

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

### Basic Information

**GEF ID**

10794

**Countries**

Regional (Malaysia, Thailand)

**Project Title**

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

**GEF Agency(ies)**

FAO

**Agency ID**

FAO: 666262

**GEF Focal Area(s)**

International Waters

**Program Manager**

Astrid Hillers

# PIF

## Part I – Project Informatic

### Focal area elements

#### 1. Is the project/program aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements in Table A, as defined by the GEF 7 Programming Directions?

##### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. The LOEs from both countries need to be submitted for this project to be considered.

With regard to COVID-19 implications, the COVID-19 section discusses the state of the pandemic in the two countries and issues related to travel for the project; however, it does not sufficiently address how the Golok River and anticipated project activities have been and will be affected. The COVID-19 box briefly notes that freshwater system related jobs and livelihoods will be adversely affected by the pandemic; however, it does not discuss how and to what extent related to Golok River. Nor does the PIF discuss how the project will address these concerns. Please strengthen these aspects.

(9/20/2021 - AH)

- Please note that this review (9/20/2021) will refer to the country agreed updated PIF which was submitted on September 15 for consideration for the next work program). It picks up the previously made comments as applicable.

- Yes, the PIF is aligned with the relevant focal area elements in table A.

- **PLEASE NOTE:** in part I of the entry into the portal: Please add the countries in addition to classifying the project as "regional". It should read instead: Countries: Regional, Malaysia, Thailand

(10/07/2021 - AH) Comment addressed. **Cleared.**

##### Agency Response

Part I of the entry into the portal has been changed accordingly. It now read as Regional, Malaysia, Thailand.

### Indicative project/program description summary

## 2. Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound, appropriate, and sufficiently clear to achieve the project/program objectives and the core indicators?

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. The objective needs to be a concise statement focused on impact. Please remove “mechanisms” and “policies” and focus on “effectively manage transboundary flood risks and erosion processes...” “reverse degradation” and “enhance environmental security...”

Examples of project objectives from other PIFs: 1) improve natural resource governance in the Gulf of Thailand through the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) contributing to the fisheries objectives of the South China Sea LME; 2) improve governance and management of ecological networks of marine protected areas, their components, and marine biodiversity conservation corridors in the Gulf of Thailand, South China Sea, Sulu-Celebes Seas, the Indonesian Sea, and Bay of Bengal to increase their coverage, better conserve globally significant biodiversity, and support sustainable fisheries and other ecosystem goods and services in these Large Marine Ecosystems.

Component 1, outcomes and outputs – The Project Description section notes that the aim of the project is to improve social stability and ease conflicts. It also notes concerns regarding local businesses. Despite this emphasis, the analysis of the river system neglects to address any aspects of social or economic dimensions. focus seems to be on the ecological aspects without consideration of the socioeconomic aspects, including the demographics of the users, their perceptions (are they even concerned regarding water issues?), their dependencies on the river for livelihoods, food security, etc, the value of the river in economic terms.

Following are more specific comments. Please note that the alternative scenario section needs to provide the theory of change, which would explain the logic of the project framework, including answering many of these questions.

Output 1.2 – why is there a particular focus on the mouth of the river? Why a detailed survey of the mouth and not other parts of the river?

Output 1.3 and 1.4 – these outputs focus on flood risk and erosion. However, the project description notes several concerns: increased flood risks, accelerated upstream erosion and siltation at the river mouth, growing contamination of surface and groundwater resources, and loss of freshwater ecosystem services. The PD specifically highlights the need for action related to sediment transport and floods and droughts. Why aren't these other concerns also being addressed with outputs?

Output 1.3 – this output focuses on planned infrastructure; however, there are several impacts of concern, including deforestation and land use. Why the focus only on infrastructure? Why not address land use plans? Also, does “planned infrastructure” mean dams? Does it refer to nature-based solutions?

Output 1.5 – as Astrid noted, it would seem that a gender analysis would be conducted during project design, including development of a gender action plan. It's unclear if both are needed.

Output 1.8 – it is unclear why there would be a specific output on training on gender instead of including with the broader category of training in Output 1.6

Outputs 1.4, 1.7, 1.8 - It seems a lot that three of the seven outputs are specifically focused on gender. While an important issue, gender is not the focus of this project and it would seem these aspects would be covered within the relevant plans.

Component 2 – This component seems duplicative with Component 4. Both are developing cooperation mechanisms. Component 2 has a bit more specificity in Output 2.2 and 2.3; however, these points would seem to be within the planned SAP in Component 4. Why are these separate?

Output 2.3 – as Astrid noted, please clarify if there is an existing real time flood model upon which coordinated flood mitigation plans (and early warning systems?) will be built.

Output 3.1 – as note by Astrid, be careful to define pilots only after conclusion of the TDA, which may cause timing issues with pilots starting too late into project implementation and consequently may not become sustainable before the end of the project. During PPG ensure that the projects are designed with solid monitoring alongside so that impacts (costs and benefits) can be made transparent as a basis for future scaling.

Component 4 – will the SAP be implemented during the project? If not that's fine. Just want to be clear.

Component 5 – what does "adoption" mean?

Component 5 is a bit of a mish mash. Outcome 5 is focused on M&E, yet Component 5 is focused on stakeholder engagement as is Output 5.1. And then Output 5.2 is focused on gender mainstreaming for the entire project. Suggest to either broaden the component to be about stakeholder engagement as well as M&E or create a separate M&E component.

Output 5.2 (gender mainstreaming) –It would seem that this is a principle throughout the entire project and perhaps an overall indicator, not a specific output only for Component 5. As Astrid commented, having "gender mainstreaming" separate defeats the purpose of mainstreaming gender throughout the project.

Component 6 – is noted as "outcome 6" so please edit this typo. This component should entail more than IWLEARN engagement. Please add other outputs to reflect working beyond IWLEARN, such as initiatives specific to the region and countries and to freshwater issues.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)**

1. Please revise the PDO to clearly express what the project is to achieve. Note: it may help to think about the PDO as being the 'end' i.e. alignment with the Theory of Change as well as being able to formulate PDO level indicators ("how" and "what" is to be achieved)

Please maintain the focus in the project as expressed in the PDO that indicates the need for both (regional and national) policy reforms and investments.

2. Component 1, outcomes and outputs – The Project Description section notes that the aim of the project is to improve social stability and ease conflicts. It also notes concerns regarding livelihoods and local businesses. Despite this emphasis, the analysis of the river system neglects to address any aspects of social or economic dimensions. The focus seems to be on the ecological aspects without consideration of the drivers and socioeconomic aspects, including the demographics of the users, their dependencies on the river for livelihoods, food security, etc, the value of the river in economic terms.

3. Outcome 1: "*Consensus among ALL stakeholders incl de minimis on present and likely future threats...*" – it may be worthwhile to add a footnote somewhere to provide a definition on how the term "consensus" is used/to be understood here (i.e. else could be a tall order if a

strict definition of consent is understood ?)

4. Outputs 1.2 - please provide some thoughts/detail on the main issues and reasoning for the survey and please consider to mention and address the benefit of a "joint" basin survey.

5. Outputs 1.3 and 1.4 – these outputs focus on flood risk and erosion. However, the project description notes several concerns: increased flood risks, accelerated upstream erosion and siltation at the river mouth, growing contamination of surface and groundwater resources, and loss of freshwater ecosystem services. The PD specifically highlights the need for action related to sediment transport and floods and droughts. Why aren't these other concerns also being addressed with outputs?

6. Outputs 1.6., 1.7, and 1.8 - please assure that these methodologies and trainings on gender lead to true integration of gender consideration throughout the project (incl. e.g. in the design of flood risk management measures (component 2) and implementation and access to resources to NBS for erosion control (component 3). Are there any other socio-economic or otherwise vulnerable or minority groups that require specific consideration in project design ?

7. Component 2 title, editorial comment: there seems to be an "and" too many. Please reread.

8. Outcome 2 and output 2.5 have nearly identical wording. You may want to keep these somewhat unique as 2.5 covers a subset of component 2 only.

9. Output 2.3 – please clarify if there is an existing real time flood model upon which coordinated flood mitigation plans (and early warning systems?) will be build. Otherwise the resources for this component are too limited.

10. Output 3.1 – be careful to define pilots only after conclusion of the TDA, which may cause timing issues with pilots starting too late into project implementation and consequently may not become sustainable before the end of the project. During PPG ensure that the projects are designed with solid monitoring alongside so that impacts (costs and benefits) can be made transparent as a basis for future scale up of these measures.

11. Component 4 – will the SAP be implemented during the project? If not that's fine and actually perfectly realistic. Just want this to be clear.

12. Output 4.1: Please replace "on ministerial level" to "by at least one Minister from each country". We have seen that the formulation *on ministerial level* has often led to confusion and discussions between agencies and countries. As you know GEF will only consider to fund GEF SAP implementation at a later stage if SAPs are signed by country Ministers.

Please also make clear that the TDA and SAP development is a consultative and participatory process.

13. Component 5 – what does "adoption" mean here? Component 5 is a bit of a mish mash. Outcome 5 is focused on M&E, yet Component 5 is focused on stakeholder engagement as is Output 5.1. And then Output 5.2 is focused on gender mainstreaming for the entire project. Suggest to either broaden the component to be about stakeholder engagement as well as M&E or create a separate M&E component.

14. Output 5.2 (gender mainstreaming) –It would seem that this is a principle throughout the entire project and perhaps an overall indicator, not a specific output only for Component 5. Having "gender mainstreaming" separate defeats the purpose of mainstreaming gender throughout the project.

(10/07/2021 - AH) The comments have been addressed in the revised FII. The project component descriptions are concise for a FII, but clear. **Cleared.**

## Agency Response

**Re 1:** We changed “prepare for investments, to “develop jointly agreed and evidence-based investment plans”. This defines a clearer, quantifiable objective, which implies also the “How”.

**Re 2:** Agreed. We added the obviously missing socio-economic dimension to the TDA in Output 1.1.

**Re 3:** The definition of Consensus is “a general agreement”, which is exactly what the project aims achieving in this Outcome. We added this to the footnote on page 18 to avoid any misunderstanding.

**Re 4:** Agreed. We changed it to “Joint detailed basin-wide survey of issues affecting erosion and siltation of the Golok/Kolok River mouth”, as this project aims to approach the erosion and flood problem from a whole-of-basin perspective within a transboundary process. It also conveys that this survey is about identifying key drivers for erosion and flood risks.

**Re 5:** Agree. We added them to the two outputs:

Output 1.3: Assessment of impacts of planned infrastructure and land use plans on flood risks, growing contamination of surface and groundwater resources, and loss of freshwater ecosystem services.

Output 1.4: Water, pollution and land use management options and opportunities identified to reduce flood risks, mitigate erosion, growing contamination of surface and groundwater resources, and loss of freshwater ecosystem services.

**Re 6:** During the Project preparation phase, we will ensure that gender focused capacity building will lead to true integration of gender considerations across the various aspects of project implementation (incl. components 2 and 3). For this reason, we decided to restructure the outputs and shifted the capacity building to Component 5 (output 5.2).

The in-depth work planned for the PPG will give us more opportunities to talk to stakeholders on the ground in the key Provinces, Kelantan in Malaysia and Narathiwat in Thailand. The data currently available to the team does not suggest any vulnerable groups or vulnerable minority groups.

**Re 7:** Thanks for pointing this out, and apologies for the mistake, which we have now fixed.

**Re 8:** We agree and shifted the EQ element to Output 2.1. We also added transboundary to the Output title. We hope this creates sufficiently unique wording.

**Re 9:** We added “Both countries started independently, based on their own data the development of whole-of-basin flood models.” Both models are expected to be fully operational by the time actual project execution starts. However, there will be a process of bringing both sides together and making improvements as part of this process.

**Re 10:** The approach assumes that pilots will already be designed during the first 12 months of the project execution (while the discussion

will already start during the PPG phase). Nevertheless, the selection of pilots should be evidence based. We plan to have the TDA ready latest after 15 months of the project while preliminary results will be presented already after 6, 9 and 12 months. This means that some

pilots are likely to find sufficient evidence during the first year and will then commence early, while other pilots might only start in month 15. Considering that by that stage the design process will already be finalized it should still give at least 3.5 years for these pilots, which should be sufficient for designing the upscaling phase.

**Re 11:** We changed the wording to make this clearer. Yes, we plan to finalize the SAP within the 5-year timeframe of this project.

**Re 12:** We change the ministerial statement, thanks. We also changed 4.1 to include “A Strategic Action Program (SAP) emerging from a consultative and participatory process, listing key priority reforms and investments...”.

**Re 13:** We agree that this component title was quite ambiguous. To avoid any confusion we changed it to “Cross cutting themes – Monitoring, stakeholder participation, and gender mainstreaming.”

**Re 14:** We agree, and we emphasize “in ALL activities throughout project implementation”. We have also references to gender in several other output descriptions, and we aim for true gender mainstreaming. However, we believe this is most effectively achieved by having team members responsible as a cross-cutting theme across all outputs and define here an output for this cross-cutting activity.

## Co-financing

**3. Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines, with a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized?**

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH)

- 1. 1. Are there no other PDO and implementation relevant development partner projects that can be leveraged as co-finance besides country co-finance ? Also, FAO co-finance with 36 K is very low (and please change YES to “in kind” in the co-finance table)
- 2. Malaysia co-finance: Please just make clearer why not all of the 75 million for flood forecasting and other is relevant to the Golok/Kolok. Only 14 million are counted.

(10/07/2021 - AH) Please add the type of finance as "recurring expenditures" for the FAO in-Kind co-finance.

(10/15/2021 - AH) Addressed. **Cleared**

### **Agency Response**

**Re 1:** Yes, we can confirm that to the best of our knowledge only the listed country investments will be available and no further projects by other development partners. This will be updated during the PPG phase. FAO's co-finance will be reassessed and increased as appropriate during the PPG phase. This will also include the time dedicated by FAO's staff for the project preparation, missions, meetings, etc. Thanks for pointing out the mistake, we change YES to in-kind.

**Re 2:** We added "Only \$14m have been counted as co-investment according to what falls into the expected timeframe of project implementation."

**10/13/2021 FAO:** the type of in-Kind co-finance of FAO has been set to "recurring expenditures" in the portal. This was done in both in the portal section and in the attached PIF in PDF format).

### **GEF Resource Availability**

**4. Is the proposed GEF financing in Table D (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):**

#### **Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

**Cleared**



Agency Response

N/A

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion N/A

Agency Response

N/A

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion Yes.

Agency Response N/A

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion N/A

Agency Response N/A

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion N/A

Agency Response N/A

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion N/A

Agency Response N/A

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion N/A

Agency Response N/A

Project Preparation Grant

**5. Is PPG requested in Table E within the allowable cap? Has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated? (not applicable to PFD)**

**Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response N/A

**Core indicators**

**6. Are the identified core indicators in Table F calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines? (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)**

**Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Table B lacks indicators, which need consideration and will need elaboration in the CEO Endorsement Request.

(9/20/2021 - AH)

1. Core indicator 7 and sub-indicators are provided.

2. Core indicator 11 should only list number of DIRECT beneficiaries. Please re-confirm that this number is indeed realistic in that sense. It may be high if only the beneficiaries of the local flood management plans and NBS pilots are considered.

3. Note: By endorsement, please provide an estimate for the area addressed by erosion and sediment control NBS measures.

**(10/07/2021 - AH)**

re. comment 2. As indicator 11 is aimed at tracking the direct beneficiaries only, the number of 100 K in the PIF table F appears more in line with the effort and can be reassessed during PPG.

Please remove the reference to 1.1 million basin population in table F/core indicator 11 as this will lead to a confusion in the data capture in the system. You want to explain *in the text* that the SAP will benefit all of the population (for this project indirectly, but expected to have direct impacts on the basin in subsequent implementation).

Re comment 3. The estimate is noted. Would this be under core indicator 4 or to be left for further verification during PPG?

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** Addressed. **Cleared**

## Agency Response

**Re 1:** Thanks

**Re 2:** To be more conservative, we added “Direct beneficiaries: 90,000” as people that will benefit from outcomes achieved during the project timeline. However, we strongly believe that the SAP will benefit the entire basin population.

**Re 3:** At this stage we estimate the area addressed by erosion control measures and NBS at around 100 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of forest areas, river embankment areas, wetlands, and agricultural areas. This figure will be reassessed carefully during the project preparation phase.

**10/13/2021 FAO:**

Re comment 2: We removed the reference to the basin population from the table and added a statement into the text aligning with the Theory of Change (Figure 1).

Re comment 3: At this stage we suggest leaving it for further verification during the PPG phase.

## Project/Program taxonomy

**7. Is the project/program properly tagged with the appropriate keywords as requested in Table G?**

**Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

**Cleared**

**Agency Response N/A**

**art II – Project Justification**

**1. Has the project/program described the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers that need to be addressed?**

**Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) The project has described the environmental problems and barriers. Please address question/comment below:

1. Droughts: you write that the river is frequently running dry in several sections? Since when has this occurred and is this a result mainly due to overuse and/or mismanagement of uses and uncoordinated operation of upstream infrastructure or truly attributable to recent increase of climatic extremes ? How many times has this happened over the last decades and what are the consequences on the river, people and their livelihoods, freshwater ecosystems and coastal zones ? Despite all this and based on the PIF description flooding seems to be the more urgent issue (?). Please clarify.

(10/07/2021 - AH) Thank you for the explanation. What is not so clear is if and how the project will address this other than aiming for including relevant actions in the SAP. Please clarify.

(10/15/2021 - AH) Comment addressed. **Cleared**

## Agency Response

**Re 1:** Floods is definitely the bigger problem, but both countries emphasized the need to include droughts in the PIF as it has become increasingly a problem for ecosystems and for livelihoods.

We haven't been able to specify which sections of the Golok/Kolok River have dried up. Meeting notes of the Golok River Mouth committee mention that this phenomenon was observed a few times without specifying where exactly. (here some published evidence: <https://wildsingaporenews.blogspot.com/2019/03/malaysia-sungai-golok-dries-up.html>). Durign the PPG phase we will be able to add the missing details.

**10/13/2021 FAO:**

This text has been added in the PIF after figure 1: *"The project will address drought as part of the TDA, which will provide essential details on where and how often agricultural and hydrological drought have occurred in the past. The TDA will also analyze drivers (root causes) to identify effective intervention points. Some of these will already be addressed as part of the demonstration projects by testing nature-based solutions for effective drought management responses and, more importantly, to avoid the drying up of river sections in the first place. The SAP will define actions based on the TDA-derived evidence and the experiences made in the pilot projects".*

This together with the already existing paragraph starting with *"NBS will mainly target flood/drought resilience and erosion..."* should clarify.

## 2. Is the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects appropriately described?

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. Within the Baseline Scenario, Institutional and water governance aspects section – given the impact of deforestation and climate change on the river system, the governance aspects of these issues need to be explained for the two countries. Also, in addition to the legislation, the institutional framework of both countries needs to be noted. Finally, for Malaysia, there is insufficient information on the state of legislation.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)**

1. No, please address the governance and institutional settings on national and respective sub-national/district levels relevant to the proposed project activities. Please also expand on the legal and policy framework in Malaysia.

2. Please also outline relevant projects in the area related to the proposed project actions.

(10/07/2021 - AH) the responses are noted as well as revision to the PIF. **Cleared.**

### Agency Response

**Re 1:** We updated the details for Thailand and re-inserted the text for institutional arrangements in Malaysia, which was cut from the PIF by mistake. We expanded on both.

We also added some text on the sub-national level in Malaysia: Malaysia is a federation of states, which makes it critical to stress that natural resources are under the mandate of States, in the case of the Golok/Kolok River Basin in the State of Kelantan. This means that the State Departments responsible for, inter alia, water management, forest management, conservation, and agriculture will be critical stakeholders for the execution of this project.

**Re 2:** We are not aware of any projects by development partners in the Golok/Kolok River basin. However, both governments plan substantial investments in the basin as listed under co-investment. These initiative will be duly monitored and linked to the project during the PPG phase.

### 3. Does the proposed alternative scenario describe the expected outcomes and components of the project/program?

#### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. The alternative scenario section needs to explain the logic of the project. It needs to explain in Table B and the thinking behind it. Many of the questions noted above, such as why the focus on erosion and flooding, should be explained in this section. Instead, this section has overall statements and then lists a series of activities, which do not coincide with Table B. There needs to be an initial theory of change. If the components, outcomes and outputs are to be noted, then ensure they are consistent with Table B.

PD notes that deforestation, land use changes and climate change are major impacts on water security; yet, the alternative scenario section notes the project will focus on climate hazards. Also the source-to-sea discussion does not mention deforestation. Please explain this focus.

(9/20/2021 - AH) No, please also refer back to comments already provided above pertaining to table B.

1. Para 4 (starting “the ultimate achievement” ..): **a.** para mentions the national **implementation** of the SAP in national action plans during the project. As far as I understand SAP implementation is not part of this project. Maybe the following may capture it better “translation of regional SAP into national action plans” (i.e. formulation of these) – please have a look; **b.** the long term intention/outcome does not talk about the goal of increasing transboundary cooperation and high-level dialogue and its co-benefit of reducing tension about the current issue of a shifting river mouth which also defines the boundary.

- 2. The paras on conjunctive management and S2S approaches are too generic and can in essence be used for any project. Can you please put this into specific and relevant terms for the Golok/Kolok river basin?

## Project Framework

3. Please provide a clear theory of change that explains the logic of the project components and is aligned with the (revised) project development objective. Please note that a Theory of Change is best formulated as a narrative and supported by a diagram to illustrate this project logic including assumptions. Please assure that the Theory of Change and the project framework is consistent with table B.

- 4. Please put a few lines of the description in each of the component text that goes beyond table B and aligns with the logic behind Figure 1 and hence enhances the underlying Theory of Change. A sentence or two to frame the component and leads into the list of outputs will do in each component and greatly help to underscore the logical connection across components.
- 5. Component 1: Please put in wording to clarify/make explicit that the TDA is a *participatory process* and involves local/national civil society groups, academia, relevant cross-sectoral government agencies in the basin, and private sector entities.
- 6. Component 3/pilots: During PPG make sure the implementation of the pilots involves local institutional entities and organizations which will aid ownership and development of implementation structures that allow future scale-up.
- 7. Outcome 4 is a bit of a 'mash' on who joins forces on what and who is reaching agreement – some is strictly across the 2 countries (e.g. short and medium/long-term action plans) and others include other development partners. Please sort this out more clearly and enhance the clarity of the text.

**(10/07/2021 - AH)**

1. and 2. - addressed

3. Thank for the inclusion of a concise ToC. Please insert the PDO within the text and diagram as its is a key component of the project logic.

4. Thank for the overall narrative for each component and some of the outputs. While this section remains to be very concise/short, it is overall clear at a PIF stage and is sufficient at this stage. Addressed.

5. - 7. addressed.

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** Comment addressed. **Cleared**



## Agency Response

**Re 1:** We changed it to “will lead after a successful project accomplishment” to clarify that the implementation into national action plans and the securing of funding for actually implementing the SAP will occur after project completion. We also added: “This will establish increasing transboundary cooperation and high-level dialogue and its co-benefit of reducing tension about the current shifting boundary at the river mouth”, thanks for pointing out this gap.

**Re 2:** We adapted these paragraphs to not only outline the generic concepts but also to present these in the context of the Golok/Kolok River basin.

**Re 3:** We added Figure 1 to define the Project Logic and the underpinning Theory of Change, which will be further developed during the ProDoc writing stage.

**Re 4:** We added short narratives for each Component, which align with the theory of change in Figure 1.

**Re 5:** We added: “The TDA will be realized as a participatory process and will involve local and national civil society groups, academia, relevant cross-sectoral government agencies in the basin, and private sector entities. As shown in Figure 1, the TDA process will not only provide a series of sector assessments for the transboundary context of the Golok/Kolok River as evidence for the SAP process. The TDA component will also synthesize findings in form of policy recommendations (e.g. investments in NBS, build infrastructure, or managerial changes) to inform the SAP process as well as the design and selection of pilots in Component 3.”

**Re 6:** Fully agreed. Local institutional entities and organizations will be involved during the implementation for the pilots.

**Re 7:** We added and edited the text. We hope it’s now clear that development partners will be presented with the SAP after the two countries agreed on the strategic actions. Development partners can decide to support the funding of selected actions from the SAP.

**10/13/2021FAO:**

Thanks for pointing out the missing PDO in the ToC. We added it to the diagram as suggested.

## 4. Is the project/program aligned with focal area and/or Impact Program strategies?

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

cleared

Agency Response N/A

5. Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response N/A

6. Are the project's/program's indicative targeted contributions to global environmental benefits (measured through core indicators) reasonable and achievable? Or for adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response N/A

**7. Is there potential for innovation, sustainability and scaling up in this project?**

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response N/A

**Project/Program Map and Coordinates**

**Is there a preliminary geo-reference to the project's/program's intended location?**

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

(9/20/2021 - AH) Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response N/A

## Stakeholders

Does the PIF/PFD include indicative information on Stakeholders engagement to date? If not, is the justification provided appropriate? Does the PIF/PFD include information about the proposed means of future engagement?

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. The PIF only notes that a joint committee enabled discussions; however it is unclear who participated and how often they met. It needs to be clear who and to what extent stakeholders contributed to the PIF. With regard to future stakeholder engagement, only the government agencies are listed. A full list of user groups, including any relevant organizations/ associations, relevant CSOs (e.g. community groups, environmental groups) and other stakeholders needs to be provided for each country and how they will be engaged. The private sector engagement section notes several associations which need to be noted in the stakeholder section.

(9/20/2021 - AH) No.

1. The PIF only notes that a joint committee enabled discussions; however it is unclear who participated and how often they met. It needs to be clear **who** and to **what extent** stakeholders contributed to the PIF.

Please also note, that with regard to future stakeholder engagement, only the government agencies are listed. A comprehensive list of user groups, including any relevant organizations/ associations, relevant CSOs (e.g. community groups, environmental groups) and other stakeholders needs to be provided for each country and **how** they will be engaged. The private sector engagement section notes several associations which need to be noted in the stakeholder section.

2. You'd clearly need to involve some of the key local and municipal stakeholders e.g. in flood affected areas, you also will need support by local NGOs/CSOs and not only international etc.

In addition, it is noted that all workshops are planned in the target basin and will include local governments and community representatives; include local governments and community representatives and that pilots will also be co-designed and co-implemented with local communities and relevant CSOs. The list of stakeholders do not include any information on these groups or their potential role. Please

communities and relevant CSOs. The list of stakeholders do not include any information on these groups or their potential roles. I would provide further information on these key stakeholder groups.

3. Am I overlooking this? I do not see the Joint Golok/Kolok River Basin Commission.

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** The explanation on who was and who was not involved at PIF stage is noted and makes sense given that involvement of local civil society and local government actors was not feasible in PIF development given current COVID travel limitations but also not knowing the locations of on the ground interventions which is reasonably at PIF stage.

Please though further explain and expand on the role of the Golok/Kolok River Basin Commission in PIF development and in the project execution/activities (either here or in the institutional setting; also, where is located?; how it staffed and financed; what are its current mandates ?).

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** Comment addressed. **Cleared**

## Agency Response

**Re 1:** We added the following text: “. Table 1 lists in the gray shaded cells the stakeholders that have been engaged with for the design of the PIF. In Thailand the lead government agency is ONWR and in Malaysia DID. In Thailand a series of six workshops have been held in 2018-2020 to draft and refine the contents of the PIF and ensure that all relevant government agencies are on board. In Malaysia a series of meetings have been held with DID and other MEWA departments in 2018-2019 to ensure the Malaysia’s contributions have been integrated and that all government agencies at central and provincial level are aware and supportive of the proposed initiative. A bilateral workshop was organized on 2 December 2019 bringing together key stakeholders from Malaysia and Thailand. The workshop was hosted by FAO in Bangkok. So far, non-governmental organizations or private sector actors have not been included.”

**Re 2:** We added examples for national CSOs and reemphasized that local communities will co-design and co-implement pilots. However, which ones will depend on the exact pilots and on the location. We also added the private sector players, apologies for this oversight. The

Golok/Kolok River Basin Commission is listed first.

**10/13/2021 FAO:**

We did not add additional text to the PIF because, the Commission is not a staffed entity. The key group is the Joint Steering Committee (JSC). The co-chairman of the JSC is:

- Secretary General, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE), Malaysia and
  - Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), Thailand
- to co-ordinate, approve and decide. The JSC meets every two years.

The Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) meets once a year, which are meetings that are organised by Thailand and Malaysia alternately. The co-chairman of JTWG meeting are

- Deputy Director General (Business Sector), Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID), Malaysia and
- Deputy Director General, Royal Irrigation Department (RID), Thailand.

Considering that the Commission is maintained mainly by DID in Malaysia and RID in Thailand and doesn't actually have its own staff we envision that the third party(ies) will actually manage project execution. This was already discussed and decided by both countries. The JSC and JTWG members will be core participants in the respective TDA/SAP project workshops. The actual execution details will be determined by the countries during the PPG phase.

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

**Is the articulation of gender context and indicative information on the importance and need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, adequate?**

### **Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. The text notes that women are more affected than men, but not how. Please elaborate as well as how the project will address this inequity.

**(9/20/2021 - AH) No.**

Please be more specific in how the project design will address gender inequalities e.g. in a social analysis. as well as provide an initial idea how the project design will address these issues and allow full participation of women and men in project design and implementation. Often women are not only less represented in consultations but also in the access to resources provided via pilot interventions.

In addition, please provide further *indicative* information on how the project expects to address these inequalities – particularly in relation to

the expected measure to closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources and improving women's participation and decision-making.

(10/07/2021 - AH)

Comments have been addressed and we are looking forward to seeing this further unfold during project preparation and presented at endorsement.

**Cleared**

### **Agency Response**

We added more detail on how flood and drought specific vulnerabilities unfold for women. The project preparation phase will obviously develop a much more detailed gender assessment.

Further, we added a paragraph to address gender inequalities during the PPG phase: "The project will address gender inequalities already during the project design phase by employing the following strategies: First, the socio-economic analysis will include an in-depth gender assessment for the Golok/Kolok River basin leading to a robust Gender Action Plan (GAP). Second, the selection of national team members (national coordinators and thematic experts) will prioritize women. Third, all workshops and consultation meetings will explicitly target at least 50% female participants. Fourth, the project will reach out and engage actively with women associations in Thailand and Malaysia to capture the on-the-ground perspective on gender inequality. Fifth, the project preparation phase will involve as required a gender action plan (GAP). These measures will ensure full participation of women in project design and implementation."

We also added a paragraph on how the project expects to address inequalities: "During the project implementation phase, multiple approaches will aim to close the gender gap in access to and control over natural resources and improving women's participation and decision-making. This will include the composition of the Joint Technical Committee and consultant teams for executing the TDA-SAP process. It will also include a focus on developing incentives to close the gender gap on the ground, for instance gendered livelihoods that would further aggravate women's disadvantage due to erosion, floods and droughts."

### **Private Sector Engagement**

**Is the case made for private sector engagement consistent with the proposed approach?**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. There is a useful list of associations; however, these seem to be national organizations. Consideration needs to be given to localized users of the resources. In addition, this section needs to clarify how these groups will be engaged. The text notes there are “several processes that have been established between government agencies and these private sector organizations.” Please explain these processes.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)** No. While you provide a long list of private sector organizations , it is not so clear why all these are so relevant to the project area (being mostly national ones) and project scope. Please revisit and explain the process of involving relevant private sector actors in the project design phase and its consultations. Do you expect the private sector to provide co-finance to some of the project activities ?

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** Thank you for this addition. Just a comment: It will be important to also engage the private sector in the TDA and SAP process as selected entities are likely to be the origin of the observed lead and cadmium loads in the biota. Addressing this will need to include both regulatory approaches by government as well as private sector investment for both pollution prevention and change of processes and improved effluent treatment.

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** Comment addressed. **Cleared**

## Agency Response

The list includes a mix of national and local/provincial entities. While some suggest being national they have their operational focus on Thailand's South (e.g. Narathiwat Province) or Malaysia's North (Kelantan). We added a paragraph to clarify the team's strategy on how to engage with the private sector: “All listed sectors have clear incentives to engage with this project, as all have been increasingly affected by floods. Several processes have been established between Government departments and these private sector organizations. These existing relationships will provide an effective foundation for this project's private sector engagement strategy. The project will engage with private sector entities in partnership with respective Government departments, present the project objectives and the proposed process and identify the roles specific private sectors entities can play. The engagement process will be focused on identifying the benefits the project can generate for private sector entities (e.g. mitigate flood risks for agricultural production, river mouth siltation for fishing sector, or land degradation due to droughts or floods on tourism sector) and design collaborations for specific project activities, including pilots.”

**10/13/2021 FAO:**

Following stakeholder mapping in PPG phase, the private sector will be engaged accordingly in the project development and during the execution in the TDA and SAP, aiming to identify opportunities for investment in pollution prevention, change of processes and improved effluent treatment.



## Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Does the project/program consider potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project/program implementation, and propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design?

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. Given the lack of stakeholder involvement at the community level to date, a “low” rating seems unfounded. Since they have not been engaged, you don’t know. Regarding COVID-19, the risk is not only in terms of access, but also the impacts of COVID9 on the river ecosystem and people dependent on the river as noted in the earlier comment.

(9/20/2021 - AH) No

- 1. The risk rating for stakeholder involvement at community level is given as "low", yet at PIF stage there have not been local consultations yet. (Same by the way applies to the risk of lack of support of local authorities.) The risk mitigation may want to be more clear that e.g. the project will/may/could (???you would need to reformulate this as applicable to what YOU have in mind) use a participatory co-design approach and only those pilots and local on the ground activities that are selected and supported by local authorities and communities will be implemented by the project (component 3).
- 2. COVID-19, the risk is not only in terms of impacts of the COVID on project delivery, but also the impacts of COVID 19 on the the people and any environmental impacts since the onset of the pandemic.

In terms of COVID mitigation measures to address challenges of implementation, consideration could be to build in activities and funds under output 1.6. National Level Training for Data Collection, Analysis and Assessment for TDA that would strengthen and role out tools for remotely engaging actors and support remote project design and supervision tools for national and local authorities. Many of these tools have been developed and training and experience is existing both in the FCV country and DRM contexts. Also, flexibility will be key and the project should consider to invest in staff safety and remote working capacities (such as e.g. provide internet access, dongles etc. to enable out of office work).

(10/07/2021 - AH)

1. It would be better to look at the risks related to local authorities and their engagement separate from the engagement and buy-in by local civil societv/local community members. These groups have often different interests that may or may not align and if and how they may be

civil society/local community members. These groups have often different interests that may or may not align and it and how they may be perceived as equitable to a range of community groups.

2. Comments addressed. During project preparation and when discussing in the field it would be good to identify if government shut-downs have led to increased pollution (incl. single use plastics) and/or illegal deforestation etc.

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** Comments addressed. **Cleared**

### **Agency Response**

Re 1: The local authorities (e.g. provincial departments) have been involved during the design phase as listed in the stakeholder overview (gray areas). Therefore, we decided to leave the risk related to local authorities at 'low'. But indeed, due to COVID the team has not been able to travel to the Provinces to engage with the communities. This will be done during the PPG phase if travel restrictions allow. Consequently, we increased the risk related to local communities to 'medium'.

Re 2: We added an entire Section on COVID related risks. We fully agree that flexibility will be critical for the success of this project and the ability of FAO as the implementing agency and the selected executing agencies to work with local champions on the ground. This will be a key aspect of the team building strategy.

**10/13/2021 FAO:**

We fully agree. For this reason we have separated the risks related to local community members (medium risk) and civil society groups from risk that relate to local government agencies (low risk). Moreover, if need be, we will identify responses to the shut-down on the ground, including changes in deforestation, littering, and water consumption during the PPG phase.

### **Coordination**

**Is the institutional arrangement for project/program coordination including management, monitoring and evaluation outlined?**  
**Is there a description of possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project/program area?**

## Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. These points are not adequately elaborated. The coordination section focuses on how the project will be governed and does not address how the project will coordinate with other GEF-financed projects and other initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation are briefly noted and require further elaboration.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)** No.

- This section should be about the coordination of the proposed project's activities with other relevant initiatives and projects already ongoing or under preparation and less about project execution (which is after all to be designed in detail in the PPG phase).
- 1. On project execution on regional level: there is mention of a third party. Would one not be able to differentiate the *substantive* coordination (the Joint River Basin Commission on regional level and national and local agencies/organizations on national/local levels) and the *financial* handling of resources (for regional level that may be a third party if the Commission cannot).
- 2. There is no mention of relevant other related initiatives or projects that the proposed project and its design will coordinate or create synergies with ?

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** Please add a "tbd" as a third executing agency in Part 1 of the PIF. That third party - as we understand - will mostly be a body to take on the fiduciary responsibility to manage the funds while the substantive lead lays with the mentioned ministries and their local counterparts in both countries as well as the Joint Committee for the Golok/Kolok river. Please confirm (the comments appear to be addressed otherwise).

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** With the explanation provided this can be cleared and noted that the final execution arrangements finalized during PPG. **Cleared**

## Agency Response

Apologies for not addressing these points. We added details on cross-project collaboration and coordination, as well as details on monitoring and evaluation.

**Re 1:** We also added text on execution and coordination.

**Re 2:** We also added text on cross-project coordination.

re 2. we also added text on cross-project coordination.

Consequently, the Section has expanded:

In regards to cross-project coordination, both governments plan to invest in the target basin to reduce flood and drought risks. These infrastructure investments will be informed by the TDA by inviting the relevant lead departments for each investment into the SAP project and into the JTC. The evidence base (TDA) resulting from Component 1 will introduce a basin-wide systems-perspective with all relevant trends and cause-effect relationships to these stakeholders. Then, pipeline investments will be discussed and the project will support the assessment and redesign of these investments to improve basin-wide water security. Cross-project coordination will be further strengthened by regular meetings and workshops, including annual stocktaking events.

In regards to the institutional structure of the project, the Project Management Unit (PMU) will be at the core of the project. Considering the transboundary context of the Golok/Kolok River basin, the PMU will be managed by a third party endorsed by both Governments. The selection of the third party and the design of detailed execution arrangements will be the focus of the project preparation phase and will take into account the substantial coordination challenges across multiple levels of governance and between both countries. Pilot activities defined under Component 3 will be executed by Government agencies. The exact constitution will be designed during the PPG phase. While it will be critical to have (a) third party(ies) managing project activities, many water management related technical processes will be coordinated by the Joint Committee for the Golok/Kolok River. This will involve various central and province level government agencies:

On the Thai side, the Office of National Water Resources (ONWR) in close collaboration with Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Royal Irrigation Department (RID) will lead the project. On the Malaysian side the Water Resources, Drainage, and Hydrology Division under the Ministry of Environment and Water (MEWA) will lead the project in close collaboration with the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID). Other central government agencies will be incorporated in both countries according to their mandate to establish effective policy and planning links for agriculture, forest management, fisheries and fish management, pollution control, poverty alleviation, and conservation.

Province government agencies in Narathiwat (TH) and Kelantan (MY) will play a major role during the TDA and the SAP to ensure the most comprehensive fact-finding outcomes and the best possible contextualization of the ultimate action plan. Both will ensure that implementation investments will not encounter unexpected barriers on the ground. The project will also work extensively with local communities and their representatives to identify the problems affecting, for example, the fishing and farming communities, to seek their active input to develop appropriate solutions to the problems identified.

During the PPG phase, projects in other parts of Thailand and Malaysia will be identified that have a similar focus (e.g. erosion, floods and droughts). The project will connect with these baseline project teams to facilitate cross-basin learning in both countries, which will be partly done through topic specific workshops and partly through the stakeholder engagement process.”

#### 10/13/2021 FAO:

We can confirm that the substantive lead will sit with DID in Malaysia) and (ONWR) in Thailand as well as the Joint Committee for the Golok/Kolok river. DID and ONWR are also lead members of the Commission. We added “tbd” to the third party to further clarify that the execution arrangements will be finalised during the PPG phase.

## Consistency with National Priorities

**Has the project/program cited alignment with any of the recipient country's national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions?**

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)** overall yes, but is there anything you could mention on alignment with national strategies for achieving the SDGs?

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** Comment addressed. **Cleared.**

### Agency Response

Thanks for pointing out this gap. We added the following for achieving SDGs in Thailand:

"The project will also contribute to Thailand's strategy to achieve the SDGs. Thailand has acknowledged the need to adapt to climate change and highlights risks emerging from floods, droughts, and erosion. The project will develop solutions for all three risks for the Golok/Kolok River basin and will thereby strengthen Thailand's efforts to achieve a range of SDGs, including SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 2 (hunger), SDG 3 (healthy lives), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 6 (water), SDG 10 (inequality), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 15 (ecosystems), and SDG 16 (peace). Thailand's core coordination group for the achievement of SDGs is the National Committee for Sustainable Development (CSD). The project will synthesize lessons learned from the TDA and from the pilot projects and present these to the CSD for potential upscaling in other parts of the country.

And the following for Malaysia:

"The project supports the realization of several SDGs (directly and indirectly) and their associated targets, particularly SDG6 (freshwater) and contributing to SDG15 (oceans), SDG 15 (terrestrial), SDG 5 (gender). In Malaysia, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is the focal point for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the SDG Council is the cross-ministerial coordination body. The project will mainly engage and support the work of the Working Committee Environment and Natural Resources under the SDG Council and the Working Committees on Wellbeing and Inclusivity. One of Malaysia's strategies is to improve the resilience of livelihoods and the eradication

Working Committees on Wellbeing and Inequality. One of Malaysia's strategies is to improve the resilience of livelihoods and the eradication

of poverty. This will be supported by the project activities and its focus on rural areas of Kelantan State and many natural resource dependent livelihoods, e.g. fishing and farming. Reducing flood and drought risks and erosion will have positive impacts on community resilience, particularly farmers and fishermen, and ultimately help Malaysia achieving the SDGs."

## Knowledge Management

**Is the proposed "knowledge management (KM) approach" in line with GEF requirements to foster learning and sharing from relevant projects/programs, initiatives and evaluations; and contribute to the project's/program's overall impact and sustainability?**

### Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. Any important aspect of KM not discussed is learning from other projects. Also it is important to share lessons and best practices with similar projects in the region directly – not only at conferences and workshops. Relationships need to be established with similar projects to share experiences to build on each other's lessons.

**(9/20/2021 - AH) No.**

The PIF misses to outline an approach to KM (see above comment). Cooperation IW-Learn is fine (and allotting at least 1 % of the GEF grant to this), but that is at a different level and for different reasons. What other projects and initiatives will this project learn from or build on? e.g. are there any community driven implementation structures that the pilots in the proposed project could build on? Same for any other projects in the countries that successfully work on erosion and sedimentation, water quality improvement etc. in the region this project could learn from? Etc. During implementation the project will also want to showcase its lessons learned and exchange with other projects in the region (virtual and in person) - this will not only be in conferences which mainly cater to international actors but lessons may also be valuable to exchange with other local authorities and groups in other watersheds within each country.

Please revise the KM section and please also include information about: 1) plans to learn from ongoing relevant projects and initiatives, 2) proposed tools and methods for knowledge exchange, learning and collaboration, 3) proposed knowledge outputs to be produced and shared with stakeholders, 4) a discussion on how knowledge and learning will contribute to overall project impact and sustainability, and 5) plans for strategic communications.

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** Thank you for the additions. Please note that it would be useful to budget for and include in the activities/work plan the type of knowledge products to be produced - this assures these to be budgeted for during project design.

Please also add some initial thoughts on subpoints 4) and 5) in the comments above.

(10/15/2021 - AH) Comment addressed in the agency response. **Cleared**

### Agency Response

Despite having gone through a series of meetings and workshops with national and local stakeholders we haven't found an active or planned project on related issues in the Golok/Kolok River basin. Well apart from the government investments listed in the co-finance Section. However, we strengthened the text to clarify that our ambition is to establish effective cross-project learning with initiatives in the wider region, particularly (but not exclusively) in other parts of Thailand and Malaysia. We added a paragraph:

"Furthermore, relationships will be developed with baseline projects to establish an active knowledge exchange network between similar projects in the region. This will allow the identification and realisation of synergies between projects. While there are no development projects active or announced for the Golok/Kolok River basin that focus on floods, droughts or erosion, except government-funded infrastructure projects, a variety of projects exist in other parts of Thailand (e.g. Flood mitigation in the Chao Phraya, Drought management in Northeast Thailand) and Malaysia (e.g. Flood mitigation in Penang and the neighbouring Kelantan River, or the drought-focused project SEA HOT in the neighbouring Kelantan River basin). The project will host annual workshops with these project teams to learn from these initiatives and to showcase project results based, for instance, on the TDA and on pilots. These results will be documented in a series of knowledge products that are easily accessible to other projects in the region, disseminated via the project webpage and during the scheduled series of workshops and conferences. Furthermore, the projects aims to include field visits to facilitate an in-depth learning exchange between other relevant basins. Execution partners for Component 6 will be responsible for developing and maintaining these cross-project relationships, identifying which project outputs might be beneficial inputs for other projects (and vice versa), for sharing experiences, and for learning from other projects."

### 10/13/2021 FAO:

We will ensure that these details will be listed as activities in the work plan and in the respective budgets, particularly relevant for Outputs 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

**Re 4):** The project will provide the first basin wide synthesis of hydrological, ecological, social and economic information as part of the TDA. These insights will be written up as practical knowledge products and disseminated to relevant stakeholders, particularly local government, CSOs and private sector entities. Further learning is expected from the execution of a series of pilot projects, which will also be analysed and documented in accessible knowledge products. These advances in knowledge and learning will improve community understanding of processes important to the long-term sustainability of the Golok/Kolok basin, particularly those affecting floods and droughts and erosion. In conjunction with the visioning process and the SAP we strongly believe that this strategy will improve management practices on the ground as well as shape policy and planning towards sustainable development in the Golok/Kolok River basin.

**Re 5):** Following stakeholder mapping and analysis, a communication strategy will be drafted, to define objectives, targeted audiences, communication channels, key messages, action plan and key performance indicators (KPIs). At the province level it will aim to raise awareness and visibility among local stakeholders, local CSOs and private sector. We plan to bring local champions on the team to ensure effective communication and networking on the ground. This will inform the design of pilots and their execution, as well as the latter

upscaling of improved practices. Lessons learned will be shared in various formats according to audiences. These will be presented in the annual stocktaking events and will be disseminated through the webpage and during a series of outreach events. We also plan a series of knowledge products resulting from each of the components, particularly from the TDA and the execution of pilot projects, to be shared also through IW:Learn. The webpage will be an important cornerstone of the communication strategy, supported by efforts to reach out via a range of social network applications. We also plan to develop a series of short videos and social media content to increase the project's visibility and achieve its outcomes.

## 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 PIF/Work Program Inclusion

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). Yes.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)**

We note that the project overall ESS risk is classified as low, and FAO has attached the Environmental and Social Risk Identification - Screening Checklist and Project Risk Certification. The Screening Checklist stated "No" for both Safeguards on Natural Resources management, indigenous peoples and cultural heritage. Further clarifications would be appreciated on the reasons that FAO determined there is no risk related indigenous peoples and local communities' natural resource use around the watershed, livelihoods and cultural heritage from this project.

Please also comment on the possibility of seasonal land use restrictions in the pilots which then would require an ESMF and compensation to be prepared during implementation to address possible impacts, compensation and grievance mechanisms.

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** Thank you. The explanation on indigenous groups is noted. Comments addressed at PIF stage.

Please *during project preparation* reassess the need for site specific ESMFs to be developed for some of the pilots , e.g. in the case of seasonal use restrictions for land rehabilitation or other actions that may affect local communities and may require compensation.



**Cleared.**

### **Agency Response**

Malay and Thai people make up the two main ethnic groups in the Golok/Kolok River basin. In Thailand's Province Narathiwat most of the inhabitants are ethnic Malays with most of the urban population being Thai, and some Thai Chinese, and Indian; 82% are Muslim and 17.9% are Buddhist

On the Malaysian side of the Golok/Kolok River basin over 90% of communities, consist of Kelantanese Malay people, which are Muslims. The minority ethnic Thai inhabitants of Kelantan are mostly centred in an area around the coastal town of Tumpat, site of most of the state's two hundred or so Buddhist temples, and noteworthy for its number of relatively well-off Siamese villages. Very few community members are Chinese or Indians.

Orang Asli, mostly Temiar, are people who have lived in the forests of Kelantan and Perak for thousands of years. Some of the Temiar maintain traditional beliefs in their natural surroundings and other forms of animist elements. Other Orang Asli ethnic groups that live in Kelantan are Jahais, Bateks and Mendriqs. The vast majority of Orang Asli live outside the Golok/Kolok River basin and will not be affected by the proposed project.

Considering the ethnic composition of the Golok/Kolok River basin and the location of ethnic minorities against the backdrop of the project's focus on floods, droughts and erosion, the overall ESS risk was determined as low. Indigenous people live largely in the protected forests to the wets of the Golok/Kolok River basin and, therefore outside the project area. Consequently, indigenous people will not be at risk.

Local communities depend on natural resources and will be involved in the project implementation process, in particular during the design and execution of pilots. The focus on nature-based solutions and the participatory process make it unlikely that communities will be negatively affected. However, any such negative effects will indeed be aligned with effective compensation and incentive mechanisms.

### **art III – Country Endorsements**

**Has the project/program been endorsed by the country's GEF Operational Focal Point and has the name and position been checked against the GEF data base?**

## **Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. LOEs from both countries need to be submitted for the project to be considered.

**(9/20/2021 - AH)** The LOE from Malaysia has been submitted and Thailand is following its process and hopes to submit its LOE within the next week or two. The internal process is complex and subject to the review of many agencies. Please submit the endorsement letter as soon as possible.

**(10/07/2021 - AH)** The LOE from Thailand remains missing. We note again and respect the internal process which requires its time. Please submit the endorsement letter as soon as possible.

**(10/15/2021 - AH)** Above comment still holds.

## **Agency Response**

The preparation of the LOE of Thailand is ongoing. The internal process is complex and subject to the review of many agencies. The LOE will be uploaded as soon as available.

**FAO 10/13/2021:**

The preparation of the LOE of Thailand is ongoing. The LOE will be uploaded as soon as available.

**FAO 10/18/2021:**

The LOE of Thailand has been uploaded in the Portal.

## **Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects**

**Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.**

**Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

**Agency Response**

N/A

**EFSEC DECISION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Is the PIF/PFD recommended for technical clearance? Is the PPG (if requested) being recommended for clearance?**

**Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

(Karrer, April 9, 2021). No. Please see the previously noted points.

(9/20/2021 - AH) No, not yet. Please address the comments noted above.

(10/7/2021) Not yet. Please address the few remaining comments and submit the missing endorsement letter from Thailand.

(10/15/2021) All comments have been addressed. Please submit the missing endorsement letter from Thailand.

(10/18/2021) Yes. All comments have been addressed and the missing LOE has been submitted.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Additional recommendations to be considered by Agency at the time of CEO endorsement/approval.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

#### Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	4/9/2021	10/1/2021
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/21/2021	10/13/2021
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/7/2021	10/18/2021
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/15/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/18/2021	

#### PIF Recommendation to CEO

#### Brief reasoning for recommendations to CEO for PIF Approval

**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 – while a smaller river in the region – 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 enhance environmental security in the Golok/Kolok River Basin. The limited dimensions of the Golok/Kolok River basin provide a rare opportunity to pilot comprehensive and effective transboundary

cooperative arrangements – aimed at improving social stability, easing conflicts at the water nexus, preserving ecosystem services – replicable in the region and beyond<sup>3</sup>. The scope of the work includes 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, flood mitigation, aquifer recharge, erosion control, buffer zones, 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, the erosion/siltation driven the 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. climate change, deforestation, and land use change. Land use change and deforestation are being recognized as a potentially driver for erosion, which drives the siltation of the river mouth. The proposed project is aiming to influence existing infrastructure investment plans and land-use planning and will build on the GEF-funded project “Development of tools to incorporate impacts of climatic variability and change, in particular floods and droughts, into basin planning processes”.