

Restoration Challenge Grant Platform for Smallholders and Communities, with Blockchain-Enabled Crowdfunding

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10637

Countries

Regional (Cameroon, Kenya)

Project Name

Restoration Challenge Grant Platform for Smallholders and Communities,
with Blockchain-Enabled Crowdfunding

Agencies

IUCN

Date received by PM

11/9/2021

Review completed by PM

3/4/2022

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

Focal Area

Land Degradation

Project Type

MSP

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

However, please address:

- The expected start / end date are not in line with the indicated project duration of 36 months. Please bring in line. Further, a start date already in January may not be fully realistic and may have to be revised in the re-submission.

02/14/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Project start and end dates revised: May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2025

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

11/23/2021: Yes, however, please consider:

- Some outputs (e.g. 1.3 - 1.6, 4.3) read more like indicators/targets and not like outputs. Consider including outputs to reflect the restoration efforts, while separating the specific targets tied to the respective output.

02/14/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Prior Outputs 1.3-1.6 and 4.3 in Table B and Results Framework revised with associated targets separated.

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

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

11/23/2021: No.

- Table C: are crowdsourced investors may be better categorized as "private sector" ?

- Are the in-kind contributions truly "Investment Mobilized"? Usually, in-kind often fulfils the criteria for recurrent investments. In any case, please describe under the table how "Investment Mobilized" has been determined.

- Please provide co-financing commitment letters.

02/14/2022: Please upload outstanding co-financing letter from IUCN.

02/22/2022: Addressed.

03/08/2022: ADDITIONAL REQUEST:

In absence of co-financing documentation, "Crowdsourced Investors (private sector)" has to be deleted at this stage. During the implementation, report it as materialized co-

financing - once this co-finance is materialized, it can be reported either at MTR or TE.
The explanation of 'how investment mobilized was identified?' for Crowdsourced Investors can be removed.

03/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Co-financing table C has been updated with additional co-financing, and reclassification of the type of co-financing in some cases.

Co-financing commitment letters from Kenya (KEFRI);Cameroon (MINEPDED); Bioversity have been uploaded to the GEF Portal. Additional letters of support from Rabbobanka dn Ecosia have been uploaded. IUCN Co-financing commitment letter to be uploaded shortly.

IUCN response to 2/14/2022 GEF review:

IUCN co-financing letter uploaded, as well as an additional letter of support (\$100,000 USD in-kind) from the Kenya Department of Environment, Turkana County that arrived this week. Tables A, B and C have been updated in the GEF portal and accompanying hard copies (CEO Approval Request and IUCN Project Document).

IUCN response to 3/8/2022 GEF review:

Crowdsourced investor co-financing deleted from the CEO AR as requested, and will be reported on as it materializes during implementation.

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

11/23/2021: Table D is adequate.

However, please note preliminary comments on the budget:

- It is not fully clear to me why the budget also lists CIAT as an executing agency? If CIAT is also executing, this needs to be reflected in Part I portal template entry as well.

- Please clarify the vehicle expense - is this a purchase of a car or only a transportation cost (i.e. rental)? Why is it charged to project components and PMC?

- For Staff: please provide a breakdown so that it is clear which staff is charged to project components, and which staff has managing/coordinating functions and is charged to the

PMC. Please provide some basic staff TOR to this regard, annexed to the project document.

- "Other operating costs" are usually charged to PMC, please also note that "miscellaneous costs" are not eligible under PMC.

- In the resubmission, please insert the budget table in Annex E of the portal template. Please refer to the GEF guidelines, the tables in the project document and in the portal should be the same. That may require presenting the table with less columns (i.e without break-down by outcome) so that it fits in portrait format in the portal margins.

02/14/2022: Not fully Addressed.

In the budget table there is usually a column on which institution is responsible for the each budget line. Please include as appropriate or clearly indicate under the table, which institution is responsible, in case it is only one.

02/22/2022: Addressed.

03/08/2022: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE BUDGET:

(i) Project Coordinator is charged to components but not to PMC - Per Guidelines, the costs associated with the project's execution have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC. Requesting the costs associated with the execution of the project to be covered by the PMC is reasonable ? by so doing, asking the proponents to utilize both portions allocated to PMC (GEF portion and co-financing portion) is also reasonable. That said, when the situation merits (i.e. not enough co-financing funds ? which for this projects is not the case), the project's staff could be charged to the project's components with ?clear Terms of Reference describing unique outputs linked to the respective component? (paragraph 4 ? page 42 of the Guidelines). For this project, the co-financing portion allocated to PMC is 300K, same amount that is represented in grants.

(ii) Direct payments to farmers don't seem like Works, but more like Grants, please revisit and confirm or correct as relevant.

(iii) Please give more details about Research Support Service, Facilities, and IT costs: why research support service is categorized as Operating costs, and why not charged to PMC. Similarly, is Facilities rental costs? Also, IT costs under operating costs should generally be charged to PMC.

(iv) The budget table under Annex E and the Portal entry's table B do show some differences between components ? please ask the Agency to amend in all budget tables:

- Component 1 in Budget table: \$1,140,718 - Component 1 in Table B: \$1,150,718

- Component 2 in Budget table: \$281,846 - Component 2 in Table B: \$391,846

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| - Component 3 in Budget table: \$154,526
\$154,526 (no difference) | - Component 3 in Table B: |
| - Component 4 in Budget table: \$196,092
\$211,092 | - Component 4 in Table B: |
| - M&E in Budget table: \$45,000 | - M&E in Table B: \$0 |
| - PMC in Budget table: \$181,818
(no difference) | - PMC in Table B: \$181,818 |

03/10/2022: Addressed in budget table, including footnotes and as per explanations below.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Bioversity International will be the Executing Agency for this project as discussed by partners. Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) merged in January 2020 to become the Alliance CIAT. As communicated by Alliance CIAT legal department, *?The two organizations remain two distinct legal entities but work closely together to build on the complementary mandates and long collaboration between the two Centers. The legal status in different countries remains as either Bioversity International or CIAT, depending on the entity that signed the hosting country agreement. The two Centers will continue to operate as separate legal entities as per the agreements made with countries, which grant legal status and legal conditions to operate within the host country.?* The change in organizational structure will not impact the project: the same staff will remain involved in project development and execution, and the same in-country resources in Cameroon and Kenya are available. If anything, a broader network of resources now exist to help disseminate project findings and experiences. Portal entries have been updated to reflect this change.

As indicated on the revised budget table, no GEF funding will be used to purchase vehicles. Vehicles used to service the project will be from Bioversity and partner organizations. Some GEF funding will cover fuel and driver expenditures as indicated on budget row 41, under *?Travel?* expenditures.

Project staff roles and responsibilities have been revised for clarity on the budget table, as well as in Annex H of the CEO Endorsement Request, where basic TORs are provided. The Budget table has also been revised to provide better clarity on PMC and non-PMC expenditures. All *?miscellaneous costs?* in prior version of the budget have been defined here.

IUCN response to 2/14/2022 GEF review:

Added the following clarification at the bottom of the Budget table in Annex E: *Note - Bioversity International is responsible for each and every budget line shown above. In the case where external consultants and/or firms will be utilized, Bioversity International will be responsible for overseeing request for proposals, contracting, oversight, coordination and delivery of all subcontracted work. IUCN will ensure that all required procurement procedures are followed for all external subcontracts, in partnership with Bioversity International.*

IUCN response to 3/8/2022 GEF review:

(i) Project team members (described in Annex H and indicated on budget), have been clarified to align with GEF requirements. The Project Leader is fully covered through PMC funding and co-financing. Project-grant funded staff time include the Project Lead Technical Support and other team members directly responsible for technical delivery of project activities.

(ii) Direct payments to farmers reclassified as ?Grants/Subgrants?

(iii) Additional details on Research Support Service, Facilities and IT costs provided on the budget. They are broken out here as required by Bioversity International internal processes, and support the effective implementation of this project.

(iv) Budget table under Annex E and Table B harmonized. *Please note, all budgeted M&E costs described in the budgeted M&E plan (\$45k USD GEF funding) fall under Component 3. The \$45k USD M&E costs are broken out in a separate column in the budget in Annex E (using GEF template), and added to Component 3 in Table B and in the Results Framework.*

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

02/14/2022: However, please correct the entries. The funds are either utilized or committed, it can't be both.

02/22/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 2/14/2022 GEF review:

Annex C on Status of Utilization of PPG corrected to show that the total PPG of \$50,000 USD has been utilized for preparation of this fully-developed project.

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

For consideration: Baseline & Collaboration - Existing application and tools relevant to land degradation and land

rehabilitation, these can be explored as potential baselines and for collaboration during the scale up/expansion phase.

02/14/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Thank you for the suggestion. Both IUCN and Bioversity International will monitor and assess the existing suite of relevant applications, tools, partners and initiatives throughout the life of the project, with a particular focus on partnerships, alignment and non-duplication of work, and capturing synergies during the phase II, scale up (linkage with crowdsouce investment platforms).

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

11/23/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

11/23/2021: Yes.

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

11/23/2021: 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

11/23/2021: 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

11/23/2021: Yes.

I see 2 maps have been uploaded in the portal section 1b. In Annex D, it is mentioned that upload failed. Are there additional maps that need to be uploaded? Please let the reviewer know, and check with IT as needed.

02/14/2022: If the IT issue persists, please check with Wanderson from the IT team <<wbataroldao@worldbankgroup.org>> and copy the reviewer.

02/22/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Updated maps have been uploaded to the GEF portal.

IUCN response to 2/14/2022 GEF review:

Annex D, Project Maps and Coordinates, now has uploaded maps for Cameroon and Kenya with coordinates and showing the location of the 6 project sites (3 in Cameroon, 3 in Kenya), where the project will implement on-the-ground activities.

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

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

11/23/2021: Not fully.

Stakeholder Engagement: It is not clear what are the specific roles of the each of the stakeholders during project implementation. Please include this in this section.

02/14/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Section 2 on Stakeholder Engagement has been revised to better clarify the specific roles of each stakeholder during project implementation.

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Cleared

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

11/23/2021: No.

Budgeted M&E plan could not be located in the portal. Please provide.

02/14/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Budgeted M&E plan provided in Section 9, Monitoring and Evaluation, and GEF funding for M&E is also indicated in the Project Budget table.

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

11/23/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

11/23/2021: Not fully.

- Annex E: budget needs to be uploaded in the portal
- Annex D: maps - please upload as appropriate (see comment above)

02/14/2022:

- Please note comment on budget table format above.
- Please check with IT by email, cc the reviewer.
- Please check the project logframe in the portal, the upload is not readable due to extremely narrow columns.

02/22/2022: Please address as advised by IT.

03/04/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

IUCN response to 11/23 GEF review:

Budget and Project Maps (Annex E) have been uploaded to the GEF Portal.

IUCN response to 2/14/2022 GEF review:

Budget table has the explanation requested at the bottom of the table on responsible entities (see above).

There is a technical issue that is preventing me from deleting several blank columns in the project logframe in Annex A that is impacting the readability. I have reached out (2/18/2022, 2pm) to IT on this and cc'd the GEF reviewer.

IUCN Response to 2/22/2022 GEF review:

After working with GEF IT support (wbatistaroldao@worldbankgroup.org) on Feb 18, 2022, we have uploaded the Project logframe into the Annex and it should be more easily readable now that IT has deleted the blank columns that were previously present. Please let us know if the problem still persists.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

11/23/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

11/23/2021: Most of the comments at PIF stage have been addressed, remaining comments to be addressed in the process of this CEO endorsement review.

02/14/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a for MSP

Agency Response

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a for MSP

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Has been provided in Annex C.

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request See comments above on this topic.

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

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

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

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

11/23/2021: No. Please address comments and re-submit, including required documentation as mentioned in the review sheet.

Please note that the currently uploaded project document needs to be revised and resubmitted as well. Specifically:

- The prodoc should be easily identifiable as the agency project document (e.g. through a cover page and table of contents). Please upload as a clean version without track changes.
- The prodoc includes 2 executing agencies, whereas the portal entry has only Bioversity International as EA.
- Please include a budgeted M&E plan.
- Basic staff TORs to justify charging of staff to components / PMC.

02/14/2022: No. Please address outstanding issues and provide the last remaining co-financing letter with the re-submission.

02/22/2022: Please address remaining issue as advised by IT.

03/08/2022: No. Please address additional comments made on co-financing and budget.

03/10/2022: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO approval.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	11/23/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/14/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/22/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	3/4/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	3/8/2022	

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

CEO COVER MEMO

The Restoration Challenge Grant Platform for Smallholders and Communities, with Blockchain-Enabled Crowdfunding will facilitate and support enhanced smallholder and rural community member engagement and investment in restoration. The Platform will utilize mobile cellular technology and payment transfer services to provide small grants/payments for smallholder-, community-, and school-led restoration work ? principally tree-planting ? matched by co-investment (in-kind and/or cash). Cellular technology will allow for efficient and effective verification of work and transfer of payments. Another key innovative focus of the Platform will be the integration of blockchain technology throughout the restoration value chain to provide transparency, build trust, facilitate real-time monitoring, evaluation and verification, and support mobilization of funding for restoration. From appropriate species selection, seed sourcing and seedling propagation, to tree planting and maintenance and transfer of payments, each transaction will be marked by a unique, traceable, unchangeable and verifiable blockchain. A second phase of the Platform will utilize a public-facing web platform and partnerships with other tree planting and restoration investment matching platforms to facilitate crowdfunding of Platform-supported restoration and financial sustainability, drawing upon the blockchain technology and ledger for security and transparency and trustworthiness of crowdfunded transactions. A range of engagement approaches and selection of a diverse group of landscapes will allow for cross comparison and learning to inform restoration initiatives going forward.

The MSP design has benefitted from STAP advise and interaction with a group of experts convened by STAP in the context of the workshop on blockchain technologies.

Further, the project has duly taken risks and opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic into account. Investment in restoration on the ground is in fact a way to create opportunities for local communities and may be combined with local and national governments efforts of building back better.