

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

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

9759

Countries

North Macedonia

Project Name

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

Agencies

UNEP

Date received by PM

5/29/2019

Review completed by PM

1/21/2020

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

Focal Area

Land Degradation

Project Type

FSP

PIF ☐

CEO Endorsement ☐

Project Design and Financing

1. If there are any changes from that presented in the PIF, have justifications been provided?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes. However, the table indicating the changes in the portal included track changes. Can this be addressed for better readability?

07/11/2019 UA:

Addressed.

Cleared

Response to Secretariat comments

The “Strikethrough” font was chosen in some sections to show the deleted sections in the original text. However, that format has been removed for better readability.

2. Is the project structure/ design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

3. Is the financing adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objective?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

02/05/2020 UA: ISSUE ENCOUNTERED:

Part of the project personnel is charged to the Components (\$100,000 and \$64,000). In view of the TOR’s for these positions, there are two issues that require clarification: (i) none of the three positions (Project Manager, National Project Coordinator and National Project Assistant) provide specific technical contribution to

the Project's components – (based on the TOR their tasks are all linked with administrative activities) – for this reason these three positions should be charged to the PMC, not to the project's components; and (ii) the TOR's of the Program Manager are very similar to the TORs of the National Project Coordinator – please adjust them and/or confirm that there is no duplication in carrying out these activities.

Response to Secretariat comments

07/04/2020

The Project Manager is charged only on PMC component.

The National technical project coordinator's ToR has been updated and 25% of the cost is charged to PMC in line with the updated ToR.

We removed National project assistant (technical specialist) consultancy post and created "Land degradation technical assistant". The ToR reflects the tasks related to Components 1, 2 and 3.

We removed 1302 Financial and travel assistant post.

We created a technical consultancy post to support economic assessments. Its ToR is added in Annex 11.

We also updated the Appendix 1 The Project Budget (the GEF budget only) to reflect the changes explained above.

4. Does the project take into account potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, and describes sufficient risk response measures? (e.g., measures to enhance climate resilience)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

5. Is co-financing confirmed and evidence provided?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

02/05/2020 UA: ISSUE ENCOUNTERED:

Out of the \$12,091,229 million of co-financing to be provided by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, \$4,555,000 are from a project that is “planned to be implemented in 2016”. The letter is letter dated 11-04-2019, but it still seems to be unknown whether the co-financing project started the implementation in 2016? If the project indeed started the implementation in 2016, is the whole amount (\$4,555,000) still contributing to the GEF project's objectives? Please (i) confirm the year when the co-financing project actually started implementation; and (ii) depending on when the co-financing project started, to calculate a reasonable amount that this project will truly contribute to the GEF project.

Response to Secretariat comments

07/04/2020

The Project “Implementation of pilot measures for sustainable use of natural resources” is being supported by the EU-IPA funds grant scheme, is implemented through UNDP and has entered in its final year of implementation (2020). Out of the total project budget of 4,555,000 USD, the envisaged budget to be spent in 2020 is 959,400 USD, for the purpose of improving nature protection and promoting sustainable use of natural resources while increasing the capacity of management authorities of protected areas, local self-governments and CSOs to manage and promote protected areas in a professional and sustainable fashion. Following GEF's comment, the amount for this project (for the remaining implementation period) has been reduced.

Additional projects identified and added as contribution in the co-finance letter:

1. The “Integrated climate-resilient transboundary flood risk management in the Drin River basin in the Western Balkan (including Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro)” is a regional project that was initiated in 2020 and is being implemented through UNDP. Out of 10,000,000 USD (full project budget), 2,200,000 USD are allotted for North Macedonia. The objective of the project is to assist the riparian countries in the implementation of an integrated climate-resilient river basin flood risk management approach in order to improve their existing capacity to manage flood risk at regional, national and local levels and to enhance resilience of vulnerable communities in the DRB to climate-induced floods. The countries will benefit from a basin-wide transboundary flood risk management (FRM) framework based on: improved climate risk knowledge and information; improved transboundary cooperation arrangements and policy framework for FRM and; concrete FRM interventions
2. “Improving Resilience to Floods in the Polog Region” is a project implemented in North Macedonia through UNDP. The total project budget is 10,000,000 USD, out of which 1,000,000 USD will be spent for complementary measures during 2020-2023. The project's goal is to instigate transformational change in managing flood risk in the region, accelerating the shift from purely reactive responses to floods to integrated systems to manage hazards, vulnerabilities and exposure of communities and assets to prevent/mitigate losses and alleviate the impact of future floods. Expected Results: a) Improved understanding of flood risks in the Polog

region and the capacity to manage them in an informed manner; b) Enhanced disaster preparedness of institutions and communities in the Polog region for effective response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction; c) Implementation of priority flood risk mitigation measures informed by international best practices to effectively reduce future risks in the Polog region; d) Improvement of the national legal and regulatory framework for disaster risk reduction in line with the Sendai Framework and the EU Floods Directive and conceptualization of risk financing and risk transfer mechanisms.

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3. “Closure of non-compliance landfills and dumpsites in the East and North-East region in North Macedonia” is a project being supported with 7,310,000 USD under the EU-IPA mechanism and 1,290,000 of national co-financing. The project activities envisage: clean-up of non-compliant landfills and small dumpsites by excavation of waste and transport of excavated waste in the East and Northeast regions; remediation and closure of selected old landfills in East Region and Northeast Region by reshaping and construction of a top capping system including leachate and gas collection systems where necessary; as well as reshaping of selected old landfills in East Region and in North-East Region and construction of drainage for leachate collection where necessary. The landfills will not be closed but remain operational, till the completion of the regional waste management centre.

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With these projects, country’s contribution has increased through co-finance.

Letter	In-kind contribution (USD)	Cash contribution
MOEPP co-finance letter (2019)	12,091,229	7,217,666
MOEPP co-finance letter (2020)	19,005,629	8,507,666

6. Are relevant tracking tools completed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

The core indicator table has been completed.

However, please clarify why the 12,550 ha of SLM have been entered under sub-indicator 4.1 to benefit biodiversity? Which globally significant biodiversity will benefit? Would it not be more appropriate to enter the area under sub-indicator 4.3 as the project works in production landscapes?

Please also enter estimated number of beneficiaries, aggregated by gender.

The project proponent did not indicate an estimate for carbon benefits and has selected Rio Markers "0" for climate change, which is fine if that is the case. However, that is inconsistent with the GEB table in the text, which indicates carbon benefits as a result of project interventions. Please make this consistent either by removing reference to carbon benefits or estimating them in the core indicators table.

07/11/2019 UA:

Addressed by removing the reference from the text. The AFOLU activities that the project implements are of small scale and carbon benefits will be negligible.

02/05/2020 UA: ISSUES ENCOUNTERED:

NO DATA FOR BENEFICIARIES: Please provide the gender disaggregated target for Core Indicator 11 on direct beneficiaries as identified in the project's results framework (# of trained and capacitated NCSD members, # of farmers testing SLM practices, # of 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). The Project Documents does contain some figures, but the portal does not..

Response to Secretariat comments

As recommended, 12 550 ha from core indicator 4.1. have been transferred to core indicator 4.3.

Core indicator 11 adjusted, in accordance with Outcome 3.1. mid-term (300 people, 50% women) and end project (500 people, 50% women) milestones

Text about carbon benefits in the GEB table has been removed.

07/04/2020

After reviewing the project activities, we revised the total beneficiaries target to 20,735. The details of beneficiaries are provided in Annex E: GEF 7 Core Indicator Worksheet of the CEO Endorsement Request.

7. Only for Non-Grant Instrument: Has a reflow calendar been presented?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement n/a

Response to Secretariat comments

8. Is the project coordinated with other related initiatives and national/regional plans in the country or in the region?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

9. Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

10. Does the project have descriptions of a knowledge management plan?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

Agency Responses

11. Has the Agency adequately responded to comments at the PIF stage from:

GEFSEC

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

STAP

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

GEF Council

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

Convention Secretariat

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement none received

Response to Secretariat comments

Recommendation

12. Is CEO endorsement recommended?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

06/17/2019 UA:

No. Please address comments.

07/11/2019 UA:

One outstanding issue to be clarified with regard to implementation/execution functions: The prodoc, section 4 mentions that UNEP technical assistance to execution. This appears to go beyond "oversight" functions as mentioned in the GEF guidelines on project cycle policy and may require a written request by the OFP to UNEP to provide this technical assistance. Please clarify if the project implementation / execution arrangements are fully in line with the GEF guidelines on project and program cycle policy and whether a request by the OFP is need to be obtained.

Please also provide a short summary of the arrangements directly in the portal in the respective section before refer to the prodoc section 4 and Annex 10.

10/23/2019 UA:

As the agency is well aware of, the implementation and execution roles on GEF projects are meant to be separate as per GEF policy and guidelines. The GEFSEC assesses any requests for dual role playing by an agency at the time of CEO endorsement and only approve those cases that it deems warranted on an “exceptional” basis, based on country requests. The request made in this case is not considered justified nor does it clearly specify the specific roles and responsibilities of all partners in project execution, including the estimated costs of providing the execution services.

The project proponents may wish reconsider the proposed project implementation/execution arrangement. In view of the project's objective, which is "to develop and strengthen national policy and institutional capacity for sustainable land management (SLM)", we consider a full national execution of the project the best way to achieve that.

01/10/2020 UA: Minor editorial issues to be addressed:

Based on the governments request sent by letter to GEFSEC, the implementation/execution arrangements are considered appropriate and an exception is therefore justified. Please make clear reference to this government request to the GEF in the respective section of the CEO endorsement template and also mention that the the letter has been uploaded to the portal under the title "...".

Further, in the sections A.3 Stakeholders and A.4 Gender: please provide a short summary of the activities in the CEO endorsement request template by summarizing the referenced prodoc text. Please also list the gender relevant activities by name and not only by output number for easier readability for the outside audience.

01/21/2020 UA: Based on the governments request sent by letter to GEFSEC, the implementation/execution arrangements are considered appropriate and an exception is therefore considered justified. The Project implementation/execution arrangements are herewith approved by the Program Manager and recommended for subsequent clearance.

02/05/2020: Please address outstanding issues as follows:

- Number of beneficiaries in core indicators (see above)
- Cofinancing letter (see above)
- Budget (see above)

04/27/2020 UA: Issues have been addressed. The implementation/execution arrangements have been discussed with the Porgam Manager, based on the exception request made by the OFP and are cleared by the Program Manager.

Porgram Manager recommends project for CEO endorsement.

Response to Secretariat comments

10/09/2019:

Thank you. UNEP's support functions with regard to project execution are now officially requested by the OFP in the letter attached to the ProDoc. A short summary of the implementation and execution arrangements will be uploaded to the portal.

12/26/2019

The GEFSEC has informed UNEP that the justification provided by the Ministry is acceptable and the Implementing Agency should resubmit the documentation (see email as well as correspondence from Ministry to GEF Sec attached in the documents depository)".

01/17/2020

'Section 6 Institutional Arrangement and Coordination' has been updated and the approved implementation/execution modality summarized. The summary includes the statement that the implementation arrangement is approved based on the government's request sent by a letter to the GEFSEC. A clear reference to the letter is provided in this section and the letter is uploaded on the portal.

A.3 Stakeholders section is updated and the list of Stakeholders with their role in project implementation is provided.

A short summary of gender activities is provided in the A.4 Gender section of the CEO endorsement request.

07/04/2020

Comments addressed above

Review Dates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

Response to Secretariat comments

First Review		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief Reasoning for CEO Recommendations

CONTEXT:

With regard to land degradation, North Macedonia is one of the most vulnerable countries in Europe. Soil pollution by fertilizers and pesticides, erosion and loss of soil organic are major issues. Unsustainable agricultural practices are the main source of soil pollution and soil fertility loss. Most vulnerable are soils under intensive agriculture production on sloping terrains with heavy texture and shallow soils in the North-Eastern parts of the country, which are a target of two of the pilot sites.

KEY INTERVENTIONS & RESULTS:

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.

The project will develop a coherent and coordinated approach to reduce pressures on land from competing for land uses in forestry and pasture through reversal of land degradation and development of instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management. It will also support country's efforts in achieving LDN. More specifically, the GEF investment will facilitate strengthened policy, legal and regulatory frameworks that will harmonize state legislation, develop guidelines for best land use practices and develop a National Integrated Soil Management Strategy. The proposed project will also improve management of community resources, as a way to secure food and reduce land use conflicts and improve the well-being of local citizens.

In terms of results, the adoption of SLM and SFM practices will reduce land degradation and secure ecosystem services over an area covering 12,550 ha in three targeted municipalities and directly benefit approximately 120,000 people. The project will also restore 2,450 hectares of degraded lands.

ALIGNMENT WITH FA STRATEGY & NATIONAL PLANS:

The project will contribute to achieving the voluntary UNCCD LDN target in North Macedonia through developing the LDN baseline and revising the institutional framework to include LDN considerations. Furthermore, the project will establish the LDN targets and define key policy and technical measures to reach LDN. The project is aligned with the GEF6 Programming Directions, namely the LD-2 Program 3: Landscape Management and Restoration and LD-3 Program 4: Scaling-up sustainable land management through the Landscape Approach.

INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY & SCALING-UP:

Scaling up will be ensured through developing the 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 for further replication in other affected areas in North Macedonia. The project will build

capacity in both local and national level resource managers and relevant authorities (MoEPP and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Economy) in land use planning, SLM and SFM practices, ecosystem restoration, and use of economic instruments in order to ensure scaling up throughout North Macedonia is facilitated. 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 and is a novel attempt in the country in this context.