

Enhancing Environmental Security and Transboundary Cooperation in the Golok/Kolok River Basin

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10794

Countries

Regional (Malaysia, Thailand)

Project Name

Enhancing Environmental Security and Transboundary Cooperation in the Golok/Kolok River Basin

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

12/7/2022

Review completed by PM

4/12/2023

Program Manager

Astrid Hillers

Focal Area

International Waters

Project Type

FSP

PIF

CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes, it remains aligned. Please note though that the focal area elements were left blank in table A.

Please address.

(4/12/2023)

Addressed and Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO:

Table A was completed with the missing information.

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/19/2023)

1. Please comment or revise ranking of the Rio Markers for contributions to BD and LD. The project in its objective and table B - among other - aims to address erosion and prevent loss of freshwater ecosystems. Please comment/address.
2. The distinct outputs on gender are noted. In addition please make sure that gender is mainstreamed within the design and description of project activities (see comment in Part II).
3. Please note that the formulation of outcome 5 does not terribly well align with the outputs under the same component. You may want to consider a distinct output for M&E.
4. Ditto for wording of outcome 6 which does not include to mention KM which is a considerable part of the outputs.
5. On the proportionality of the PMC: the co-financing contribution to PMC is not proportionate compared with the GEF contribution to PMC. If the GEF contribution is kept at 5%, for a co-financing of \$28,779,570 the expected contribution to PMC is around \$1,238,978 instead of \$290,430 (which is 1.0%).

While the comment is noted on the limitation of co-finance via recurring and recurring national funds is limited to what the countries and the executing agency directly allocate to this project, it does not fully explain why e.g. staff such as the national coordinator or other could not be funded as in-kind contribution via PMC.

(4/12/2023)

Comments 1. - 3. addressed. Comment 4 addressed in output 6.3.

Comment 5: The effort to explore options with the executing agency and the countries to realistically and transparently allocate Co-finance to PMC is noted as well as the limitations stated. As you state while the policy guidelines urge to keep the same proportion for grant to co-finance for PMC as for the overall project, this is not always possible. Therefore there is no firm GEF policy fixing this ratio and some flexibility is possible as long as all effort is made to keep the ratio. In this case the PMC co-finance is a bit over 1% which is low but can be accepted on exceptional base for this project.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO:

1. The RIO markers for BD and LD were not changed. Simply, at the time of submission of the PIF, these two indicators were not included in the portal template. Both of them have been now set to 1 to reflect the contribution of the project, as described in table B.
2. Gender focused descriptions have been added to each output, as advised.
3. A separate M&E output has been added and the Results Framework has been revised accordingly.
4. Wording in Outcome 6 has been revised as follows: ?Coordination mechanisms, knowledge management and sharing with ongoing??
5. The co-financing to PMC has been slightly increased through the FAO co-financing commitment. GEF co-financing policy and ratios set portfolio level ambitions to be adapted to the specificity of each project and different agencies. Both the GEF guidelines to co-financing policy and the guidelines to PPC policy refers to the need to tailor the co-financing amounts to the specificity of each project. In this case, the PMC co-financing is already entirely allocated for the management of the co-financing portion of the project and there is no room for cost-sharing arrangements of the coordinator. The proposed PMC co-financing ratio is the best that the Agency, the Country and the available co-financiers can provide.

3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response N/A

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023)

The amounts are consistent with the letters of co-finance, incl. in-kind and public investment for Thailand.

1. What is the co-finance from FAO ?
2. Please double check the sum of in-kind PMC co-finance detailed in the letters of co-finance (USD 290 K?) Also, see the comment on PMC and co-finance above.

3. Please comment on the co-finance listed by both countries for "piloting nature based solutions for improved transboundary food and sediment management". These activities seem highly complimentary. It is listed by Thailand as public investment and by Malaysia as in-kind. Why the difference and also could staff time provide co-finance towards PMC on national level ?

(4/12/2023)

Comments 1 and 2 addressed.

Comment 3. We do not want to jeopardize endorsement for this project which has been prepared despite its sensitive nature and has specific importance to environmental security dimensions. Please note though that in future country discussions on co-finance should include transparency on the nature of e.g. in-kind co-finance (as well as of course investment mobilized) to assure tracability and verification by mid-term. We understand that in the given time there are no more options for a country visit and detailing this, but please assure that the type/nature of country co-finance will be followed up and documented in the inception phase. Thank you.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO May2023:

Thanks for the advice, which we fully understand. FAO ensures that the co-financing will be followed up and documented in the inception phase.

Response FAO:

1. FAO co-financing letter has been included and uploaded.
2. PMC total was increased. A new PMC total with the FAO contribution is now included. As explained above, though, the co-financing allocated to PMC cannot be artificially increased more than this if the countries and stakeholders to the project indicated something different in their letters.
3. The co-finance for Component 3 includes investments by both countries that the GEF funding will be able to influence (e.g. their project design, location, management). Hence, there will be a highly synergetic relationship between the countries' co-finance and this GEF project. The choice of Malaysia to indicate them as public investment and by Thailand as in-kind cannot be questioned by FAO. The countries decided to do so after several meetings in which we duly explained to them the different typology of co-financing. The same applies to their choice to indicate what they indicated as co-fin to PMC.

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023) Yes, the financing table is adequate.

Cleared.

Agency Response
Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response
Core indicators

7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023)

There are no changes from PIF.

1. Can you please provide an estimate on ha covered by pilots addressing erosion control and siltation and/or other NBS leading to better state of land and ecosystems ? Please also make sure that the project will track and quantify the impacts and co-benefits to livelihoods and ecosystems. Good baselines on the scale of the pilot areas will need to be established.

2. The number of beneficiaries is noted and consistent with the PIF. However, please note that the prodoc under the heading "10. Benefits" (pg. 97) notes 450.000 beneficiaries. Please comment.

(4/12/2023) Agency response and explanation on the different notion of beneficiaries noted. Comments addressed.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO:

1. A conservative estimate of 2,000 ha for the implementation of pilots has been added. A statement assuring to conduct a baseline assessment and an impact assessment for all pilots has also been included. This will inform upscaling strategies accordingly.
2. Table E was adjusted in response to GEFSEC guidance to include only the most direct beneficiaries, involved in pilots. Under "10. Benefits" we include the downstream impacts of changes triggered by the project, which will unfold in form of reduction of floods & droughts (frequency and magnitude), and siltation.

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Overall yes. For detailed comments see comments under question 3 below.

Cleared.

Agency Response

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) The baseline situation is well described. Baselines projects are implicit described under baseline situation and the directly following institutional, legal and policy framework sections. It would be helpful to add a short table listing a short description of main baseline projects in each country and on regional level (as far as there are any on regional level).

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO:

Please refer to Tables 10 and 11 who provide this information

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(1/19/2023) The overall approach to the problem and components are well placed, yet the component description section is insufficiently detailed and hardly more elaborate than at concept stage. This is surprising as there is considerable detail in the accompanying documents that suggest that there is a detailed underlying project design, such as reflected in the gender action plan and the workplan table.

1. Please provide a significantly more granular description of the project component, scope of activities and executing partners for each component. Please then assure also that the Results Framework (RF) is somewhat more detailed and aligns with the revised project description (just to mention one simple example: the project aims to formulate and implement a communications strategy, but this is not reflected in the results framework; the results framework requires more detail and SMART indicators for some of the actions e.g. definition of indicators and targets on what are considered gender responsive indicators).

2. Please that considerations of gender (and/or other roles of specific population groups) are taken up within and mainstreamed across the project component description. In addition, references to specific sections of the gender action plan for additional detail may be very useful. Same for the stakeholder involvement plan.

3. The Theory of change mentions the projects expected co-benefits , such as on coastal fisheries as well as a number of other NBS and S2S related co-benefits. These should be tracked and quantified. It will be extremely useful to capture co-benefits to ecosystems and livelihoods to support the scale-up of successful interventions in the future.

3. Institutional arrangement. Please include a clearer role of national agencies in the component description. Will the national coordinators be housed in these agencies ?

4. Similarly on regional level, what is the role of the Golok/Kolok River Basin Commission, the JTC and technical working groups in relation to the project/ PMU and project staff? Can this be made more easy to understand? e.g. could one find a way to show this is the institutional arrangement diagram?

5. Please specify that the SAP adoption requires signature of at least one Minister from each country and should include quantified targets, i.e. clear commitment e.g. to improve certain EQ indicators via policy reform and/or investments.

6. Typo: Please eliminate mention of the Panj river (activity 5.1)

7. Capacity building of the Golok/Kolok River basin Commission: This is to be addressed within component 2.1 but is not detailed in the RF. Will this be initiated based on a short institutional needs assessment or was this done during project design? 2.1 mentions a "TOR" for the commission. These types of definition mandates and institutional frameworks usually takes the form of formal legal frameworks between the countries. Please comment and possible annex the existing legal framework underlying the cooperation on the Golok/Kolok river basin.

8. Please provide expected selection criteria, scope (\$\$/ha/other), average budget and implementation modalities for the pilot interventions.

9. The private sector (e.g. rubber plantations) appear to have a significant role in the land and water management in the basin. Please include in the description where the private sector will be involved (in which outputs).

10. Budget:

i. Please add a column and indicate the executing entity that is responsible with relation to each budget line.

ii. Please explain why the salary/consultant costs are front loaded to years 1 and 2. Will most staff only be needed early on and for a limited amount of time?

iii. Please explain the the overall consultant total of USD 2.6 million out of a 4.0 million total. This seems a rather high percentage. Also, the year 1 costs of the national coordinators of USD 174 K appear extraordinary high. Same for the CTA at 362 K.

iv. National coordinators - and other operational costs - should be charged to PMC, not to project components.

(4/12/2023)

1. Overall this is addressed. **Please though:**

(i) there seems to be a **drafting error** in the project description in the ER in component 6. Its states that " ...the regional engagement will establish an additional knowledge exchange platform focused on the Greater Mekong Sub-region and ASEAN". Where is this coming from?

(iv) Output 5.3 - the indicator in the RF counts the "number of stakeholders involved in the project execution" which supposedly is set as 20 at midterm and 50 at the end of the project which surely is confusing and cannot be meant as written. Please revisit.

Comment 2. Please see comment 1 above.

Comment 3. Noted. Addressed.

Comment 4. - 9. Addressed.

Comment 10 - budget: needs additional responses.

(i) Addressed

(ii) Unclear. The workplan states that documents /SAP will endorsed in year 4 and not in year 2. Your response is therefore hard to follow.

(iii) The CTA is budgeted for 362 K in year 1 and over half a million total. This does not align with the daily rates you quote in the response below. It may be best to discuss the consultant costs (quasi project staff) in person before resubmission.

(iv) Noted. Addressed.

(5/11/2023) Comments addressed.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO May2023:

Comment 1:

Re (i): Many thanks for pointing this out. We deleted the reference to ASEAN as this was indeed a drafting error.

Re (iv): We changed it to 20 and 50 stakeholder groups, respectively. We also added examples for what we mean with groups.

Comment 2:

In regards to the suggested changes to the gender ratio, we added minimum target of 20%-35% (pages 77-80, and 127 of the FAO Prodoc attached as PDF in the roadmap of the submission and also reflected in the CEO ER template in the portal).

Comment 10:

Re (ii): Our apologies, there was indeed a mistake in the formulae for how to distribute costs between years, many thanks for pointing this out. We fixed this mistake for all relevant consultants. A new budget has been uploaded to the portal.

Re (iii): Apologies, this was due to an error in the formulae, which we fixed. The annual distribution has been revised to reflect the described tasks per annum. The budget for studies necessary for the pilots, previously included in consultants as labour cost for pilots, were shifted to contracts, as appropriate. A new budget has been uploaded to the portal.

Response FAO:

1. We added more details to all component descriptions and we hope that this clarifies the scope of activities. We also ensured consistency with the RF and can confirm that the development of a communications strategy was already listed as part of Output 5.3. We also reviewed all indicators in the results framework and in the gender action plan (page 77-84) and made additional improvements to ensure that they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
2. Thank you for pointing out this deficiency. We added gender specific aspects to the various components and, where already possible, specified actions. Some additional gender-specific actions are likely to emerge from the TDA and the water and gender analysis. We also added references to the GAP and the stakeholder engagement plan.

3. Re. Theory of Change: Thank you for raising this. We added this point to the text and we will include the monitoring of co-benefits for livelihoods and ecosystems.

Re. Institutional arrangements: We added the description of the role of national agencies in the component description. Yes, both lead agencies (DID in Malaysia and ONWR in Thailand) have offered to host the national teams.

4. The Golok/Kolok River Basin Commission and the JCT have been added in the Execution diagram, Figure 15.
5. We added to this section that the SAP will be signed by at least one Minister in each country.
6. We corrected this typo; apologies and many thanks for pointing this out.
7. Capacity building is captured explicitly, facilitated by Outputs 5.2. Also, Output 2.1 refers to the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the committee/commission for transboundary water management, which is not implying training-type capacity building but rather the development of a clear TOR and its establishment with a clear and relevant role in basin planning processes.

To clarify the institutional structure of the past: both countries initiated the Golok River Mouth Improvement project when siltation made large parts of the river mouth impassable. Under this project, there was a Joint Evaluation Team (JET), a Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG), and a Joint Steering Committee (JSC).

When developing the PIF two options were discussed. First, to expand the focus of the current groups from the river mouth to the whole-of-basin perspective. Second, to start fresh and establish for the purpose of the GEF project new groups. The discussion revealed a clear preference for establishing new groups (option 2), requiring a clear TOR defining the mandate for the relevant groups (e.g. JTC/JTWG of the GEF project).

8. We expanded the text explaining Component 3 (Pilots) covering also these three issues.
9. We added private sector more explicitly to the process of selecting and implementing pilots.
10. Budget:
 - i. Both governments decided to proceed with only one executing agency and they selected MERFI. This is decision was taken by the countries after several meetings. We have to respect this.
 - ii. The majority of consultants will be needed for conducting the TDA. The TDA will be completed within the first 12-15 months. Then the majority of expenditure will shift to the SAP process and the pilots. While the SAP process

also involves consultants the budget for pilots are listed separately (e.g. pilot labor).

- iii. Costs for consultants are mainly linked to Components 1 and 3, and to some extent also to Component 2. Component 1 is very consultant-heavy because it is aiming to deliver the TDA. Consultants in Malaysia and Thailand charge higher fees (between \$170 and \$330 per day, depending on the role) than consultants from developing countries, which has a clear impact on the budget. For international consultants, we have used the lower end of the fee range, at \$620, which is lower to other development projects in the region.

Component 3 adds to the budget for consultants as we split up the pilot budget into a labor line and two other lines (travel expendable, and non-expendable procurement). This will allow us to fund the labor related aspects of executing pilots. Within Component 2, consultants will be required to facilitate a range of workshops (e.g. visioning) and provide expertise on various topics, e.g. EQ targets, data sharing mechanisms, and gender.

- iv. The "national coordinators" are technical staff leading the TDA in each country and leading the largely technical discussion with the relevant government and private sector entities. Consequently, their contribution is largely component specific. This technical work cannot be covered by PMC who is dedicated to management tasks. This is duly justified by Annex O: Terms of Reference for key staff and international Consultants, which is attached to the submission (both in the GEF agency project document and as a standalone document in the roadmap of the submission).

Finally, you may also have noted that the project budget does not include any staff costs because everything will be executed by consultants as suggested and approved in the two countries. This choice obviously increases the allocation under the consultants' category, but on the other hand, leaves to USD 0 the costs allocated under the staff section.

4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) The incremental reasoning is adequate. For detailed comments on the baseline and co-finance please see earlier comments.

Cleared.

Agency Response

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response
Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
N/A

Agency Response N/A
Stakeholders

Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase? Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
(1/19/2023)

The stakeholders involved in the design are outlined. For the implementation phase, please see comment on the component description and indicating there who are the main executing partners for what output.

1. Further, table 15 is very detailed and gives a detailed overview of stakeholders, yet their "engagement and participation role" is very much the same/cut and paste roles across the board. While that may be the case "in general" could you add a column indicating the sub-components for which the listed stakeholders are expected to play these roles (e.g. expertise, advice, guidance etc.)

(4/12/2023)

Addressed.

Agency Response

Response FAO:

We added focus outputs for each stakeholder, see right column in Table 15

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes, the gender analysis has been done.

In fact, this may be one of the few project documents I have come across where the gender action plan (as reflected in prodoc pages 74 to 80) provides the most detailed description and detail of processes in project implementation compared to the overall project description.

1. See earlier comment to mainstream key gender aspects in the overall project component description and/or reference the gender action plan in the component design description and results framework. e.g. will there be targets for targeting women or women's groups as executing partners and/or beneficiaries in the pilots. In particular, describe women's meaningful engagements and contributions in activities under Components 2, 3 and 4 should be ensured (workshops, discussions, visioning exercises, development of actions plans, etc.)

(4/12/2023)

Overall addressed. Please assure that gender differentiated engagement is indeed tracked across project activities and realistic/region appropriate targets are set e.g. for women participation in trainings etc. Noting that especially the water sector is heavily male dominated a 50/50 target will not be appropriate for certain aspects of the project, nevertheless floors and/or other targets should be set where applicable.

(5/11/2023) Comment addressed. Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO May2023:

We can assure that gender differentiated targets will be tracked during the execution phase.

We also reconfirmed our current targets with our national coordinators.

In areas heavily male dominated, we have revised the gender ratio, adding a minimum target of 20%-35% (Section 3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, pages 77-80, and 127 of the FAO Prodoc attached as PDF in the roadmap of the submission and also reflected in the CEO ER template in the portal).

Response FAO:

As mentioned before, we added gender specific aspects to the output descriptions, which complements the GAEP (page 77-84) and Annex H.

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Main private sector actors are listed and seen mainly as stakeholders in project and pilot design and as beneficiaries of the project activities.

1. Will they be consulted and providing views and inputs to the TDA ? the SAP ?
2. While benefitting from flood control and reduced erosion and/or sedimentation will the project aim to work with private sector groups (large and small) to have them e.g. improve land management practices to decrease erosion ?

(4/12/2023) Thanks for that confirmation and please capture during implementation in progress reporting/PIRs as well as specifically in the MTR.

Cleared

Agency Response

Response FAO:

1. Yes, the private sector actors will be consulted for the TDA to fill data gaps (not just ex-post but also ex-ante to capture private sector planning) and engaged for developing the SAP, which should ultimately lead to more resilient strategic actions (as private and public sector planning is coordinated).
2. Yes, this will be a major element of the SAP but also a major focus for the pilots in component

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023)

1. Please indicate main climate risks (quantified) and why coastal inundation and erosion not add to the shifting of the delta and hence add to the challenge of the river delineating the boundaries between countries.
2. Please comment why the buy-in and support to the commission and a collaborative mechanism is seen as so low, while t this has not shown much progress in the past.
3. How does the project address a real threat to the sustainability of project interventions given that - so far - the project design and description does not outline an exit strategy on regional nor on local/pilot levels. Please address in the risk section and reflect /include in the project description.

(4/12/2023)

Thanks for the responses. Comments 1 and 2 addressed.

Comment 3. How will the joint body be financed after project closure ? Will there be a dialogue with countries to establish cash or in-kind/staff contribution past project closure ?

(5/11/2023)

Thanks for addressing this and outlining an exit strategy and clear of project vision in this regard.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO May2023:

Both countries indicate a strong interest in maintaining the transboundary basin management body the project will create. This has been added to the exit strategy after the risk table, as follows:

Exit strategy

In case project objectives have been achieved, both countries will continue coordinating their basin development plans, implement strategic actions as jointly defined in the SAP, and share data, which will ultimately secure the resilience of communities across the Golok/Kolok River basin to floods and droughts (see Theory of Change).

In case project objectives cannot be fully achieved, it is envisioned that the established entities for transboundary water management in the Golok/Kolok River basin will continue to push the delivery of the entire agenda defined by the project. Both countries have made strong commitments to maintaining and supporting a regional entity (commission or committee, and a JTWG) to coordinate development plans in the Golok/Kolok River basin. Establishing such a regional entity beyond the lifetime of the project is a major goal and will be a core focus of the SAP process, and will be included in all related dialogues. Considering that both countries already maintain a commission that is focusing on managing the Golok River mouth and that both countries envision replacing this commission by the entity established by the project it seems very likely that this goal can be achieved.

Response FAO:

1. We added climate change related drivers to the overview of risks.
2. The buy-in and support to the commission cannot be perceived as low. We would argue that the opposite has been the case. However, the current cooperation is, by mandate, focused on siltation of the river mouth. The existing JTWG emphasized that this step is necessary but only deals with the symptoms; the focus should shift to a basin wide perspective, which this project aims to support and facilitate. And both countries have committed to engage in this project to shift to a whole-of-basin perspective.
3. We added an exit strategy in the risk section describing both scenarios, a situation in which all project objectives have been fully achieved and a situation in which not all objectives have been fully achieved.

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) There is a description on coordination mechanisms and cooperation with related efforts on national level.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) The project document includes a set of appropriate knowledge management and learning activities, especially as part of its 6th component and its outputs on knowledge sharing and coordination, including project participation in IW:Learn. The project's KM Approach has been adequately elaborated. The project document also includes a KM budget.

However, a timeline for implementing listed knowledge management activities has not been included.

1. Please provide a timeline for implementing planned knowledge management activities, including communication plan/strategy implementation.

(4/12/2023)

An overall timeline has been included as part of the workplan. While quite high level, this gives an indication and we look forward to seeing this further defined during project implementation in the yearly work planning.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO:

We added KM activities to the work plan in Annex H available as part of the FAO Project Document appended in the roadmap of the submission.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Project is rated by FAO as low risk.

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes. A budgeted M&E plan is included. A better cross reference between tables 18 and 19 still would be helpful .

Cleared.

Agency Response

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) yes.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) See earlier comments to provide more detail, align with a more detailed project description and add SMART indicators and targets accordingly where needed (e.g. indicate scope of pilots; targets and gender indicators within components; etc.) and in response to the comments under question 3.

(4/12/2023) See earlier discussion. No additional responses needed here.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO

All comments have been duly addressed, as described in the responses above.

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) See above, including the request at PIF stage to quantify by endorsement the area to be addressed for erosion control measures and NBS and how the project will utilize and build on existing national flood models.

addressed

Agency Response

Response FAO

All comments have been duly addressed, as described in the responses above.

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) Please address the comment from the German Council member:

Germany Comments

Germany approves the following PIF in the work program but asks that the following comments are taken into account:

Suggestions for improvement to be made during the drafting of the final project proposal:

? Data management is mentioned as a gap, but only little efforts are undertaken to improve the situation. ?Developing detailed specifications for regional data management system to support freshwater management in the Basin? may not be sustainable. The project could consider initiating a joint database.

? Both countries will co-finance the project with already planned measures and activities (in-kind contribution). Instead of planning new NbS pilots, it could be more effective to make

already planned measures 'greener' and to adapt them towards a NbS approach. This could be done quite cost-effective, because SAP already requires an assessment of the existing and planned projects.

(4/12/2023) Thank you for addressing the German council comments.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO

A table with responses to country comments has been added in Annex B: Response to Project Reviews.

- Re. data management: Many thanks for this comment. Output 2.4 is targeting a joint database. The team framed it as a data management system to go beyond and include the maintenance of the database beyond the lifetimes of the project.
- Re. pilots: Thank you for the recommendation. This has been added as an option to be explored during the assessment of existing and planned pilots in Component 3.

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/19/2023) STAP questions on climate risks on the project, on conflict potential and a need to quantifying adaptation benefits during project implementation are anticipated to be clearer in a revised submission.

Also, please expand on the request to outline specific lessons learned that the project design has taken into account and the project will build on, including the active participation of communities and local governance structures.

(4/12/2023) Thank you for expanding the response and addressing the STAP comments more fully.

Cleared.

Agency Response

Response FAO

The relevant risks in 'Section A: Risks to the project?' have been expanded in response to the STAP comments.

We also added specific lessons learnt to the end of the baseline section, as follows:

- The key lesson learnt from baseline projects is that floods, droughts, erosion and siltation cannot be effectively addressed by countries individually or by collaborative interventions that solely focus on the river mouth. This insight has already been stated in 2016 by the Joint Evaluation Team (Jet) of the Golok/Kolok River Mouth Improvement project. Also, over the years, flood-focused infrastructure investments have only temporarily mitigated flood risks for parts of the basin, often shifting flood risks to other parts of the basin. Both countries are fully committed to jointly manage flood and drought risks, erosion and siltation in a whole-of-basin approach, which is paramount for the project.
- Another lesson learnt concerns multi-level governance. While many institutional aspects are very positive, community-level action lags behind. Consequently, the project will involve most affected communities in the development of pilots and include strongly a community perspective in the upscaling strategy for pilots and the overarching SAP. This will be supported by conducting interviews with communities to understand the behavioral and intentional dimensions relevant for land and ecosystem management decisions on the ground.

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response N/A

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response N/A

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response N/A

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request duplicative field; already commented on

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request duplicative field; already commented on

Agency Response

Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

N/A

Agency Response

N/A

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response N/A

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response N/A

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1/20/2023) No, please address comments and resubmit. Please feel free to reach out if you would like to discuss the comments given by GEFSEC.

(4/12/2023) No, please address the few remaining comments and resubmit. We suggest a call to clarify the budget before resubmission.

(5/11/2023) The comments have been addressed. The project is technically cleared and recommended for endorsement.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	1/19/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/12/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	5/14/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

Background. The Golok/Kolok River is one of the 137 rivers worldwide that define international borders, many of which face various levels of conflict hindering sustainable development, including in the Golok/Kolok River. The Golok/Kolok River defines the international border between two important South East Asian countries: The Kingdom of Thailand and peninsular Malaysia. Transboundary cooperation between the two countries would enable both sides to better promote sustainable basin management and overall environmental security and address common challenges. At the same time, it highlights an important opportunity to establish and consolidate transboundary cooperation as the essential prerequisite to respond to a number of the challenges facing the two riparian countries and the population of the basin; among them: increasing flood risks, accelerated upstream erosion and siltation at the river mouth, growing contamination of both surface and groundwater resources, and the loss of freshwater ecosystem services.

The project will improve transboundary management of flood risks and erosion processes, and develop jointly agreed and evidence-based investment plans that will be needed to reverse degradation trends and decrease the conflict potential associated with the shifting river mouth which demarcates the border between the two countries. The manageable scale of the Golok/Kolok River basin provides an opportunity to move forward comprehensive and effective transboundary cooperative institutional mechanisms and operationalize management arrangements aimed at improving social stability, easing conflicts at the water nexus, and preserving ecosystem services. The project also implements innovative approaches in the region including the introduction of conjunctive management of surface and groundwater in the Golok/Kolok River basin, the design and testing of nature-based solutions for improved water management, aquifer recharge, erosion control, enhancing buffer zones, and nature based flood management via flood expansion areas. The project aims to adopt a systematic source-to-sea approach that accounts for impacts of upstream activities on coastal and marine resources.

Innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up. A key initial focus of the project will be on the two most conflict-laden topics, establishing a common understanding and evidence base on the erosion/siltation driven shifting of the Golok/Kolok River mouth and the coordination of flood mitigation investments. Other key aspects of the project are to address main drivers of environmental degradation in the basin i.e. increased resilience to climate change, deforestation, and land use change. Land use change and deforestation are being recognized as one driver for erosion and therefore a root cause of the siltation and shifting of the river mouth. The proposed project is aiming to influence existing infrastructure investment plans and land-use planning and will build on the previous global GEF-funded project ?Development of tools to incorporate impacts of climatic variability and change, in particular floods and droughts, into basin planning processes?.