - grant scheme - implementation by UNDP)	/
MoEPP Environmental Investment Programme 2018 – ongoing (projects to be implemented by the end of 2019)		1.150.000
MoEPP Environmental Investment Programme 2019 (planned)		1.150.000
MoEPP Environmental Investment Programme 2020 (planned)		1.150.000
MoEPP Environmental Investment Programme 2021 (planned)		1.150.000
MoEPP Programme on Waters (2019)		400.000
MoEPP Programme on Waters (2020) - planned		400.000
MoEPP Programme on Waters (2021) - planned		400.000
Engagement of 4 persons from MoEPP (GEF OFP, NFP for CBD, NFP for UNCCD and Deputy FP for UNCCD) in project implementation	100.000	/
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>12.091.229</b>	<b>7.217.666</b>





Europe Office

**Reference:** BP/he/2019.0028

**Date:** 29 April 2019

**Subject:** Co-financing for the UNEP/GEF project: "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes".

Dear Ms. West,

UN Environment Europe Office is committed to support the UNEP/GEF project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes", with the overarching objective to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystems of North Macedonia.

It is acknowledged that the above-mentioned project is being designed in full synergy and complementarity with several other on-going and planned initiatives in the country and the Western Balkan region with support of the UN Environment Europe Office.

The UN Environment Europe office would like to confirm that it will provide in-kind contribution to the project for the three-year period of duration of the project in the amount of 750,000 USD and in-cash contribution of 250,000 USD.

UN Environment Europe Office is pleased to be part of the project and contribute to its outcomes. We look forward to collaborating with UN Environment, Ecosystems Division, the Global Environment Facility, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia and other partnering organizations and institutions in this initiative.

Sincerely yours,

Bruno Pozzi  
Director

Ms. Kelly West  
UN Environment / GEF Coordinator  
Portfolio Manager  
UN Environment Corporate Services Division  
Email: [Kelly.West@un.org](mailto:Kelly.West@un.org)

UN Environment Programme  
c/o MIE  
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[www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)



*Building a Greener Economic Environment*

## Memo

**To:** Kelly West  
Director, GEF Coordination Office  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
PO Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya  
[Kelly.West@unep.org](mailto:Kelly.West@unep.org)  
+254 20 762 4147

**Subject:** Co-financing for the UNEP/GEF project: "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes".

Subject:

Dear Ms. West,

Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation – CNVP North Macedonia Office is committed to support UNEP/GEF project "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscape", with the overarching objective to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management and to contribute to achieving the national land degradation neutrality target with integrated landscape management in north-western mountainous ecosystem of North Macedonia.



It is acknowledged that the above-mentioned project is being designed in full synergy with several other on-going and planned initiatives related to sustainable use of non-timber forest products and fighting illegal logging that are undertaken in North Macedonia with support of the CNVP. CNVP would like to confirm that the project activities are complementary and will provide in-kind contribution to the project for the three-year period of duration of the project in the amount of 500,000 USD.

CNVP- North Macedonia Office is pleased to be part of the project and contribute to its outcomes. We look forward to collaborating with UN Environment, Ecosystem Division, the Global Environment Facility, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia and other partnering organizations and institutions in this initiative.

Sincerely yours,  
Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova  
CNVP Country Director, North Macedonia Office



**Appendix 13: Endorsement letter of the GEF National Focal Point**

 <p>REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL PLANNING</p>	 <p>MKD СЕРТИФИКАТ MKC EN ISO 9001:2009</p>
<p>Our Number: <u>21-6669/1</u></p> <p>Date: <u>15.11.2016</u></p>	
<p>TO: Ms. Brennan Van Dyke Chief, Strategic Donor Partnerships and Global Funds Coordination United Nations Environment (UNEP) P.O. Box 30552 0100 Nairobi, Kenya <a href="mailto:Brennan.vandyke@unep.org">Brennan.vandyke@unep.org</a></p>	
<p><b>SUBJECT: Endorsement of "Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes."</b></p>	
<p>Dear Ms. Van Dyke,</p> <p>In our capacities as the GEF Political and Operational Focal Points at the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of Macedonia, I confirm that the above project proposal (a) is consistent with my Government's national priorities and its commitment to the relevant global environmental conventions and (b) was discussed with relevant stakeholders, including the global environmental convention focal points.</p> <p>I am pleased to endorse the preparation of the above project proposal with the support of the United Nations Environment (UNEP) as GEF Implementing Agency. If approved, the proposal will be executed by UNEP Regional Office for Europe – Vienna Office and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of Macedonia. I request UNEP to provide a copy of the project document before it is submitted to the GEF Secretariat for CEO Endorsement.</p>	





REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND  
PHYSICAL PLANNING



Republic of Macedonia  
**Ministry of  
environment and  
physical planning**

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Phone: ++ 389 2 3251 400  
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[infoeko@moepp.gov.mk](mailto:infoeko@moepp.gov.mk)  
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With this endorsement, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is requesting to use the "Flexibility" opportunity and the total financing from GEF TF, from STAR6 being requested for this project is USD 4,110,487 inclusive of project preparation grant (PPG) and Agency fees for the project cycle management services associated with the total GEF grant. The financing requested is detailed in the table below:

Source of Funds	GEF Agency	Focal Area	Project Preparation Grant	Project	Agency Fee (9.5%)	Total
GEFTF	UNEP	Biodiversity	50,000	1,324,201	125,799	1,500,000
GEFTF	UNEP	Land Degradation	50,000	2,338,344	222,143	2,610,487
Total GEF Resources			100,000	3,662,545	347,942	4,110,487

Sincerely,

**Bashkim Ameti**  
**MINISTER**  
**GEF Political Focal Point**  
**Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of Macedonia**  
Email: [bameti@moepp.gov.mk](mailto:bameti@moepp.gov.mk)

Vesna Indova *Vesna Indova*  
GEF Operational Focal Point  
UNCCD Focal Point  
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning  
[v.indova@moepp.gov.mk](mailto:v.indova@moepp.gov.mk)



**Appendix 14: Draft procurement plan**

<b>UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan</b>					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
	<b>UNEP Budget Line</b>	<b>List of Goods and Services required</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year {Note 1}</b>	<b>Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}</b>
1200	Consultants				
1201	National project coordinator	Coordinate daily duties with the Project Manager and support him/her in steering project implementation, work as a team member of the Project Management Unit and with all project partners to coordinate and implement project activities, particularly with regard to natural resource management assessment, planning and evaluation as well as relevant capacity development measures.	100,000	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
1202	National project assistant (technical specialist)	Assist the national project coordinator in daily coordinating duties, provide strategic guidance on all matters relating to North Macedonian institutional, legal and policy particularities at state level.	64,000	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.

UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
UNEP Budget Line		List of Goods and Services required	Budget	Year {Note 1}	Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}
1203	Forestry/Soils expert (international)	International perspective and guidance on development of all documents and work on pilot sites, especially afforestation activities, relating to sustainable forest practices and management during the project	80,000	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
1204	Forestry/Soils expert (national)	Data gathering and consolidation, development of documents as well as pilot site activities pertaining to sustainable forestry management	65,000	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
1205	Web portal development specialist	Compile and set up all required information in websites, portals and for media communication.	30,000	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
1206	Database expert	Collection and processing of land use data in GIS and other relevant data sets for land and forest resources.	20,000	2019, 2020	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.

UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
	<b>UNEP Budget Line</b>	<b>List of Goods and Services required</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year {Note 1}</b>	<b>Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}</b>
1207	Policy/Institutional expert (international)	International perspective on institutional and legal matters related to sustainable land management developed in coherence with the national expert(s)	60,000	2019, 2020, 2021	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
1208	Policy/Institutional expert (national)	Data gathering and consolidation on SLM and SFM in the country, development of legal instruments and policies for the needs of the project	60,000	2019, 2020, 2021	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
1209	Capacity building expert	Development and undertaking of capacity building exercises for national and local authority representatives and local communities and NGOs on efficient management and benefits of costal and marine protected areas (C / MPAs).	20,000	2018, 2019	The expert will be chosen based on UN Environment procedures. A pre-selection will be made based on inputs from the Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit.
2200	Sub-contracts (MOUs/LOAs for supporting organizations)				
2201	Analysis of the ongoing legal and institutional setup and development of the Soil Protection Law	Assessment of existing data and gap analysis of collected information; data collection and processing and consolidation and	180,000	2019, 2020	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.

UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
	<b>UNEP Budget Line</b>	<b>List of Goods and Services required</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year {Note 1}</b>	<b>Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}</b>
		development of Soil Protection Law.			
2202	Development of the Soil Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Monitoring	Assessment of existing legal and regulatory framework in North Macedonia and development of Soil Protection Strategy and Monitoring guidelines	190,000	2019, 2020	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2203	Ecosystem services valuation for forest and grasslands system in north-western N. Macedonia	Land utilization study, scenario characterization and biophysical and economic data gathered, analyzed and valued.	170,000	2020, 2021	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2204	Development of the Training Programme for SLFM	Collection of data on capacities and development of tailored training programme	76,000	2020, 2021	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2205	SFM guidelines for effective framework for reforestation/afforestation activities	Data collection, pilot sites visits, design of the afforestation programme in 3 pilot sites at 400ha	70,000	2020	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2206	Update of Local Environmental Action Plans (with focus on SLM and erosion control)	Revision of the LEAPs for 5 municipalities that are covering the 3 pilot site areas. Focus will be on	80,000	2020, 2021	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by

UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
	<b>UNEP Budget Line</b>	<b>List of Goods and Services required</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year {Note 1}</b>	<b>Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}</b>
		inclusion of SLM practices and erosion control measures and action plan			conducting a Due Diligence process.
2207	Afforestation of 5 municipalities (3 pilots sites)	Afforestation of 400 ha based on the SFM framework, covering 3 different pilot sites in 5 municipalities	520,000	2021	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2208	SLM in 5 municipalities (3 pilot sites)	Installation of sustainable land management practices (erosion control/organic matter conservation) measures in 3 pilot sites	450,000	2021, 2022	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2209	Preparation of Land Management Plans Plan (including guidebook) and validation of the pilot sites measures	Validation of all pilot site activities and preparation of the Land management plans and guidebooks for SLM practices	150,000	2022	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2210	Preparation of communication strategy	Gap assessment of existing communication regulations on land use management and design of communication strategy on the benefits of sustainable land management	35,000	2019 and 2020	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2211	Preparation of lessons learned	Collection and compiling of lessons learned from the project for the use of local	15,000	2022	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the

UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
	<b>UNEP Budget Line</b>	<b>List of Goods and Services required</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year {Note 1}</b>	<b>Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}</b>
		and national authorities when designing new laws and regulations.			best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
2212	Gender oriented communication	Preparation of gender-oriented communication material, review of produced documents	5,000	2019	A number of NGOs will be considered. Depending upon qualification/experience the best one will be selected by conducting a Due Diligence process.
4200	Non-expendable equipment				
4201	Computer Software for remote sensing and data management	Programs and installations that will establish functional data collection and processing as well as exchange between entities in North Macedonia.	50,000	2020	A number of companies will be considered. Selection will be conducted either by an RFP or an RFQ according to the final technical specifications
4202	Data gathering and consolidation equipment	Equipment for land utilization, soil analysis and forestry.	100,000	2020	A number of companies will be considered. Selection will be conducted either by an RFP or an RFQ according to the final technical specifications
4203	Office Supplies and Equipment	Computers and printers/scanners and stationary.	545	2019	Three offers will be considered and the most economical one will be chosen for procurement.
4204	Technical equipment for the three new MPAs	Computers, GIS maps and software, diving equipment, nature observing equipment for land and under water, including binoculars, night	150,000	2019	A number of companies will be considered. Selection will be conducted either by an RFP or an RFQ according to the final technical specifications

UNEP/GEF Project Procurement Plan					
	<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes			
	<b>UNEP Budget Line</b>	<b>List of Goods and Services required</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year {Note 1}</b>	<b>Brief description of anticipated procurement process {Note 2}</b>
		vision goggles, recorders and sound amplifiers, equipment for extinguishing fire			
4205	Infrastructural equipment for the 3 pilot sites	Equipment necessary to install the SLM practices in the 3 pilot sites	118,000	2022	A number of companies will be considered. Selection will be conducted either by an RFP or an RFQ according to the final technical specifications
<b>Note 1 - Year when goods/services will be procured</b>					
<b>Note 2 - Based on your organization's procurement procedures, and in compliance with UN Environment rules and procedures,</b>					
	<b>briefly explain how the service provider/consultant/vendor will be selected</b>				

**Appendix 15: Core indicators**

Core Indicator 3	Area of land restored				(Hectares)	
		Hectares (3.1+3.2+3.3+3.4)				
		Expected			Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		2450	2 450			
Indicator 3.1	Area of degraded agricultural land restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Total area that will adopt better sustainable land	2 050	2 050		

		management practices				
Indicator 3.2	Area of forest and forest land restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Total area to be afforested directly in the pilot sites	400	400		
<b>Core Indicator 4</b>	<b>Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)</b>					<i>(Hectares)</i>
			Hectares (4.1+4.2+4.3+4.4)			
			Expected		Expected	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Total area that will adopt the SLM and SFM improved practices		12 550	12 550		



**Appendix 16: Capacity Development Scorecard**

Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Through Strengthening Legal and Institutional Framework, Capacity Building and Restoration of Most Vulnerable Mountain Landscapes

## Capacity Development Scorecard

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
<b>CR1: Capacities for engagement</b>						
Indicator 1 – Degree of legitimacy/mandate of lead environmental organizations	Organizational responsibilities for environmental management are not clearly defined	0				
	Organizational responsibilities for environmental management are identified	1				
	Authority and legitimacy of all lead organizations responsible for environmental management are partially recognized by stakeholders	2	2	Environmental organizations might not be fully aware of the roles of state authorities when it comes to sustainable land management practices	Output 1.2.1 and 3.1.1 will raise awareness of all stakeholders SLM issues	1.2 and 3.1
	Authority and legitimacy of all lead organizations responsible for environmental management are recognized by stakeholders	3				
Indicator 2 – Existence of operational co-	No co-management mechanisms are in place	0	0		Output 1.2.2 will contribute providing a	1.2

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
management mechanisms					management mechanism for SLM in the country	
	Some co-management mechanisms are in place and operational	1				
	Some co-management mechanisms are formally established through agreements, MOUs, etc.	2				
	Comprehensive co-management mechanisms are formally established and are operational/functional	3				
Indicator 3 – Existence of cooperation with stakeholder groups	Identification of stakeholders and their participation/involvement in decision-making is poor	0				
	Stakeholders are identified but their participation in decision-making is limited	1	1	The stakeholder groups are identified, however, the local communities, researchers, local businesses in particular have a very passive involvement in the decision-making process – mainly	Through outputs 2.1.1 and 3.1.2 will contribute to better cooperation with stakeholder groups	2.1 and 3.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
				through public consultations		
	Stakeholders are identified and regular consultations mechanisms are established	2				
	Stakeholders are identified and they actively contribute to established participative decision-making processes	3				
<b>CR 2: Capacities to generate, access and use information and knowledge</b>						
Indicator 4 – Degree of environmental awareness of stakeholders	Stakeholders are not aware about global environmental issues and their related possible solutions (MEAs)	0				
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues but not about the possible solutions (MEAs)	1				1.2
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues and the possible solutions but do not know how to participate	2	2	Environmental issues, and their effects are familiar to the stakeholders (through media, education, etc.), however, most stakeholders are not aware of how to participate in	Output 1.2.1, 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 will contribute to increased degree of awareness of stakeholders on the issues of SLM	1.2 and 3.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
				decision making		
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues and are actively participating in the implementation of related solutions	3				
Indicator 5 – Access and sharing of environmental information by stakeholders	The environmental information needs are not identified and the information management infrastructure is inadequate	0				
	The environmental information needs are identified but the information management infrastructure is inadequate	1				
	The environmental information is partially available and shared among stakeholders but is not covering all focal areas and/or the information management infrastructure to manage and give information access to the public is limited	2	2	There is some information on land use in the country, which is available to public, but most of it so far has been acquired through private research which is in most cases not even accessible to	Information gathered during development of output 1.1.1 as well as all other documents will be publically shared and available to stakeholders.	1.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
				relevant authorities		
	Comprehensive environmental information is available and shared through an adequate information management infrastructure	3				
Indicator 6 – Existence of environmental education programmes	No environmental education programmes are in place	0				
	Environmental education programmes are partially developed and partially delivered	1	1		The decision makers will be aware of the benefits of sustainable land management practices	1.2
	Environmental education programmes are fully developed but partially delivered	2				
	Comprehensive environmental education programmes exist and are being delivered	3				
Indicator 7 – Extend of the linkage between environmental research/science and policy development	No linkage exist between environmental policy development and science/research strategies and programmes	0				
	Research needs for environmental policy development are identified but are not	1	1	There is research and data, however it is not linked	Gathered information through the component	1.1 and 2.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	translated into relevant research strategies and programmes			to decision making and policy development well in the country	one will be designed to guide the identification and establishment strategy on soil protection as well as law and many other policy documents to be developed under this GEF project.	
	Relevant research strategies and programmes for environmental policy development exist but the research information is not responding fully to the policy research needs	2				
	Relevant research results are available for environmental policy development	3				
Indicator 8 – Extend of inclusion/use of traditional knowledge in environmental decision-making	Traditional knowledge is ignored and not taken into account into relevant participative decision-making processes	0				
	Traditional knowledge is identified and recognized as important but is not collected and used in relevant participative decision-making processes	1	1	Traditional knowledge is not being used in processes of decision making	Through designing management plans, it will be ensured traditional knowledge is part of the	2.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
					practice in sustainable land use	
	Traditional knowledge is collected but is not used systematically into relevant participative decision-making processes	2				
	Traditional knowledge is collected, used and shared for effective participative decision-making processes	3				
<b>CR 3: Capacities for strategy, policy and legislation development</b>						
Indicator 9 – Extend of the environmental planning and strategy development process	The environmental planning and strategy development process is not coordinated and does not produce adequate environmental plans and strategies	0				
	The environmental planning and strategy development process does produce adequate environmental plans and strategies but there are not implemented/used	1				
	Adequate environmental plans and strategies are produced but there are only partially implemented because of funding constraints and/or other problems	2	2	Environmental plans are in place but are not being implemented due to financial constraints and lack of capacities	Outputs 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 as well as 3.1.3 will ensure that environmental plans are being implemented	2.1 and 3.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
					and capacities raised	
	The environmental planning and strategy development process is well coordinated by the lead environmental organizations and produces the required environmental plans and strategies; which are being implemented	3				
Indicator 10 – Existence of an adequate environmental policy and regulatory frameworks	The environmental policy and regulatory frameworks are insufficient; they do not provide an enabling environment	0	0	There are very little regulatory and policy frameworks for sustainable land management and soil utilization in the country	Output 1.1 and 1.2 will develop relevant environmental policies	1.1 and 1.2
	Some relevant environmental policies and laws exist but few are implemented and enforced	1				
	Adequate environmental policy and legislation frameworks exist but there are problems in implementing and enforcing them	2				
	Adequate policy and legislation frameworks are implemented and provide an adequate enabling environment; a compliance and	3				



Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	enforcement mechanism is established and functions					
Indicator 11 – Adequacy of the environmental information available for decision-making	The availability of environmental information for decision-making is lacking	0				
	Some environmental information exists but it is not sufficient to support environmental decision-making processes	1	1	There is lack of information on sustainable land management and ecosystem values, which cannot support relevant decision-making processes	Outcome 1.1 will assess all environmental information concerning land use and management in the country	1.1 and 2.1
	Relevant environmental information is made available to environmental decision-makers but the process to update this information is not functioning properly	2				
	Political and administrative decision-makers obtain and use updated environmental information to make environmental decisions	3				
<b>CR 4: Capacities for management and implementation</b>						
Indicator 12 – Existence and	The environmental organizations don't have adequate resources for	0	0		3.1.1 will ensure that there are at	3.1

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
mobilization of resources	their programmes and projects and the requirements have not been assessed				least 3 bankable projects developed as follow up of the activities on the project.	
	The resource requirements are known but are not being addressed	1				
	The funding sources for these resource requirements are partially identified and the resource requirements are partially addressed	2				
	Adequate resources are mobilized and available for the functioning of the lead environmental organizations	3				
Indicator 13 – Availability of required technical skills and technology transfer	The necessary required skills and technology are not available and the needs are not identified	0				
	The required skills and technologies needs are identified as well as their sources	1				
	The required skills and technologies are obtained but their access depend on foreign sources	2	2	In country capacities for sustainable land management are very low	This project contains a substantial outcome on capacity building and training	1.2
	The required skills and technologies are	3				

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	available and there is a national-based mechanism for updating the required skills and for upgrading the technologies					
<b>CR 5: Capacities to monitor and evaluate</b>						
Indicator 14 – Adequacy of the project/programme monitoring process	Irregular project monitoring is being done without an adequate monitoring framework detailing what and how to monitor the particular project or programme	0	0		The project will set up a monitoring and enforcement system to ensure effective installation of sustainable land management	2.1
	An adequate resourced monitoring framework is in place but project monitoring is irregularly conducted	1				
	Regular participative monitoring of results in being conducted but this information is only partially used by the project/programme implementation team	2				
	Monitoring information is produced timely and accurately and is used by the implementation team to learn and possibly to change the course of action	3				

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
Indicator 15 – Adequacy of the project/programme evaluation process	None or ineffective evaluations are being conducted without an adequate evaluation plan; including the necessary resources	0	0		The project will has an elaborate monitoring and evaluation structure in each component, especially the pilot sites	2.1 and 2.2
	An adequate evaluation plan is in place but evaluation activities are irregularly conducted	1				
	Evaluations are being conducted as per an adequate evaluation plan but the evaluation results are only partially used by the project/programme implementation team	2				
	Effective evaluations are conducted timely and accurately and are used by the implementation team and the Agencies and GEF Staff to correct the course of action if needed and to learn for further planning activities	3				
<b>Maximum total</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>15</b>			

## Appendix 17: Theory of Change

